

**REALISM AND THE BACKGROUND OF GOODMAN'S
WORLDMAKING**

by

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Abstract

The work of Nelson Goodman has significantly impacted the philosophical landscape of the latter half of the twentieth century. In this thesis I critically assess Goodman's later metaphysics, particularly his ontological relativism and multiple worlds hypothesis. I argue that, while Goodman's view is interesting and important to philosophic thought, it critically fails as a tenable metaphysical position. This failure is twofold: first, Goodman's argument for ontological relativism rests on the representational fallacy and is therefore unsound; and second his position, when considered as a self-standing metaphysical doctrine, is incoherent. My conclusion is that Goodman must admit some mind-independent structure of reality, otherwise his view should be rejected. However, while I do not argue for any specific form of realism, once some mind-independent structure is admitted, a general realist position becomes preferable to Goodman's anti-realist, relativist, and constructivist view.

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List of Abbreviations

Book-length works by Goodman are abbreviated as follows, while full use of the title of articles is made. The pagination of articles in citations is taken from the collection *Starmaking: Realism, Anti-realism, Irrealism*, ed. Peter McCormick (1996).

Ways of Worldmaking: WW

Fact, Fiction, and Forecast: FFF

Languages of Art: LA

The Structure of Appearance: SA

Problems and Projects: PP

Of Mind and Other Matters: MM

Chapter One

Introduction: Goodman's Worldmaking

Nelson Goodman's philosophy has been greatly influential on the latter half of the twentieth century. This influence, however, is severely underappreciated and often unrecognized. This makes his absence in many bibliographies in which his work could have contributed significantly a mystery. This work aims to rejuvenate our thinking about Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking*. Not, indeed, a defense of Goodman's view, but rather a fair treatment of it as what it is: an overlooked vanguard of modern philosophy, wrong, but for good reasons. Goodman's grue paradox asked important questions about inductive generalizations,¹ his calculus of individuals gave nominalism a logical foothold², and his work on aesthetics renewed philosophic interest in an area that had historically been devoid of analytic rigour³. Goodman's metaphysics have been no less influential and, with Hilary Putnam and Richard Rorty, he helps form a triumvirate of philosophers who attack the doctrinaire position of metaphysical realism.⁴ This attack typically proceeds via a denial of a mind-independent world or our ability to know it, and posits a central ontological role for the subject in its place. This tendency has a strong Kantian resonance, taking epistemology as prior to metaphysics and the structure of human thought as antecedent to the structure of the world.

Goodman is a paradigm case of this neo-Kantian view. Goodman describes his position as one of "skeptical, analytic, constructionalist orientation", (*WW*, 1) which can be described as a

¹ See *FFF* (1979), chapter 3 for grue and Goodman's new riddle of induction.

² See *SA* (1966), chapter 2 for the calculus and its purport for nominalism.

³ See Goodman's *LA* (1976), which has been credited with revitalizing philosophical aesthetics.

⁴ Goodman's antirealism and relativism is most fully expounded in *WW* (1978), although his earlier work on nominalism in *SA* (1966) shows antecedents of his later position. Dena Shottenkirk argues that Goodman's nominalism underpins his entire philosophic project in all its facets, so to understand his metaphysics, epistemology and aesthetics it is necessary to understand his nominalism. See her *Nominalism and Its Aftermath* (2009). Nominalism may provide the motivation for Goodman's later philosophy, however his ontological relativism can still be analyzed as a self-standing doctrine that does not have nominalist constraints. See *WW*, pp. 21, and Cohnitz and Rossberg (2006), pp. 200.

“radical relativism under rigorous restraints, that eventuates in something akin to irrealism.” (WW, x) Despite Goodman’s objections to metaphysical realism, he is “an anti-realist and an anti-idealist—hence an irrealist” (MM, vii) and is as opposed to Berkeley as to Locke.⁵ It is my aim to question Goodman’s ontological relativism by criticizing both the soundness of his arguments and the feasibility of his conclusion. This project is resoundingly negative; I am only offering a criticism of Goodman’s position, not a defense of the type of realism I wish to replace it with. Therefore, I use realism broadly construed to hold some form of a mind-independent reality. I will leave the structure and properties of that reality unspecified.

I will argue that Goodman’s argument for ontological relativism is fallacious and that the position itself is untenable without some appeal to a mind-independent world. This twofold approach in criticizing Goodman’s irrealism and his denial of a mind-independent world and concomitant ontological relativism proceeds as follows: first, I argue that Goodman commits what Heather Dyke calls the *representational fallacy* and that his linguistic thesis against a mind-independent world is unsound; second, I consider Goodman’s ontological relativism as a self-standing doctrine, showing that it is internally incoherent and should therefore be rejected.

In chapter 1 I give an exegetical account of Goodman’s position, explaining his rejection of a mind-independent world because of the failure of foundationalism, his argument for an ontological and epistemological relativism stemming from the irreducibility of multiple right descriptive systems, and his constructional project that argues for the various ways that we make worlds that can be explained “through an analytic study of types and functions of symbols and symbol systems.” (WW, 5) My aim is show that Goodman’s position is really quite radical. While Goodman’s extravagant metaphysics may be interpreted as rhetorical,⁶ I argue that he is entirely

⁵ I am not claiming that Berkeley had no influence on Goodman’s thought; Shottenkirk (2009) argues that there are many affinities between Berkeley’s system and Goodman’s; see her *Nominalism and Its Aftermath*, pp.100-101.

⁶ E.g. Quine (1981), *Theories and Things*, pp. 97-98.

serious in claiming that there are multiple, actual mind-dependent worlds constructed by our systems of description.

In chapter 2 I argue that Goodman commits the representational fallacy. I give an explanation and defense of Dyke's formulation of the fallacy, and discuss parallel identifications of the fallacy by John Heil and Thomas Nagel, while using Carnap's views on ontology to illustrate how it is committed. I then argue that Goodman is guilty of committing the representational fallacy in two distinct, but related, ways: he assumes irreducible conflicting descriptions cannot apply to the same world; and he conflates descriptions of reality with reality itself. As a result, I show how his linguistic thesis for ontological relativism fails.

In chapter 3 I consider Goodman's ontological relativism under its own merits, evaluating the coherence of Goodman's position. I argue that Goodman's position either presupposes or requires some mind-independent structure to be coherent. Without it, Goodman's position fails for a number of reasons: its explanatory scope is limited, it cannot account for certain features of experience, and it has no external constraint, making it an "anything goes" relativism. I conclude that Goodman's position is untenable without an appeal to some minimal mind-independent reality. Goodman's position therefore rests on an unpersuasive and fallacious argument, and is itself unfeasible because of its incoherence. We are thereby given no reason to accept his ontological relativism, constructivism, and multiple worlds.

Before assessing the coherence of Goodman's metaphysical pluralism, it is necessary to say what exactly that position is, with particular attention paid to what Goodman means by "world". This chapter will offer an account of Goodman's position by tracing his arguments from a "world well-lost" to a view of "skeptical, analytic, constructionalist orientation" described as a "radical relativism under rigorous restraints, that eventuates in something akin to irrealism." (WW, x, 1, 4) My aim is to show that Goodman's position is really quite radical. While my main concern is with Goodman's metaphysics, particularly his ontological relativism, his metaphysical

arguments and his epistemology are intertwined, so it becomes didactically necessary to discuss them together. I will first explain Goodman's argument against a mind-independent reality, then give his argument for ontological relativism. I will argue that Goodman's talk of multiple worlds is to be taken literally: there are a plethora of actual worlds answering to our descriptions. Goodman combines this metaphysical position with an epistemological relativism and constructivism that, despite the claim against being "anything goes", does not preclude any metaphysical possibilities. Finally, I will briefly consider the processes involved in worldmaking. The denial of a mind-independent world, when combined with ontological and epistemological relativism, results in an extreme metaphysical view of multiple actual worlds that are mind-dependent and subjectively constructed, with only minimal constraints on the constructivism.⁷ It will be the business of the subsequent chapters to question the cogency of Goodman's position.

1.1 A principal motivator of Goodman's project is the desire to establish the arts as an equal epistemological and metaphysical enterprise as the sciences. (*WW*, 102) Indeed, Goodman makes use of a number of examples taken from painting, prose, poetry and mythology. For Goodman, there are a plethora of descriptions of the world - the various descriptions of the sciences, literature, philosophy, common sense, perceptual experience - which are all equally right. Goodman calls these various systems of description *versions*. Goodman denies that these versions (be they physics, art, or whatever else) describe the world as it is in itself because 'the world' is epistemically unavailable to us. Rather, we only have epistemic access to our versions

⁷ While Goodman uses the term "constructionalism" to describe his position, I follow André Kukla (2000) in calling it "constructivism". The construction metaphor has been applied to many different areas, which are frequently conflated. See Ian Hacking (1999), particularly pp. 47-49, for a disambiguation of these different 'construct-isms'. Given Hacking's distinctions, we can distinguish between the "constructionalism" of Goodman's early work in logic (in *SA*, for example) and his later, more socially and linguistically inclined work (in *WW*), which I am calling "constructivism". For Goodman, these two views are related. See his "Comments", pp. 206, n. 1.

of the world. In bare outline, Goodman's argument against a mind-independent world is as follows:⁸

- (1) There are a number of equally right and often conflicting descriptions of the world.
- (2) If talk of the Given is self-defeating, then we cannot know the way the world is, only our descriptions.
- (3) Talk of the Given is self-defeating.
- (4) Therefore we cannot know *the* way the world is apart from our descriptions.

These premises constitute a rejection of any notion of mind-independent structure by denying us epistemic access to the world in itself. Goodman takes the various versions to be mind-dependent and constructed, and is therefore decidedly anti-realist. These mind-dependent versions constitute 'reality'. Goodman assumes that "the fact that there are many different world-versions is hardly debatable", (*WW*, 4) and so takes it for granted that (1) is true. This is uncontentious; we can give a physical, phenomenal, artistic, or common sense description of the same object.

Goodman argues for (2) by claiming that asserting the accuracy or rightness of a description by comparison with the world cannot be such an arbiter, for there is no way the world is apart from all systems of description. Talk about 'the world' ascribes structure, orders it under a given conceptual scheme. To say anything is to say it within a system of description. (*WW*, 6) The obvious question is, if there are these various descriptions, what are they descriptions *of*? For Goodman, it cannot be *the* world that is described, because we do not have epistemic access to it apart from our descriptions. The two conflicting descriptions:

(i) the sun always moves

and

(ii) the sun never moves

⁸ This is reconstructed from various parts of *WW* and Goodman's other articles on the subject. The argument thus reconstructed may not be something Goodman would be comfortable with, nevertheless it adequately portrays the features of Goodman's thought I am most interested in, and so for my purposes it will suffice. I refer the reader to the relevant works by Goodman to assess his views in more depth.

are typically explained as elliptical for ‘moves under a given frame of reference’. (WW, 2-3) However, because both descriptions are apparently about the same object, Goodman maintains that the different frames of reference belong to systems of description rather than to the object itself:

Frames of reference, though, seem to belong less to what is described than to systems of description: and each of the two statements relates what is described to such a system. If I ask about the world, you can offer to tell me how it is under one or more frames of reference; but if I insist that you tell me how it is apart from all frames, what can you say? We are confined to ways of describing whatever is described. Our universe, so to speak, consists of these ways rather than of a world”. (WW, 2-3)

If they belonged to the object, one would be saying in some absolute sense that the sun both moves and does not move. Therefore, if the notion of the Given or non-conceptual content is self-defeating, then all structure is contained within our versions. Goodman further takes (2) to show the poverty of a correspondence theory of truth. That is, because we cannot compare our descriptions with an ‘aboriginal’ world, we cannot determine whether they correspond truly to reality, and thus any correspondence relation between statement and world fails to secure the truth of that statement. (WW, 17-18)

Goodman argues that talk of unstructured content or the pure given is senseless, for the world apart from all descriptions, a world without concepts, structure, kinds or properties, amounts to nothing. (WW, 20) Even the typical reduction of perceptual experience to, say, ‘a red bulgy patch over there’⁹ employs spatial relations and colour concepts. One could ask ‘what is the world given *as?*’ but any answer to this question is necessarily conceptual, thereby undermining the notion of being *given*. (“The Way the World Is”, 5-6) Goodman does not

⁹ See, e.g. H. H. Price, “The Given” for a typical account of the Given.

provide a substantial argument against the Given in (3),¹⁰above, instead appealing to arguments advanced by Berkeley, Cassirer, Bruner, and particularly Kant. (*WW*, 6-7)¹¹

Kant denies that we can have knowledge of the world as it is in itself - the noumenal realm - by claiming that we only have knowledge of appearances. For Kant, empirical knowledge is constituted by both form and content, or the concepts of the understanding combined with the manifold of sensibility. This leads to his famous dictum, echoed in Goodman,¹² that “thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.” (A51/B75) The parallels with Goodman are evident: the rejection of a ready-made world and the appeal to the Given as an epistemological foundation, knowledge only of descriptions, the inseparability of form and content, and the role of subjective construction in experience. Goodman further deploys a sort of Kantian regulative principle in answer to the question, what are these descriptions descriptions of? (*WW*, 7)¹³ Goodman maintains that descriptions describe versions which are subjectively constructed, and these versions, rather than being constructed from ‘the world’ are constructed from other versions. We always start from some old version and refashion it, such that what worlds are made of - matter, energy, substance - is made along with the world. (*WW*, 6) There is no underlying material from which all worlds are made, because even this raw stuff is version-dependent. The demand for a first world begets an antinomy; it seems necessary that there be a first world from which all subsequent worlds were made, yet if worlds are always made from other worlds we appear stuck in an infinite regress. If we arrived at the first world, it would have had to been made from a previous world, and so on *ad infinitum*. (“Notes on the Well-Made World”, 153) The concept of world (and version) is being stretched beyond its limits by such metaphysical questions about a first world.

¹⁰ Goodman speaks loosely of the Given as non-conceptual or unstructured content that is not merely perceptually foundational, but which is independent of our conceptual schemes, and is therefore closer to Kant’s notion of the noumena. See *WW*, pp. 6.

¹¹ See Shottenkirk (2009) pp. 98-99, for a discussion of Kant’s influence on Goodman.

¹² See *WW*, pp. 6.

¹³ See also *WW*, pp.7 n. 8.

Coupled with the rejection of the Given and its replacement by our versions is an argument from parsimony: because all structure is found in our descriptions, rather than in a mind-independent reality, the concept of ‘the world’ has no explanatory value. We should replace talk of the structure of ‘the world’ with talk of the structure of our descriptions. (WW, 3-4) As a result, “the “tolerant realist view” that a plurality of worlds can be versions of a unique underlying reality is also nothing but a useless addition. A reality underlying the worlds must be unstructured and neutral, and thus serves no purpose.” (Cohnitz and Rossberg, 197)¹⁴ For Goodman, because we can never know the world in itself, the concept of a unique underlying reality should be rejected, and thus we are only left with our various versions.

Thus far, Goodman has argued that from the failure of the Given we do not have epistemic access to a mind-independent world. Instead, we only have epistemic access to the structure of our descriptions. Thereby, “Goodman merges epistemology with metaphysics [. . .] the metaphysical does not exist independently of the epistemological.” (Shottenkirk, 92) Along with a rejection of both the Given and a mind-independent world, Goodman claims any notion of truth as a correspondence relation between a description and the world as it is in-itself fails, for the world apart from all systems of description is “on the whole a world well-lost.” (WW, 4) This is only a negative argument against realism. Goodman offers an argument for ontological relativism that leads him to the multiple worlds hypothesis, which I consider in the next section.

1.2 Goodman has given us an argument against there being an inherently structured, mind-independent world. Goodman does not stop at this merely negative argument against realism, but offers a positive ontological account to replace it. Goodman argues that because our descriptions often conflict and are not reducible to a single derivational base, they must be true in different

¹⁴ Kukla criticizes Goodman’s rejection of the concept of ‘the world’ by arguing that from the world having no properties, it does not follow that the concept is therefore explanatorily useless. It may be so entrenched in our web of belief that to remove it would cause immense shock to the coherence of those beliefs. See Kukla (2000), pp. 99-101.

worlds to avoid contradiction. Goodman therefore posits multiple worlds to account for these conflicting descriptions, because “contradiction is avoided by segregation”. (“Notes on the Well-Made World”, 152) Goodman’s argument for multiple worlds is as follows:

(5) If different descriptions describe the same world, then they must be either intertranslatable or reducible to a single derivational base without loss of meaning

(6) Many of these conflicting descriptions are not intertranslatable and cannot be reduced to a single derivational base without loss of meaning.

(7) Therefore, they do not describe the same world.

This is merely a sketch of Goodman’s argument. In part, Goodman’s motivation is to undermine physicalism and phenomenalism, which demand reducibility to their respective domains, hence the conditional in (5). One could simply deny (6) by appeal to Davidson’s attack on incommensurability,¹⁵ but Goodman has a lengthy argument for why (6) is true.¹⁶ The ontological status of “the same world” in (7) must also be clarified, as well as Goodman’s positive project of establishing the ways we make different worlds. Each of our descriptions describes a world, and where they do not conflict they are what Goodman calls *versions* of the same world. However, for Goodman, both the versions and the worlds they describe are constructed. When combined with his argument against a mind-independent world, Goodman’s position denies an inherently structured reality, positing multiple worlds in its place, each of which is constructed by our descriptions. Thus, what there is in the world is relative to our descriptions. Goodman therefore holds a very strong form of ontological relativism. Ontological relativism “contends that which objects it is that populate the world is a relative matter - that different answers to which objects (and which kinds of matter) there are in the world are true, relative to different conceptual

¹⁵ See Davidson, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme”. Goodman talks of intertranslatability and reductionism rather than incommensurability; I take these notions to amount to much the same thing.

