



Meaning and the Moral Sciences.

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blems" (p. 95) of interest to both of them. He mailed the draft of the essay to Parsons for two reasons: he wanted to make sure that he had presented Parsons' ideas correctly and he hoped with his initiative to bring about a lasting theoretical relationship with the American sociologist who, like himself, had taken his departure from Weber. Parsons, however, not only felt that Schutz had not done justice to his position but read the whole essay as a critique of himself. As a consequence, the exchange ended on a note of mutual frustration.

Schutz had assumed that Parsons, after having accepted Weber's sociology of understanding, would have to move in the direction which he himself had chosen when he wrote *Der Sinnhafte Aufbau*. But, in fact, Parsons moved in the opposite direction, that is, toward the construction of a structural-functional Systems Theory. A convinced Neo-Kantian, he felt that he had done justice to the principle of subjectivity by integrating 'subjective' *categories* into his otherwise 'objective'-positive theories. Being not versant with phenomenological psychology, he—as he reiterated in 1974—feared that Schutz wanted to lure him into a "quasimetaphysical" trap. The discussion between the two, which could have led to establishing agreements and differences in their mutual theories at the time, turned into an extensive theoretical misunderstanding. Neither of them had a clear grasp of the "in-order-to motive" of the other and judged his statements in terms of erroneous presuppositions.

Parsons' "Retrospective Perspective" serves the exclusive purpose of clarifying and improving the major positions he had taken in 1941. While he now argued from the vantage point he had reached after more than 30 years of additional theoretical work, he made no effort to consult the publications which Schutz wrote between 1941 and 1959. Thus, he allows himself the repetition of his misinterpretations of Schutz's position of 1940 instead of rectifying them on the basis of the elaborations and clarifications contained in later articles.*

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*The author of this review has substantiated his interpretation of the volume on hand in a forthcoming review article in *Current Sociology*, and he has analyzed Parsons' "Retrospective Perspective" in detail in an article to be published in *Human Studies*.

Meaning and the Moral Sciences. HILARY PUTNAM. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. Pp. ix, 145. \$9.00.

Collected here are the 1976 John Locke Lectures at Oxford and

three other lectures. That the topics “overlap, interrelate, and inform one another” (6) makes the book rich and rewarding, if rather disorganized. Don’t let the title fool you. There are but two lectures on the “moral sciences,” both more tentative than the rest, though highly suggestive. And meaning is less a focus than truth, reference, and linguistic understanding. That’s because of Putnam’s previous debunking of meaning in conjunction with his provocative theory of reference.¹ The main topic here is realism.

Putnam’s realism is not metaphysical but empirical, as the final lecture makes clear (it might be read first). He rejects metaphysical realism, with its purported “model of the relation of *any* correct theory to all or part of THE WORLD” (123), by arguing that it is unintelligible to suppose “that even an ‘ideal’ theory (from a pragmatic point of view) might *really* be false” (126). Empirical realism is “internal,” i.e., part of a scientific theory providing an explanatory model of the general success of speakers’ total behavior (100-2), people’s epistemic reliability (103-7), and the “convergence of scientific knowledge” (19-25). Well and good, but surely any anti-realist who rejects realism as an explanation of the general coherence of our perceptual experiences will not be moved by these considerations either.

Putnam’s brand of realism is essential to the extensional semantics of “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’.” The connection is via the correspondence theory of truth (not that you have to be a realist to accept that theory (106), but it helps). Tarski’s semantic conception of truth, though formally correct, is philosophically neutral (4, 46), silent on how reference gets set up in the first place (12ff). Putnam views reference in causal terms: “a speaker refers to some thing when he uses a term just in case his use of that term stands in a definite causal relation . . . to that something, or to things of the same kind” (4-5). “The assumed correspondence between the representations in the speaker’s mind and their external referents” (4) is part of an empirical hypothesis. Applying aspects of Quine’s thesis of the indeterminacy of translation, Putnam argues that no *one* account of a speaker’s references is *the* right one (a special case of the possibility of distinct but equally correct descriptions of a person’s psychology—46-54). What emerges is a “sophisticated realism” (51, 131) that can tolerate such theoretical diversity.

Putnam’s brilliant, far-reaching view seems to hold together, but does it hold up? Only if he can justify his rejection of Katz’s defense of

¹ “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’,” in Keith Gunderson (ed.), *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. VII. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975, pp. 131-193.

intensional semantics² and his summary dismissal of the Grice-Schiffer approach to meaning as but the latest "museum myth" (49). If you play Putnam's game, you won't lose. But it's not the only game in town.

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Rights and Persons. A. I. MELDEN. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. Pp. 263. \$15.00.

In his impressive record of contributions to moral philosophy, A. I. Melden has been especially concerned to elucidate concepts of promising (1956), rights (1959), and free action (1961). The present work affords a focus for all three of these concerns: the concept of person as agent.

For Melden, "a promise is a paradigm case of a right conferring action" (134). In the act of promising, the promiser assumes an obligation towards the promisee, who thus acquires the right to fulfillment of the promise. The paradigmatic factor is the relationship between the two. Melden argues that wherever a relationship between agents exists, both rights and obligations should be distributed so that "the agency of each, in different and changing ways, supports the agencies of others" (67).

Like H. L. A. Hart, Melden views rights as remaining even when overridden by other moral considerations. Rights are thus dependent on moral goods, but priorities among these are determined on the basis of the interpersonal relations on which both rights and goods impinge. According to Melden, it is our "moral concern for others as persons, rather than principles and priority rules [vs. Rawls], which provides us with a rationale for resolving many or most of the moral conflicts that arise, easily and without hesitation" (18).

While he is mainly interested in moral rights, Melden observes a necessary connection between these and legal rights, despite the inadequacies of legal definitions of person. Similarly, he explores the relation between special rights—which are unique and changing, and human rights—which the individual perduringly holds in common with other human beings. In light of his own definition of person as a social being who exists through time, he examines various possible human rights, and considers the status of infants, psychopaths, and

² Jerrold J. Katz, "Logic and Language: An Examination of Recent Criticisms of Intensionalism," in Gunderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-130.