

7 Naturalism on the Sydney Plan

JENANN ISMAEL

The most influential self-proclaimed naturalistic approach in the contemporary philosophical literature is metaphysics on the Canberra Plan.¹ On the Canberra plan, questions of what the world is like are left to physics. It falls to metaphysics to say what features of the world described by physics various classes of everyday belief represent. I will contrast this with naturalistic metaphysics on the Sydney Plan. The Sydney Plan is a style of naturalism that has been advocated and practised over the years by Huw Price, who is not only the father, but the sponsor and primary benefactor of the Sydney Plan, actively bringing together different strands of pragmatism in the philosophical community under its auspices.² Neither the Sydney nor the Canberra Plan are presented here as the view of any one person. They rather collect some unifying commitments and a common approach to metaphysical questions. Sydney Planners are united by opposition to the view of representation as a kind of mirroring which still shapes traditional approaches in metaphysics and epistemology and by a commitment to naturalism. Their work in various ways makes contributions to a positive, anti-representationalist understanding of linguistic and mental phenomena. Where the Canberra Plan asks 'what do x beliefs represent?' the Sydney Plan raises the question 'what facts about ourselves and the world jointly support the formation of x beliefs and the role they play in our lives?' Where the Canberra Plan conceives of the relationship between everyday concepts and the Absolute structures described by a fundamental theory in terms of semantic notions (reference, truth, and satisfaction), the Sydney Plan substitutes a fully detailed side-on account of use that may or may not take the form of a traditional theory of reference.³ There will be a story about agents and their relation to the world and how concepts facilitate their interaction, but there won't be anything that looks recognizably like reference to an independently well-defined feature of the landscape. As I see it, the Sydney Plan as a generalization of the Canberra Plan, that is conservative of much of the work done under the auspices of the Canberra Plan but comes with a somewhat more permissive understanding of what

it is for some everyday concept to 'find a place' in a scientific vision of reality.⁴

In the first section, I'll introduce the Canberra Plan, and I'll spend the rest of the chapter contrasting it with the Sydney Plan and saying how the attempt to fit everything into its mould leads to certain kinds of recognizable errors.

The search for truthmakers: naturalism on the Canberra Plan

The body of everyday belief is a motley collection of partially overlapping loosely integrated representations. There are words, images, maps, sounds, symbols, and sensory impressions organized around concepts connected in a Quinean web of inferential relations.⁵

There was a time when philosophy was all about conceptual analysis. We were interested in norms that govern relations among concepts and their relations to perception and action. The methods were a priori, and for some who thought that the structure of our concepts was authoritative about the structure of Being, this was a way of exploring the structure of Being. When naturalistic philosophers began to look to science for an understanding of what the world is like, the project turned from one of describing relations among concepts to one of relating concepts to the world. The Canberra Plan introduced a division of labour. The job of science is to give us an account of what the world is like, and the task of the metaphysician is to find something in the scientifically given world that can serve as reference for objects and properties we quantify over in everyday discourse. David Lewis generalized and perfected the method introduced by Ramsey and developed further by Horwich. First we collect everyday platitudes using the concept to be interpreted. We pull these together in the form of an implicit theory, and then we Ramsify. Whatever comes closest to satisfying the Ramsified theory is then presented as an explicit physical characterization of the concept's extension. This is a picture of representation born of experience with the maps and models. Concepts are interpreted by extensional mapping that assign referents from the target domain. It is built on the paradigm of what Price calls 'matching games'.

Imagine a child's puzzle book, designed like this. On the right side of each page there's a picture of a complex scene, on the left side a column of peel-off stickers. For each sticker – the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge, the koala, and so on – the child needs to find the corresponding object in the picture. The game is successfully completed when every sticker has been placed in its correct location.

88 Jenann Ismael

Now think of the right-hand side as the world, and the column of stickers as the set of statements we take to be true of the world. For each statement, it seems natural to ask what makes it true – what fact in the world has precisely the ‘shape’ required to do the job. Matching true statements to the world seems a lot like matching stickers to the picture ...⁶

That is a very natural and compelling picture of how the terms in a natural language (or the concepts that furnish components of everyday belief) relate to the world. Beliefs encode information about identifiable configurations of elements in the landscape, and the direction of fit is from belief to world. If there is a mismatch, something is wrong with the belief. But it doesn’t fit very well with a naturalistic view of representational practices. It builds in from the get-go a quite restricted view of the function of belief that fails in a way that is readily apparent when we take a side-on view of our own representational practices.⁷

Representational practices: facade construction

Representations of all kinds (from the mental models generated by the brain to the everyday maps and artefacts that we steer by, to the specialized products of professional science) have the status of user interfaces designed to facilitate interaction between an active system and an open environment. In practice, representation isn’t about constructing scaled models or copies of the world. It is about constructing facades. Facades capture the stable structures in restricted domains, at a certain scale, and against the background of unrepresented, and often unknown, scaffolding.⁸ They are idealized, simplified, sometimes distorted. They filter, transform, and embellish with auxiliary structures designed to facilitate specialized uses.⁹

Most of us, in our day-to-day lives, steer by a collection of partially overlapping and loosely integrated, facades. Whether we are talking about the everyday maps that we steer by or the norms governing the use of concepts that we internalize with our languages, these are not hatched fully formed, but grown over generations. They are evolved, and structured, to provide a user interface between a situated agent and her environment. We represent with concepts we inherit and steer by maps that are prepared by our brains, culture, and science that were selected, not as best copies, but because they fared best in a competition judged on practical grounds. They typically reduce high-variable spaces to low-dimensional spaces that highlight strategically important structures for solving epistemic and practical problems.¹⁰ Mark Wilson’s *Wandering Significance* is an immensely rich exploration of the complexity of the relationship between concepts, and is summarized here by Brandom:

Naturalism on the Sydney Plan 89

When things work well, when the concepts we deploy succeed in making the phenomena they address tractable, the result is the fabrication of a conceptual platform: a kind of workbench-with-tools that is the context in which things become available to us to observe, work on, manipulate, reason about, and investigate theoretically.