¹⁶ See *WW*, pp. 3-5.

schemes, and that there is no scheme-independent fact of the matter on this question.” (Elder, 31-32)

Both Goodman’s argument against a mind-independent world and his argument for ontological relativism presuppose that our various ways of describing are all equally right. The heliocentric model is no better justified than the geocentric model on Goodman’s view, because both are right under a given system of description. (WW, 111) Part of the reason for this is that we cannot appeal to the truth of a description by its correspondence with ‘the world’. In addition to different descriptions of planetary motion, there are the myriad ways of describing found in the sciences, phenomenal perception, and the arts. A painting by Katharine Sturgis of a hockey game is no less right than a common sense description of the same game given by a spectator.¹⁷ Similarly, a phenomenal description of a table and other mid-sized objects is no less right than a physical description of the table as a collection of molecules. Each of these descriptions describes differently, highlighting different features. What features are highlighted is relative to the system of description. Relevance of features will be discussed with the processes of worldmaking, below. For now, the point is simply that all these different ways of describing are equally right (with criteria of *rightness* currently left unspecified).

While it is uncontentious to accept that there are many different ways of describing the world, we may not want to accept all such descriptions as epistemically equal. While this seems plausible with descriptions of, say, planetary motion, we may consider a less plausible case with the following counterfactuals:

(iii) If I were Julius Caesar, I wouldn’t be alive in the twentieth century

and

(iv) If Julius Caesar were I, he would be alive in the twentieth century (*FFF*, 6)

¹⁷ See WW, pp. 30 for the painting I am referring to.

Here the antecedents are logically indistinguishable, while the consequents at least superficially conflict, yet each of the conditionals do not appear to be any better justified than the other.¹⁸ As a result, attempts to undermine Goodman's argument by appeal to the epistemic primacy of some descriptions over others does not resolve the issue as easily as one would hope.¹⁹

Goodman's ontological relativism seems to gain ground because many descriptions are not intertranslatable.²⁰ The ardent physicalist will object by declaring that everything is or should be, reducible to physics and physical descriptions (e.g. chemical reactions can be reduced to molecular motion). Since different right descriptions have been accepted, it is unclear how, say, a novel by Arthur Conan Doyle or Picasso's *Guernica* could be reduced to the axioms of set theory or the laws of physics. (WW, 5) The rejection of such examples due to their fictional nature is readily forthcoming; physical descriptions are true, while fictional works like novels are either false or have no truth value. Goodman's response is twofold: first he denies that literal truth and falsity are the only relevant criteria in assessing systems of description,²¹ and second, he offers a non-fictional example illustrative of a failure of intertranslatability:

Suppose for now that our universe of discourse is limited to a square segment of a plane, with the two pairs of boundary lines labelled "vertical" and "horizontal". If we assume that there are points, whatever they may be, then the two sentences
(A) Every point is made up of a vertical and a horizontal line

¹⁸ By 'logically indistinguishable' I mean that $I_x=J_y$ and $J_y=I_x$ are intersubstitutable without a change in truth value. Goodman is an extensionalist, so he will reject the idea that the two antecedents have different intensions. See SA, chapter 1, for Goodman's extensionalism.

¹⁹ This perhaps dismisses the objection too quickly. First, the appeal to counterfactuals is extremely suspect. We could deny that counterfactuals refer to any ontological features of the actual world. In this particular case, there is an ambiguity around which temporal slice of the identical individual is being considered. Further, Goodman does not give a sustained argument for the epistemic equality of conflicting truths. We could deny that one or both statements are true, or we could maintain that the words in the statements do not have the same meaning. Kukla advances this argument, remarking that this neatly deals with Goodman's plane segment problem, which I discuss below, (WW, 114-117) where the use of 'point' is ambiguous. See Kukla (2000), pp. 98-101. I discuss this issue in chapter 2, section 2.3. Cohnitz and Rossberg suggest an alternative solution, which is to adopt a sort of Quinean schizophrenia, accepting one position as true and the other false at a given time. See Cohnitz and Rossberg (2006) pp. 216-217.

²⁰ Hempel takes Goodman's notion of conflicting descriptions (or versions) to be analogous to Kuhn's incommensurability of paradigms. ("Comments on Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking*", 129)

²¹ E.g. a statement can be literally false but metaphorically true. See Davidson (1978), "What Metaphors Mean" for a discussion of this issue. Further, some systems of description are not denotational at all because they are not linguistic, and therefore have no truth value.

(B) No point is made up of lines or anything else conflict, but are equally true under appropriate systems. We know that simple relativization to system [. . .] is a specious way of resolving the conflict. The truth of the statement in question made by each system must also be affirmed; and if the systems, respectively, say (A) and (B) as they stand, the conflict remains. (WW, 114-115)

Thus, Goodman maintains that some descriptions conflict and are neither intertranslatable nor reducible to some more fundamental description. Similarly, the physicist flits back and forth between theories about particles and theories about waves. (“Notes on the Well-Made World”, 153) If we accept one, we cannot simultaneously accept the other, yet we have good reason to accept both as equally right. Therefore, “so long as contrasting right versions not all reducible to one are countenanced, unity is to be sought not in an ambivalent and neutral *something* beneath these versions but in an overall organization embracing them”, (WW, 5) where the organization is to be taken as Goodman’s metaphysical pluralism of right versions and the worlds they describe. The plane segment in Goodman’s example (above) can have its points described as either composed of lines or not, both of which are right. Because the points cannot both be defined as composed of lines and not composed of lines, the two descriptions must be describing different worlds. How does Goodman construe the ontological status of ‘world’ in this context? First let us consider the distinction between world and version.

Our various descriptions describe what Goodman calls versions of a world or worlds. Various versions have already been countenanced: the heliocentric versus the geocentric models of the solar system, phenomenal versus painted descriptions of an event, physical versus common sense descriptions of a table, and the two descriptions of the plane segment. For Goodman, versions simply are the various systems of representation to which these statements belong. (WW, 2-4) However, that is not to say that all versions have a corresponding world nor need they describe a world at all. There are true versions that describe actual worlds and there are false

versions which describe none.²² Because truth as correspondence between a version and a world has already been rejected, the criteria for what makes a version true must be revised (see 1.3, below).

While Goodman admits a plurality of actual worlds, his is not an ‘anything goes’ relativism. Only true versions make worlds, and not all versions are true.²³ Whereas the modal realist admits all false versions as true in some possible world and that world as actual, Goodman claims false versions do not construct worlds. He further admits some true versions as true in the same actual world (if they are reducible or intertranslatable), while admitting conflicting true versions as true only in different, actual worlds (if they are irreducible or untranslatable). Therefore different versions do not necessarily describe different worlds: “we may want to define a relation that so sorts versions into clusters that each cluster constitutes a world, and the members of that cluster are versions of that world”. (*WW*, 4) Versions may be of the same world if they do not conflict, but “we can hardly take conflicting statements as true in the same world without admitting all statements whatsoever (since all follow from any contradiction) as true in the same world, and that world itself as impossible”. (*WW*, 110) A phenomenal description of a table as sense-data and a physicalist description of a table as a collection of molecules can be considered different versions of the same world. By contrast, the conflicting descriptions of the plane segment are versions of different worlds. The heliocentric and geocentric models may perhaps be considered true in different worlds as well, although Goodman does not say determinately whether he considers them different versions or different worlds.²⁴ Necessity and possibility may be modeled on theorems of a modal calculus: statements are necessary if true in

²² “Worlds possible or impossible supposedly answering to false versions have no place in my philosophy.” (*WW*, 94) I take Goodman to be distinguishing his position here from both modal realism and some kind of Meinongian realm of subsistent fictional entities.

²³ Truth is, for Goodman, relative to a version. There are no absolute and immutable truths. See “On Starmaking”, pp. 143-144.

²⁴ Goodman often talks as if the heliocentric and geocentric models conflict, however he nonetheless recognizes that they are “all of them in much the same terms and routinely transformable into one another”. (*WW*, 3, 93)

all actual worlds, possible if true in some and impossible if true in none. (WW, 120) While Goodman's view seems much the same as David Lewis',²⁵ the set of actual worlds is different. Goodman's actual worlds are a subset of Lewis', however, because Goodman does not specify what actual worlds there are, *which* subset is unclear. Further, because we admit contradictions between some of our worlds, these actual worlds cannot themselves be versions of some higher order world without admitting a contradiction.²⁶ That is, because contradictions between descriptions are segregated into different worlds, we could not compose these worlds into a single overarching world without reintroducing the contradiction. As such, there are a plurality of right versions answering to actual worlds. The role of 'actual' should be thought of analogously with modal realism, so that Goodman's multiple worlds do not share a single spatio-temporal organization, but are ontologically discontinuous realities. Space-time is made along with a world, and multiple spatio-temporal organizations are not enclosed in an overarching space-time. ("Notes on the Well-Made World", 152)

Goodman occasionally uses 'right version' and 'world' interchangeably: "To say that every right version is a world and to say that every right version has a world answering to it may be equally right even if they are at odds with each other. Moreover, talk of worlds and talk of right versions are often interchangeable." ("On Starmaking", 144) Despite this, Goodman recognizes that there is a difference between a version that puts a star 'up there' and the properties of the star thus constructed. (ibid.) The difference between versions and worlds is negligible, so I follow Goodman in using them interchangeably. Goodman also makes loose reference to 'universe' and 'realm'. Goodman's use of 'universe' is unclear, when he writes "our

²⁵ See Lewis' (1986) *On the Plurality of Worlds*.

²⁶ "A world is a totality; there can be no multiplicity of totalities, no more than one all-inclusive whole. By assigning conflicting versions to different worlds, we preclude composition of these totalities into one." ("Notes on the Well-Made World", 152) This passage is purportedly arguing against the inclusion of multiple worlds into one, however it seems patently self-contradictory. If a world is a totality, and there cannot be a multiplicity of totalities, how can there be multiple worlds? This seems to be in tension with Goodman's other claims about multiple worlds, however he may only mean that there cannot be multiple coextensive totalities, while there can be multiple discontinuous totalities, because they are completely unrelated.

universe, so to speak, consists of these ways [of describing] rather than of a world or of worlds". (WW, 3) This may not be incompatible with his view of multiple actual worlds because "universes of worlds as well as worlds themselves may be built in many ways". (WW, 5) Since worlds are constructed by our descriptions, and there is little by way of necessity when it comes to worldmaking, Goodman seems to see the universe as composed of the *constructans* or ways of constructing, rather than the *constructandum*, or what is constructed.²⁷ However, because he says "our universe" it does not seem to imply some absolute use of the term, but one of a subjective organization of worlds or right versions. Goodman's use of 'realm' appears in the context of his discussion of the two descriptions of the plane segment. (WW, 115) Here he says that the descriptions of points as either composed of lines or not so composed must pertain to different realms, where 'realm' does not have the technical definition given to it elsewhere. (LA, 72)²⁸ I take 'realm' to be interchangeable with 'world' in this context.

On Goodman's picture there are multiple systems of description (the *constructans*) which construct right versions (the *constructandum*). Where these versions do not conflict they are versions of the same actual world, where they do conflict, they are versions of different, actual worlds. False versions correspond to no actual worlds.²⁹ Versions may be referred to as 'realms', while worlds may be referred to as 'right versions' (remembering that these are interchangeable), 'universes' or 'clusters' (of versions).^{30,31}

²⁷ The *constructans/constructandum* distinction is Kukla's. See his *Social Constructivism and the Philosophy of Science*, chapter 13.

²⁸ See also WW, pp. 115, n. 10.

²⁹ Goodman seems to require two notions of possibility: one is defined above as a [true] statement is possible if true in some actual world; the second notion must be an actualist conception of possibility, otherwise what do we do with false versions that are still possible? For false but possible versions, it seems they are contained within some actual world, but not true in any world. (WW, 20-21)

³⁰ For simplicity's sake I will refer to [right] versions and worlds.

³¹ In a review of WW, Quine (1981) recognizes that Goodman intends literally that there are multiple actual worlds. (96) However, Quine tries to mitigate this with the following: "Proceeding then to try to penetrate what one hopes is a figure of speech, one finds that where the purported multiplicity really lies is not so much in worlds as in versions". (96) While Quine is right that Goodman eschews the interpretation of them being versions of a single world, and is therefore content to talk of versions, Goodman also claims 'world' and 'version' are interchangeable, so we are still left with a multiplicity of actual worlds.

A defender of Goodman may want to avoid his extravagant metaphysics by claiming that Goodman's talk of a metaphysical plurality of worlds is metaphorical rather than literal and that different descriptions are just alternative viewpoints of the same reality. However, Goodman spurns such an interpretation: "I am afraid that my remark above about conflicting truths and multiple actual worlds may be passed over as purely rhetorical. They are not; and even at the cost of some repetition, I must make that clearer". (*WW*, 110) One may also be tempted to explain away Goodman's radicalism with an attempt to show how his view coincides with common sense realism, and thus leaves what we take as the familiar world of everyday experience exactly as experienced. Putnam takes his internal realism to be similar to Goodman's irrealism insofar as both are

working out the program of preserving commonsense realism while avoiding the absurdities and antinomies of metaphysical realism in all its familiar varieties (Brand X: Materialism; Brand Y: Subjective Idealism; Brand Z: Dualism) [. . .] [internal realism] is a view that takes our familiar commonsense scheme, as well as our scientific and artistic and other schemes, at face value, without helping itself to the notion of the thing "in itself." ("Is There Still Anything to Say about Reality and Truth?", 23)

If Goodman's irrealism were merely asserting the usefulness and epistemic legitimacy of various conceptual schemes via a descriptive ontology of these internally subjective systems of description, then his irrealism would amount to 'uncontentious metaphysics'. But this is precisely what Goodman does not say. First, Goodman has no interest in maintaining commonsense realism, seeing it as "presystematic discourse urgently requiring critical examination and organization into well-made versions". ("Comments", 205) Second, Goodman shies away from Putnam's realist ambivalences, resting content with the rejection of a ready-made world. However, the two positions do share an acceptance of conceptual relativity.³² Goodman's

³² Goodman remarks that we tend to work within one world version at a time, adopting different versions as suits our purpose. He recognizes this is quite similar to Putnam's internal realism. However, while

irrealism therefore denies both the extreme realism of physicalism and less extreme realisms that just admit of some objectively structured and mind-independent world without specifying how that world is structured.³³ Goodman's appeal to multiple actual worlds should be taken at face value.

It may be tempting to think of Goodman as an idealist, but such a reading faces several problems. First, and most obviously, Goodman rejects the idealist label; "I am an anti-realist and an anti-idealist—hence an irrealist". (*MM*, vii) Goodman's constructivism does not construct out of the mental: "I do not think of versions, verbal or pictorial, as mental or as being or in general referring to ideas or Ideas, but as objects functioning as symbols". ("Comments", 204) What Goodman takes the ontological status of 'object' to be here is unclear. Suffice it to say that irrealism rejects the ready-made world (hence anti-realism) but also rejects the notion that reality is constituted only by ideas (hence anti-idealism). A second problem with reading Goodman as an idealist is the matter of getting straight what one means by 'idealism'. While Kantian, Goodman rejects the noumena, so a comparison to post-Kantian idealism may be apt. Putnam apparently had this in mind when he says of irrealism: "springing full-blown within contemporary analytic philosophy, a form of idealism as extreme as Hegel's or Fichte's!" ("Irrealism and Deconstruction", 180)³⁴ Whether Goodman is an idealist or not depends on what form of idealism one has in mind. We could equate Goodman's talk of versions with the Kantian phenomenal realm, in which case Goodman's use of 'world' would be the familiar Kantian one. However, nowhere in Kant is there even a suggestion of multiple realities.³⁵ Thus, Goodman's

versions are intersubjective, it is hard to see how conflicting worlds could be as well, and thus how we could move back and forth between them. See "Notes on the Well-Made World", pp. 151-153.

³³ Goodman's irrealism purportedly adopts a position of disinterest in metaphysical disputes between, say, realism and anti-realism or physicalism and phenomenalism. However, as Hacking remarks, this is itself a metaphysical position. (1999, 60-61) Indeed, as I have argued, Goodman's position is strongly anti-realist, and advances a substantial metaphysical thesis.

³⁴ Putnam's comparison is vehemently denied by Goodman. See "Comments", pp. 204.

³⁵ Goodman recognizes that his position combines two historically distinct theses: "The non-Kantian theme of multiplicity of worlds is closely akin to the Kantian theme of the vacuity of the notion of pure content.

many actual worlds are decidedly not Kantian. Goodman's position may be compatible with a form of linguistic idealism that sees ideas as residing in symbols and symbol systems, although I am not sure he would accept such an interpretation. I find it more useful to use the terms with which Goodman describes himself - radical relativist, constructionalist, anti-realist - to understand his irrealism.

The foregoing discussion of Goodman's argument for ontological relativism and multiple worlds already points to a very radical position: Goodman denies a mind-independent world because of the inaccessibility of the world 'in itself', and replaces it with multiple worlds answering to, and constructed by, our true descriptions. Ontology and truth become relative to our descriptions - versions, in Goodman's terminology - so that what there is, and what statements are true, depend on what version one adopts. Goodman further accepts the epistemic equality of conflicting descriptions, arguing that versions that are not intertranslatable must be true in different worlds. A discussion of Goodman's epistemological views has so far been delayed, but when his epistemological relativism is combined with his metaphysical position adumbrated above, we get an extreme form of relativism and subjective constructivism.

