A Critical Evaluation of the Epistemology of William Pepperell Montague

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A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE EPistemology OF
WILLIAM PEPPERELL MONTAGUE

by

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LIFE

The Reverend John Joseph Monahan, C.S.V. was born in Chicago, Illinois, March 2, 1926.

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PREFACE

The original plan called for a study in detail of the entire American realist movement. Since this project would embrace too wide and varied a topic, it had to be abandoned in favor of concentrating on the epistemology and theory of consciousness of William Pepperell Montague.

Very special thanks are due to Father R. W. Mulligan, S.J. for his kindness and helpfulness.
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CHAPTER I

REALISTIC PHILOSOPHY IN AMERICA: ITS BEGINNINGS
DEVELOPMENT, AND DEBT TO WILLIAM
PEPPERELL MONTAGUE

Realistic philosophy derives its name from the attitude that it takes toward the validity of our knowledge of extra-mental reality. The history of realism as a philosophical system can be traced back to ancient Greece. "The typical affirmation of Exaggerated Realism, the most outspoken ever made, appears in Plato's philosophy .... Aristotle broke away from these exaggerated views of his master and formulated the main doctrines of Moderate Realism."¹ Aristotle was the great exponent of realism in the ancient world. Realistic philosophy in the form of moderate realism attained its greatest expression during the middle ages. St. Thomas Aquinas was the most important medieval exponent of realistic philosophy.

In modern times idealistic philosophy and various forms of phenomenalism and skepticism became the dominant philosophical outlook in Europe and America. This skepticism of so much of modern philosophy is contrary to the spirit of modern science which plays such a dominant role in modern life.

This failure of the prevailing philosophies to maintain contact with the experimental sciences condemned them in the eyes of educated people. Not all philosophers, however, held aloof from the philosophical implications of the findings of the experimental sciences. "On its positive and constructive side the philosophical reaction to the new spirit of science was the development of realism -- a development which, in all essentials, took place during the first two decades of the twelfth century." 2

Previous to this date, however, in our country there were indications of dissatisfaction with the then dominant idealism. A good example of this trend was the philosophy of James McCosh, which maintained that America should develop its own philosophy as an expression of its scientific spirit. He was convinced that this would be best expressed by some form of realism. In his book Realistic Philosophy he had this to say about realism and about the favorable conditions for this philosophy in our country:

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If a genuine American philosophy arises, it must reflect the genius of the people....if there is to be an American philosophy, it must be realistic....The Americans believe that there are things to be known, to be prized and secured, and will never therefore look approvingly on an agnosticism which declares that knowledge is unattainable. The American philosophy will therefore be a realism, opposed to idealism on the one hand and to agnosticism on the other.3

In regard to the specific nature of this realism McCosh continues in the following vein: "Realism holds that the mind perceives matter. In sense perception we know things; we know them as external to the perceiving self—as extended and exercising resisting power."4

The first organized opposition to the idealist monopoly in American philosophy came from the pragmatists. It was William James and John Dewey in particular who criticized weak points in the idealist position. James attacked the idealist notion of consciousness in an article in the Journal of Philosophy. In reference to consciousness he said "That entity is fictitious, while thoughts in the concrete are fully real".5

4Ibid., p. 5
5William James, "Does Consciousness' Exist", Journal of Philosophy, I (September, 1904), p. 491. In the following references to the Journal of Philosophy the abbreviation JP will be used.
Another notable philosopher of this early period of realism was Francis Ellingwood Abbot. He proposed a realism based on biological notions to which he gave the name "scientific" realism. He was acutely conscious of the need for a reform in the dominant philosophical thought of the times. He fore-shadowed the neo-realist movement in his insistence on a new method in approaching philosophical problems. In reference to this needed philosophical reform Abbot says:

What is this needed philosophical reform? Briefly, to substitute the scientific method in philosophy, as the only possible means, in this critical and sceptical age, of making ethics and religion so reasonable as to command the continued allegiance of reasonable minds....Unscientific philosophy conceives the universe as nothing but a Thought-World; and in this conception there is no room for any Mechanical Real. On the possibility of developing a scientific philosophy out of the scientific method itself must depend at last the only possibility, for reasonable men, of believing equally in the real principles of ethical science. Today the greatest obstacle to such a reasonable belief is the "philosophical idealism" which directly contradicts it; and the greatest reform needed in modern thought...is the substitution of the scientific method for the idealistic method in philosophy itself.6

6 Francis Ellingwood Abbot, A Public Appeal for Redress to the Corporation and Overseers of Harvard University, (Boston, 1891), p.27. The same stress is maintained even to this day by naturalistic philosophers on the need for the use of the scientific method in philosophy as the only alternative to idealism.
The realism that Abbot proposed is very insistent on man's ability to know the object of knowledge. "Epistemology is obviously impossible, unless the object of knowledge is knowable: Knowable as it is, not as it is not -- Knowable (more or less) as it is both in itself and out of itself, that is, in both its internal and external relations, without which there would be nothing to know."\(^7\)

Abbot's attempt to develop a realistic approach to knowledge in philosophy was in keeping with the spirit of the physical sciences.

The growing conviction among educated people of the value of the scientific method and of its possible application in fields other than the physical sciences must not be underestimated as an important factor in the development of realistic philosophy. For the fruit of applied science as seen in the development of technology and the growth of industrialization was very evident in the United States.

Progress in the sciences and the consequent comforts and conveniences that this brought to everyday life made

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\(^7\)Francis Ellingwood Abbot, *The Syllogistic Philosophy*, vol. II (Boston, 1906), p. 148
the majority of people aware of the value of applied science in their everyday life. In educated circles the scientific method came to be looked upon as the key to progress in all scholarly endeavour.

It was in this atmosphere of confidence in the ability of man to master his material environment that the first organized attempt was made to formulate a scientific realism. It was in 1910 that six realists formed an alliance for the purpose of developing a realistic epistemology that would stand up against the objections of the idealists. This group was composed of Perry and Holt from Harvard, Marvin and Spaulding from Princeton, and Pitkin and Montague from Columbia. Their set purpose was to use the scientific method in their approach to the problems of philosophy. They reasoned that much of the progress in the physical and biological sciences was due to the fact that scientists worked together, pooled their knowledge, and confined themselves to one single problem. They wished to apply this method to the study of the problems of philosophy. In particular they confined themselves to the field of epistemology and to the specific problem of the knowing process.
In this way they felt that they would come to a certain conclusion, and thus obtain definite results. Their working procedure is clearly set forth in the beginning of their Platform in the following manner:

It is therefore with the hope that by cooperation genuine problems will be revealed, philosophical thought will be clarified, and a way opened for real progress, that the undersigned have come together, deliberated, and endeavored to reach an agreement. Such cooperation has three fairly distinct, though not necessarily successive stages: first it seeks a statement of fundamental principles and doctrines; secondly, it aims at a program of constructive work following a method founded on these principles and doctrines; finally it endeavors to obtain a system of axioms, methods, hypotheses, and facts, which have been so arrived at and formulated that at least those investigators who have cooperated can accept them as a whole.

This statement of purpose or platform was set forth in the first cooperative work of this group, which was an article in the July 1910 issue of the Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods entitled "A Program and Platform of Six Realists". Two years later they published the results of their joint researches in a cooperative volume entitled the New Realism. This book is one of the classics.

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8 In the long run this attempt proved to be unsuccessful not only for the neo-realists, but also for the critical realists.
9 E.B.Holt et al., "The Platform of Six Realists", VII (July, 1910), P. 393
10 This periodical became Journal of Philosophy, Jan., 1921.
in the story of American realism and should be read by anyone who wishes to have an understanding of the movement that it represented and expressed.

The actual area of agreement of the neo-realists as expressed in their book was not as great as their first hopes seemed to indicate. In spite of intensive research many points of disagreement remained. In brief the neo-realists expressed agreement on two working procedures, which really had been points of agreement at the start of their cooperative work, and agreement with reservations, on three principles of the theory of knowledge. The two working procedures that they agreed on were to work together as a group sharing their findings with one another, and to work on one problem at a time. They adopted these two procedures from the example of the cooperative efforts of the physical scientists.