(Brandom 2011, 189)

Wilson introduces the very apt term 'facade' to describe these conceptual platforms.¹¹ Facades are tools, natural and human-made, designed to help us navigate a complex and changing world, and the structures defined on them earn their place in our lives because they work in the tasks for which they are appointed. We use the tools that we have inherited without an engineer's insight into why they work. Just as the cook learns to use the implements of his trade without needing to understand the physical principles that make them work. The gambler who knows how to use probabilities need have no understanding of the facts about the world that make the practices embodied in the norms that govern probabilistic reasoning work well (or well enough) as a guide to betting behaviour. Our belief-forming practices often have a quite complex behind-the-scenes rationale that is not explicitly represented at the level of content. We learn to use concepts by internalizing the norms that govern their use without needing to worry about that rationale. The side-on view makes the behind-the-scenes 'rationale' explicit, exhibiting the facts about Nature on the one hand, and ourselves on the other, that make them useful, giving us an engineer's insight into why those practices were selected, what they do for the creatures that use them.

Towards a conception of Being qua Being

Metaphysics means different things to different people, but there is a good tradition stemming from Aristotle according to which metaphysics is inquiry directed at the study of Being qua Being, which is to say, the study of what there is in the most general sense, not from a particular perspective in space and time, or as it appears to a particular class of creatures, but as it is *in itself*.¹² Physics aims for such a conception, but it doesn't stand on its own. It is part of an integrated science that has its own internal account of the relationship between the structures described by physics and everyday belief. And the part of science that describes that relationship is not separable from the physics. They are joint products of a form of analysis that gradually decouples our conception of the properties of things from the appearances and affordances they present to the likes of us. The result is a denuded vision of the world presented as an object to be

viewed through different kinds of sensory lenses and presenting affordances and opportunities to beings with different capacities and ends.

The process of articulation is slow, laborious, and unavoidably empirical. It finds its most sophisticated expression in science and does not preserve the kinds of reference relationships between pre-articulated beliefs and elements of the post-articulated world that the Canberra Plan demands. Consider the complexity of the physical analysis of sound. A knocker hits the side of a bell, setting up sound waves that traverse the space between that vibrate the hairs on the inner ear, that in turn vibrate the eardrum, which then sends signals to the brain, producing the impression of a chime. Where, or what, in all of this is the sound? Is it at the source where the ringer hits the metal? Is it in the airwaves between the bell and the ear? Is it in the hairs on the ear, in the eardrum, in the brain or mind of the perceiver? I think there is not a clear answer. The everyday conception of sound locates sounds at their source more or less, for many purposes, because it is useful to do so. But it is easy to sway people's intuitions. If you aren't moved by trees falling in the forest with no one around to hear, think of a vacuum in which there are lots of clangers hitting bells, but no sound waves, or think of a world in which bell-clangings produce sound waves, but things are arranged differently between skin and skull so that sound waves produce olfactory rather than auditory experiences. The everyday notion of sound doesn't distinguish between the event that produces the sound, the sound waves themselves, and the qualitative state produced in the hearer if these things are co-present, partly because everyday practice doesn't demand this distinction for practical purposes. Concepts tend to become articulated in response to practical needs.¹³

Mother Nature is a stingy, opportunistic engineer who takes advantage of rough correspondences whenever they are good enough for the organism's purposes, given its budget.

(Dennett 1998, 69)

If the goal is to arrive at a conception of Being qua Being, reflecting on the character of our experience won't do us any good in the hard cases, i.e. cases in which we are trying to determine whether some shared feature of experience is part of the mind-independent fabric of the world. We have to take the complex physical interaction between a situated agent and her environment, and try to sort out the various contributions of brain and environment, all the way from the irritations of sensory surfaces out to the distal sources. That's why the side-on view afforded by the study of the situated agent in her environment is indispensable to forming a conception of the way the world is in and of itself. Adopting a side-on view is part

Naturalism on the Sydney Plan 91

and parcel of separating *how things seem* from *how they are*, i.e. how they appear from our perspective, in space and time, and in relation to our particular sensibility. There is nothing a priori about that process. It is all part of the ongoing project in which physics partners with the cognitive and human sciences, of forming an articulate conception of the natural world and our place in it. The account of Being is not the starting point, but the end point of an inquiry that takes its departure from the familiar world of everyday sense. It is, as I understand it, what the whole of natural science is up to. For these reasons, it is hard to see how there can be a separable enterprise of pure ontology.