1.3 The rejection of the Given and a ready-made world necessitates a revision of our conception of truth. Goodman argues that because worldmaking is not just denotational or linguistic, but admits of versions that exemplify³⁶ rather than denote, truth needs to be reconceived as rightness or right fit. (*WW*, 21-22) The distinction between truth and

The one denies us a unique world, the other the common stuff of which worlds are made." (*WW*, 6) While Goodman appeals to many Kantian arguments, his account is quite removed from Kant's own.

³⁶ Goodman takes certain version - abstract painting, music - to express, say, a sample or pattern (be it geometrical or tonal), but these versions do not directly denote that pattern. Such exemplification is still a referential relation, however is non-linguistic. See *WW*, pp. 11-12, 133-137, and *LA* pp. 50-57, 87-95.

falsehood, fact and fiction, and subjective and objective³⁷ tends to evaporate on Goodman's model. (WW, 91) Goodman maintains a thoroughgoing epistemological relativism; what facts obtain is relative to a given version. The truth of those facts are not determined by some neutral underlying world, but is determined by the version and its worldmaker. Truth is still relevant - for a given purpose - but truth applies to propositions and not all versions are propositional, so versions should be thought of as right or wrong, rather than true or false. Truth cannot be considered solely as a correspondence relation between descriptions and the world because all our knowledge of the world is contained in our descriptions of it. This is not to say that truth is not important. For the sciences, truth may still be the most relevant criteria for distinguishing between right and wrong versions. Literal truth is important to the sciences, while metaphorical truth is important in literature. Goodman is urging a recognition of multiple relevant, purpose-dependent criteria of rightness,³⁸ while maintaining that all truths are constructed. What there is is constructed by, and relative to, our versions, so it follows that what we can know is also constructed by, and relative to, our versions.

Demands to immediately produce a tender beefsteak and the resulting inability to do so are thought of as *a fortiori* arguments against Goodman's sort of ontological constructivism.³⁹ However, when it comes to worldmaking Goodman insists that we cannot just make whatever we choose. While there is no fact of the matter as to what we must make, there are limitations to what we can make at any given time. We are saddled with previous versions and must remake

³⁷ By "subjective" I mean depends on the subject or context for truth, and by "objective" I mean does not so depend, but is independently true.

³⁸ Since truth may still be an important criterion, Goodman suggests altering Tarski's T-schema to fit his metaphysical pluralism; it becomes "'snow is white' is true in a given world if and only if snow is white in that world". (WW, 120)

³⁹ Kicking a stone did not refute Berkeley, so it should come as no surprise that a similar argument against Goodman misses the mark. See "Notes on the Well-Made World" pp.155.

new versions from them, not from scratch. (WW, 6-7) The “felt stubbornness of fact” is the result of habit. (WW, 97) As we have seen, an ‘anything goes’ relativism is avoided by segregating conflicting versions to different worlds. Goodman insists that his relativism does not imply an ‘anything goes’ policy, but has severe restraints, thereby allowing him to distinguish between right and wrong versions. What constitutes these restraints and what are the criteria that distinguish right from wrong versions? For Goodman,

a version is taken to be true when it offends no unyielding beliefs and none of its own precepts. Among beliefs unyielding at any given time may be long-lived reflections on the laws of logic, short-lived reflections of recent observations, and other convictions and prejudices ingrained with varying degrees of firmness. Among precepts, for example, may be choices among alternative frames of reference, weightings, and derivational bases. (WW, 17)

This seems straightforwardly to be coherentism. However, because conflicting versions can both be coherent, rightness further depends upon convention and purpose. That is, the most frequently adopted versions are those that are entrenched through social custom or are those that are most useful for a given purpose.⁴⁰ Thus, Goodman’s position is a sort of pragmatic coherentism; versions are taken to be right if they are internally coherent, and what version is adopted depends upon human interests and purposes. A commonsense account of celestial motion in the twelfth century said the sun revolved around the earth. This view became entrenched through custom, and it took no small amount of work to dislodge it. For the purposes of going about day-to-day activity, the geocentric model worked fine, for predicting celestial motion, it had its limitations.⁴¹

⁴⁰ There is a problem here that Goodman does not seem to have felt: if both ‘the world’ and our versions are constructed, how do we account for the predictive power of our best scientific theories? Goodman would have to claim that both the prediction and the prediction’s success are constructed by the subject. However, this would also mean that predictive failures are also constructed, in which case, why would we construct failures at all? As Hempel remarks, Goodman does not do justice to the stubbornness of facts. (“Comments on Goodman’s *Ways of Worldmaking*”, 131) See also James Robert Brown, “Explaining the Success of Science” for an interesting realist account of the predictive power of science. Brown, among others, suggests that realism is the only position that does not make the success of science miraculous.

⁴¹ I am not suggesting that the geocentric model was displaced solely because of its poor explanatory power, since updated Ptolemaic systems were often more accurate than the original models by Galileo and Copernicus. There were undoubtedly many social and cultural factors that contributed to the endurance of the geocentric system. See Thomas Kuhn (1957) *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the*

Conflicting conventional organizations are evident with the plane segment. Systematic descriptions are just different conventions, so whether the points are compound or atomic will depend upon one's choice of a derivational basis. We could not remove all layers of convention without having anything left; "the onion is peeled down to its empty core". (WW, 118) The criteria for distinguishing right and wrong versions is therefore constituted by an appeal to *pragmatics and coherentism*.

Goodman often stops short of giving a concrete example of a wrong version, while recognizing many right versions. The one wrong version he recognizes is in fact a counterexample proposed by Carl Hempel:

If, for example, we were to measure the duration of an event by the number of pulse beats of the Dalai Lama during that event, we would obtain a world version in which the rate of change of all processes would depend on the Dalai Lama's state of health; [. . .] the version in question would have the grave flaw of not permitting the formulation of any general and reasonably simple laws of nature. Therefore, when Goodman declares that "the uniformity of nature we marvel at . . . belongs to a world of our own making," I think he does not do full justice to the stubbornness of facts. ("Comments on Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking*", 131)

Goodman responds by saying that while simplicity and explanatory scope are important to science, this does not imply any ontological claim about 'the world'. ("On Starmaking", 146) More importantly, Goodman describes Hempel's proposal as "a good example of how some proposals fail to fit and work easily and well with our familiar versions of time." ("Comments", 208) Goodman does not exactly say that Hempel's Dalai Lama time metric is a wrong version, rather that it merely does not fit with our current time conventions. Convention and purpose as the criteria of rightness therefore do not seem to exclude any possible version as right. On Goodman's view it seems that given a different version of time (whatever that might be), we could measure the duration of an event by the pulse of the Dalai Lama. Therefore, while

Development of Western Thought, particularly chapter 6, for a discussion of the adoption of the heliocentric model.

Goodman admits that there are restraints on worldmaking, convention does not appear to exclude any possible version from being among the set of right versions. For Goodman, “relativity goes all the way up”. (“On Starmaking”, 143)⁴²

Cohnitz and Rossberg claim that “the constraints on worldmaking are strict” (2006, 197) and they identify the following: “We cannot just create things; predicates must be entrenched and thus there must be some close continuity with former versions. Simplicity will keep us from creating new things from scratch, coherence from making anything in conflict with beliefs with higher initial credibility, and so on.” (2006, 197-198)⁴³ None of the constraints that Cohnitz and Rossberg have listed preclude anything from being constructed, they only make it difficult, which means that on Goodman’s view everything is metaphysically possible.⁴⁴ Consider Goodman’s famous example of grue, where something is grue if examined before time *t* it is green and otherwise blue. Given the same evidence set (of a group of emeralds) the predicates green and grue may arrive at contradictory conclusions, yet both are well defined predicates.⁴⁵ Not only can contradictory conclusions be reached from the same evidence set, but grue could be considered a right predicate (or relevant kind) in some versions if it became entrenched through habit. Thus, while Goodman wants to maintain some sort of restraint on his relativism, the restraint merely amounts to the difficulty of remaking old worlds into new - a difficulty caused solely by the stubbornness of custom.

Goodman’s epistemological relativism follows from his ontological relativism; what there is is relative to our descriptions, so what we can know is therefore also relative to our descriptions. Both our ontology and our epistemology are constructed by our versions. Goodman’s position contains three distinct theses that when combined produce a radical

⁴² This seems to contradict Goodman’s claim that there are restraints on worldmaking.

⁴³ It is unclear what the “and so on” amounts to, since no other constraints are identified by Goodman.

⁴⁴ The only real constraint is the law of non-contradiction, since Goodman uses it as the criteria for worldhood. As I argue in chapter 3, section 3.1, non-contradiction must be version-independent, and thus an objective feature of a mind-independent reality.

⁴⁵ See Goodman, *FFF*, chapter 3.

metaphysical position: his rejection of a mind-independent world, his ontological relativism and multiple worlds hypothesis, and his epistemological relativism. The first and third theses follow from the ontological relativism and multiple worlds, so I take the second thesis to be the most fundamental aspect of Goodman's position. Goodman offers some cursory explanations of how we actually construct worlds, and it is to this that I now turn.

1.4 Goodman is both an ontological and epistemological constructivist. Goodman does not say that worlds are constructed from nothing: "neither by logic nor by any other means can we prove something from nothing." ("On Starmaking", 144) Instead, they are made from other worlds, and we are stuck with the world we inherited until we make a new one. (WW, 6-7) The multiple worlds that he posits are constructed by us, the subjects, through a process of symbol manipulation. Goodman suggests several ways that we construct facts and worlds.⁴⁶ These various ways of worldmaking are not exhaustive, and there will often be cases of overlap; they are: composition/decomposition, weighting, ordering, deletion/supplementation, and deformation.

To briefly illustrate these processes I will consider some specific cases.⁴⁷ The colour phi phenomenon occurs when a subject is shown two points of light, slightly apart, with them being flashed in quick succession. Instead of the expected blinking on and off of the first light to the second light, what is perceived is a gradual motion of the first light over to the position of the second. Even when the lights are different colours a smooth transition from one to the other (say red to green) occurs halfway through the motion. Because we know the light is not continuously

⁴⁶ See WW, pp. 7-17 for a more detailed discussion of these processes. Goodman's later philosophy is sympathetic to the social processes involved in constructivism found in the work of constructivists such as Latour and Woolgar's (1979) *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts*, however he does not explicitly posit a role for the social. Hacking (1999) provides an interesting anecdote on this topic, *The Social Construction of What?* pp. 45 and 229 n. 4

⁴⁷ An interesting example is taken from the history of philosophy; Goodman describes how the metaphysical disputes of the pre-Socratics reflect the processes of worldmaking. See WW, pp. 97-99.

traveling from one location to the other, the mind is ‘filling in’ the perceived motion. This is an example of how we use supplementation to construct a version.⁴⁸ Goodman takes this phenomenon to imply that all perceptual experience is constructed. (*WW*, 89) Construction in perception is a key claim of Goodman’s for how there is no independent world ready to be taken in. Imagine a case where Goodman and an Amazonian with no prior contact with the outside world are sitting in a waiting room. On the wall is what Goodman recognizes as a stereo, which the Amazonian “will not find, because he has not the means of making, any stereo system in that room. [. . .] Not only does he not know the stereo set is one; he does not recognize as a thing at all that which I know to be a stereo system—that is, he does not make out or make any such object.” (“Notes on the Well-Made World”, 155-156) We cannot appeal to brute sense-data that compose the stereo because Goodman has rejected any notion of the Given. For Goodman, the stereo just does not exist for the Amazonian. Similarly, Goodman makes the famous claim that we construct the stars.⁴⁹ Not only are constellations constructed by picking out certain configurations of stars, but the stars themselves are constructed by drawing certain boundaries rather than others. Thus, Goodman maintains that all features of ‘the world’ are constructed.

We more obviously, and less contentiously, construct in the arts. The use of weighting is most prevalent when a certain feature is emphasized, for example, the brush strokes in impressionist painting. Pictures and paintings are non-linguistic versions. An abstract work like a Mondrian does not refer, but rather exemplifies certain patterns. (*WW*, 19) By contrast, novels, while linguistic, do not denote literally because what they refer to does not exist. Goodman suggests that fiction can still be metaphorically true, when, e.g. someone acts like a Don Juan. (*WW*, 103) While considerations of truth between fictional and non-fictional versions differ, the processes of worldmaking involved in their construction are the same. (*WW*, 107)

⁴⁸ See *WW*, chapter V, for Goodman’s very detailed discussion of the experiments involved.

⁴⁹ For this claim, see Goodman, “Notes on the Well-Made World”, pp. 156 and “On Starmaking”, pp.145.

This is how worlds are made. Goodman argues that because there are a number of right descriptions of the world, and talk of the Given is self-defeating, the notion of a mind-independent world is nonsensical. Further, because many of these descriptions are not intertranslatable, they must be true in different worlds to avoid contradiction. Therefore, Goodman concludes that there are multiple actual worlds answering to right versions, all of which are subjectively constructed. Because talk of the Given is senseless, we cannot compare our descriptions to a neutral world, so truth as correspondence is no longer the preeminent arbiter of knowledge. Goodman therefore admits an epistemic and ontological relativism that is only constrained by deep-rooted conventions; what there is and what we can know is relative to our versions. Goodman's position is therefore quite radical, since it denies many of our commonsense presuppositions of reality. In the next chapter I will look at how Goodman commits the representational fallacy, and thus how his conclusion of ontological relativism and multiple worlds does not follow even if we accept his initial premises.

Chapter Two

Goodman and the Representational Fallacy

Having a firm idea of Goodman's ontological relativism, I now want to question the soundness of his arguments. Recent work in metaphysics has raised objections to the antirealism, relativism, and idealism that has occupied much of the latter half of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ Much of this work has focused on the so-called epistemic fallacy - a conflation of what there is with what we can know. Heather Dyke has identified one species of the epistemic fallacy - what she calls the *representational fallacy* - which is a general tendency to 'read off' ontology from language. John Heil identifies a similar tendency to read off ontology from language in what he calls the picture theory and its corollary, principle Φ . Thomas Nagel discusses a parallel tendency to those identified by Dyke and Heil, however he couches it in terms of a fallacious move from subjective form to subjective content. I will begin by discussing Dyke's formulation of the representational fallacy, after which I will consider the parallel formulations of Heil and Nagel, using Carnap's views on ontology as illustrative. Having thus shown how it does, in fact, constitute a fallacy, I will then apply the representational fallacy to Goodman's argument, ultimately undermining his linguistic thesis for ontological relativism.

2.1 The tendency to read ontology off of language can take many forms and, claims Dyke, is a tacitly assumed methodology of many contemporary metaphysicians. No doubt it is a result of the 'linguistic turn' of the early twentieth century. The representational fallacy may be variously committed by (a) assuming there is a single true description of reality, (b) assuming a one-to-one correspondence between our true statements and our ontology, (c) assuming facts are structurally isomorphic to our descriptions, and (d) conflating descriptions of reality with reality itself. A

⁵⁰ E.g. Putnam (1983), Rorty (1979) and (1982), Dummett (2006), and of course, Goodman (1978).

frequent belief associated with assuming (a)-(d) is accepting the traditional metaphysical positions are exhaustive. Dyke identifies five metaphysical positions which she sees as constituting the “methodological map”: realism, reductionism, error theory, noncognitivism, and conceptual relativism. Dyke maintains that these positions are not exhaustive. Once we recognize that the representational fallacy is a fallacy there is room for an alternative position, which is an amended version of metaphysical realism.

As a tendency to draw ontological conclusions from the nature of language, Dyke identifies a commonly held form of the representational fallacy: the strong linguistic thesis (SLT). SLT holds that there is (a) a single true description of reality which holds a subset of all truths, (b) a one-to-one correspondence between statements of that description and reality, and (c) that those statements are structurally isomorphic to the facts they describe. (Dyke, 46) Additionally, Dyke argues that because SLT holds (a)-(c), it lends itself to (d) a conflation of descriptions with what those descriptions describe, although not all philosophers who tacitly assume SLT make such a conflation. Dyke distinguishes between two notions of a single true description: one holds that there is a true description which contains all truths, and the other contains a subset of all truths which are ontologically perspicuous. (ibid.) That is, this subset of truths better and more clearly describes reality because each truth reveals a fact about the world. SLT assumes the latter type of one true description. For this description to be ontologically perspicuous, both a one-to-one correspondence and a structural isomorphism⁵¹ between the description and the fact described must be assumed. Thus, by assuming (a), SLT is implicitly committed to (b) and (c). The slide into (d) (the conflation of descriptions and reality) is more subtle. Because the one true description assumes a one-to-one correspondence and a structural

⁵¹ The isomorphism in question would be one between the syntactic structure of the description and the structure of the corresponding fact, e.g. the fact corresponding to “The chair is brown” consists in a particular answering to ‘chair’ which has the property ‘being brown’. (Dyke, 80)

isomorphism it becomes easy to confuse features of that description with features of the world it describes.