In regard to the actual content of their agreement in the matter of epistemology, they agreed that some of the objects of which we are aware are actually real, and exist apart from our thinking of or perceiving them. They had a problem in regard to objects of error and illusion. The next area of agreement was in regard to the universal
notions that we have of things. They agreed that some of these at least were true notions in that our ideas were based on a real understanding of particular objects. Finally, they agreed that some at least of the things that we perceive and apprehend, we perceive directly by perceiving the thing itself in some physical way rather than by perceiving it indirectly through some copy or mental image. Again in this case they had difficulty in explaining objects of illusion and error.\(^{11}\) The problem of error always posed as a serious one to the neo-realist epistemology.

The general program of the neo-realists indicates that they limited their efforts to the specific project of determining the relationship between the knower and the thing known. They did not try to achieve unanimity as to the nature of the thing known.

The entire platform of the neo-realists is of such importance to the development of American realism that it should be consulted in full in order to have a real understanding of this movement. It can be found in the appendix

of The New Realism or in the 1910 volume of the Journal of Philosophy. The principal notion of the platform is that the objects or entities under study in the various sciences are fundamentally real in the sense that they either actually exist or could exist given the proper circumstances; or they are real at least in the sense that they are principles of thought that have a foundation in reality. Furthermore, the neo-realists make a distinction between objects that occupy real space, and objects that are purely mental but are not self contradictory. The former are said to exist, but the latter are said merely to subsist. Montague defines the term subsistent as follows: "I shall use the term 'subsistent' to denominate any one of the actual and possible objects of thought."\(^{12}\) Hence, anything that is thought about is said to subsist, and mental existence and subsistence are identical terms.

The nature or existence of real objects, however, is in no way affected by their being known. They are what

\(^{12}\text{William P. Montague et al., The New Realism. (New York, 1925), p. 253.}\)
they are and remain such in the act of being known and apart from it. The neo-realists also hold that the degree of unity among objects and the harmony in the physical universe are just as objective as the things themselves and that the foundation of all relations among objects is in the objects themselves.

While admitting that epistemology was not the most basic science, the neo-realists felt that it was not necessary to go any deeper into the study of reality in order to solve the problem of knowledge. They held that there are certain principles of human thought that are basic to all the sciences, but they did not think that the nature of the world could be inferred from the nature of knowledge. At the same time, however, they considered that knowledge was something that was just as physical and material as the object known. Indeed knowledge was looked upon by them as some sort of neural response to the object known. The whole explanation of the problem of knowledge was to be found on a purely physical and material level. This in general was the area of agreement for the neo-realists in their study
of the epistemological problem.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13}The principal propositions of the neo-realists and their platform are stated as follows in the \textit{Journal of Philosophy}.

1. The entities under study in logic, mathematics, and the physical sciences are not mental in the proper sense of that word.

2. The existence and nature of these entities is in no sense conditioned by their being known.

3. The degree of unity, consistency, or connection subsisting among entities is a matter to be empirically determined.

4. Epistemology is not logically fundamental.

5. There are certain principles of logic which are, logically prior to all scientific and metaphysical systems.

6. The nature of reality cannot be inferred merely from the nature of knowledge.

7. Cognition belongs to the same world as its objects. That is both have their place in the order of nature.

8. The objective content of consciousness is any entity in so far as it is responded to by another entity in a special manner exhibited by the reflex nervous system.

The platform of the neo-realists represented the greatest cooperative achievement of this movement. After this greatest cooperative achievement, the neo-realist movement began to decline as far as its influence on the American philosophical scene was concerned. This decline was due in part to a failure to achieve a greater area of agreement, but more particularly to a failure to give a really satisfactory answer to the problem of error and hallucination in the workings of the senses. "The differences that were most important both in themselves and in their influence on the later development of the neo-realist movement centered first on the question as to the 'Behavioristic' nature of consciousness and second on the question as to the 'relativistic' but existential status of the objects of illusion and error."\(^{14}\) One sad result of this failure was that certain neo-realists proposed solutions to these problems that contradicted the proposed solutions of other neo-realists. This situation naturally enough caused the neo-realists some loss of prestige in the eyes of their opponents.

There is also some indication that even when the neo-realists agreed among themselves, that this agreement was not entirely due to their complete acceptance of one another's propositions. Montague had this to say concerning their co-operative efforts and their efforts to reach common agreement. "We read one another's papers, and we did for the most part make the revisions or at least the omissions that were requested, but I am afraid that especially on matters about which we felt strongly there tended to develop among us a tacit and, I hope, an unconscious understanding which if made explicit could have been expressed as, 'I'll pass your stuff if you will pass mine'."15

There remained always, however, one basic proposition to which all the neo-realists agreed, and which really constituted the very core and foundation of the realist movement. "It consisted in the attempt to show by empirical examination and inference that the things that are believed to be real do not seem to depend on the fact that they can figure as objects of perceptual and conceptual experience."16

15Montague, p. 234.
The neo-realists always held fast to this their basic proposition that reality existed apart from our knowledge of it, and that our knowledge added nothing to the scope of the external world. The neo-realists were able to give a good explanation of our dependence upon the external world for our knowledge, but they were weak in their explanation of error. The neo-realists held that we know objects directly by being physically influenced by them. This position made it very difficult to explain error, because it called for the extra-mental existence of objects of illusion and error. The neo-realist explanations of error were never wholly satisfactory to some realist philosophers. Some of these philosophers formed an association to correct the errors of the neo-realists. This group came to be called the critical realists, because they insisted upon a re-examination of the foundations of realism.

The Rise of Critical Realism

The critical realists represent the next step in the development of American realism. The years between 1916-1920 were the formative ones for critical realism. Seven men were chiefly responsible for this movement. They were
Drake, Lovejoy, Pratt, Rogers, Sellars, Santayana, and Strong. The results of their findings they incorporated in their book *Essays in Critical Realism*. The critical realists, like their neo-realist predecessors, understood the value of cooperative effort, and limited their area of agreement to the matter of epistemology. They stated their limited agreement as follows in the preface of their cooperative book. "It should be added, however, that no agreement has been sought except on the epistemological problem... the members of our group hold somewhat different ontological views."17

The chief criticism that the critical realists had of the neo-realists was concerning their treatment of the problem of error. The neo-realists, because they held to a representative rather than a representative theory of perception, left no room for subjective factors as the cause of perceptual error or illusion. A classical example of perceptual error or illusion is how railroad tracks seem to converge when viewed from the rear observation car of a train. We know from experience, however, that the rails do not actually converge. The neo-realist, nevertheless, because of

his theory of perception would have to hold that in relation to the viewer that the tracks did converge.¹⁸

This position is obviously open to severe criticism from many quarters, because it contradicts the facts of every-day experience.

The positive contribution of the critical realists to an explanation of the knowing process was the emphasis that they gave to subjective factors in their epistemology. The majority of critical realists, because of the subjective factors in their epistemology, held to epistemological dualism as the only possible way of avoiding the mistakes of the neo-realists. "The dualistic...view maintains that consciousness and the world of physical objects in space are essentially different from each other in kind; and that the psychical may be defined as consisting of non-physical entities which, though they may be spatial, are not in space, and which exist only as functions of one or more individual persons or organisms....But although the dualist insists that our knowledge of the physical world is mediate, he is very far from considering it unreal....our ideas far from

forming our prison house, are in fact our means of knowing the outer world." 19 Pratt in defending the necessity of a dualistic position made a radical distinction between the object of knowledge and our ideas about the object. However, he made both factors material.