The normal progression of physics is in the direction of increasing depth, precision, generality, and objectivity.¹⁴ And it is part of the logic of that progression that the structures to which we have the most immediate phenomenological access are recovered as emergent, scaffolded, approximate, and implicitly relativized to a frame defined by our own situation in the world. Because it is a product of this self-directed hermeneutic, implicit in the Absolute conception is an understanding of how the objects of perceptual experience relate to Being. The familiar world of everyday sense is not reduced, but recovered, from a deeper and more general description as an emergent, approximate order that characterizes elements of Being in terms that implicitly relate it to our own modes of sensory access and interventional capabilities. Although we have gained a good deal more sophistication about the complexity of the subpersonal preparation that generates the perceived world, it is still correct to think of perception as broadly in the business of feature detecting, carrying information about the landscape to the agent. But if we turn our attention away from concepts that have immediate connections to experience to moral properties, normativity, modality, causes, and chances, the story is much more complex. The full body of everyday belief is full of concepts that don't simply have the function of describing in the sense of 'reflecting features of the world as it is anyway'. So consider the practice of probabilizing (forming beliefs about probabilities). This grew up as a way of overcoming epistemic deficits, guiding expectation in the face of ignorance. The practice comes with norms embodied in the probability calculus, for forming beliefs about probabilities, reasoning with them, and using them to guide expectation. Or consider the practice of causal modelling, which grew up as a way of guiding action for creatures with limited practical input to the world. The practice comes with its own tacit norms, which we all learn in the course of forming beliefs about causes, reasoning with them, and using them to guide practical inference.

Forming an articulate understanding of what our practices are for and why they work calls for a kind of self-directed hermeneutics that takes a side-on view of the coupling between agent and environment in which

those practices have their role. Probabilities and causes have a use for creatures with our particular mix of capacities and limitations developed to help us navigate, and guide our own contributions to, a complex and changing world. They are recovered from the account of Being not as labels for features of the landscape, but as partially prepared solutions to frequently encountered problems.¹⁵ There are all sorts of distinctions we draw at the level of belief that don't reflect structure that is there anyway, distinctions in our practical and epistemic relations to events and the whole battery of concepts organized around helping us overcome our limitations. The natural function of cognition is to extend our epistemic and practical powers, not by making them stronger, but by making them more effective.

Closing the circle: in retrospect, the relationship between everyday belief and fundamental ontology

Earlier I remarked that the Canberra Plan assumes a division of labour; the job of science is to give us the ontology, and the task of the metaphysician is to interpret our beliefs by an extensional mapping into the ontology provided by physics. The problem is that the overall account of Being embodied in a fully articulated scientific vision of the world, itself contains an account of the relationship between our concepts and the Absolute structures. That account goes something like this: it starts with fundamental ontology and talks about how macroscopic structures stabilize out of microinteractions in a way that produces a macroscopic world with a thermodynamic gradient and a good number of open systems that maintain their internal regularity well enough to be predictable. And it chronicles the emergence of creatures (information gathering and utilizing systems) that exploit that regularity by developing the practice of modelling. Once there is a fully developed practice of modelling up and running, with creatures utilizing concepts that have evolved through a process of natural and cultural selection to help them cope with a complex and changing environment, the physics will provide a side-on view of the relationship between the concepts these creatures employ and the Absolute structure of the world as it appears in our fundamental theory. And that side-on view will not support the extensional mappings expected by the matching game. The side-on view of the relationship will be in general more complex and mediated by the agent.

A naturalistic perspective on representational activity views representations of all kinds – from everyday concepts to the specialized products of professional science – as part of a user interface designed to act as an epistemic and practical intermediary with a partly known and locally controllable world, fashioned by an evolutionary design process that

balances costs and rewards. There are concepts that reflect the way things are with the world, and concepts that reflect the way things are with us, and then the great, grey area in-between of structures that are simultaneously self- and world-involving in a mix that can't be described in terms that are in general any more compact than the account of their role in the coupling described above. If you want an account from the perspective of physics itself of how our concepts relate to the fundamental structures that it describes, put some scaffolding in place, add some epistemic and practical asymmetries together with a set of cognitive needs and resources, let it evolve until structures have stabilized. The product of this process is not a mirror-like reproduction of the manifold it represents, but something restructured to serve as a user interface for an agent with his native perceptual equipment and all of the acquired tools he has picked up along the way to help him navigate and transform his environment. Representation is something that agents do with all kinds of structured internal images and external artefacts. Because those tools are the product of a combination of biological and cultural engineering that took place outside his field of explicit awareness, the agent himself won't need to have any explicit understanding of the physics behind the facade. That is something that will emerge (if at all) from an inquiry that takes a side-on view of his practices.

Our concepts and the representational practices in which they are embedded have this status. We inherit them with our languages and learn to use them with little explicit awareness of *why* they work. Just as a user of toaster needs to know how to feed toast in, and the sequence of operations he needs to perform to achieve results, the gambler who uses probabilities needs to know what conditions license an assignment of probability, the inferential calculus that governs the formal operations in probabilistic reasoning, and how to use such assignments to guide his betting behaviour. He needs, in short, to know the norms that guide the practice of probabilizing, but he need not possess an articulate understanding of why the practices work.