Dyke uses the debate between A- and B-theorists over the nature of time to illustrate the representational fallacy.⁵² SLT is assumed by both A- and (old) B-theorists. A- and B-theorists both accept there is one true privileged description of reality. (Dyke, 44) For the A-theorists that description will include tensed statements, while for the B-theorists that description will include tenseless statements. Because of this, both A- and B-theorists take there to be a one-to-one correspondence between the statements of that one true description and the facts. For the A-theorist, the one true description contains tensed statements, therefore the world contains tensed facts. For the B-theorist, the one true description contains tenseless statements, therefore the world contains tenseless facts. (Dyke, 43) This tacitly assumes the true statements of the description to be structurally isomorphic to the facts.⁵³

Underlying this debate is the issue of paraphrase and related problems of intertranslatability and reductionism. Attempts throughout the twentieth century to reduce tensed language to tenseless language have largely failed. (Dyke, 43)⁵⁴ The B-theorist instead maintains that tenseless paraphrases of tensed statements can convey all the same information, without being committed to a tensed ontology. (47) The A-theorist will deny that the paraphrases convey the same information, leaving us with tensed statements and therefore a tensed ontology. Thus, both A- and B-theorists take paraphrase to have some ontological significance, because they have both implicitly accepted the one-to-one correspondence and structural isomorphism of SLT. (Dyke, 46-47) If the paraphrase is successful, there must be tenseless facts and therefore a B-theoretic time. If it is unsuccessful, there must be tensed facts and therefore an A-theoretic time.

⁵² See Dyke (2008), chapter 2, for the complete discussion of the debate over temporal ontology.

⁵³ The structural isomorphism commits the A-theorist to hold that because some statement is tensed, the world contains a corresponding tensed property. For example, for the statement 'It is now raining' to be structurally isomorphic means the temporal indexical 'now' corresponds to some property in the world of oneness or presentness. The same applies to the (old) B-theorists.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, Goodman was among those who attempted such a reduction. See *SA*, pp. 359-371.

The motivation behind the paraphrase project is the assumption that accepting the original sentences commits one to an ontology consisting of the entities referred to. (Dyke, 85) If the paraphrase is successful, it is thought that such an ontological commitment is therefore unnecessary. This tacitly assumes a one-to-one correspondence and structural isomorphism.

Dyke gives the A-theory argument from tensed language as follows:

1. Some tensed sentences are untranslatable into tenseless sentences without loss of meaning.
2. If there are tensed sentences which are untranslatable and true, then there are corresponding, irreducible tensed facts.
3. There are tensed sentences which are untranslatable and true.
4. Therefore, some irreducible tensed facts exist. (Dyke, 55)

Notice that this argument is very similar to my reconstruction of Goodman's argument for ontological relativism in chapter 1. A similar argument could be given for the B-theory, except with the conclusion that there are tenseless facts, because the paraphrase was thought successful. A- and B-theorists disagree on the first and third premises, thereby deriving conflicting conclusions. (Dyke, 55) Dyke maintains that it is the second premise which is problematic and is where the fallacy occurs. From there being untranslatable tensed sentences, it does not follow that our ontology must be tensed. She suggests that if we reject that conditional, and its tacit acceptance of SLT, then an alternative position becomes available on the methodological map: true tensed sentences made true by tenseless facts. (59-60) Dyke's reasons for accepting the B-series are quite independent of language, indeed she argues that whatever metaphysical position one wants to adopt, the arguments for it cannot be made via an appeal to the nature of language. (88)⁵⁵ I want to remain neutral on the debate between A- and B-theorists, instead using it merely to illustrate the fallacy.

⁵⁵ Dyke has a lengthy argument for the (new) truthmaker variant of the B-theory, as opposed to the truth-condition variant of the B-theory. She argues that the latter, under a certain formulation, is susceptible to the representational fallacy, and thus rejects it. That is, it assumes that a one-to-one correspondence obtains between truth conditions and ontology, while also leaving the tensed/tenseless ontology debate underdetermined. See Dyke (2008), cf. pp. 47-55.

Dyke has two main arguments for why SLT rests on a fallacy: the truthmaker argument and what I shall call ‘the argument from ontological underdetermination’. The truthmaker argument claims that it is possible for multiple, irreducible statements that differ in meaning to have the same truthmaker. A true statement (the truthbearer) is made true by some entity in the world (the truthmaker). The truthmaking relation is cross-categorical in that it relates language (truthbearers) to ontology (truthmakers). (Dyke, 77) There has been much debate over how we should interpret ‘made true by’; interpreting it as ‘true in virtue of’ does not seem to provide much conceptual clarity, although we may intuitively understand what it means. (Dyke, 79) Dyke rejects supervenience as an adequate characterization, (78) although it is unclear why.⁵⁶ It is a further issue to specify what constitutes truthmakers; the truthmaking notion can be cashed out as facts but this leaves unspecified their nature.⁵⁷ Dyke’s project of identifying the representational fallacy is a general one, and so she can be noncommittal to a specific view of the truthmaking relation. (Dyke, 81) Likewise, I will remain neutral on these various questions and will assume the general truthmaker principle that truth depends on ontology, where a truthmaker (or fact, these are interchangeable) is simply some portion of reality.

SLT assumes a one-to-one correspondence between statements (or predicates) and facts (or properties). Dyke’s truthmaker suggestion is that this correspondence may, in fact, be many-to-one. Consider the two descriptions of some object *o*: ‘*o* is lilac’ and ‘*o* has molecular structure *P*’. (Dyke, 6, 74) These two statements may be irreducible to one another and have different meanings,⁵⁸ yet what makes ‘*o* is lilac’ true may be the fact that *o* has molecular structure *P*. That

⁵⁶ Dyke says supervenience provides a symmetrical relation that fails to capture the asymmetry of the truthmaking relation. I do not follow her argument; if there is a change in the truthbearer there must be a change in the truthmaker and if there is a change in the truthmaker there must be a change in the truthbearer. As such, supervenience may adequately characterize truthmaking.

⁵⁷ David Armstrong (2004) has suggested truthmaking facts are states of affairs; see his *Truth and Truthmaking* (2004) for a good discussion of the available positions. See also Heil’s *From an Ontological Point of View* (2003), chapter 7, for another discussion of the problem. Like Dyke, Heil rejects supervenience/entailment as truthmaking.

⁵⁸ It may be contentious to claim that these two statements are irreducible, however if they are reducible it is unlikely that it could be accomplished without loss of meaning. Therefore, they are at least non-

o has molecular structure *P* also makes true the statement ‘*o* has molecular structure *P*’. Thus, it is the same portion of reality that makes both statements true, even though they are untranslatable and non-synonymous. Similarly, ‘*o* is lilac’ and ‘*o* is coloured’ are non-synonymous, irreducible, and yet both are made true by ‘*o* has molecular structure *P*’. This undermines the necessity of a one-to-one correspondence and the implicit notion that truthbearers are structurally isomorphic to their truthmakers. Dyke contends that “just because the sentence ‘*o* is lilac’ conveys different information from the sentence ‘*o* is coloured,’ it does not follow that there is some feature in the world, the property of being lilac, that corresponds to that different information.” (74)

In the philosophy of mind, the notion of multiple realizability provides a familiar example of Dyke’s suggestion. The predicate ‘in pain’ can be true of many different organisms, none of whom need have the same neurophysiological make-up, yet what makes the application of that predicate true (e.g. organism *x* is in pain) are some facts about the organism’s neurophysiology. Therefore, the two statements ‘organism *x* is in pain’ and ‘organism *x* is in physical state *H*’ may both have the same truthmaker - organism *x* being in physical state *H* - yet they convey different information. (Dyke, 102-103) As Dyke puts it,

From the fact that we choose to utter the sentence-token that employs “pain” vocabulary, we can infer something about our way of categorizing certain types of physical states, a way that is of interest to us. From the fact that we choose to utter the sentence-token that employs physical vocabulary, we cannot draw this inference, but we can infer other things about the truthmaker, namely, its physical nature. In this case, then, the two sentence-tokens are both true and have the same truthmaker, but they do not convey all the same information. (Dyke, 102)

This also highlights the assumption that paraphrase can have ontological significance. Behaviorists may attempt to paraphrase away tensed statements by supplanting them with tenseless statements. The motivation for paraphrase of this sort is the belief that accepting the truth of the

synonymous. The failure of a reduction between mental states and neurophysiological states may be a more familiar and less contentious example (see the discussion of the multiple realizability of pain, below). The position I am arguing for is not dissimilar to Davidson’s anomalous monism; see his paper “Mental Events” (2006).

tensed statements forces one to accept the existence of tensed facts. However, as the previous discussion of truthmakers has made clear, descriptions are not necessarily structurally isomorphic to the facts, such that tensed statements need not carry any ontological commitment to tensed facts. The method of paraphrase therefore implicitly assumes SLT, and having rejected the latter, there is no imminent requirement to eliminate all undesirable terms through paraphrase, nor does doing so necessarily reflect any concomitant ontological feature of the world. (Dyke, 84) In the case of pain, the irreducibility of pain-talk to neurophysiological-talk does not carry any commitment to a property ‘in pain’, nor do attempts to paraphrase away tokens of ‘pain’. Notice too that Dyke’s suggestion allows for multiple true descriptions of reality by recognizing that these multiple descriptions emphasize different aspects of reality depending upon our purposes and interests.

A further problem with accepting SLT is (d) the tendency to conflate descriptions of reality with reality itself. Given the belief in a single true description of the world and a one-to-one correspondence between that description and reality, it becomes easy to confuse features of the description with features of reality. Putnam has argued, like Goodman, that we cannot know the world independently of our conceptual schemes, yet realism demands one true description of the way the world is independently of all schemes. (1983, 213) Putnam contends that this realist demand is self-contradictory: “How can we pick out any one correspondence between our words (or thoughts) and the supposed mind-independent things *if we have no direct access to the mind-independent things?*” (ibid., 207; italics in the original) For Putnam, any ontological account is relative to, and partially determined by, our conceptual schemes. (Dyke, 93) Dyke claims that first, Putnam is making a use-mention error,⁵⁹ and second, the realist need not accept the demand for one true description. (ibid., 94) By relativizing ontology to a conceptual scheme, Putnam conflates descriptions of reality, which mention those descriptions, and statements about reality,

⁵⁹ Searle (1995) advances a similar argument against the conceptual relativists when he claims that they “commit a massive use-mention fallacy”. See his *The Construction of Social Reality*, pp. 166.

which use them to describe. (Dyke, 5) The realist, as Dyke has been arguing, can accept that the relation between language and reality is many-to-one, and thus there is no demand for the first component of SLT, (a) one true description of reality (as it is in-itself or apart from all conceptual schemes, as Putnam contends). Therefore Putnam's arguments against realism pose no significant threat.⁶⁰

Dyke's second argument for why we cannot read our ontology off of language is what I have called the argument from ontological underdetermination and is a corollary of the truthmaking argument. For any given statement there are multiple ontologies that are consistent with it. (Dyke, 64-65) Consider again the statement '*o* is lilac'. This statement says nothing about whether '*lilac*' is a universal colour property or a resemblance particular, nor whether *o* is constituted by substance or is merely a bundle of properties. Indeed, indefinitely many metaphysical views are compatible with the statement '*o* is lilac'. Therefore, nothing about language tells us what our ontology *must* be. The relation between language and reality is not necessarily one-to-one. The relation is *n*-one where *n* is any natural number.⁶¹⁶² This allows for multiple true descriptions of reality, with no demand for reducibility or paraphrase. In the case of tensed language, if both the A-series and B-series are compatible with tensed statements, then an appeal to language provides no guarantee that the entities referred to exist. That is, from the fact that there are true irreducible tensed statements we cannot conclude that therefore reality is tensed. An argument independent of an appeal to linguistic features must be made to establish

⁶⁰ I discuss confluences of descriptions and reality more fully with regard to Heil (section 2.2) and Goodman (section 2.3). Goodman and Putnam have essentially identical arguments against realism. One of Putnam's versions can be found in his paper "Why There Isn't a Ready-Made World" (1983).

⁶¹ Language may correspond to reality injectively, however this need not be the case. Furthermore, *n* may be zero, since some of our descriptions may be false. For Dyke, scientific descriptions may stand in a one-to-one correspondence with reality, but language in general does not.

⁶² Dyke admits that the relation may, in fact, be many-to-many because some sentences may have many truthmakers, e.g. 'there exists at least one black swan' is made true by the existence of any one of many black swans. The point is that the relation between language in general and reality is *not* one-to-one. (Dyke, 83)

either the A- or B-series. Similarly, because paraphrase is a symmetric relation,⁶³ an appeal to language alone will not determine which paraphrase obtains the correct correspondence relation between description and reality. Paraphrase still leaves ontology underdetermined, so a further argument, independent of language, must be given for one of the paraphrases.

On Dyke's conception of metaphysics "the aim will be to characterize the nature of reality, to say how things are", (Loux, 10) as informed by science and other considerations.⁶⁴ Her positive project is in defending both a metaphysical realism of a physicalist inclination and a B-theoretic time, done by carving out a new position on what she has dubbed the methodological map.⁶⁵ As should be clear by now, Dyke's alternative advocates a single reality that can have multiple irreducible descriptions. My strategy against Goodman, on the other hand, is resoundingly negative. While I wish to maintain a broad conception of metaphysical realism, I will not advance any defense of this doctrine. Nor will I advance a defense of physicalism, although I recognize that as Dyke has conceived it, the truthmaker principle depends on this doctrine.⁶⁶ Rather, I am only arguing against Goodman's anti-realist ontological relativism, without providing any substantial account of what I wish to replace it with. Suffice it to say, I wish to refute his arguments against realism broadly construed. Dyke identifies and rejects SLT, which assumes (a) there is a single true description of reality, (b) there is a one-to-one correspondence between our statements and our ontology, and (c) facts are structurally isomorphic to our descriptions. SLT further makes one liable to (d) conflate descriptions of reality with reality itself, although this is not always the case. Dyke's rejection of SLT allows a realist position that maintains multiple true descriptions of reality made true by a single portion

⁶³ For any two statements S1 and S2, if S1 is a paraphrase of S2, then S2 is a paraphrase of S1. (Dyke, 85)

⁶⁴ Presumably such considerations would include the law of parsimony, coherence, explanatory scope, empirical evidence, etc.

⁶⁵ The methodological map consists in realism, reductionism, error theory, noncognitivism, and conceptual relativism. See Dyke (2008) chapter 5. Notice that while the first position is realism, Dyke rejects it because it assumes SLT, arguing for a different form of realism that is not committed to SLT.

⁶⁶ That is, Dyke takes truthmakers to be facts about the physical world.

of the world. That is, the relation between language and ontology may be many-to-one and therefore we cannot simply ‘read off’ ontology from language. Having discussed Dyke’s formulation of the representational fallacy, I will now look at some parallel arguments against the tendency to read off ontology from language before giving my argument against Goodman.

2.2 John Heil identifies a similar tendency to read off ontology from language, calling it the Picture Theory. Like Dyke, Heil does not see the Picture Theory as a unified doctrine, but as a set of loosely related practices that lead to shoddy metaphysics. (Heil 2003, 5-7) Heil dubs the same one-to-one correspondence that Dyke identifies principle Φ , defining it as follows:

(Φ) When a predicate applies truly to an object, it does so in virtue of designating a property possessed by that object and by every object to which the predicate truly applies (or would apply). (2003, 26)

As Dyke’s discussion of truthmakers has shown, this need not be the case. It is important to note here that while Dyke discusses the representational fallacy at the level of statements, sentences or descriptions, Heil identifies it at the level of predicate-to-property. Most of the examples I have discussed so far have been at the statement level, with the exception of the multiple realizability of pain.⁶⁷ While the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence may occur at the predicate level, it is still fallacious. Consider the predicate ‘inflammable’. As a so-called dispositional predicate, an object that is inflammable may never burn.⁶⁸ Does the object have the property ‘being liable to combust’? Like ‘lilac’, ‘inflammable’ may apply to an object in virtue of its chemical composition, and this is all that is required for the predicate to truly apply. There does not need to

⁶⁷ Heil discusses this example throughout *From an Ontological Point of View* (2003). Heil’s project differs markedly from Dyke’s insofar as he is intent on undermining the realist view that properties and predicates form a one-to-one hierarchy, rather than a defense of a B-theoretic time. The fallacy identified is applicable to either.

⁶⁸ See Goodman, *FFF*, pp. 40-49 for dispositional predicates.

be a single property designated by ‘inflammable’.⁶⁹ Thus, the same part of reality can be variously described.

Most philosophers would reject the Picture Theory (or proclaim that the representational fallacy is obviously fallacious), but both Dyke and Heil maintain that it is insidiously widespread in contemporary metaphysics. Carnap, for example, seems to endorse it, while simultaneously recognizing it as fallacious. Carnap distinguishes between *internal* and *external* metaphysical questions. Internal questions pertain to entities admitted relative to a given domain of discourse, so the question “Do numbers exist?” is trivially true in mathematics because mathematical discourse regularly makes reference to them. By contrast, external questions are those that ask about the pragmatics of adopting a certain domain of discourse. (Carnap, 21-22) That is, they ask “Should we adopt the language of mathematics?” Carnap sees this latter type of question purely as a matter of the usefulness of a given linguistic framework. For Carnap, an entity’s existence depends on, and is determined by, the syntactic rules of a given discursive domain. Carnap appears to be deriving his ontology from his linguistic framework when he makes the following claim:

For example, are propositions mental events . . . ? A look at the rules shows us that they are not, because otherwise existential statements would be of the form: “If the mental state of the person in question fulfills such and such conditions, then there is a p such that” *The fact that no references to mental conditions occur in existential statements . . . shows that the propositions are not mental entities. Further, a statement of the existence of linguistic entities . . . must contain a reference to language. The fact that no such reference occurs in the existential statements here shows that propositions are not linguistic entities*”. (26-27; my italics)

Later in the same article, Carnap warns us that “the acceptance of a linguistic framework must not be regarded as implying a metaphysical doctrine concerning the reality of the entities in

⁶⁹ It is worth noting that Dyke and Heil have opposing aims; Dyke is arguing that the relation between various predicates and reality is many-to-one, while Heil is arguing in the other direction that the relation between a single predicate and reality is one-to-many (e.g. many different parts of reality can make ‘is red’ true). When their views are combined, the relation between language and reality is seen to be many-to-many, not one-to-one.

question”. (30) Despite this, the italicized portion of the first quotation points to a clear case of deriving ontological conclusions from language, and therefore Carnap is committing the representational fallacy.