Roy Wood Sellars, another critical realist, has this to say about knowledge of external objects through the content of perception:

The situation is, of course, unique, and metaphors will not much help us. The knower is confined to the datum, and can never literally inspect the existent which he affirms and claims to know. Penetrative intuition of the physical world is impossible just because we humans are what we are, organisms stimulated by external things. Knowledge rests upon the use of data as revelations of objects because of what may, I think, be rightly called a logical identity between them.... Physical objects are the objects of knowledge, though they can be known only in terms of the data which they control within us. 20

The critical realists held to a representative theory of knowledge by means of which they hoped to give a satisfactory account of error and illusion. They held that we do not know objects directly as they are in themselves, but that we directly only know the idea or mental image of the

20 Durant Drake et al., Essays in Critical Realism, p. 203.
object. They insisted, however, that we know the object by means of the mental image or sense datum that we have in our mind of the object. The sense datum is the result of the influence of the object on the brain through the senses, and of the role of the senses and the brain in producing an image of the object in our consciousness. The influence of the object on the senses is something physical to the critical realists, and the sense datum that results from the interaction of the knower and the object is itself physical.

As the controversies between the critical realists and the neo-realists continued it became more evident that the explanation of the nature and function of consciousness was the chief point of dissention between them. The success of both groups in explaining the nature of knowledge had only been partial. The neo-realists had no problem with their explanation of the objectivity of knowledge, because there was no subjective factor in their theory intervening between the knower and the object known. However, they could not give a satisfactory explanation of error and hallucination, because they held that every experienced object was a real object. This meant that the objects of error and halluci-
nation existed in the external universe. This position makes it impossible to distinguish true perception from false perception. Indeed on the face of it there should not be such a thing as a false perception, if every experienced object is a real object. This conclusion is so at variance with experience, that the burden of proof rests with those who hold such a view. The neo-realists were never able to give a fully satisfactory explanation of error and illusion.

The critical realists as "epistemological dualists" were able to give a good explanation of hallucinations, delusions, and errors of sense perception. Yet they had much difficulty in explaining the objectivity of knowledge. Santayana, a critical realist, understood the problem that the critical realists faced here, but he seemingly felt that no rational answer could be found for it. At least that is the impression that must be gathered from the following statement.

"Knowledge...is belief: belief in a world of events, and especially of those parts of it which are near the self, tempting or threatening it. This belief is native to animals,

and precedes all deliberate use of intuitions as signs and descriptions of things.... The truth which discourse can achieve is truth in its own terms, appropriate description; it is no incorporation or reproduction of the object in the mind."22 In this description of the process of knowledge the basis for any conformity that might exist between the mind and its object is belief. Certainly belief is a poor foundation for a philosophical system.

The obvious difficulty in the critical realist view is that since we only directly know the sense-data, how can we be sure that the sense-data corresponds to the external object? For there is no way of checking the sense-data with the object. The best that the critical realist can do is to presume that the sense-data is like the object. However, a presumption is a weak basis for a philosophical system, and likeness to the object rather than identity with it is a poor understanding of the nature of knowledge.

Each side was always quick to see the weak point in the arguments of their opponents. Lovejoy, a critical realist,

had this to say of neo-realism: "Neo-realism, when consistent, seemingly means 'pan-objectivism'. If consciousness is but an external relation, not even the content of an 'erroneous' presentation can exist merely subjectively. It must be as independent and objective as everything else, which means among other things, that it must find a place in real space." 23 The arguments of Lovejoy against the neo-realist conception of error were always effective. 24

Montague, a neo-realist with reservations, pointed out that the critical realists with all their concern for an explanation of error were not able to explain satisfactorily our knowledge of external objects. "Critical Realism has revived an old puzzle rather than contributed a new solution of it, and that in its eagerness to preserve the gap between the undisciplined hordes of mutually incompatible ideas and the single self consistent system of univalent material entities it has made that gap as hopelessly unbridgeable as it was in the earlier dualistic realisms of Locke and Descartes. 25

25 ibid., p. 259.
The difficulty remains inescapable as long as critical realism maintains its radical epistemological dualism.

The General Tendencies of Contemporary Realism

The failure of both the neo-realists and the critical realists to satisfactorily explain the knower-object relationship encouraged the rise of a third group of American realists, who can be called the contemporary realists because they are active at the present time. Like their predecessors they formed an association for the purpose of advancing the progress of realistic philosophy, and called themselves the Association for Realistic Philosophy. This group drew up a platform of their own and put it together with their own contributions to the movement, in a book called *The Return to Reason*. John D. Wild was the editor of this work, but thirteen others made contributions to it.26

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26 The contributors to the book in addition to John D. Wild were John Ladd, Robert Jordan, Harry S. Broudy, J. Arthur Martin, Charles Malik, Harmon M. Chapman, Oliver Martin, Jesse DeBoer, Manley H. Thompson, Jr., Francis H. Parker, Henry Veatch, Eliseo Vivas and William A. Banner.
This book The Return to Reason, was reminiscent of The New Realism of the neo-realists, and Essays in Critical Realism of the critical realists as a concise statement of the purpose and procedure of the contemporary realistic movement. John Wild expressed this notion of the book as follows: "This book is the fruit of a co-operative movement known as the Association for Realistic Philosophy, which has now been in existence for five years... Several of the contributors participated in the formulation of the platform. All are familiar with it. Many of us would disagree in interpreting certain statements. But all of us accept the platform in the sense in which it was formulated, as a program for 'critical clarification and defense'." 27

These contemporary realists hold the position that we know extramental reality, and that we know it as it actually is. Wild states this position as follows: "Realistic philosophy, as we understand it, is radically empirical in the sense that its basic concepts and principles are derived from observation and analysis of the immediately given data of experience.... The world is constituted by a plurality of active, 

existent entities which are really related to one another, without being absorbed in a monistic absolute. ... Realism also defends the thesis that these actual entities can be known by the human mind, at least in part, as they actually are."\(^\text{28}\)

Unlike their predecessors among the American realists, the contemporary realists extend their cooperation and agreement to all the branches of philosophy. They give as much consideration to metaphysics as they do to epistemology. They assert that it is necessary to agree on the basic principles of ontology in order to reach agreement in the field of epistemology because a true understanding of the nature of being is presupposed in any serious consideration of the nature of our knowledge of that being or reality.

In reference to our awareness of the objects of reality, the contemporary realists maintain that "The most primitive fact of any act of awareness as it presents itself to our inspiration, is the fact that it is always of something other than itself."\(^\text{29}\) Thus the real existence of an object of

\(^{28}\)ibid., pp. vi-vii.

\(^{29}\)ibid., p. 153.
knowledge is presupposed in this epistemology. Epistemology studies the nature of knowledge. It finds its object, it does not create it. This is the basic proposition of all realistic philosophy.

The contemporary realists hold that being cannot be reduced to just matter, but that the real entities in the world are both material and immaterial. They maintain that the truth of this proposition can be established by empirical evidence. The real world and the objects that are in it can be known directly by the human mind. The mind knows the things themselves and not just some mental image of the things. The relations that exist among the objects in the world are real in the sense that their foundation is in the things themselves. The mind discovers this relationship, it does not create it. The mind also can draw certain conclusions from the facts of observation that can be used as principles for guidance in the matter at hand. From a consideration of human nature certain principles can be established in the ethical order that are just as valid in that order as the principles established for the sciences are valid in the order of physical nature. The contemporary realists in their search for truth give full consideration
to the perennial tradition of realistic philosophy that has its roots in the thought of Plato and Aristotle.  

The contemporary realists reached agreement in a much greater area of philosophy than either the neo-realists or the critical realists. Their position on the subject of epistemology, however, remains our chief interest at present.

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30 The following are some of the important points of agreement of the contemporary realists:

1. Being cannot be reduced to either material being or to immaterial being.

2. Empirical evidence shows that both modes of being exist in the cosmos.

3. This cosmos consists of real, substantial entities existing in themselves and ordered to one another by real extra-mental relations.

4. These real entities and relations together with known artifacts can be known by the human mind as they are in themselves and can be aesthetically enjoyed.

5. Such knowledge, especially that treating of human nature, can provide us with immutable and trustworthy principles for the guidance of individual and social action.