Viewed through a naturalist's eyes, all of our practices of applying and using concepts are ways of *coping*, a peculiarly human way of mediating interaction with the world. The Sydney Planner sees the relationship between concepts and Being (from the perspective of Being) as itself an object of investigation whose produce will describe how a class of beliefs function, what they do, what facts about us and the world cooperate to support their use. Where Canberra Planners insist that the relationship between belief about Xs and Being should take the form of an account of what at the level of Being beliefs about Xs 'refer to' or (in the material mode) what Xs *are*. Sydney Planners viewing the relations from the side-on standpoint see a differentiation of roles. They distinguish concepts that

track features of the environment from those that guide expectation and choice. And then there are products of culture, answering to much more complex needs, many of them social in character. In place of the static, two-term relation 'reference', they have a rich plurality of relations mediated by, or passing through, the embedded agents tailored to perform practical, epistemic, or social functions that cannot be understood in static, disembodied, or unembedded terms. Methodologically, this style of explanation opens up separate (but complementary) explanatory spaces for phenomenology, cognitive science, and natural science, treating them as partners in a fully developed naturalistic worldview.¹⁶

Naturalism on the Canberra Plan was conceived as addressing placement problems. For any familiar everyday concept, the 'location problem' vis-à-vis that property is to say how and why the property does or does not 'get ... a place in the scientific account of our world' (Jackson 1998, 3). The Sydney Planner can agree with this. Her disagreement with the Canberra Planner was not with his conception of the problem but his idea of what a solution would look like and the methods that were to be employed to achieve it. The Canberra Planner expects the placement problem to be solved by an account of reference. He collects platitudes about Xs in a theory that is used to pick out the best satisfier. The role of empirical investigation is limited to providing the ontology. The Sydney Planner has a more liberal conception of what it is to place something. She doesn't look for truthmakers for an implicit theory. She tells a non-reductive story about why creatures like us would develop those beliefs, and what they do for us. And it is an entirely scientific matter, not in any sense transparent to the users of a vocabulary, what facts about the world and ourselves viewed from the perspective of Being jointly support the fixation and use of X-beliefs.¹⁷ The Sydney Planner sees the process of relating concepts to Being as a wholly empirical matter of investigating the physical underpinnings of our representational practices: the physics behind the facade.¹⁸

The characteristic errors of the Canberra Plan: reification and over-articulation

The side-on view is that part of our account of Being that relates the Absolute structures that are part of a fundamental theory with the structures at the user interface. Although in some special cases, it takes the form of reference, it does not do so in general. And the attempt to force everything into the mould of reference is behind two characteristic errors to which Canberra Planners are prone. First, there is no need to find a referent for every structure on the user interface. The side-on view will explain why our concepts aren't articulated enough, where they are not, to make the

discriminations needed to deliver a referent. So in the case of interpreting sound vocabulary mentioned above, it will resist the temptation to say that there is an answer to the question 'what (or where) are the sounds?' Any extensional mapping of sounds into the more articulated physical framework will over-articulate the concept, i.e. attribute to it more articulation than it possesses.¹⁹ And there is a general point to be made here. The point of the Dennett remark I quoted earlier about Mother Nature being a stingy engineer is that user interfaces are *selected* in part because they don't represent what they don't need to. They provide reduced variable spaces that register only those differences that need to be discriminated for practical purposes.

Second, there is no need either to reduce or to reify where the side-on story doesn't take the form of an account of what the terms in question refer to.²⁰ Causes and chances provide especially good examples of the tendency to reify.²¹ Here is what the Sydney Planner says about chance. Chances play a certain epistemic role for creatures with our mix of knowledge and ignorance. They guide expectation about the future, in a manner that Lewis formalized (more or less) in his Principal Principle.²² The Sydney Planner's account of chance has several parts. It details the facts about why creatures like us have a use for beliefs about chance, he describes the norms embodied in the probability calculus that tell us how to use them in reasoning. And he tells us how we form beliefs about chance. And he ends there. The part of the story that tells us how we form beliefs about chance is effectively his account of scientific theorizing. Chance and laws are doxastic outputs of scientific theories, the products of a very complicated, holistic induction that uses observed regularities to generate quantities designed to aid us in the kinds of practical and epistemic inferences that creatures like us face.

The Canberra Planner wants to find a referent for chance beliefs. He sees two choices:²³ either he finds something in the pattern of fact that could be assigned as truthmaker to beliefs about chance, or he reifies chances by adding to his account of the mind-independent fabric of the world. Lewis famously attempted the first and his difficulties views are instructive about the difficulties that a Humean view faces. He began by looking at how beliefs about chances are formed as part of a package that systematizes information about the overall pattern of fact. He then presented the account of how beliefs about laws and chances are formed (his best-systems analysis) as an account of the *truthmakers* for those beliefs. Because all chance beliefs are joint products of the same holistic induction, if this is taken seriously as an account of truthmakers, it turns out that particular chance claims and every statement of law have the same truthmaker, namely the overall pattern of actual fact. What makes it true on Lewis's account that the chance at t that a particular radium atom decays within

an hour is x is that it is a theorem of the best systematization of the pattern of overall fact that the chance at t that a particular radium atom decays within an hour is x . And likewise for the chance that a particular spin measurement at t^* is y . Likewise for the laws of diffraction and the fundamental equations of motion.