Carnap’s internal questions are also a case of conflating reality with descriptions thereof. Dyke and Heil include this conflation as a subspecies of the representational fallacy and the Picture Theory, respectively. Heil attributes the conflation to the belief, held by both conventionalists and naturalists, that the following two theses are logically inconsistent:

- (i) It is not the case that there is exactly one way to describe correctly the world and its contents.
- (ii) What there is in the world, the way the world is, is independent of our way of describing it. (1981, 245)

Conventionalists accept (i) and think it entails the denial of (ii), while naturalists accept (ii) and think it entails the denial of (i). (Heil 1981, 245) This is because conventionalists think that (ii) implies that there is only one true description of reality, while naturalists think that (i) implies that what there is is entirely dependent on our modes of description. Heil argues that both are true, but recognition of the independence of reality does not entail one true description of it, nor does countenancing multiple right descriptions imply that reality is description-dependent.⁷⁰

Dyke’s discussion of truthmakers should make it clear that (i) is true. We can describe a desk as a piece of furniture, a collection of molecules, as a material object, as made of wood, and so on *ad indefinitum*. All these descriptions can truly apply to the desk. There is no reason to say that it is just a collection of molecules and nothing else. (Heil 1981, 245) “Assertion (i), on examination appears to involve a claim about language . . . Assertion (ii), in contrast, reminds us of the fact that co-ordinate systems are, after all, fitted on to an independently existing reality.” (ibid., 246)⁷¹

⁷⁰ Recognition of the conventionalist assumption that these two theses are incompatible can also be found in Searle (1995), Boghossian (2006), and Bakhurst (2011).

⁷¹ Wittgenstein uses an interesting metaphor to describe how our conventions describe reality: a hexagonal mesh applied to a white and black surface will tell us which hexagons are white and which are black; a similar mesh, this time triangular, will describe the same surface differently. Some meshes will be useful for certain tasks, and some meshes for others. See the *Tractatus*, §6.341.

Heil takes a denial of (ii) to constitute a *prima facie* absurdity; he argues that there is no non-trivial sense in which our descriptions determine reality, and thus reality is independent of us in a very strong sense. (ibid, 246) Heil means trivial in the sense that calling a fruit a tangerine only makes it the fruit called ‘tangerine’. (Heil 1981, 246) Heil’s view perhaps does not acknowledge the full extent to which language affects ontology. The arbitrariness of biological categories means that with regard to some definitions there will be many more fruits than on other definitions, e.g. criteria for inclusion of tomatoes in the reference class of ‘fruit’. Thus, there may be some non-trivial cases in which language does affect reality.⁷² In Carnap’s case, he claims that language universally determines ontology. He conflates the linguistic framework with what the linguistic framework enables us to describe, thereby supposing that the only meaningful questions are those *internal* relative to the framework. Thus he conflates the referring expression with the referent.⁷³ We can describe reality many different ways while still describing the same reality. The two theses that Heil identifies, while thought to entail the denial of one another, are in fact consistent.

Thomas Nagel discusses a similar problem in relation to idealism. He characterizes it as a fallacious move from subjective form to subjective content. Nagel writes:

The content of a thought may be quite independent of its particular form— independent, for example, of the particular language in which it is expressed. All of our thoughts must have a form which makes them accessible from a human perspective. But that doesn’t mean they are all about our point of view or the world’s relation to it. *What they are about depends not on their subjective form but on what has to be referred to in any explanation of what makes them true.* (101-102; my italics)

⁷² This constructivist line of argument may be expanded. Though I do not think it is intractable, I cannot fully address it here. This objection may cause problems for realist views like Heil’s or Searle’s (1995). See Mary Kate McGowan (2002) for a recent discussion of this problem.

⁷³ Carnap takes the extant entities to be determined by the syntactic rules of a given discourse, so that it becomes trivially true that such entities exist because they are introduced as *ab initio* members when the syntactic rules are formulated. See his “Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology”, pp. 22-29

The italicized section points to a parallel with Dyke's truthmaking view. The two statements 'snow is white' and 'neige est blanc' are different in form, yet are the same proposition; that is, they express the same state of affairs.⁷⁴ This seems unremarkable and obvious, yet a similar move from subjective form to subjective content is often implicit in metaphysical disputes. For example, the two statements already countenanced - '*o* is lilac' and '*o* has molecular structure *P*' - are different in form (both syntactical and semantic), yet describe the same portion of reality; they have the same content.⁷⁵⁷⁶ Subjectivity of form does not entail subjectivity of content. We cannot draw conclusions about reality from features of language.

Nagel's suggestion is the same as Dyke's and Heil's; there is one way reality is and many ways to describe it. Dyke's representational fallacy and Heil's arguments against principle Φ uncover the assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence between language and reality and a single true description of reality. We have seen how Dyke's truthmaker argument and the argument from ontological underdetermination show this assumption to be fallacious. We further saw how Carnap is guilty of committing the representational fallacy by drawing ontological conclusions from the nature of language and conflating language and reality. This conflation occurs by assuming the two theses that Heil identifies are incompatible, when they are not. I will now show how these arguments apply to Goodman.

2.3 While I hope the foregoing discussion has provided some tentative insight into where Goodman goes wrong, it is incumbent upon me to explicitly show his mistakes. Goodman makes two erroneous moves in arguing for ontological relativism that are included in the cluster of

⁷⁴ Leaving the ontological status of 'state of affairs' here unspecified. They may be particulars instantiating universals or relations among individuals, etc.

⁷⁵ I am here using 'content' loosely as an ontological, rather than semantic, notion.

⁷⁶ While realists may maintain that 'lilac' corresponds to an objective property in the world, other philosophers contend that such properties do not describe the world as it is-in-itself, but are constituted by the subjective experience of the individual, e.g. Putnam (1983). Goodman makes a similar move, which I discuss below (section 2.3). Heil (2003) argues against the view that 'lilac' and similar higher order predicates denote a hierarchically structured system of properties.

tendencies that Dyke calls the representational fallacy. First, Goodman assumes that for two true descriptions to describe the same reality they must be reducible or translatable to a single domain of discourse. Second, Goodman routinely conflates descriptions of reality with what those descriptions describe. This in turn rests on his belief that to know the structure of the world we must have epistemic access to non-conceptual content, which Goodman argues is self-defeating. While this last point is only briefly discussed by Dyke as part of the representational fallacy, (Dyke, 93-94) it is central to Goodman's argument. I will address these problems sequentially.

Goodman's argument for ontological relativism, discussed in chapter 1, proceeds as follows:

(5) If different descriptions describe the same world, then they must be either intertranslatable or reducible to a single derivational base without loss of meaning.

(6) Many of these conflicting descriptions are not intertranslatable and cannot be reduced to a single derivational base without loss of meaning.

(7) Therefore, they do not describe the same world.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, one strategy for criticizing this argument would be to question the truth of (6), as Davidson has done, however Goodman argues extensively in favour of this premise. Following Dyke, instead of attempting to undermine incommensurability or arguing for reductionism, which has largely failed, I would question accepting (5) without a strong argument in its favour. As Dyke has shown for the debate between A- and old B-theorists, both parties accepted the conditional in (5) as true (with appropriate substitution of subject matter)⁷⁷ and thus got mired in issues of translation and meaning. However, what reason do we have for accepting (5) as true? Dyke has argued from the truthmaker principle that (5) is false. Before considering her argument with respect to Goodman, we must look at Goodman's reasons

⁷⁷ The parallel in the debate about time is the second premise in the argument from tensed language (section 2.1, above and Dyke (2008) pp. 55).

for accepting (5). If he provides no satisfactory arguments in its favour, then Dyke's argument will show it to be fallacious.

Goodman's desire for the reduction requirement in (5) rests on his belief that two contradicting statements may both be true, and yet he does not want to allow for a contradiction since anything follows. Reductionism would remove the contradiction, however Goodman thinks the reductionist project has failed. (*WW*, 4) Without any reductionist means to resolve the contradiction, Goodman posits multiple actual worlds, because "contradiction is avoided by segregation". ("Notes on the Well-Made World", 152) Alternatively, we can deny that there is, in fact, a contradiction. Kukla uses this strategy to resolve the problem of the plane segment. (Kukla, 99)⁷⁸⁷⁹ Goodman maintains that the two conflicting definitions of a point - as made up of two intersecting vertices or as an atomic element - cannot be true of the same world. Kukla suggests that the word 'point' has a different meaning in each of the apparently conflicting sentences: "In this case, there seems to be nothing wrong with saying that the word 'point' is ambiguous - that the points that are made out of lines are simply different entities from the points that aren't made out of lines." (*ibid.*) Thus there is no conflict because the referents of the two descriptions are different.⁸⁰

First notice that Goodman accepts that the relation between descriptions and reality may be many-to-one when he says that we can define a cluster of versions that all constitute the same

⁷⁸ For the example of the plane segment see Goodman, *WW*, pp. 114-116 and my discussion of it in chapter 1, section 1.1.

⁷⁹ Paul O'Grady (2002, 83-84) discusses an argument advanced by Nicholas Wolterstorff against Goodman similar to that made by Kukla: "We can either argue that the initial claims are not contradictory, just different (like saying this apple is red and this apple is green - which are compatible sentences), or else that they are about different things." (*ibid.*) Wolterstorff's and O'Grady's conclusion is that none of the examples advanced by Goodman (or Putnam) are compelling. An argument along the same vein can be found in Searle (1995) and Boghossian (2006).

⁸⁰ This neatly deals with Goodman's lengthy discussion of celestial motion in *WW*, pp. 111-114. Goodman claims that he is not interested in whether the earth moves in some absolute sense, (*WW*, pp. 111 n. 4) yet maintains that statements that describe the motion of the earth relative to other bodies say nothing about the motion of the earth. (*WW*, pp. 113-114) There is an ambiguity here in what Goodman means by 'motion'. His demand for non-relative motion belie his disinterest in absolute motion, with the latter being odd since Einstein.

world. (*WW*, 4)⁸¹ His main motivation therefore appears to be the issue of contradiction. Notice however, that Goodman rarely says that versions actually *contradict*, instead saying they *conflict*. Logical contradiction is a far stronger notion than any putative conflict between descriptions, yet other than the plane segment, Goodman never provides an example of two definitively contradicting versions.⁸² Further, Goodman cannot appeal to just any contradiction because he still maintains that there are wrong versions, so he would first have to defend both contradicting descriptions as right. If there is no actual contradiction between the two descriptions of points, and Goodman does not provide us with any other contradiction⁸³, then we need not agree with his motivations for demanding a strict reducibility criterion, and thereby have no independent reason for accepting (5).

As Dyke has argued, there is no reason to accept (5) as true because irreducible and non-synonymous statements may describe the same portion of reality. The two statements ‘*o* is lilac’ and ‘*o* has molecular structure *P*’ both have the same truthmaker, yet are not reducible to one another.⁸⁴ Consider the heliocentric and geocentric models, where one says ‘the sun moves around the earth’ and the other says ‘the earth moves around the sun’. Granting that they are both

⁸¹ That is, Goodman admits that there can be multiple descriptions of the same reality: “the principle is not “different right versions, different worlds,” but “*disagreeing* right versions, different worlds (if any).” (“On Some Worldly Worries”, 166) See also my discussion in chapter 1, section 1.2.

⁸² While Goodman often talks as if different descriptions of celestial motion conflict, he nevertheless recognizes that they are “all of them in much the same terms and routinely transformable into one another”. (*WW*, 3) This is quite far from saying that the heliocentric and geocentric models contradict one another. Even with the plane segment, Goodman only ever says that the two descriptions conflict.

⁸³ There are perhaps two other contradictions Goodman identifies: two versions that ascribe different temporal origins to a star, (“Comments”, 213) and the conflict between *grue* and *green*. (*WW*, 126-128 and *FFF*, ch. 3) First, in neither case does Goodman explicitly call them contradictions, and second, like Kukla, we can dissipate the putative conflict. In the case of the temporal origin of a star, Goodman says one version places it millions of years ago while another places it now, when the light reaches our eyes. This is so obviously a case of equivocation of ‘star’ that I wonder why Goodman used it. One version is talking about the light source, while the other is talking about the light. In the case of *grue*, we can simply say that *grue* is not a proper predicate, or in Goodman’s terms, is not *projectible*, (*FFF*, 81-83 and ch. 4) or, with Davidson, deny that it is a proper inductive predicate of emeralds. (“Mental Events”, 114) Therefore neither case provides an intractable contradiction.

⁸⁴ As I have mentioned previously, if the irreducibility of this example is contentious, the reader is welcome to substitute another example, such as the irreducibility of mental states to physical states.

right under appropriate systems,⁸⁵ as Goodman does, they may be true in virtue of the same objects and states of affairs. In this case, certain facts about the earth, the sun, and the laws of physics are the truthmakers for both descriptions, in which case they both describe the same reality. Thus, it would not be necessary to say that they are true in different worlds, while simultaneously agreeing with Goodman that there are a multiplicity of right systems of description (i.e. *versions*). Further, we are not required to demand that they be reducible or translatable into one another. The two descriptions may be irreducible, yet be descriptions of the same world. This neatly bypasses the various problems surrounding reductionism and incommensurability.

The assumption of a one-to-one correspondence in Goodman should be clear; for every irreducible true description there corresponds a different actual world. Goodman tacitly assumes one component of SLT: (b) there is a one-to-one correspondence between our statements and our ontology. This move takes some feature of language or our linguistic representations - irreducible descriptions - and concludes that they correspond to different portions of reality, and in Goodman's case, to disparate realities. I have used Dyke's argument from the truthmaker principle to undermine this view. The latter criterion in (5) - reducible without loss of meaning - is a concomitant tendency Dyke identifies as part of the representational fallacy. Goodman tacitly accepts the ontological significance of paraphrase. Indeed, it is a corollary of the demand for

⁸⁵ For the sake of argument I am willing to grant Goodman the point that the various alternative frames of reference he considers are all epistemically equal. However, there is something seriously wrong with thinking that the heliocentric system is 'right'. Rather, I would say that the sun *appears* to revolve around the earth when perceived by observers on the earth. But this is merely an appearance; the explanatory scope of any system that maintains that the sun revolves around the earth will be extremely limited. The problem with making such claims against Goodman is that his position is so extreme that he does not accept the same theoretical virtues that a scientifically-minded philosopher accepts. That is, explanatory scope, simplicity, objectivity, etc. are not preeminent for Goodman. See my discussion of Goodman's response to Hempel along these lines in chapter 1, section 1.3.

translatability.⁸⁶ In discussing the translatability of heliocentric and geocentric descriptions, Goodman says the following:

The equally true sentences concerning the daily motion of the earth and sun

(f) The earth rotates, while the sun is motionless

(g) The earth is motionless, while the sun revolves around it
might be interpreted as amounting to

(h) The earth rotates relative to the sun

(i) The sun rotates relative to the earth,
which are nonconflicting truths.

What must be noticed, however, is that (h) does not quite say, as (f) does, that the earth rotates; and (i) does not quite say, as (g) does, that the earth is motionless. That an object moves relative to another does not imply either that the first one moves or that the second does not. (*WW*, 113; I have changed the numbering of the sentences)

The thrust of Goodman's argument is that attempts to paraphrase away the conflict between the two descriptions fail, because the paraphrases do not have the same meaning as the originals. Dyke has shown that paraphrase assumes a one-to-one correspondence, thereby carrying ontological significance. However, the truthmaker principle shows that a one-to-one correspondence is unnecessary, and therefore the significance attributed to paraphrase is spurious. We do not need paraphrase to remove any putative conflict between descriptions to retain the notion of a single reality. As we have seen, conflicting descriptions can describe the same world. The heliocentric and geocentric models do not need to be paraphrased into one another without loss of meaning to be of the same world. As a result, one of Goodman's arguments for multiple actual worlds is fallacious.

The second point where Goodman commits the representational fallacy is in conflating descriptions of reality with what those descriptions describe. Goodman's mistake is twofold: first, he assumes that objective knowledge about the world can only be had apart from all descriptions, and second, that because this is not possible that we cannot know anything about the

⁸⁶ I have been using both reductionism and translatability loosely, as if they are interchangeable. For all intents and purposes, the differences between them are not important for my argument. However, it may be worth distinguishing between them insofar as reductionism requires extensional isomorphism, whereas translatability only requires either most of the same information conveyed (where what counts as 'most information' varies subjectively) or preservation of truth-values.

world, but only about our descriptions. Goodman's rejection of a mind-independent world, which I discussed in chapter 1, proceeds as follows:

- (1) There are a number of equally right and often conflicting descriptions of the world.
- (2) If talk of the Given is self-defeating, then we cannot know the way the world is, only our descriptions.
- (3) Talk of the Given is self-defeating.
- (4) Therefore we cannot know *the* way the world is apart from our descriptions.