6. Important truths are contained in the classical tradition of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy.

John Wild, The Return to Reason, pp. 357-363. These pages contain the complete platform of the contemporary realists in addition to the principal propositions mentioned above.
The contemporary realists hold that every act of awareness implies an object of that awareness. Indeed, the act of awareness would have no meaning apart from terminating in an object, because the object gives the act of awareness its determination and meaning. Wild expresses this notion of awareness when he says that: "Awareness is directly given as a peculiar, relational activity of sensing, feeling, remembering, defining, and judging, definitely centered in the psychophysical organism of the agent of awareness. These acts are always intentionally relative to some object. I cannot feel without feeling something, I cannot remember without remembering something, I cannot judge without judging something."31

This act of being aware of something makes no change in the object known. There is a certain change in the knower, however, in the sense that he is now aware of some object of which he was not aware before. "The knowledge act is...a unique, sui generis, relational act, terminating immediately in an at least presumptively independent

31 ibid., p. 50.
object, which it in any case leaves unchanged and with which it, therefore, unites its agent in a relation of immaterial union."32 This description of the knowing process is a far cry from the materialistic-behavioristic interpretations so common in the explanations of the earlier realists.

As regards the general nature of cognition Wild is quite explicit in stating that it is partly physical and partly immaterial in character. He maintains that even on the sensory level a certain kind of awareness is involved in sensory cognition. Sensation as such is more than the physical activity involved when for example light waves or sound waves reach the eye or ear from some physical object. "Having one's eye colored blue is not to be aware of blue, having one's head vibrate is not to sense sound. The physical presence of something in something physical is not knowledge, though it may condition knowledge."33 Wild gives three reasons to show that noetic presence is different from physical presence even on the purely sense level. He says

32 ibid., p. 157.
33 ibid., p. 408.
that physical change involves three processes which are not found in the act of sensation as such. These changes are the following:

1. Physical change always involves some matter already formed which is capable of receiving some opposite form, e.g. the change from hot to cold.

2. In this process the matter does not become the form itself, but becomes united with it in a third entity which is neither the one nor the other, but a combination of the two.

3. The form of the matter is numerically distinct from the form of the cause. 34

These physical changes are not fulfilled in the act of sensation, but rather a different sort of change takes place. Wild summarizes the changes that take place in the act of sensation as follows:

1. When an object comes under the senses that object is not destroyed physically in order to be grasped sensibly. Nor do we destroy the opposite form of the object in sensing it. We do not have to hear a low sound in order to hear a high sound.

2. The noetic faculty in the act of sensation knows the object and not some third entity which could not be the object but something else.

3. The form of the object must in some sense be grasped by the senses in knowing. 35

34 ibid.
35 ibid., pp. 408–409.
From this consideration Wild concludes that noetic existence is something quite different and distinct from physical existence. Moreover he asserts the higher animals and man in particular are able to overcome the subjective isolation proper to purely material beings, because of their cognitive faculties—either sensory or intellectual.

The contemporary realists also hold to a radical or essential distinction between the operations of the senses and the intellect. The proper object of the senses is the individual material object, whereas it is proper to the intellect to abstract the universal nature or essence that is found in the individual sensible object. They stress the striking degree of communicability that the operations of the intellect have over the operations of the senses. The senses and the intellect have the same object materially speaking, but different objects formally speaking. In other words the contemporary realists maintain that the mind and the senses know the same extra-mental object in a different way according to their respective natures and capacities.

The object of the senses is restricted to the here
and now. It has a definite position in time and space, and is as such incommunicable. On the other hand the object of the intellect is not limited to this time or place, but is universal. The intellect is able to abstract from the material conditions of an object and consider it in its universal or communicable aspect. Since the operations of the senses and the intellect are proportioned to or specified by their objects, the difference in objects in these two cases points to a difference in the nature of the senses and the intellect. Such is the position of the contemporary realists as to the nature of the senses and the intellect and their operations.

The Thread of Unity in Fifty Years of American Realistic Philosophy

In considering the realism of Wild and his associates we have certainly come a long way from the first strivings of naive realism in this country. Real progress has been made in analysing and defining the various elements in the knowing process. All the realists had one basic purpose in mind, and that was to give a satisfactory explanation of the validity and process of human knowledge. Their goal or purpose was to establish a theory of knowledge based on,
and in accordance with, the requirements of experience and observation. All the realists of course did not attain that goal. The contemporary realist movement in seeking its roots and inspiration in the classical realism of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas gives a real foundation for the hope that it will be the bearer of true progress in realistic philosophy. Though the contemporary realists accept the classical realist tradition, they continue their efforts to adapt the traditional realist principles to modern times and conditions. In particular, they apply the principles of traditional realism to the progress in the sciences. This effort has been the goal of all the American realists.

The Debt of American Realistic Philosophy to William Pepperell Montague

William Pepperell Montague, whose thought is the subject of this thesis, played an important role in laying the foundations of contemporary realism through his contributions to the neo-realist movement, and his criticisms of the critical realist movement. Montague was one of the first defenders of realism against the attacks of
Royce. Again it was Montague who formulated the first basic thesis of neorealism that was acceptable to most neo-realisers. This formulation included the notion of epistemological monism, which subsequently became a characteristic tenet of the neo-realist position. Moreover his defense of neo-realism against the attacks of the critical realists involved a special use of the word or term consciousness. He looked upon consciousness as merely a relation between objects. When we are conscious of something it merely means that physical energy from some object is impinging upon our sense organs. Montague looked upon the potential energy of matter as equivalent to sensation or consciousness. His theory of consciousness influenced the development of his epistemology.

The object of this thesis is not to prove that everything that Montague held or even that most of the propositions that he held in regard to realism were correct, but rather to give an explanation of the philosophical teachings of this man who so greatly influenced the beginnings of the realist movement in our country.

In the next chapter we will consider Montague's theory of knowledge and consciousness. Montague in working out
his epistemology sought the elements of truth in neo-
realism, critical realism, and idealism. We will consi-
der in the following chapter Montague's use of these three
systems of philosophy in working out his own epistemology.
Underlying his solution to the epistemological problem of
the knower-object relationship is his theory of conscious-
ness. Montague's theory of consciousness will also be con-
sidered in the next chapter, because of its influence upon
his epistemology.

In the third chapter of the thesis we will evaluate
Montague's epistemology and theory of consciousness. The
strong points and weak points of his epistemology and theory
of consciousness will be considered in order to understand
Montague's contribution to the development of realistic
philosophy in America.
CHAPTER II

WILLIAM PEPPERELL MONTAGUE'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

An analysis of William Pepperell Montague's epistemology leads to the conclusion that Montague took a positive approach to the solution of the knower-object relationship. He had great respect for the efforts of his predecessors, and tried to incorporate as much of their findings as he could in his own solution to the epistemological problem. The three systems of proposed solution to this problem that Montague systematically analyzed were that of Objectivism, Dualism, and Subjectivism.

Objectivism (so-called by Montague) maintains 1) that extra-mental reality exists independently of our knowledge of it, and 2) that in knowing extra-mental objects we perceive them directly and in themselves. Subjectivism to Montague was the doctrine that the object of knowledge is really constituted by the mind. By dualism Montague meant the representative theory of knowledge. This means that in knowing an object, we do not know the object directly and as such. What we know directly is our idea of the object. This idea is caused in us by the sense-data of the object.
Montague expressed his notion that there are three basic theories as to the knowledge process in the following quotation.