The Sydney Planner's diagnosis of where Lewis went wrong is not that he had the wrong ontology, but that when he just looked for an unmediated extensional interpretation of beliefs about laws and chances, he lost all of the important differences that appear from a side-on view when we take into account their role in the practical and epistemic lives of users. They are all outputs of the same holistic induction, based on unrestricted information about the way things generally hang together. They differ not in which *part* of Being they represent, but in what they *do*.²⁴ They are differences in function, not differences in extension. The Sydney Planner's diagnosis of where Lewis's opponents went wrong is that they succumb to the allure of reification. And succumbing to the allure of reification is succumbing to the temptation to think that all belief takes the form: there are ways the world is and we form beliefs that are intended to reflect the way the world is and those beliefs are made true or false by the way the world is. Neither reduction nor reification is the right story here. We get full insight into the notion of chance by looking at the human contingencies that explain why those notions play the role they do in our cognitive and epistemic lives, i.e. the contingencies that give rise to the cognitive and epistemic practices in which they are embedded, and for which that are – so to speak – designed. Concepts have a role in the context of a specifically human combination of human capacities, limitations in which they are used to modify an evolving body of knowledge which is brought to bear on a history in progress. The side-on account of that role takes the form of an account of the relationship between agent and environment, viewing that as the nexus of a coupled interaction in which information flows in both directions. There is no natural way to paraphrase it as an account of reference.

If you feel yourself pulled by the idea that there must be something in the world that these beliefs represent that is not captured by the side-on account of use, consider the following. Once when I borrowed an apartment from a friend in Paris, I brought with me a store-bought map of the city, but found that she had left a personalized map to help me get around. The store-bought map was a perfectly generic map that had everything that you'd expect such generic maps to have on it. It represented all of the parts of the city and their relations to one another. It was carefully labeled and complete up to the same level of resolution as the personalized map, but the personalized map had a whole battery of secondary structures that had been written overtop in coloured pencil: stars marking favourite spots, Xs marking spots to be avoided, yellow highlighting marking busy

Naturalism on the Sydney Plan 97

streets, purple marking hills too steep to make on bike, green for safe neighbourhoods and grey for parts of the city that aren't well known. Now imagine the two maps side by side. Even though they represent the same terrain at the same level of resolution, one will find no extensional mapping of the secondary structures on the personalized map into the structures on the generic map. There is no metaphysical mystery about what these secondary structures represent. They are there to facilitate the user's interaction with the landscape. They are part of a user interface that she has constructed to navigate the space represented in Absolute terms in the generic map. Once you understand what those structures are for and the role they play in the lives of the users of the map, the expectation of an extensional correspondence to anything represented in Absolute terms on the generic map is deflated. There isn't an extensional mapping, because the structures on the user interface are relational. They relate the structures on a generic map to the situation, location, purposes, etc., of the user. They are built around distinctions that have significance for her, but that are not part of the intrinsic structure of the landscape.

One might try to resurrect correspondences by pointing out that the structures on the user interface don't correspond to structures represented on the generic map, because in the example, the user isn't herself represented on the map.²⁵ That would be correct. In our overall theories of the world, we are included in the description, and the structures that populate our everyday world are related to the Absolute structures of the fundamental ontology in a way that is mediated by the side-on account of use. The side-on view *is* that part of the scientific account of Being that relates everyday concepts to the Absolute structures described in a fundamental theory. That's the whole story. The Canberra Planner supposes that content-level structure can be related to Being by a two-term relation that takes the form of a static mapping into Absolute structures. The Sydney Planner says that is a truncated attempt to substitute a static, two-place relation of reference for a complex interaction mediated by the agent in which there are differences in direction of fit and use. We need to unpack that side-on view before we know whether and when to expect correspondences between concepts of things and things as they are in themselves. Our understanding of what there is fundamentally – in the Absolute mind-independent fabric of reality – is itself a product of a self-directed hermeneutics.

Not instrumentalism, not expressivism, not anti-realism

One reaction to this example is to view the structures on the embellished map instrumentally, or expressively, or in some other sense as not

genuinely representational. Here, I refer to Price's work on why those distinctions don't do the work that proponents want them to do: separating structures that have extensional correspondents in the sense of the matching game and those that have a more complex relationship to the Absolute structure of the world.²⁶ But even if we put that aside, there is a question here about how to use the vocabulary of representation? Do we hang onto the conception of representation built on the model of the matching game at the cost of regarding a good deal of everyday belief as not genuinely representational, or do we generalize 'representation' to allow the full range of roles that beliefs can play? The Sydney Planner generalizes the notion of representation and finds a use for a special class of representations that have the function of labelling or standing for independently well-defined features of the world.

Here is what a side-on view reveals about how the contents of everyday belief relate to the world described by physics: first, imagination often assumes that the microscopic world is a scaled down version of the macroscopic, but as we've learned in recent years, there is a great deal of non-trivial physics between the macroscopic and microscopic. We anchor words to stable macroscopic targets in the landscape that make good landmarks to steer by, but macroscopic targets of reference do not typically correspond to collections of microscopic particulars and the macroscopic regularities that describe how things hang together in the everyday world are stabilized out of low-level laws in a manner that is often too complex to compute. Second, pretheoretic reflection assumes that perception is a transparent channel for conveying information about the macroscopic environment to the mind; the cognitive sciences and neuropsychology have revealed how much restructuring is effected below the level of consciousness. Third, not all of our concepts have the function of referring to what is there (or, as it is sometimes put, what is 'there anyway'). If we want to bridge the gap between everyday concepts and physics, we have to tell every part of this story. No part of that story is a priori, and it can't be bypassed in general by using everyday intuitions to formulate an implicit theory of a concept and Ramsifying.²⁷ To understand why our concepts have the shape they do, we need to understand the environment in which they are born and used, the forces that shape their growth. They find applicability and practical purpose in a context. Epistemic practices like prediction and inference make sense for example only under conditions characterized by epistemic asymmetries, and the specific character of those practices requires understanding the epistemic context in which they are deployed, the problems that they are introduced to solve, the tasks that they are introduced to perform. Concepts like disgust or shame have a complex setting and an anatomy that can't be understood in isolation from it. All of this is part of a naturalistic ecology that casts light on the

networks of concepts and auxiliary representational tools that mediate our interaction with the environment.