In premise (2) Goodman assumes that the structure of the world as it is-in-itself must be independent of our conceptual schemes.⁸⁷ Because Goodman rejects the distinction between convention and content, (WW, 116-120) he takes systems of description to be purely conventional. Goodman thinks that because the Given is self-defeating, the notion of content as distinct from convention (or form) is nonsensical, and thus we only have epistemic access to convention.⁸⁸ We cannot say what properties reality has because to ascribe properties is to ascribe a conceptual structure, and therefore all properties are relative to a description or version. In discussing the heliocentric and geocentric models of the solar system Goodman argues that:

Frames of reference, though, seem to belong less to what is described than to systems of description: and each of the two statements relates what is described to such a system. If I ask about the world, you can offer to tell me how it is under one or more frames of reference; but if I insist that you tell me how it is apart from all frames, what can you say? We are confined to ways of describing whatever is described. Our universe, so to speak, consists of these ways rather than of a world". (WW, 2-3)

⁸⁷ Goodman uses the Given and non-conceptual content interchangeably. He says "talk of unstructured content or an unconceptualized given or a substratum without properties is self-defeating; for the talk imposes structure, conceptualizes, ascribes properties. [. . .] We can have words without a world but no world without words or other symbols." (WW, 6)

⁸⁸ Goodman rejects the convention/content dichotomy, however Hempel asks how, after rejecting it, can Goodman then claim that everything is conventional? See Hempel, "Comments on Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking*", pp. 131.

Goodman suggests that we should drop talk of ‘the world’ and adopt talk of right versions because the descriptive systems that constitute right versions are all we have epistemic access to, and are thereby constitutive of our ontology.

The quotation above is a clear case of conflating descriptions and reality. It is true that we are confined to ways of describing; we must always have some frame of reference or conceptual scheme to describe the world. However, it does not follow that reality is entirely constituted by those ways of describing. Non-conceptual content is not required to have objective knowledge of a mind-independent reality. Nagel’s discussion of the move from subjective form to subjective content makes clear that objective content can be expressed in various subjective forms. We can agree with Kant’s attack on the Given, but the necessity of describing reality in *some* form does not vitiate its independence from how it is described. There is little reason to think that just because we must describe the world with language that all we can therefore know is language (or our conceptual schemes). As William Alston has put it, “this is no better than arguing from the fact that all eating involves chewing and swallowing to the conclusion that the only things I can eat is my teeth, throat, and esophagus.” (*A Realist Conception of Truth*, 94) Goodman’s conceptual relativism follows Carnap in making ontology relative to language. What there is depends on whatever our versions say there is. Goodman’s mistake is in assuming that knowledge of the world must be non-conceptual, and because this is not possible, he wrongly concludes that our knowledge is only ever of our own concepts. As Heil argues,

in one sense, of course, it must be senseless to ask about the world independently of the ‘conceptual structure’ which ‘slices it up’. We need a language in order to talk about the world because we need a language in order to *talk*. Nevertheless, different ways of talking about the world are not ways of talking about different worlds, but just different ways of talking. (1981, 244)

As a result, there is no need for Goodman to deny the possibility of epistemic access to a mind-independent reality. Knowledge of a mind-independent reality is possible despite our use of multiple conceptual schemes.

Goodman is intent on arguing against the view that there is one privileged description of reality, because he wants to allow for this multiplicity of conceptual schemes. As we saw with Dyke though, we can have multiple descriptions of one reality. Accepting a single way reality is does not entail an acceptance of a single way to describe it; they are two distinct and compatible theses. There can be one way reality is and many ways reality is described, therefore we can agree with Goodman that there are multiple true descriptions. The anti-realist and relativist element in Goodman's thought rests on the view, identified by Heil, that the acceptance of multiple true descriptions is incompatible with a mind-independent reality, coupled with a very narrow view of realism. A major motivation for Goodman is to maintain the epistemic legitimacy of multiple systems of description against "the monopolistic materialist or physicalist who maintains that one system, physics, is preeminent and all-inclusive, such that every other version must eventually be reduced to it or rejected as false or meaningless." (WW, 4) I have already shown reductionism to be an unnecessary requirement for realism, so the various systems of description Goodman wants to allow are thereby not precluded from having meaning or truth. Indeed, the kind of realism that Dyke, Heil and myself have argued for allows for many epistemically legitimate ways of describing reality, *even* if one accepts physicalism; in this Dyke agrees with Goodman. Realism need not be committed to one true description of reality, yet Goodman assumes that for reality to be independent of our subjectivity there must be a single true description of it. Because he thinks that the view that there is one true description is false, he erroneously concludes that realism must also be false. However, Dyke and Heil have shown that we can have multiple descriptions of a single, mind-independent reality. Thus, we can accept both of Heil's theses, thereby agreeing with Dyke's physicalism and Goodman's conventionalism. Recognizing the compatibility of both theses avoids conflating the various versions of the world with the world itself.

However, Dyke maintains that some descriptions are more *objective* or more *accurate* than others. Tenseless statements, Dyke argues, are better descriptions of reality because they more accurately describe it and are less context-dependent. Similarly, scientific descriptions may be more objective because they may stand in a one-to-one correspondence with the world. (Dyke, 59, 71) This claim may still be too strong for Goodman. Scientific descriptions may be more objective or more accurate, if one is seeking objectivity and descriptive accuracy. For some purposes objectivity may be unwelcome.⁸⁹ It will be less inimical to Goodman's project if the interest-relative nature of all descriptions is recognized, rather than the primacy of scientific description as Dyke espouses. Goodman's and Putnam's relativism can be maintained in relation to descriptions, but it does not follow that what they describe is also relative. Different ways of describing can still be interest- or purpose-relative without slighting the independence of reality.⁹⁰ As a result, a major motivation for Goodman's attack on realism is rendered harmless.

Goodman himself recognizes the tendency to conflate descriptions and reality when he says "no principle requires that features imputed to a world be features of the version." ("Comments", 213) This is in response to Scheffler's objection that a version could not construct something that existed prior to its construction. ("Worldmaking: Why Worry", 173)⁹¹ Goodman is saying that there is no principle that demands the *constructans* and the *constructandum* be coeval. Kukla calls this the *imputation principle*. (106)⁹² Goodman writes of the imputation

⁸⁹ Goodman's much-touted example of metaphorical truth in fiction may be such an example. Metaphors, typically being literally false, are not accurate descriptions, but accuracy of description is not what they are intended to accomplish. Instead they are meant to invoke some feeling, or emphasize some similarity.

⁹⁰ This may address Putnam's argument from causation (Putnam 1983, 211-214) where the relativity of any cited cause of some event is interest-relative and different for, e.g. different species, but from being interest- or conceptually-relative it does follow that they are not somehow mind-independent features of a single reality.

⁹¹ In the same passage, Scheffler criticizes Goodman for recognizing the conflation of descriptions and reality, yet committing it himself.

⁹² Interestingly, Kukla admits that he wants to defend the imputation principle, yet concedes that he cannot come up with a good argument in its favour. It has been the business of this chapter to argue that the imputation principle is false, and as Goodman construes it, it seems obvious that it must be. A description of the world may be in English, but from this we would not conclude that the world is therefore an anglophone. See Goodman, "The Way the World Is", pp. 3.

principle that “this tendency may even reach the point of linguomorphism when we conceive the world as comprised of atomic objects corresponding to certain proper names, and of atomic facts corresponding to atomic sentences.” (“The Way the World Is”, 3) Goodman is eschewing both the conflation of descriptions and reality and the one-to-one correspondence that Dyke warns us of,⁹³ yet then commits the fallacy himself by positing multiple actual worlds corresponding to irreducible descriptions. When we recognize that descriptions are different from what they describe we are able to know and express the mind-independent structure of the world without making any appeal to the Given. The conflation of descriptions and reality has led Goodman to deny the possibility of knowledge of the structure of a mind-independent world.

I have argued that Goodman commits the representational fallacy in two important ways: by concluding that irreducible and untranslatable descriptions must describe different realities, and by conflating descriptions of the world with the world itself. Showing his arguments to be fallacious undermines Goodman’s linguistic thesis for ontological relativism. However, showing his argument to rest on a fallacy only determines the argument to be unsound, not the falsity of the conclusion, and neither does it undermine Goodman’s epistemic relativism. Nor have I discussed Goodman’s constructivism, and how he claims that ontology is a product of various descriptive processes. A glimpse of constructivism can be seen in Goodman’s conceptual relativism; the various ways we describe construct different worlds answering to them. In the next chapter I will consider Goodman’s relativism - both ontological and epistemic - under its own merits, as well as his constructivism, showing that it suffers from inconsistencies that make it utterly incoherent.

⁹³ Goodman, like Heil, calls the view he is arguing against the picture theory of language. See “The Way the World Is”, pp. 4, 10. Heil does not mention this parallel.

Chapter Three

Minds and Worlds

In the last chapter I criticized Goodman's argument for ontological relativism, showing it to rest on a fallacy. I shall assess the cogency of Goodman's ontological relativism as a self-standing doctrine. My aim is twofold: first, to show that Goodman's radical ontological relativism and constructivism presuppose, and in some cases require, a mind-independent world; second, to show that as Goodman has espoused it, his ontological and epistemological relativism are, in a number of ways, incoherent. These two approaches proceed concurrently, and in fact go hand in hand. If Goodman does not acknowledge a mind-independent reality, then he risks incoherence.

I will begin with the need to acknowledge some kind of logical structure of the world independent of human subjectivity, despite Goodman's conflicting statements in this regard. I will then argue that Goodman's ontological relativism removes the mind from the world while assuming some independent structure of our mental activities. I will show that however it is parsed, there must initially be some mind-independent structure, and that Goodman gives us no reason to deny structure to the physical world. Having thus shown that Goodman's position must admit both a logical and a mental structure, I will argue that Goodman's attempt to replace the monistic world of the realist with multiple worlds fails, since on Goodman's own terms, these multiple worlds must be part of a single, all-inclusive, world. If he rejects this, then interaction between subjects does not make sense. Finally, I will consider Goodman's epistemological relativism. While Goodman rejects an "anything goes relativism", his "rigorous restraints" merely amount to social custom, and thereby do not preclude any constructions.⁹⁴ Here too, he

⁹⁴ As I argued in chapter 1, section 1.3, Goodman's constraints amount to social custom and the entrenchment of predicates and thereby allow the (metaphysical) possibility of constructing virtually anything. The entrenchment of predicates means that some constructions, e.g. grue emeralds, unicorns, and

must admit some absolute and objective fact about the world or risk being incoherent. Indeed, his views of truth, necessity, and versional coherence seem patently contradictory. Some of these issues I have explored in chapter 1, however at the cost of being repetitive, I will briefly discuss them again in this chapter to show where Goodman goes wrong.

3.1 As we saw in chapter 1, in relativizing conflicting truths to different worlds, Goodman is motivated by the need to avoid any putative contradictions between epistemically equivalent descriptions. This solves what Kukla calls ‘the problem of the two societies’.⁹⁵⁹⁶ The problem of the two societies arises for constructivists who maintain that all facts are constructed by social agreement. If this is so, then it is possible for one society, S1, to construct x and for another society, S2, to construct $\sim x$, giving us the contradiction $(x \cdot \sim x)$. (Kukla, 91) Some constructivists see this as an epistemic issue, and relativize x to a belief system, so that x is true according to S1 and $\sim x$ is true according to S2. But this says nothing about the truth or falsity of x .⁹⁷ To his credit, Goodman recognizes this issue:

notice that while at least one of the conflicting statements

- (1) The kings of Sparta had two votes
- (2) The kings of Sparta had only one vote

is false, both of the following are true:

- (3) According to Herodotus, the kings of Sparta had two votes
- (4) According to Thucydides, the kings of Sparta had only one vote.

round squares, will be difficult to construct, but not impossible. While Goodman denies that we can make whatever we please, his view nevertheless collapses into an “anything goes” relativism.

⁹⁵ See Kukla (2000), *Social Constructivism and the Philosophy of Science*, chapter 12 for his in-depth discussion of the problem. Kukla argues that Goodman consistently picks up the ontological slack left over from the sociologists of knowledge, and so he is one of the few to address the problem of the two societies.

⁹⁶ Paul Boghossian calls this “the problem of disagreement”. See his *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism*, pp. 39-41. Curiously, Boghossian says that Goodman’s ‘cookie-cutter constructivism’ cannot solve the problem. Boghossian does not even countenance Goodman’s multiple worlds hypothesis, and so his arguments against Goodman seem woefully incomplete.

⁹⁷ Kukla (2000) credits van Fraassen with this view, pp. 96.

Clearly (3) and (4), unlike (1) and (2), are entirely noncommittal as to how many votes the kings had. (*WW*, 112; the numbering has been altered from the original)

Because Goodman wants to maintain the more radical thesis that it is possible for x to be both true and false under different systems of representation, he requires an ontological method of dealing with the problem of the two societies (see section 1.2). Rather than admitting a contradiction, Goodman claims that conflicting descriptions pertain to different actual worlds, hence his oft quoted dictum that “contradiction is avoided by segregation”. (“Notes on the Well-Made World”, 152) It must be noticed that this logical requirement for worldhood is independent of the various worlds (and versions) that Goodman claims we construct. The law of non-contradiction, as a criterion for distinguishing between worlds, cannot itself be constructed in any world. Goodman’s motivation for ontological relativism is to avoid contradictions amongst descriptions. He therefore contends that irreducible conflicting descriptions describe different worlds. The motivation to preserve the laws of logic seems like a *prima facie* acceptance of some mind-independent structure of reality, despite Goodman’s express disavowal of our ability to comprehend such. (*WW*, 4) He is therefore at least tacitly committed to there being *a logical structure of reality* independent of our versions.

Alternatively, if logic were version-dependent (read subjectively constructed), then the need to segregate contradictions between worlds would not be necessary. As we saw in chapter 1, the only restraint on Goodman’s constructivism is the stubbornness of habit and social custom, which by itself does not preclude anything from being constructed. As a result, it is at least possible on Goodman’s view that alternative laws of logic could be constructed, or that there *could* be a version where no laws of logic have been constructed nor apply. In short, the laws of logic are not necessary. Goodman appears to endorse such a view when, in attempting to introduce constraints on his worldmaking, he writes: “a version is taken to be true when it offends no unyielding beliefs and none of its own precepts. Among beliefs unyielding at a given time may be long-lived reflections of laws of logic”. (*WW*, 17) But if the laws of logic are merely

unyielding beliefs constitutive of the precepts of some version⁹⁸, then it follows from there being no constraints on what versions we construct that we are not obliged to construct the laws of logic so long as the version itself is internally coherent. If, however, logic is constructed by a version, why would internal coherence be a criterion of version-hood? Thus, coherence itself would no longer be a requirement for the construction of a version. There could therefore be versions where there is no need to segregate contradictions, but this is in direct conflict with Goodman's claim that his is not an 'anything goes relativism'. (*WW*, 94-95; "Notes on the Well-Made World, 152) But if non-contradiction is merely a construct of some version, then the demand to segregate contradictions comes from accepting that version, in which case Goodman's ontological relativism would have to be presupposed. What reason do we have for assuming multiple worlds? Goodman's motivation is to avoid contradictions. If Goodman makes logic version-dependent then he must abandon the coherence-criterion and he undermines his own need for a plurality of worlds because it would allow contradictions.

What are we to make of this apparent inconsistency in Goodman's position? If Goodman maintains that the laws of logic are subjectively constructed, then it is unclear how any world or version could be comprehensible⁹⁹ It would require giving up non-contradiction, identity, and bivalence, which is a rather steep price and one Goodman himself does not seem inclined to pay. Goodman is therefore forced to admit that there is something mind-independent and that it, at least in part, determines the structure of reality. However, Kukla contends that in response "it

⁹⁸ After the passage just quoted Goodman says "but the line between beliefs and precepts is neither sharp nor stable" (*WW*, 17) and so our unyielding belief in the laws of logic can be part of the precepts of a version.

⁹⁹ It may be objected that it is possible to comprehend contradictory beliefs because 'objectivity' amounts to entrenched subjectivity. If a version *V* stipulated that $(x \cdot \sim x)$ is true, then a subject could comprehend this as an accepted social fact, the reasons and justifications for which are contextually relative. I think this is false. By allowing contradictions they endorse a doctrine of 'anything goes' which denies my criteria of comprehensibility, while by accepting the objectivity of logic I deny 'anything goes'. As a result, there are no mutual criteria of meaningful dialogue. See Paul O'Grady (2002), pp. 131-146 for an excellent discussion of relative vs. non-relative rationality. O'Grady identifies four universal criteria of rationality which are salient to the above discussion: non-contradiction, coherence among beliefs, non-avoidance of available evidence, and intellectual honesty. (*ibid.*)

seems *prima facie* possible for constructivists to defend themselves against this charge by claiming that the laws of construction are *logical* truths, and that the constructivist thesis applies only to contingent propositions about the world.” (93) While I am willing to grant the possibility of this position, that Goodman accepts a mind-independent logical structure of the world is one step closer to a more sober metaphysics. I will now consider Goodman’s *sui generis* view of the mind and argue that, in addition to logical structure, he must admit some further mind-independent reality.

3.2 While Goodman has quite a lot to say about the processes involved in worldmaking, the various versions that we construct, and the many examples used against metaphysical realism, he is curiously silent on the nature of the worldmakers in this whole affair. Indeed, Goodman says virtually *nothing* about the ‘we’ that are supposedly engaged in the constructive task of making versions and worlds through a process of symbol manipulation. As Elder puts it, “but then one naturally wants to ask: what are we like independently of - metaphysically “prior to” - our exercising that system [of sortals]? Are we all members of a common natural kind? Do we have determinate (and bounded) courses of existence?” (52) Throughout Goodman’s disparate writings on this issue, the question remains what the metaphysical status of minds is.¹⁰⁰ This should come as a surprise, since “Goodman is arguing for a radical version of what, in fact, others have argued for: a metaphysical role for the observer. Not unlike Kant, Goodman is arguing that reality is, apart from the (to use Kant’s word) “concatenation” of the data, virtually empty.” (Shottenkirk, 92) This oversight seems curiously pressing. It is not my intention to provide Goodman with a substantial account of the role of the subject in his worldmaking.