On this question there are three classic theories which have contended with one another for acceptance. First, there is the theory of "objectivism" or epistemological realism which holds that objects exist exactly as they are apprehended, that things are in themselves and apart from us just what they seem to be when we experience them, and that consciousness reveals directly the nature of external reality. Secondly, there is the theory of "subjectivism" or epistemological idealism which holds that the nature and existence of an object is constituted by its relation to a mind or subject, and consequently all reality in so far as it can be conceived at all must be conceived as conscious experience. Thirdly, there is the "representative" or "copy" theory of knowledge which we have called epistemological dualism. According to this theory objects are of two kinds, internal objects or "ideas" depending upon consciousness and directly revealed by it; and external or physical objects which are independent of consciousness and never directly experienced by it, but which can and must be inferred as the hypothetical cause of experience.36

Montague uses these three positions as the basis of his own epistemology in the sense that he tries to extract

the elements of truth that are contained in each system. He says that "We will try to show that the rival contentions of objectivism, subjectivism, and dualism can be restated from a realistic standpoint in such a way as to be made not only compatible with, but implicative of one another. To the extent that our effort is successful the epistemological problem will have been solved. And it will have been solved by the reduction of the three previously opposed theories to three diverse but mutually supplementary methods of interpreting the single set of facts involved in the relation of a knower to the object known." 37

Objectivism: Its Strength and Weakness

The first theory of knowledge which Montague discusses is objectivism. This theory takes three distinct forms—extreme objectivism, moderate objectivism, and relativistic objectivism. The first of these theories (i.e., extreme objectivism) teaches that every experienced object exists as it is experienced and that its existence is completely

37 Ibid., p. 33.
independent of its being experienced. The second is moderate or common sense objectivism which regards as subjective all that is unreal and regards as objective all that is physically real. The physically real is considered by moderate objectivism as independent in its existence of the knowing mind. The third and final form of this theory is the relativistic or "new" objectivism which holds that the concrete objects of perception owe their nature to the relation in which they stand to the individuals that perceive them. These three forms of objectivism center their interest and attention on what constitutes one of the basic problems of epistemology, i.e., the nature of the extra-mental object.

The epistemological problem has its origin "in the situation that is presented whenever any sort of individual apprehends any sort of object."38 The chief question that arises in this situation is "Whether or not the object thus apprehended can retain its existence and character apart from its relation to the apprehending subject."39

38 ibid., p. 237.
39 ibid.
Naturally we have no experience of a situation in which we observe an unobserved object. The very act of knowing an object makes the object a known object. It is impossible to know objects apart from the knowing act. No philosopher would ask us to know an object apart from the act of knowing it. Yet it is precisely on this point that some philosophers conclude that the object is constituted by our knowing it. Montague expresses his opinion on the matter thus: "The presence of consciousness together with the objects of which we are conscious leaves the dependence or independence of the objects an open question to be decided by inference from their behavior while under observation."

Montague said in an ironic fashion that the pseudo-science of astrology has a firmer basis than idealism in the senses that astrology does not maintain that the very existence of the stars is the proof of their influence on human affairs.

The subjectivists, however, maintain that the co-presence of object and consciousness proves that consciousness is constitutive of the object. Objectivism in its various forms has not been guilty of this particular assumption. All three forms of objectivism hold that the experienced object exists apart from our experience of it.

The extreme objectivists hold that every experienced exists, and that it always exists as we actually experience it. There really is no distinction between a true experience and a false experience in this system. This position because of its naive stand on the problem of error and illusion has no significant following among philosophers.

Moderate objectivism, however, makes a distinction between the real and the unreal objects of the senses. It considers the former as real and objective as does extreme objectivism. The unreal objects of the senses it considers to be subjective and does not try to locate them in real space. "It regards as merely subjective and exclusively inside the mind all that is unreal, while at the same time all that is physically real is regarded as independent of, or external to, the mind, although directly and immediately
present to it."

The weakness of moderate objectivism according to Montague is that it leaves the choice or selectivity of which objects of perception are real and which are unreal to the judgment of the individual knower or observer. Montague expresses his objection as follows: "The technical weakness of the common-sense realism consists in the fact that the admittedly real objects of our experience can be shown to be (selectively) relative to the minds that know them, to exactly the same extent as the objects of the most fantastic dreams; and if selective relativity implies subjectivity in the one case it should imply it equally in the other." If two observers see an object differently because of the defect in the sight of one observer, the question that really arises is whether the objectivity of the view of the observer with the unimpaired vision can be accepted. For how do we know that the senses in good working order give us a true knowledge of reality? This seeming relativity of the object of perception to the con-

\[^{42}\text{William P. Montague, The Ways of Knowing, p. 240.}\]

\[^{43}\text{Ibid., p. 241.}\]
dition of the viewer invoked this novel explanation of the act of sense perception on the part of the new objectivists.

The relative or new objectivists explain the distorted image of an object by appealing to the entire visual situation, that is, to the situation that existed at the time of the distorted perception of the object. For the new objectivists maintain that "...the concrete objects of perception owe their nature to the relations in which they stand to the individuals that perceive them." This means that in our example the eyes of a person suffering from a distorted perception must be considered in view of the past similar images that the person has experienced. This is done not only to enable the person to make a practical adjustment to his particular situation, but in order to explain the present distorted perception as a true perception under the particular circumstances which the person is facing.

No matter how much may be said about a distorted perception being a peculiar type of true perception, a distorted perception can be explained only in terms of a true

\[\text{ibid., p. 243.}\]
perception. The relative objectivists themselves use the true perception as the criterion to measure where a particular distorted perception should fit in as an act of sense perception. The fact that the true perception is used by the relative objectivists as a norm to measure distorted perceptions indicates that even they think there is more reality or truth in the true perception, than there is in the distorted perception. Montague in examining the relative objectivist position on this matter points out the weakness of the relative objectivist explanation of a distorted perception by the fact that it must be measured and interpreted in terms of a true perception. He says that:

"The difficulty with this position consists in the fact that the diverse appearances of the same thing in different contexts always presupposes a single primary system of events...and it is by means of this single public and physical system that the variety of private and subjective perspectives can be explained and harmonized."\(^45\) The great emphasis that is placed on the true perception, even by the relative objectivists, indicates the unreality of the object

\(^{45}\textit{ibid.}, \text{p. 244}.\)
of a distorted perception.

There is much in the objectivist theory of knowledge in all of its three degrees or forms that Montague found acceptable. He was in full agreement with the objectivist position on the independence of the object of knowledge and on the directness of our knowledge of objects. He did not agree, however, with the objectivist position that every experienced object is a real object, because of the many difficulties in this position when it gave an explanation of error and illusion.

**Dualism: Its Strength and Weakness**

The second theory of knowledge which Montague considered was that of dualism. Montague describes what he means by epistemological dualism in the lines that follow.

"...Epistemological dualism has no bearing whatever upon the truth or falsity of psycho-physical dualism. It is not concerned with the relation of mind to body or of ideas to brain processes, but only with the relation of the data of experience to the external objects which are believed to cause those data."

In his opinion the theory of episte-
mological dualism has three strong points. He indicated these strong points as follows:

1. The convenient manner in which it deals with the problem of illusion and error.

2. The equally convenient manner in which it deals with the problem of perceptual relativity, that is, the problem that arises from the seeming dependence of sense data upon the position and general condition of the percipient of those data.

3. The convenient means which it provides for explaining the objective world in terms of pure quantity...

Montague examined dualism at considerable length. By dualism he means the representative theory of knowledge, according to which we do not directly know the object as it is in itself, but only the sense-data. Dualism is the name that Montague gives to the position of the critical realists. This dualist position takes two forms in regard to its explanation of error. As regards errors of sense, the dualists hold that they are caused when the effect produced upon the brain by the external object fails to correspond with its cause. Errors of intellect, on the other hand, are produced when one makes false interpretations and inferences from the sense-data given by the object. It

47 ibid., p. 249.
often happens that both types of error are present at the same time in a given act of perception.

The natural objection to this explanation of error is that according to the principles of dualism, the knower can never know the object as such but only the sense data caused by the object. This being the case, Montague objects to the dualist position that the dualist can know an erroneous perception because it fails to correspond with the external object. The dualists according to their own principles deny that we know the object as such in the act of knowledge, therefore they cannot appeal to the object as the criterion of a true or false perception.

In Montague's own epistemology he does demand a correspondence between the mind and the object as the criterion of a true perception. This correspondence, however, is not based on any intuition of the object. Rather it is based on our remembrance of similar sense situations in which a similar object produced a similar effect on the brain. The brain through the external senses is receptive of energy coming from external objects. The reception by the brain of this external energy is experienced by the perceiver as an act of sensation. "...sensations are as truly types of
physical energy as are motions themselves, it is my theory that they are the non-kinetic forms of energy into which motions disappear and from which they reappear. The presumption is that the effect produced in the brain by the object is the same as the cause that produced it.