One might worry at this stage that I have been criticizing a straw man by saddling the Canberra Planner with a conception of reference that imputed a direction of fit and ruled out the more complex relationships described in the side-on view? The conception of representation that I have been criticizing is more insidious than a consciously held view. It can be seen in the complaint that the side-on account of use which explains how and why we form beliefs about employing a target vocabulary leaves the metaphysical questions unanswered. And it needs to be openly displayed, explicitly criticized, and actively disavowed, so that we don't fall into the traps it holds. Consider, for example, this remark in the introduction to a book developing the new insights into the content and role of causal thinking that have come out of the work on causal modelling in the past thirty years:

This book isn't about metaphysics. It's about representation. It's about how people represent the world and how we should represent the world to do the best job of guiding action. ... the logic of causality is the best guide to prediction, explanation, and action. And not only is it the best guide around; it is the guide that people use. People are designed to learn and to reason with causal models.

(Sloman 2005, 20)

Discussion of the metaphysics of causation, that proceeds on the assumption there is a question here that is left untouched by those developments. The thought seems to be that once we have clarified the logic of causal claims,²⁸ their connection to other beliefs, and their role in epistemic and practical inferences, we merely have an account of the *epistemology* of causal belief and the function of causal thinking. This – the thought is – is the place where metaphysics begins; there remains a question about what causal relations *are*, or what causal models *represent*. This thought is mistaken. Understanding what causal modelling is *for*, how to build and use a model, the role models play in the natural history of embedded agents, the practical role the distinction between fixed and variable structure plays ... that's all there is to understand. There's nothing more that God could add to this story to answer the question of what causes are.

Or consider how different the discussion of modal metaphysics would be if people stopped looking for truthmakers and began doing what Boris Kment is suggesting here:

A comprehensive philosophical account of modality should not only tell us what metaphysical necessity is, but should also tell us which ordinary-life

100 *Jenann Ismael*

practices give rise to modal notions, and what role modal concepts play in them. It should thereby elucidate what the purpose of these notions is, why creatures with our interests and concerns have developed them.

(Kment 2006, 237–38)²⁹

Kment is one of the good guys, someone doing exactly the kind of work that the Sydney Planner thinks should replace metaphysics on the Canberra Plan, but even he pays lip service in this remark to the need to say ‘what metaphysical necessity is’. The Sydney Planner denies that there is a *separate* question about what metaphysical necessity is. The whole story is given by the story of how modal beliefs arise and the role they play in ordinary-life practices. The Sydney Plan as I am presenting it is not quietist.³⁰ It has a lot to say about how different classes of concepts find their place in a scientific vision of the world, but it refuses to paraphrase what it says in the form of an account of truthmaking.

Conclusion

Because we ourselves and our representational practices fall within the scope of our physical theories, they come with a side-on view that relates them to the world. In some cases, the side-on view will go like this: there are these things in the world and people come by and gather information about those things, and they form beliefs that are intended to reflect the way things are with the world, and (if all goes well) the way things are with the world makes their beliefs true. But in other cases, the story will not look like that at all. In the case of beliefs about chance, and cause, and disgust and democracy, the side-on story doesn’t involve facts that are well-defined independently of our representational practices and that act (in that sense) as truthmakers for our beliefs. It is a much more complex story to recognize that not all terms in a mature language have the job of reflecting features of the domain of fact. There has been a slow shift of practices in response to the demands of the subject matter, but the vocabulary of truthmaking has remained.

Bridging the gap between physics and the familiar world of everyday sense involves two movements, one vertical and one horizontal. The vertical movement requires understanding how high-level structures are stabilized out of low-level interactions. The horizontal movement requires understanding how an active mind coupled to a changing environment generates personal-level experience. There have been huge changes and advances in scientific thinking on both fronts, and on both fronts the developments have been unanticipated and transformative. Research on complexity has undermined entrenched philosophical assumptions about the relationship between the microscopic and macroscopic. Scientific study of the mind

has forced us to acknowledge that the objects and structures disclosed in experience are not a transparent reflection of the mind-independent structure of reality, but distilled out of coupled interaction between mind and environment as part of a user interface honed over generations to produce adaptive behaviour. Culturally incubated practices of concept application add a further layer of complexity. To think that we could bypass all of these processes with a simple two-term relation of truth to truthmaker is a mistake that leads to some clearly identifiable diseases of contemporary analytic metaphysics: (i) the tendency to over-articulate, (ii) the tendency to reify, and (iii) the tendency to over-appreciate the role of a priori methods. The Canberra Plan had a good run. The advances that were made under its auspices have been deep, but it is time to fly a new banner.