¹⁰⁰ I am using ‘minds’ as shorthand for ‘constructors’. On Goodman’s picture, we can construct versions of the ‘mental’ - the various neurophysiological or folk psychological accounts of the mind and its structure. I am not taking issue with these versions, but am focusing on the antecedent role of the subject in Goodman’s constructivism. Therefore my use of ‘mind’ is in its pre-version role, arguing that its structure needs to be accounted for, because Goodman says nothing about the ‘constructors’.

Rather, I aim to show how Goodman must assume some initial mind-independent structure to explain his subsequent worldmaking.¹⁰¹ If he does not admit any such structure, then he provides no justification for the special status of the mental, and therefore begs the question. Which is to say that at base Goodman's account is only sustainable if he admits mind-independent structure *somewhere*. This, of course, contradicts his claim that the world has no properties apart from those ascribed to it by our conceptual schemes, and is yet another step towards showing the incoherence of his position.

Given that we cannot know the world apart from our conceptual schemes, Goodman concludes that there is no way the world is in itself. We have seen how he replaces it with a plethora of subjectively constructed versions which produce the structure and organization that we find in experience. But how do these versions come to have structure? What are they constructed from? Goodman answers the latter question by deploying a kind of Kantian regulative principle. He argues that versions are always constructed from other versions, and the search for a first world is pointless because it would require knowledge bereft of a conceptual scheme - which is impossible. What of the first question? How can a mind come to produce something as complex as a world? For Goodman, a process of manipulation of symbol systems constructs the version and thereby produces structure in them. This process of manipulation is undertaken by us, the worldmakers. As such, versions are not self-structuring. For us to engage in such a constructive process of organization we must have some antecedent structure. As I said, Goodman says nothing about this aspect of his position, so there is no explanation for why the mind has structure.

Historical antecedents of the same problem can be found in the works of Kant and Husserl. Kant maintained that the world as it is in itself is unknowable, and our phenomenal experience is constituted by the interplay of the categories of thought and the forms of intuition.

¹⁰¹ In what follows I am indebted to Josh Mozersky and the rough draft of a paper he presented to the Queen's University Philosophy Department's Colloquium Series in January 2013.

Kant had much to say about the structure of the mind, yet *it* was not a product of sensibility and the understanding, but rather a feature of the world as it is-in-itself. Kant's explanation was a torturous appeal to transcendental self-apperception¹⁰², which was undermined by his own theory of knowledge. Kant claimed that we could not know the noumenal realm, yet gave a detailed explanation of the structure of the mind as part of the noumena. If the world has no structure apart from what we give it, Kant cannot claim that the structure of the mind is not constructed without admitting some mind-independent structure, in which case we *can* have epistemic access to the noumena. Therefore, Kant's claim that the world in itself is structureless and bereft of properties undermines itself. Husserl encountered the same problem and posited that the mind appears to be the cause of both the world and of itself simultaneously. In a Kantian vein, Husserl argued that the mind engaged in a process of 'self-mundanizing apperception', and like Kant's transcendental self-apperception, this notion is notoriously nebulous. Husserl could not account for how the mind could both construct itself as an object in the world and be an independently existing entity.¹⁰³ Neither Kant nor Husserl came up with plausible solutions to this problem.

As with the physical world, there are two options: either the mind is constructed, or it exists independently of a perceiving subject.¹⁰⁴ Since Goodman is emphatic that the world has no properties apart from those that we give to it, it seems plausible to assume that the mind must be no different and is therefore constructed by other minds. On such a model some subject, *S*, constructs a version, *V*, which constitutes his world. *S*, not having inherent structure, must have been constructed by another subject, *S'*. The question immediately arises as to how *S'* has structure. Since the world is structureless apart from our subjectivity, another subject, *S''*, must have constructed *S'*. The beginning of the regress should be clear. The world cannot have inherent structure; all structure is contained in our versions of it. *V* does not have structure on its

¹⁰² See the Transcendental Deduction in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, particularly B130-B142.

¹⁰³ See §45 of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*

¹⁰⁴ The determined skeptic could always push for a third option: that neither minds nor the world exists. I do not feel it is necessary to address such a view here, if at all.

own, but is constructed by *S*. *S* cannot have structure on his own, and so must have been constructed by *S'*, who must have been constructed by *S''*, who must have been constructed by *S'''*, and so on *ad infinitum* - on this model at least. This regress does not explain how any structured reality actually *started*. With limited explanatory scope and a profligate expansion of minds, an infinite regress is not a position Goodman should adopt. Therefore, somewhere in the constructive process there must have been some mind-independent reality which gave rise to minds, or we must admit minds as capable of spontaneously generating structure. This is a version of the familiar argument of the unmoved mover. The idea is that somewhere at the border of our epistemic sphere is some mind-independent structure that provides the structure to our knowledge of the world. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of Goodman's position without an initial structure that structures all subsequent structure.¹⁰⁵

The latter alternative to the regress is to simply nip it in the bud,¹⁰⁶ and claim that *S* or any other subject is spontaneously structured from nothing. On this view, *V* is constructed by *S*, and *S* is self-structured. However, if minds can be self-structuring, what reason is there to deny that the world could be similarly capable of self-structure? If this is Goodman's view, then I see no reason why we should deny physical reality inherent structure, yet allot the mind some special metaphysical status that allows it to spontaneously generate structure. Goodman gives no

¹⁰⁵ The early Goodman (e.g. in *SA*, which comes out of the logical positivist tradition) could claim that this objection misses the mark because he is concerned with the construction of 'logical' frameworks and symbol manipulation, rather than minds and worlds. However, Goodman's later work (particularly in *WW*) focuses more on social and ontological constructivism, and so is susceptible to unmoved mover-type objections. Further, it cannot be claimed that some structure is constructed (e.g. the sun) but that it has subsequent causal properties independently of its initial construction (e.g. gravitational pull), which are somehow construction-independent. While this counter-objection would allow the possibility of some initial construction of minds, which then have independent causal properties, Goodman is adamant that everything is constructed by our versions, so all properties whatsoever - of the sun, minds or whatever else - are constructed. See Shottenkirk (2009), pp. 107-108.

¹⁰⁶ Goodman may want to maintain that at least some subjects can be constructed by other subjects, however the point is simply that somewhere along the line of construction the first subjects developed inherent structure.

argument for this *sui generis* nature of the mind.¹⁰⁷ If the question is whether reality can have inherent structure or not, Goodman's view appears to beg the question.

A third explanation for the metaphysical status of the mind is a combination of the previous two. That is, two structureless entities standing in relation to each other¹⁰⁸ create structure between them. Here again, the same problem presents itself; if two structureless entities can create structure between them, why is it not possible for two parts of non-mental reality to do the same? This view requires an exception be made of the mind, but no argument is given for why we should see the mind as unique in this fashion.

The suggestions that the mind spontaneously structures itself or that multiple structureless entities generate structure between them is unlikely to be adopted by Goodman. He is quite adamant that "neither by logic nor any other means can we prove something from nothing". ("On Starmaking", 144) The likeliest course for Goodman is therefore the regress. As we have seen though, Goodman must either rest content with an infinite regress, or admit that it began with some mind-independent reality. The latter option undermines his ontological relativism and constructivism, while the former has limited explanatory scope and runs afoul of Ockham's razor.¹⁰⁹ However, given that Goodman is content with an infinite regress of versions - versions are always constructed from other versions and the search for the 'first version' is pointless - he may opt for an infinite regress of minds too, claiming that the search for the 'first

¹⁰⁷ John McDowell (1996) advances a position where the mind is *sui generis*. McDowell's argument is akin to Davidson's anomalous monism in seeking to secure - and make sense of - the freedom of the subject. McDowell, however, sees his position (what he calls "second nature") as realist; he is equally committed to maintaining the independence of the world as he is the independence of the mind. Not only is Goodman's motivation not about securing the freedom of the subject, but he offers no argument for the *sui generis* nature of the mind.

¹⁰⁸ I will leave this relation unspecified, as I am unsure what it would entail.

¹⁰⁹ While multiple worlds already seem to conflict with Okham's razor, Kukla argues that Goodman, ironically, appeals to parsimony in denying a mind-independent world because the concept of 'the world' has no explanatory value. (Kukla, 99-101) This way, it cannot be claimed that Goodman would not accept Okham's razor as a theoretical virtue. It should also be noted that an appeal to parsimony is in conflict with Goodman's rebuttal to Hempel's Dalai Lama example (see chapter 1, section 1.3). Goodman says that while science may see parsimony as a virtue, this is not the case for all versions, yet Goodman's original argument for ontological relativism appeals to parsimony.

mind' or whatever it came from, is similarly futile. The metaphysical gymnastics required to sustain such a position do not justify its acceptance over a more parsimonious realism that has greater explanatory scope. Goodman is confronted with a trilemma: admit something from nothing, admit some initial mind-independent reality, or admit an infinite regress of minds.¹¹⁰ The first option gives us no reason to deny structure to non-mental reality; the second option undermines Goodman's worldmaking project by admitting a mind-independent reality; and the third option is reducible to the other two because the regress demands that minds can structure other minds, and so they must either be capable of self-structuring or must themselves be mind-independent. In addition to requiring a logical structure of the world, Goodman must admit some other mind-independent structure (as minimal as an unmoved mover or as substantial as the space-time manifold) or risk incoherence.

3.3 I have explored two areas where mind-independent structure is (or must be) assumed in Goodman's worldmaking. There is a third avenue for mind-independent structure to insert itself in Goodman's account. If it is not assumed, then many facets of our experience simply do not make sense. Goodman contends that there can be many versions of a single world - the many different systems of description or conceptual schemes that we use. He further argues that mutually untranslatable descriptions are versions of different actual worlds. In chapter 1 I suggested thinking of these worlds as analogous to Lewis' modal realism; each of Goodman's worlds are hermetically sealed, discontinuous realities. Goodman, in discussing the various versions of the physicist, the artist, and the man-in-the-street, makes the claim that "ironically, then, our passion for one world is satisfied, at different times and for different purposes, in *many*

¹¹⁰ Goodman could agree that there must be some initial mind-independent structure or an unmoved mover but claim that any description of that structure would be contained in our versions, and thus be mind-dependent, thus obviating the necessity of independent structure. My argument in chapter 2 undermines any recourse to the failure of foundationalism by showing that the necessity of describing from within a conceptual scheme does vitiate the independence of what is described.

different ways.” (WW, 20) Goodman further says that “we usually think and work within one world-version at a time [. . .] but we shift from one to another often. When we undertake to relate different versions, we introduce multiple worlds.” (“Notes on the Well-Made World”, 153) If these multiple worlds do not share a spatio-temporal structure, nor are capable of being composed into a higher order world that embraces them all,¹¹¹ then how can we shift so readily from one to another? Hempel’s tongue-in-cheek question “If adherents of different paradigms did inhabit totally separate worlds, I feel tempted to ask, how can they ever have lunch together and discuss each other’s views?” (129) points to much the same problem. Hempel continues:

Surely, there is a passageway connecting their worlds; indeed it seems that their worlds overlap to a considerable extent. The fact that proponents of such conflicting paradigms as Newtonian and relativistic physics pit their theories against each other in an effort to explain certain phenomena shows that they agree on the relevant features of those phenomena—e.g., the rotation of the perihelion of Mercury—in one common description; and indeed, they agree on a good deal more. (129-130)

This is a serious problem for Goodman’s account, and indeed, one he never addresses.¹¹² There is a stark contradiction between the multiple discontinuous actual worlds that Goodman posits¹¹³, and our ability to shift between them. This bears on the question of the structure of the mind, discussed in the previous section. There I argued that Goodman’s view assumed some mental structure, and that this mental structure must be mind-independent. Assuming that Goodman could give an argument for why the mind is metaphysically special, it is possible that the non-

¹¹¹ See Goodman’s “Notes on the Well-Made World”, pp. 152.

¹¹² Goodman never responds to Hempel’s concern. Because Goodman does not say anything about the worldmakers it is unclear how he would deal with this criticism. While many philosophers may be sympathetic to Goodman’s project, the multiple worlds hypothesis is a polarizing feature of his position (as it is with Lewis). Quine sympathizes with Goodman, however sees “his sequence of worlds or world versions only as a rather tenuous metaphor.” (*Theories and Things*, 98)

¹¹³ Kukla suggests we take Goodman’s position to be at least comprehensible because we think of it analogously with a model of the universe that posits multiple continua with no shared spatio-temporal organization. (102)

mental has no intrinsic nature, and that we construct multiple actual worlds. Hempel's 'interparadigmatic lunch'¹¹⁴ points to a difficulty with this view.

Our experience supports Hempel; not only can physicists with different celestial models discuss their theories, but I can have lunch with someone who describes the object between us as a collection of molecules, while I describe it as a table. Indeed, the world of the physicist, the artist, and the man-in-the-street seem perfectly compatible with one another. Goodman claims non-conflicting versions can be versions of the same world, so two different histories of the Renaissance - one about the battles and the other about the arts - can be of the same world. (WW, 26) It would be odd if Goodman claimed otherwise, for da Vinci, who both painted frescos and designed war machines, certainly shifted between both versions. If da Vinci painted the Vitruvian man on the back of a trebuchet, they must certainly be part of the same world. The various non-conflicting versions pose no problem for Goodman, because he admits they are versions of one world and therefore it is possible to shift between them. The conflicting versions which pertain to different worlds however, pose a serious difficulty.

Take the case of two contradicting versions describing the temporal origin of a particular star.¹¹⁵ One version puts the star's origins at t1, while the other places it at t2. The origin of the star at t1 entails that it did not originate at t2, and vice versa. Therefore, on Goodman's view, these two versions must pertain to different worlds. Call the world of t1 W1 and the world of t2 W2. Let us further say that society S1 constructed W1 and that society S2 constructed W2. If S1 and S2 live in their respective worlds, and these worlds are not connected in any spatio-temporal organization, then it is not possible for S1 and S2 to interact. Our experience belies such a conclusion; people with contradictory worldviews frequently interact, so they must inhabit one single overarching world that encompasses W1 and W2. Further, S1 and S2 are themselves objects of experience, and so they must inhabit a single overarching world as well. That is, for S1

¹¹⁴ This term is coined by Kukla (2000), pp. 101.

¹¹⁵ This is a modified version of one of Goodman's examples. See his "Comments", pp. 213.

to perceive S2 and S2 to perceive S1 as objects, they must be mutually present in each other's experience, which must in turn be at least partially coextensive with a single, shared world for this to be possible.¹¹⁶ Discussing Hempel's interparadigmatic lunch, Kukla asks

Regardless of how strained and unproductive their conversation might be, how does it happen that there's a common *venue* in which it can take place? Aren't the conversers supposed to be living in different worlds? Obviously, denying that they can have lunch together isn't an option. It's a feature of my world that it contains adherents of different paradigms or versions, and it's a feature of at least some of these adherents' worlds that they contain *me*. (102)

Our experience shows that interaction between subjects who supposedly live in different worlds occurs, and as a result, an appeal to the *sui generis* nature of the mind does not avoid the necessity of a single all-inclusive reality. Kukla concludes from this that Goodman's multiple worlds hypothesis as

[a] model of two unconnected continua won't do: if a point *x* is in both world W1 and world W2, then it's possible to traverse the space between *x* and any other point in W1 (because W1 is a continuum), and it's also possible to travel from *x* to any other point in W2 (because W2 is a continuum). But then it must be possible to travel from any point in W1 to any point in W2. (103)

Because of the interaction between inhabitants of different worlds, Goodman is forced to admit that non-mental reality must be a totality, and therefore that his multiple actual worlds are not discontinuous but connected, thereby constituting a single world. So in what sense can Goodman claim that there are multiple *actual* worlds? This claim seems to evaporate into hyperbolic rhetoric. Both his ontological relativism and his concomitant multiple worlds hypothesis are thereby undermined. The many worlds that Goodman argues for merely amount to different descriptions of a single reality.

¹¹⁶ The necessity of the co-habitation of S1 and S2 in a single world prevents any response that minds can coexist in a single reality, but the objects of experience need not. That is, Goodman could claim that all minds exist in a single mental reality, and each can somehow move in and out of various worlds in non-mental reality. However, individuals are also objects in those worlds and are capable of interaction, so minds must also coexist in a single non-mental reality for this interaction to be possible.

It may be claimed that the previous remark only gets me as far as non-mental monism. It does not preclude the possibility that the non-mental may be constructed by the mind.¹¹⁷ A further argument is needed to secure the independence of the non-mental. Let us consider another of Goodman's examples. Goodman asks us to imagine two people in a waiting room, Goodman himself, and an Amazonian fresh out of the jungle who has never had any previous contact with the outside world.¹¹⁸ In this room there is a stereo built into a bookcase. Goodman contends that while *he* sees the stereo, the Amazonian does not; the stereo simply does not exist for the Amazonian because he has not constructed it. ("Notes on the Well-Made World", 155-156) Goodman's world and the world of the Amazonian contain different objects; what exists in one world may not exist in the other. I have already argued that Goodman and the Amazonian must exist in a single reality for any interaction between them to be possible. If this is the case, how could the stereo exist for one but not for the other? While it is plausible that the Amazonian does not recognize the stereo *as* a stereo, he nevertheless sees some object, or at least some phenomenal expanse in his perceptual field that overlaps significantly with Goodman's stereo. But Goodman's point is not that the Amazonian sees the stereo and thinks it is, say, a rock, or a shrubbery, but that the Amazonian sees *no object at all*.¹¹⁹ For the object to exist, says Goodman, is for the Amazonian to have the requisite conceptual means to construct it, in this case the concept 'stereo' and all its attendant capacities and relations. The Amazonian lacks the means to construct such an object. While Goodman and the Amazonian may share a single reality, the objects they construct in that reality differ markedly.