The only subjective factor in Montague's epistemology of sensation is the physical condition of the brain or sense organs. He states this position in the following quotation. "When we perceive an object the only direct and proximate determiner of the perception is the condition finally produced in the brain. What this condition will be is thus determined partly by the nature of the external object from which energy is emitted, and partly by the condition and nature of the perceiving brain."

The dualists cannot give this simple explanation of error, because what they directly know is not the object but the effect of the object on the brain by means of the sense-data. The dualists give as much a physical existence to the sense-data as they do to the object. This position

causes them much difficulty in explaining the act of perception. When a dualist sees some external object, for example a tree, he must go through the following steps to explain the process: The extra mental tree produces a sensation of itself called the sense-data in the knower. This sense-data is a mental copy of the extra-mental tree. This copy is just as physical as its cause, otherwise it could not truly represent the object. This means that the sense-data must contain all the characteristics of the object in order to give a valid knowledge of the object. The external object exists in space and time, and this condition must then be found in some way in the sense-data. The sense-data obviously does not exist in the external or public spatio-temporal order. Therefore, there must be two spatio-temporal orders, one for real extra-mental objects, the other for the sense-data. The trouble with this explanation is that we have no experience of an internal spatio-temporal realm. Montague writes in reference to this problem that "the only space and time in which the physical causes of sense-data can be located is the space and time of the sense-data themselves." For our senses tell us only of

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50 Ibid., p. 262.
one spatio-temporal order, and that is as much a part of extra-mental reality as the object itself.

The dualists have the same difficulty with the notion of time as they do with the notion of space. According to the dualist, there must be two real orders of time: one for the sense-data, and the other for the external object. Every event must take place in time, and for the dualist every event involves two factors: 1) the external event which is objective, and 2) the internal subjective event. Both these events in the dualist position are real, and both must exist in real time as well as in real space; but the internal event of the sense-data does not exist in the same time medium as the external objective event. The conclusion that the dualists draw from this situation is that there must be two temporal orders in the physical world, one for external objective events, the other for internal subjective events. Montague objects to this conclusion on the same grounds that he objected to the conclusion that there were two distinct spatial orders. The grounds of his objection were that the dualist conclusion as to the existence of two temporal orders is contrary to the evidence of experience. We are not aware, he said, of two temporal
orders, but only of the one external temporal order of objective events. Therefore, we must conclude that the time of these physical objects or causes of sensation is the same as the time of the sensations themselves. Both times are one and the same; that is, both have the time of the external event.51

Montague agrees with the dualists when they say that there is a subjective factor in the knowledge process. He disagrees with them, however, as to the extent and basis of this subjective element. The dualists maintain that only the sense-data of the object can be known directly. Montague insists that the object is known directly in the sense that the physical influence of the object directly affects the organs of the knower. The only subjective factor that Montague admits in the act of sense perception is the physical condition of the senses or the space between the senses and the object. Any distortion in these can be corrected from a remembrance of past similar experiences when conditions were normal in the sense organs or in the space intervening between the knower and the object.

51 ibid., p. 264.
Subjectivism: Its Strength and Weakness

The third theory of knowledge that Montague treats is subjectivism (the name that Montague uses when he refers to idealism). Subjectivism is defined by him as "the belief that objects, particularly material objects, cannot exist independently of a consciousness of them, and therefore all reality consists exclusively of conscious being and its states." Montague shows that there are seven distinct stages in the development of idealism. He made these seven divisions of the development of idealism on the basis of a principle of knowledge which he called selective relativity. This principle of selective relativity means that our perception of objects is determined primarily by our inclination in the matter rather than by the force of the objects themselves. Montague shows that each stage in the development of total idealism depends essentially upon a wider application of this principle of selective relativity to the data of reality. The degree of extension that is to be given to this principle is determined by the choice of the knower more than it is by the nature of the object.

\[52\text{ibid.}, p. 265.\]
things we shall know at any moment depends on our internal states at that moment..."53 Every experience that we have can be traced back to its cause which is some external object, but which objects we are conscious of at any given moment depends upon our own internal dispositions. "This explains the curious relativity of objects known to the person that knows them, a relativity that is 'selective' but never constitutive, like the relativity of historical events to the words that describe them."54 This principle of selective relativity of the objects known to the knower is the basis of Montague's delineation of the "seven stages of subjectivism".55

In its first and most basic stage subjectivism consists in holding to the subjectivity of what we commonly call unreal objects. Among unreal objects he includes the perceptual and conceptual errors of conscious life and the illusions and dreams of sleep. In support of this view the subjectivists hold that it is unreasonable that the mind in

54 ibid.
55 The principle of selectivity is also the basis for Montague's own selection of the elements of truth in the positions of objectivism, dualism, and subjectivism.
addition to its own proper activities should serve as the storehouse of perceptual errors. Montague expresses this notion of the subjectivists as follows: "...the mind in addition to its own proper activities of thinking, willing, and feeling, comes to be credited with the function of serving as a vast dumping ground for all the unrealities of life." To save the mind from this needless function the first stage of subjectivism makes these illusions and errors unreal. They no longer exist in some hidden spatio-temporal system, but are regarded as creatures of the mind alone.

The second stage of subjectivism is described by Montague as maintaining the subjectivity of the sense-data or the effects of the object on the knower. This stage of subjectivism is for all practical purposes identical with epistemological dualism, and the same objections that can be made against dualism naturally apply also to this stage of subjectivism. Carried to its logical conclusions this stage of subjectivism would result in two distinct systems of reality. One would be the objective spatial temporal universe that we all know through experience; the other

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would be an internal subjective spatio-temporal order that has no foundation in experience. The philosophical basis of this stage of subjectivism is found in the application of the principle of selectivity to the sense-data of objects. Montague expresses this dualist position on the nature of perception as follows: the "...objects we are at any moment to perceive are found to depend directly and primarily and secondarily upon the things outside of our organism. From this point of view, therefore, dualism is considered as representing the second stage of subjectivism.

The chief characteristic of the third stage of subjectivism is the view that the secondary sense qualities of objects are made dependent upon the mind for their existence. By secondary sense qualities Montague means those characteristics of things that are only known by one of the senses, and this includes such sense-data as the color, sound, smell, and taste of objects. According to Montague the physical scientist is inclined to agree with this stage of

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57 *ibid.*, p. 262.
58 *ibid.*, p. 267.
subjectivism, because it enables him to give a purely quantitative explanation of the world in terms of the primary qualities of objects. However Montague objects to this attempt at reducing reality to include only the primary qualities of objects. In this view "...Physical objects are centers of inflowing and outflowing energies, and they also consist of qualities correlated with these energies." If the external object is the cause of our knowledge of it at all, then it is also the cause of those qualities by which the external object is made known to us. These qualities are both primary and secondary. If the primary qualities are objective, then there is no reason why the secondary qualities should not be objective. Such at least is Montague's objection to this third degree of subjectivism.

When we come to the fourth stage or degree of subjectivism we find that the principle of relative selectivity can also be applied to the primary qualities of objects. This objective destruction of the primary qualities of objects really makes it impossible to know external objects.

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in any realistic way, because all their sense perceptible qualities, are now made subjective. In this stage of subjectivism there is no certain contact with or realistic knowledge of even a world of sense-data and their causes, but the only thing left is a world of knowers and their conscious states. Nevertheless the idealist at this stage of subjectivism holds that there are certain notions about reality that all men share in common. The fact of common agreement as to the appearance of the external world is too overwhelming to be denied by the subjectivists at this stage. At this stage of subjectivism the facts of experience are saved by a distinction between what are called the common or public experiences of men, and the particular or private experiences of individual men. The former is regarded as something common to all men and the same for all men, whereas the latter is regarded as peculiar to each individual. An example of a common experience according to these subjectivists would be our consciousness of animals and plants in the world, and an example of a particular or individual experience would be some pain or ache that we might be conscious of in ourselves.