Notes

- 1 The origin of the expression 'Canberra Plan' was in drafts of O'Leary-Hawthorne and Price 1996. As O'Leary-Hawthorne and Price say, 'Canberra's detractors often charge that as a planned city, and a government town, it lacks the rich diversity of "real" cities. Our thought was that in missing the functional diversity of ordinary linguistic usage, the Canberra Plan makes the same kind of mistake about language' (O'Leary-Hawthorne and Price 1996, 291, n. 23). The label was adopted by Canberra Planners themselves (see, for example, Lewis 2004, 76 and 104, n. 3), who talk about the 'Canberra Plan' for causation, referring to the theories proposed in Tooley 1987 and Menzies 1996, and is now widely used without prejudice. For an excellent new volume of essays from Canberra Planners and their critics, see David Braddon-Mitchell and Robert Nola 2008. There are a number of people that call themselves Canberra Planners whom my narrow characterization would not fit. Here and throughout the term is used to describe my characterization, and self-modelled Canberra Planners are free to escape criticism by demurring from my characterization.
- 2 Price has moved to Cambridge, but the Sydney plan grew up in Sydney, and that is properly its hometown. The Sydney Plan has deep roots in Deweyan pragmatism, with connections to Sellars, Rorty, and Wittgenstein. Sydney Planners, aside from Price, include Blackburn, Michael Williams, Mathew Chrisman, Brandom, Lionel Shapiro, and in some respects, Mark Wilson, Allen Gibbard, and Jamie Dreier. It can be seen from the range of interests and positive views represented here that Sydney Planners are a disparate lot. My version of the Sydney Plan is not in every respect Price's. See, for example, n. 30.
- 3 I use semantic notions (truth, reference) in a non-deflationary way, unless otherwise indicated, for ease of exposition. The Sydney Planner characteristically holds a deflationary theory of reference, preserving semantic notions to play a formal role, but qualifying to allow the possibility of deflationary readings makes the exposition tortured. I also speak throughout in naively realistic terms about physics, but everything I say is compatible with treating physics as just one more representation, with its own internal standard of what the Absolute structure of the world is like. In that case, my naive realism will be a kind of internal realism.
- 4 The phrase is Jackson's. For Jackson, the naturalistic metaphysician's job is to say how the things we quantify over in everyday discourse 'get ... a place in the scientific account of our world' (Jackson, 1998, 3).
- 5 Concepts are components of thought and thought is distinguished from these other forms of representation in several ways that won't matter for our purposes. There are individual and communal versions of the body of everyday belief. I'll give the communal version priority, though nothing hinges on it.

102 *Jenann Ismael*

- 6 Huw Price, 'Expressivism, Pluralism and Representationalism – A New Bifurcation Thesis', University of Sydney, 27 August 2007. <<http://sydney.edu.au/time/conferences/epr/price.pdf>>.
- 7 And we can see why the procedure would be useful: for the same reason it is useful to give the coordinates of a collection of familiar and well-loved places known by common names (Sam's restaurant, mom's house, the old police station) and give addresses in a systematic vocabulary. The result will be an explicit, non-redundant catalogue of what there is that characterizes all objects in Absolute terms and locates them relative to one another.
- 8 Scaffolding (in its use here) is structure in the environment that supports connections that are used, but not representation. So, for example, the connection between visual impressions of redness and the reflectance properties of surfaces that allows us to use the former to track the latter depends on things being set up correctly in the ambient environment.
- 9 What gets included and left out, which idealizations and simplifications are allowed, and what auxiliary structures get onto one's map depends on their use. The map I use to navigate the dinner party at a conference will be highlighted with labels that identify what institution the people in attendance work at and what their field is. The map one uses to navigate a purely social situation will be quite different. The map a biker uses to cross a city is different from the one a driver or walker uses. And those are different from the one that someone using a wheelchair deploys. The same context- and task-dependent criteria are at work in choice of models in science. The biologist and physicist modelling signalling pathways may deploy different descriptive coordinates and different equations.
- 10 The design process is natural and cultural selection. The user of a facade needs to know how to carry out content-level manipulations that provide effective procedures for achieving ends. Things are arranged by the designer so that a simplified set of content-level manipulations produce the desired effect, but a side-on view reveals the complex underpinnings
- 11 I adapt his term here for my purposes.
- 12 This is not to rule out other perfectly legitimate inquiries, equally deserving the name metaphysics.
- 13 See Ismael (2007), in particular the discussion of Sellars and the Myth of Jones for an account of the process of articulation.
- 14 'Depth' is measured in terms of resolution; 'generality' is measured in terms of the range of applicability of its laws (do they hold only under special conditions or universally); and 'objectivity' is measured in terms of the independence of relations from our sensory states or interventional capabilities.
- 15 See Ismael, unpublished, for development of the idea of models as partially prepared solutions to frequently encountered problems.
- 16 Naturalism is not necessarily physicalism, on my view, because it doesn't come with the reductionist aspirations of many physicalists. But that is a long and separate story. On consciousness, here and throughout, my position will be that I take it for granted that our mental lives are conscious, that they have both a quality and content, and that quality and content are both introspectively available. I take it for granted that the conscious mind is well enough for our purposes coincident with the introspectively available mind. I take no position on whether consciousness is reducible, but consciousness does not figure anywhere as an explanatory primitive. For my purposes, consciousness can be treated as either epiphenomenal or reducible.
- 17 Realism/anti-realism, objectivity/subjectivity, we let all of the important distinctions get drawn in the hermeneutic story, which makes explicit what different kinds of belief (e.g. beliefs about laws, causes, counterfactuals, morals, beauty, etc.) commit us to from the perspective of Being. All of the distinctions we want to draw between what different classes of belief commit you to (about the world, about the self, about the relationship and interaction between them) will get drawn in a more nuanced and articulated form.
It is important that these distinctions get drawn from the side-on and not the top down. The Sydney Planner denies simple division into representational and non-representational (or subjective and objective). Most of our beliefs are both world- and self-involving and teasing apart what realism about Xs commits us to is a matter of developing an articulated, side-on view of the practices in which they arise.