¹¹⁷ Kukla argues that multiple actual worlds are necessary to avoid the problem of the two societies, so if it has been shown that there cannot be multiple actual worlds, then Goodman's constructivism has already been refuted. (Kukla, 96, 103-104) However, I will consider Goodman's constructivism just to reinforce my argument.

¹¹⁸ From Goodman's "Notes on the Well-Made World".

¹¹⁹ Goodman is actually unclear on this point. He says that the Amazonian will not find books in the room, "but in the books and plants I find he may find fuel and food that I do not", (ibid. 156) which suggests that what is going on is simply different categorization of the same basic material. However, Goodman then claims that the Amazonian will not find the stereo because he does not make such an object.

Besides being vastly counter-intuitive, our frequent use of demonstrative reference undermines Goodman's example. We can agree with Goodman that the Amazonian does not have the concept 'stereo' and thus does not recognize the object Goodman calls a 'stereo' as a stereo. But that the Amazonian fails to see something as a particular object does not entail that he fails to see. As we so often do when confronted with a failure of communication, we resort to pointing to signify our meaning. The Amazonian may not see a stereo, but he can still see *that*, where the referent of 'that' is the object Goodman recognizes as a stereo. The Amazonian may see the speakers, the cord, and the control panel of the stereo as parts of the bookcase, however Goodman can point to these various parts of the stereo and show the Amazonian that *that* is an object that we call 'stereo'. For demonstrative reference to succeed the object being pointed to must exist for both Goodman and the Amazonian, otherwise Goodman's pointing would be pointless. Therefore not only must Goodman and the Amazonian share a single reality, but the ontology of that reality - its 'furniture' - must be the same for both.

Here it may be objected that the Amazonian can be taught to construct the stereo by Goodman. I do not see how this could happen without some antecedently existent object. It is not at all obvious in the case described how or when Goodman teaches the Amazonian the concept and constructive process of stereo creation. It already assumes that both Goodman and the Amazonian can interact in a shared reality. If Goodman appeals to demonstrative reference, then to refer to parts of the object for the Amazonian to construct as a stereo, the object must already exist for the Amazonian to perceive them.¹²⁰ The various ways of worldmaking that Goodman identifies - weighting, ordering, composition, etc.¹²¹ - can only be applied to some pre-existing material, since Goodman claims we cannot create something from nothing. ("On Starmaking",

¹²⁰ Goodman could reply by claiming that the act of referring constructs versions, however this leaves unexplained the subject performing the referential constructivism. This leads Goodman back to the dilemma discussed in section 3.2, where he must either assume some initial mind-independent structure or he is left begging the question.

¹²¹ See *WW*, pp. 7-17 for Goodman's discussion of these processes.

144)¹²² Boghossian advances this argument against what he calls the ‘cookie-cutter constructivism’ of Goodman and Putnam. (38) If we use our concepts to slice up reality, must there not already be some ‘worldly dough’ for our concepts to carve up?¹²³ (Boghossian, 35) If this is the case, then Goodman’s denial of a mind-independent reality is false. Even if we accept Goodman’s conceptual relativity, there must be something mind-independent that the concepts of both Goodman and the Amazonian can demonstratively refer to.

Not only do Goodman’s multiple actual worlds prohibit interaction among subjects, they further exclude the possibility of our having common shared experiences of a single object. The subjects must exist in a single reality to allow for interaction between them and that reality’s ontology must exist independently of the subjects for them to demonstratively refer and mutually interact with a given object. Goodman’s ontological relativism is incoherent without the assumption of a single reality. Further, his multiple worlds hypothesis and associated constructivism require this single reality to be mind-independent for our experience to be possible. After all the metaphysical hoops that Goodman jumps through to maintain his thesis, one must agree with Kukla when he concludes that “all this is, of course, absurd.” (103) By now the case against Goodman should be overwhelming. However, there is one last area that I want to consider, namely Goodman’s epistemological relativism in the face of his multiple actual worlds.

3.4 I have so far argued that Goodman’s ontological relativism and anti-realist constructivism require a logical, mental, and non-mental mind-independent structure of reality or his view is

¹²² This is despite Goodman’s claim that we construct the matter out of which worlds are made, be it space-time, energy, substance, etc. Instead he claims we always make a new world from the remains of a previous one. See *WW*, pp. 6-7. The argument I have deployed against the mental in section 3.2, above, can be equally applied to Goodman’s infinite regress of versions, showing that somewhere there must be mind-independent structure.

¹²³ I think Boghossian is mistaken in attributing this cookie-cutter view to Goodman and Putnam. Goodman takes the underlying sub-structure of the world to be constructed along with our concepts, while Putnam explicitly rejects the cookie-cutter model. See *WW*, pp. 6-7 and Putnam (1987), pp. 32-37, respectively. Boghossian later (wrongly) attributes this cookie-cutter view to Kant’s categories. See Boghossian (2006), pp. 42-44.

incoherent. Finally, I want to briefly consider whether Goodman's epistemological views are compatible with his ontological relativism and constructivism. Goodman's epistemological relativism holds that there *is no way the world is* independently of how we conceive it. What facts obtain depend on what stance is adopted, and what stance is adopted is a matter of convention. ("Just the Facts, Ma'am!", 84-85) Coupled with his unimpeded versional constructivism, what facts there are become relative to a version (or world) with virtually no limits on what facts can be constructed.

As we have seen, some fact p can be true in W_1 , while $\sim p$ can be true in W_2 , so the truth of any fact is relative to whatever world is under consideration. Goodman suggests altering Tarski's T-schema accordingly:

“ ‘Snow is white’ is true if and only if snow is white” must be revised to something like “ ‘Snow is white’ is true in a given world if and only if snow is white in that world”, which in turn, if differences between true versions cannot be firmly distinguished from differences between worlds, amounts merely to “ ‘Snow is white’ is true according to a true version if and only if snow is white according to that version.” (WW, 120)

It should be remembered that while Goodman rejects truth as correspondence between a version and a world, statements within a version can be considered true if they correspond correctly to the version.¹²⁴ The version in turn is considered ‘right’ if it is coherent by offending neither our long-held beliefs nor any of its own precepts. Goodman thus provides us with a theory that enables us to determine the truth of any given proposition, however he does not tell us what the scope of that theory is. Goodman is faced with two options concerning the scope of the truth of some proposition p : either ‘ p is true in W_1 ’ is true *simpliciter*, in which case it is true in all

¹²⁴ It is not entirely clear what Goodman has in mind here. While his altered T-schema seems to suggest a correspondence relation between statement and version, he also claims that acceptance of Tarski's formula does not commit one to a correspondence theory of truth. ("The Way the World Is", 8) He provides no argument for this claim.

worlds or ‘*p* is true in W1’ is relative to W1.¹²⁵ Both options, I will argue, raise serious difficulties for Goodman.

If Goodman accepts the first option, ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true *simpliciter*, then ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true in all worlds. As a result, ‘*p* is true in W1’ is an absolute fact, but then it follows that some facts are not relative, and therefore that Goodman’s epistemological relativism is false. That is, Goodman holds that there is no way the world is apart from how we describe it (which is to say there is no independent ‘fact of the matter’). However, if ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true in all worlds, then ‘*p* is true in W1’ is an independent fact, not relative to any given version.¹²⁶ It also places constraints on Goodman’s constructivism; W2 cannot construct the fact that ‘*p* is false in W1’, otherwise the problem of the two societies is reintroduced. If ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true *simpliciter* and W2 constructs the fact ‘*p* is false in W1’ which is also true *simpliciter*, then it is the case that ‘*p* is true in W1 and *p* is false in W1’. If Goodman allowed facts to be true *simpliciter*, then this entails that there is a mind-independent way the world is because there are absolute (non-relative) facts. It would further undermine his own constructivism by vitiating the very usefulness of positing multiple worlds because he would have no way to avoid a contradiction.

The second option relativizes ‘*p* is true in W1’ to W1, such that all facts true of W1 are only true in W1. Thus, it can be the case that ‘*p* is false in W1’ is true in W2’ while ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true in W1, avoiding a contradiction. However, relativization of fact to version introduces a different problem for Goodman. It introduces an infinite regress of relativizations, what Boghossian calls “infinitary propositions”¹²⁷ (56) Goodman has already relativized *p* to a

¹²⁵ These two options are discussed in Boghossian (2006) and Kukla (2000).

¹²⁶ Goodman may object by claiming that ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true relative to all versions, however the truth of that statement depends on there being at least one version, so it is still not a property of the world in itself. This objection still leaves Goodman with the dilemma discussed in 3.2; he must assume some initial mind-independent structure or he is left begging the question.

¹²⁷ Kukla discusses the same problem in terms of Putnam’s inexpressibility thesis. See Kukla (2000), pp. 131-134.

world, W1. However, in order to avoid ‘*p* is true in W1’ becoming an absolute fact, it must be relativized to a world, so ‘ ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true in W1’. This new fact, ‘ ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true in W1’ will be an absolute fact unless it is itself relativized to a world. It becomes ‘ ‘ ‘*p* is true in W1’ is true in W1’ is true in W1’. It quickly becomes apparent that we are faced with an infinite regress of relativizations. These infinitary propositions are required to avoid the conclusion that there are absolute facts, and the corollary that the world has a mind-independent structure. However, if we abbreviated these regressive relativizations to $\{W_\infty, p\}$ ¹²⁸ then Goodman cannot claim that this formula is absolutely true without contradicting his own position. That is, if Goodman claims that the truth of all propositions is relative to a world, then that claim must itself be relative to a world, in this case the version that Goodman has adopted. We are given no reason to accept such a version *and* it begs the question. Goodman’s claim that truth is relative to a version is therefore self-undermining.¹²⁹ But no other options exist, so “the real dilemma facing the global relativist, then, is this: either the formulation that he offers us does not succeed in expressing the view that there are only relative facts; or it consists in the claim that we should so reinterpret our utterances that they express infinitary propositions that we can neither express nor understand.” (Boghossian, 56) For Goodman’s position to be plausible he has to admit some absolute, mind-independent facts.

Further problems arise when we consider Goodman’s supposedly “innocuous interpretations of necessity and possibility”. (WW, 120) How do the two options given above conform with Goodman’s views of possibility and necessity? Goodman’s formulation, which I discussed in chapter 1, is the same as David Lewis’ with the exception that the set of actual worlds is different: “A statement is necessary in a universe of worlds or true versions if true in

¹²⁸ That is, *p* is true relative to a world *W*, *ad infinitum*. Kukla gives a similar formula and argument. See Kukla (2000), pp. 132.

¹²⁹ This is the traditional argument against relativism; is the statement ‘everything is relative’ itself relative? If it is not, then it is false and if it is, then we are not forced to accept it because it does not preclude the truth of non-relative claims. See Boghossian (2006) pp. 52-54 for a discussion of the traditional problem.

all, necessarily false if true in none, and contingent or possible if true in some.” (ibid.) While Goodman’s actual worlds are a subset of Lewis’ possible worlds, Goodman provides no catalogue of them, so it is unclear what actual worlds there are. Further, it is unclear what Goodman has in mind by “universe of worlds or true versions” - does he mean all the worlds that it is *possible* to construct, or all the *currently constructed* worlds? The former possibility seems to beg the question, since what is possible is precisely what is being defined. Yet the latter possibility would be odd, since presumably whatever current versions there are can be deconstructed (in a non-Derridean sense) and new versions constructed. A statement, *y*, that is now necessary by being true in all worlds, could become merely possible if a new version was constructed in which *y* was false, or impossible if all new versions were constructed and *y* was true in none of them. This is an odd consequence, and it seems to miss something important about the meaning of ‘necessary’ and ‘impossible’. Despite appearing to beg the question, Goodman must mean the set of all possible right versions.

I have already argued in chapter 1 that the constraints on Goodman’s worldmaking merely amount to the stubbornness of social custom. As a result, it would be possible for anything to be constructed so long as it did not violate the laws of logic (as I argued in section 3.1). Therefore, necessity for Goodman amounts to tautologies, impossibility is merely contradiction, and possibility allows absolutely anything. This brings me back to the issue I started with; is necessity and possibility a problem for Goodman’s epistemological relativism? Another drawback with admitting ‘*p* is true in *W1*’ is an absolute fact is that on Goodman’s model of necessity, ‘*p* is true in *W1*’ is a necessary fact. If ‘*p* is true in *W1*’ is true in all worlds, then we get the odd result that *everything* is necessary. Goodman’s view of necessity, when combined with absolute facts, results in universal necessity. This is in conflict with Goodman’s assertion that nothing is absolutely necessary. (“On Starmaking”, 143-144) This is yet another reason for Goodman not to admit absolute facts, but then he is stuck in an infinite regress of

relativizations. In contrast, if Goodman accepts regressive relativization to version, then his view of necessity poses no major difficulty, however we have seen how his constraints on version-construction merely amount to the laws of logic, which belies Goodman's claim that his relativism does not allow "unlimited license". ("On Starmaking", 144) Further, as I argued above, Goodman's relativism cannot even be uttered without being self-undermining. Goodman is therefore stuck between admitting some mind-independent structure of reality or an unintelligible view of multiple worlds and relativized constructions.

This chapter has focused on a number of aspects of Goodman's ontological relativism and relativist constructivism, considered as free-standing doctrines. I have argued that Goodman's position requires a mind-independent reality. Goodman tacitly assumes a logical structure of the world that is mind-independent, despite being in conflict with much of what he says. He further assumes that the mind has a special metaphysical status, but provides no argument for it. He must therefore either supply an argument for the *sui generis* nature of the mind, or admit that there is some mind-independent structure. I then argued that Hempel's and Kukla's criticisms seriously undermine Goodman's position, such that Goodman's multiple worlds hypothesis must be taken as merely rhetorical, otherwise Goodman is incapable of explaining certain facets of our experience. Finally, I argued that Goodman's epistemological relativism is faced with a dilemma: either admit absolute facts and an objective world or accept an infinite regress of relativizations that are ultimately incoherent. Without a mind-independent reality Goodman's ontological relativism and constructivism are incoherent, giving us no reason to doubt our everyday ontology of naive realism.

Conclusion

The central thesis of Goodman's metaphysical position that I have been concerned with is his ontological relativism, which argues that there is no version-independent way the world is. While there are four distinct aspects of Goodman's metaphysical position - ontological

relativism, anti-realism, epistemological relativism, and constructivism - the latter three follow from his ontological relativism. I have therefore focused on Goodman's argument for ontological relativism, showing him to have committed Dyke's representational fallacy in chapter 2 by assuming that conflicting descriptions must be intertranslatable to describe the same reality and by conflating descriptions of reality with reality itself because of the failure of foundationalism. There I argued that irreducible and mutually untranslatable descriptions *can* describe the same reality by appeal to the truthmaker principle. I further argued that the failure of the Given does not undermine our epistemic access to a mind-independent reality. Despite finding Goodman's argument fallacious, I further considered his position as a self-standing doctrine, arguing that it is incoherent for various reasons: its explanatory scope is limited, it cannot account for certain facets of our experience, and it devolves into a self-undermining relativism. My conclusion was that Goodman must admit a single, mind-independent reality for his position to be tenable. However, once a mind-independent reality is admitted there is increasingly little reason to accept the rest of Goodman's premises.

While I have not argued for any specific formulation of the realist thesis, realism broadly construed seems far more plausible than Goodman's position, particularly his multiple worlds hypothesis. Goodman is far from alone in holding such radical ontological and epistemological views, and so I do not claim to have undermined anti-realism, constructivism, or relativism in all their forms. Goodman advances similar arguments as other philosophers that I have touched on briefly, such as Putnam and Carnap, but my treatment of their respective positions has been far from exhaustive. Instead, my aim has been to question the cogency of Goodman's specific brand of ontological relativism.

There is an appreciable difficulty in criticizing radical views like Goodman's, in that thinkers of his sort are unlikely to accept the same theoretical virtues as the realists. David Bakhurst remarks on the same problem with respect to arguing against the radical constructivist

views of Kenneth Gergen: “Gergen is an interesting opponent because, paradoxically, the extremity of his views makes them difficult to argue against. After all, the radical constructionist will likely dismiss the standards of soundness invoked by realists as social constructs of an invidious kind.” (2011, 29) As I touched on in chapter 3, Goodman may not share my acceptance of parsimony, simplicity, or explanatory scope. Given his motivation to avoid contradiction because anything may follow, Goodman must at least accept non-relative criteria of rationality. As a nominalist (although he makes no nominalist demands on worldmaking) Goodman should further accept parsimony,¹³⁰ and by putting forward his arguments for ontological relativism and multiple worlds, Goodman seems to presuppose that explanatory scope is a virtue of metaphysical theories. As a result, Goodman should recognize the aptness of my criticisms. While I do not expect to have exhaustively undermined Goodman’s position, I hope to have taken a decisive step in showing why his position is untenable.

¹³⁰ As I discussed in chapter 1, despite invoking parsimony in his argument against realism, Goodman rejects Hempel’s appeal to parsimony (and explanatory scope and simplicity) in criticizing Goodman’s constructivism.

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