Subjectivism, however, can be carried to greater lengths
than the subjectivity of the primary qualities of objects. The next and fifth stage of subjectivism makes creatures of the mind out of the concepts of space and time, and out of the very categories and laws of nature. For the subjectivist argues that there is no good reason why the laws and relations that exist among things should be objective, if things themselves are only conscious states or ideas. Why should there be objective laws to regulate subjective things? The answer to the question is obvious. It would be strange, indeed, to have such a situation. Therefore, in this stage of subjectivism the simple solution consists in making the laws and categories of nature as subjective as is nature itself.

By a greater extension of the principle of selectivity we come to what Montague calls the sixth stage of subjectivism. In its sixth stage subjectivism calls for the subjectivity of the minds of other men in relation to ourselves. In such a view the self is the absolute measure of the value of reality. The idealists call this self, considered as the objective measure of reality, the absolute ego. This absolute ego includes not only our conscious being, but our whole experience of reality. This total experience is here re-
garded as the expression of the deeper meaning of our personality. The finite self is the name that these idealists give to the self considered as one of the objects existing in the world created by the absolute self. By means of this improvised distinction between the self considered as the norm or only objective anchor of experience, and the self considered as one of the objects of experience, the subjectivists of this stage try to give an explanation of the world that has some degree of consistency.

There is one final stage of subjectivism, however, that questions the objectivity of the absolute self. For on what grounds, these idealists argue, can a valid distinction be made between the absolute self and the finite self, because all the objects of experience are regarded as states of the knower. There is only one knower or self and that is the finite self. The concept of the absolute self is merely another object of experience of the finite self and all the objects of experience are subjective in their nature. The principle of relative selectivity is here given its fullest extension. The point has at last been reached where we are

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no longer certain of the existence of the knower. Subjectivism begins by depriving the object more and more of reality and ends by trying to deprive the knower of existence. The technical name of this degree of subjectivism is solipsism.

After this consideration of the development of subjectivism, Montague feels that we are in a good position to see the pernicious nature of this theory of reality, and the importance of basing our study of knowledge on carefully chosen principles. Montague adds that a very good reason for studying the final stage of subjectivism is to develop a real understanding of the results of this theory in order to be better on our guard against its beginnings. Subjectivism is sometimes hard to recognize in its early stages and can easily enter the philosophy of even the most determined realist unless he is on his guard against this tendency.

To prove his point that the realist must be on guard against the tendencies of subjectivism present in the knower-object relationship, Montague reduced the theories of objec-

\[61\text{ibid.}, p. 289.\]
tivism and dualism to the first and second stages of subjectivism. The cardinal principle that Montague used in his analysis of the various degrees of subjectivism was the principle of selectivity. Montague expresses this use of the principle of selectivity as follows: "...the arguments in each case for passing from a more realistic to a more idealistic position are mainly based on a single great assumption—the assumption, namely, that '(selective) relativity' implies dependence, and that because every known object is (selectively) relative to the knowing subject, therefore it is dependent upon the knowing subject and incapable of existing apart from consciousness."62 The principle of selectivity need not imply any dependence, however, of the object of knowledge upon the knower. The principle merely means that our own internal states have more to do with what objects we are conscious of, than does the force of the object itself. This does not mean in any sense of the word that the object depends upon the knower for its existence, but only that it depends upon the knower for being known.

62 ibid., p. 238.
Montague uses the principle of selectivity as the basis of his own system of epistemology. He applies this principle to the systems of objectivism, dualism, and subjectivism in order to find the "elements of truth" contained in the three systems. The application that Montague makes of the principle of selectivity to the objects of reality depends upon his own judgment. He tries to form his judgment on this matter according to the evidence of experience. He takes what he considers the basic proposition of each system and applies the principle of selectivity to it. The first system that he considers in this way is that of objectivism.

The basic proposition of the objectivists according to Montague is that "all the objects which are experienced exist physically or externally and are independent of mind."\(^{63}\) For him the word exist when it is applied to an object means that the object has a certain position in space.

\(^{63}\)ibid., p. 292.
and time in the real universe. A real thing has a certain quantitative position in regard to the other objects in the physical universe. Any experienced object that lacks these qualifications does not physically exist. Hence Montague rejects the objectivist notion that objects of illusory experience exist in some internal spatio-temporal order. Montague does hold, however, that every experienced event or object does have a definite meaning or essence which gives the object or event a logical existence in the human mind or even a possible physical existence in the external world. By means of this distinction between logical entities and physical entities Montague is able to accept the objectivist proposition that all experienced objects exist as that proposition applies to logical entities, but he rejects it as applied to physical entities.

The truth of objectivism is to be found in its position about the nature of reality as something independent of the mind, but its mistake was to conclude from this fact that every experienced object was a real object. For the objects of illusory experience are something experienced, yet they cannot be said to exist in the physical universe. Any existence that they have is purely in the mind of the person
who experiences them. For according to Montague "the real universe consists of the space-time system of existents, together with all that is presupposed by that system." 64 This "truth" of objectivism that all physical objects exist apart from and independently of the knowledge of the knower is one of the basic tenets of Montague's epistemology. Keeping in mind this "truth" of objectivism, let us consider Montague's analysis of epistemological dualism.

For the dualist the objects of sense perception are independent of the mind, but are never known by the mind as such. On the other hand, the experienced objects or sense-data depend upon the knower for their existence. 65 Montague agrees with the dualists that the experienced object as an experience does depend on the knower for its mental existence in his mind. He does not agree, however, with the dualist conclusion that this posits the existence of two distinct systems of reality—the one internal and subjective, the other external and objective, but both systems part of the physical material universe. This conclusion he says is

contrary to the facts of experience, because we have no experience of a double system of spatio-temporal reality.

The dualists propose the following example as a proof that there are two systems of reality. If a person looks at a table and then closes one eye and presses the ball of the other, the image of the table will move or become distorted. Yet this same person can open both eyes or ask some other person present in the room, and find that the real external table has not moved or changed in any way. The only change that took place was in the image of the table. This proves that the real table and the experienced table can vary independently of one another, because the experienced table depends on the knower for its existence.

The example certainly proves that the image of the table can vary from the real table, but it does not prove that the real table can vary without this variation affecting the image. The dualist conclusion from this example remains unproved, because it is not necessary to posit two spatio-temporal orders to explain the variation in the image of the table from the real table. The solution of this problem of the variation of the experienced object from the real object is found according to Montague by making the
following distinction in the act of perception. There are two entities involved in every act of perception. First, there is the object which exercises causal influence on the knower. Secondly, there is the knower whose senses produce the proper reaction or response when acted upon by the causal influence of the object. The result of this interaction of the object and the senses in the act of perception is called the sense-data. This sense-data is the result of two causes—the knower and the object. Montague calls the object and its causal influence on the knower the existence system of reality, because its most distinctive feature is the existential independence of the object of perception to the knower. The reaction and response in the knower to the influence of the object he calls the experience system of reality, because this response is always found and only found in our experience of reality. The existence system has its foundation in the object, because it consists of the object and the physical influence that the object has on the knower. The experience system has its foundation in the knower, because it consists in the particular response that the senses organs make to the influence of the external object. This response involves a complex
sensory process that varies with the different senses. Because of the many physical factors involved in the operation of both systems, there is a mutual influence or overlapping of the effects of both systems on the knower. Montague holds that the meeting point of these two systems is the act of knowledge. What at first sight seems to be a simple knower-object relationship is really according to Montague a complex relationship between the physical influences of the object and the complex sensory response of the knower. The result or outcome of this complex process is the act of knowledge. Montague expresses this notion in the following quotation. "...each being with a mind carries about inside its skull a sort of copy or map of the extra-organic world. ...The mental map that is here and now reveals a world of objects that are there and then, not by just being a copy of them but by functioning as a dynamically and causally effective substitute for them....In the hurly-burly of perceiving, remembering, and acting we cannot realize this, for we are conscious only of the objects meant and not of the sensory states mean or reveal them."66 The dualists

are right according to Montague in asserting that the experienced object can vary independently of the real external object, but they are wrong in concluding that two distinct spatio-temporal systems of reality are necessary to explain this variation. Montague explains this variation by a distorted response on the part of the knower to the influence of the object. This response takes place at the meeting point of the influence of the object on the knower and the response of the knower to the object. This is what he calls the meeting point of the existence system and the experience system.