Naturalism on the Sydney Plan 103

- 18 It retains a role for a priori methods establishing the norms that govern the use of concepts, but even there, a priori methods aren't authoritative. The norms those norms are partially internalized by the users of concepts to the extent needed to guide their behaviour, but they have their source externally, in the give and take of reasons. Because the practices are widely distributed (they have to be culled from the social interactions among no small number of interacting individuals), it is no trivial matter to discern the norms that govern them.
- 19 The tendency of the Canberra Planner is to elicit intuitions about counterfactuals to strengthen the implicit theory enough to discriminate the various candidates. The counterfactuals will characteristically describe situations that don't arise in practices. In many cases this has the feel of introducing articulation rather than manifesting articulation that was already in place, somehow implicit in the practice. The counterfactuals transform the concept. And although there may be more or less natural ways of extending use to these sorts of cases, if the goal was to elucidate the everyday concept, there may not be an answer.
- 20 This has to be put quite delicately. The Sydney Planner wants to reserve the right to use the vocabulary of truth and reference, so this is where the distinction is between inflationary and deflationary conceptions of semantic notions (truth, reference, satisfaction) matter. For a fuller discussion of the distinction and generally illuminating discussion of metaphysics from a Sydney Planner, see Thomasson, unpublished.
- 21 I have discussed both examples in more detail in Ismael, forthcoming.
- 22 There has been controversy about the precise formulation. See Lewis 1980 for the original formulation, and see Lewis 1994, Hall 1994, and Thau 1994 for some of the controversy
- 23 Or, two choices if he wants to hold that chance beliefs express truths. There are non-cognitivist alternatives.
- 24 See Ismael, forthcoming, where I argue that no beliefs about what merely is the case could play the role that beliefs about laws or chances do in practical and epistemic reasoning. The Sydney Planner recognizes connections to perception and to action in the guise of roles in epistemic and practical reasoning, and connections to other concepts in the guise of roles in inference. And he thinks that all of these are essential to a full understanding of how beliefs relate to the Absolute structure of the world. Differences among beliefs can arise along any one of these dimensions.
- 25 The operative distinction here is the distinction between a relation between the content of the map and its user, which is external to the map, and a relation internal to the content of the map between a representation of the user and a representation of the map.
- 26 Price 2011.
- 27 'The processes involved in platform-building are not epistemically transparent to us, taking place outside our field of explicit awareness and intention' (Brandom 2011, 189).
- 28 By this I mean nothing more than the sorts of inferences that beliefs about causes support, and the sorts of beliefs from which they can be inferred.
- 29 Kment here speaks as though he thinks that there are two separable projects: a side-on account of the role, and then a separate account of what modality is; but I think he is actually one of the good guys. His account of what modality is doesn't take the form of finding a referent ... say more about him elsewhere.
- 30 That contrasts it with Cambridge pragmatism and with some of the things that Price himself can be found saying.

References

- Braddon-Mitchell, David and Nola Robert (eds) (2008) *Conceptual Analysis and Philosophical Naturalism*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Brandom, Robert (2011) 'Platforms, Patchworks, and Parking Garages: Wilson's Account of Conceptual Fine-Structure in Wandering Significance', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82: 183–201.

104 *Jenann Ismael*

- Dennett, Daniel (1998) *Brainchildren*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hall, Ned (1994) 'Correcting the Guide to Objective Chance', *Mind* 103: 505–18.
- Ismael, Jenann (2007) *The Situated Self*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (forthcoming) 'How to Be Humean', in Barry Loewer and Jonathan Schaffer (eds), *Companion to Lewis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (unpublished) 'Modelling and Modality'.
- Jackson, Frank (1998) *From Metaphysics to Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kment, Boris (2006) 'Counterfactuals and the Analysis of Necessity', *Philosophical Perspectives* 20: 237–302.
- Lewis, David (1980) 'A Subjectivist's Guide to Objective Chance', in R.C. Jeffrey (ed.), *Studies in Inductive Logic and Probability*, vol. 2, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- (1994) 'Humean Supervenience Debugged', *Mind* 103: 473–90.
- (2004) 'Causation as Influence', in J. Collins, N. Hall and L. Paul (eds), *Causation and Counterfactuals*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 75–106.
- Menzies, Peter (1996) 'Probabilistic Causation and the Pre-emption Problem', *Mind* 105: 85–117.
- O'Leary-Hawthorne, John and Huw Price (1996) 'How to Stand Up for Non-cognitivists', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74: 275–92.
- Price, Huw (2011) *Naturalism without Mirrors*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Slooman, Steven (2005) *Causal Models*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thau, Michael (1994) 'Undermining and Admissibility', *Mind* 103: 491–504.
- Thomasson, Amie (unpublished) *The Descent of Metaphysics*.
- Tooley, Michael (1987) *Causation: A Realist Approach*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.