The third theory of knowledge that Montague seeks elements of truth in is idealism or subjectivism. Montague agrees with the proposition of the subjectivists that "all objects are in some sense relative to the self and objects of its possible experience." By this he means that experienced objects are relative to the self, not that physical objects as such are relative to the self. Experienced objects are relative to the self in the sense that every thing that we perceive is to some extent determined by our own inner states and processes.

The notion of the subjectivists that all experienced objects cannot exist independently of experience is false, because it overlooks the fact that objects can be considered in various contexts. An object can be considered as an experienced object, and it exists as an experience only in the consciousness of the person experiencing it. The experienced object, however, has its real or existential existence apart from any experience of it on the part of the knower. Montague brings out this point by the following graphic example. He says "Consider...the toothache from which our friend is suffering: it is present in our consciousness as an object of conception, and how we shall conceive it and when we shall conceive it depends upon how and when our brains are specifically excited. But the indubitable presence of our friend's toothache as a member of the system of objects conceptually apprehended by you and me has not the slightest direct effect upon its presence in the system of things felt by the sufferer. If either you or I cease to think of the painful event, it continues with undiminished intensity."68 This example brings home the point that the conceptual experience of an object is not

68 ibid., p. 303
the physical object that exists outside the mind, and that our ceasing to think of the object has no bearing on its objective existence.

After this consideration of the three systems of objectivism, dualism, and subjectivism to find the elements of "truth" that are contained in them, Montague re-examines the problem of error to see what solution can be found for it. He says that the possibility of error both on the sensory level and the intellectual level is found in the act of knowing. He describes the act of knowledge as the meeting point of the existence system and the experience system of reality. This is also the point where the possibility of error arises. What we call our knowledge of the physical world is the indirect effect produced in us by the energy flowing from the extra-mental object into our brain through the sense organs. This involves a very complicated process of cause and effect, action and re-action between the brain and the environment, between the cerebro-nervous system and the objects and forces present in the physical world. This complicated process is the knowing process. Because of the many factors involved at the meeting point between the mind and the physical
world, it is at this point that the cause of error and distortion arise. In regard to the knowing process Montague says: "because of the indirectness and complexity of the process, the cerebral states that condition our experience give only a misplaced and distorted presentation of their extra-bodily causes—hence the existence of error." 69

The situation, however, is not quite as hopeless as Montague first paints it. He says that the brain has the ability to compensate for perceptual and conceptual illusions. On the perceptual level he gives the example of a man walking down a road. The farther he proceeds from the viewer the smaller he appears to become in size. This is the way that the image of a walking man affects the retina of the eye. However, we know from experience that it is the increasing distance between the viewer and the object that causes the smaller image and not any decrease in the actual size of the object. On what he calls the conceptual level, he gives the example of the setting sun. When the sun sets it appears to go down in the west; nevertheless, we know from the study of astronomy that the sun does not

69 Ibid., p. 309.
move in reference to the earth, but that the rotation of
the earth on its axis is the true cause of the apparent
setting of the sun. Our eyes perceive a setting sun, but
science tells us that the reality here is different from
the appearance. In both these cases, however, we were able
to make the proper adjustments to the situation, and thus
arrive at true knowledge in spite of the false impression
first given by the senses.

Montague compares a perceptual error to a bad photo-
graph that gives some true knowledge of its subject, but
it is knowledge mixed with error. A series of bad photo-
graphs, however, can give a fairly accurate picture of
something. Through a comparison of these pictures we can
construct a good picture of the object. The same prin-
ciple according to Montague can be applied to sense illusions.
Through our many experiences of the same object we can come
to an accurate knowledge of what it is. Montague expresses
this view when he says "the more effects we have of things,
the less ambiguity there is in their point implication... .
The totality of a thing's effects....would not, indeed,
be themselves identical with the thing, but they would be
exactly and adequately implicative of it." Both error and true knowledge have a plurality of causes in Montague's epistemology.

The notion of truth and falsity in Montague's epistemology is found in the act of making a judgment. When we make a decision about some matter that is correct we call that judgment true. An incorrect decision on some matter we term as a false judgment. Montague understands these judgments not so much as a correspondence of our ideas with reality as he does the mental or human expression of extra-mental reality. By the word truth he means true knowledge, and by the word error he means false knowledge. Montague also identifies the notions of the real and the true. He says "I hold that the true and the false are respectively the real and the unreal, considered as objects of a possible belief or judgment." By the term real Montague means anything that actually exists and hence is located somewhere in space and time, or at least something that is possible and hence has a logical existence in the

71 Ibid., p. 252.
mind of the person that knows it. These two terms the real and the true Montague identifies as the same thing considered from different points of view. An object is termed "real" from the point of view of its perception or apprehension, and it is termed "true" from the point of view of some judgment made concerning it. Similar ideas of truth Montague writes are found in the systems of objectivism, dualism, and subjectivism.

These definitions of Montague are, perhaps, the key towards our understanding how it is that he finds "truth" in the systems of objectivism, dualism, and subjectivism. Montague says that for the objectivist "the real considered as the object of a possible conscious belief or judgment" is the true. The truth for the dualist is "whatever in the individual corresponds to what exists outside the individual." For the subjectivist the true is defined as "whatever would be confirmed by an all-comprehending or absolute experience."72

These three distinct definitions can be reduced to the same criterion of truth, according to Montague. For

the objectivist notion of truth as "a judgment that asserts what is real" will agree with the subjective criterion of a single experience being judged by a more complete experience, because the more complete experience will be in substantial agreement with the objective criterion. The same thing can be said of the correspondence theory of the dualists, because when the mind and the object truly agree on the understanding of some object, the mind will also agree with the norm of a more complete experience or the assertion of the real. This being the case, these three norms or measures of truth are really mutually implicatory of the truth, rather than opposed to each other. These three norms can be used as a threefold check on the data of experience, and they can be mutually helpful in the actual process of checking this data.

By means of this more sympathetic approach to the definition of the true as it is found in the three systems Montague believes that he has found a common ground for possible agreement among the three systems. He believes that he has shown that the three systems are each seeking the same basic truth in its own way concerning the nature of the real world. For he says "It has been our aim...to
show that all of the three epistemological theories can be re-interpreted in such a way as to bring them into accord with the facts with which they deal and with one another; and we hold that in each case this re-interpretation has preserved what is positive and essential in each of the warring theories. 73 This re-interpretation of the three theories of epistemology constitutes Montague's solution of the epistemological problem of the relationship between the knower and the object known.

Montague undertook in his epistemology to save the reality of our knowledge of the world by showing the world to be the true cause of our sensations. He opposed the dualist claim that knowledge consisted of sense-data produced in us by the external object, but for his part held a "representative" theory of knowledge by which we know the object directly. Though he agreed with the objectivists that we know objects directly, he denied their premise that the errors and illusions of experience have a physical existence in the real universe. Finally, he showed how the subjectivists quite logically came to their conclusions by giving the principle

73 Ibid., p. 314.
of selectivity a greater and greater extension of meaning, but he himself denied that the data of experience warranted its extension along these lines. For he denied that our knowledge was in any sense constitutive of reality. Montague then used the principle of selectivity and applied it to the definitions of the true and the real, because he saw in them the point of reconciliation between the theories of objectivism, dualism, and subjectivism. Whether his reconciliation was successful and his own solution valid will be discussed in a later section. We come now to Montague's theory of consciousness. This theory of consciousness has an important bearing and connection with Montague's epistemology as we shall show in the next section of the thesis.
The validity of Montague's solution to the epistemological problem depends in great measure on the correctness of his definition and conception of the nature and function of consciousness. This means that we must have an understanding of what Montague meant by consciousness. He defines it as "...the potential or implicative presence of a thing at a space or time in which the thing is not actually present."\textsuperscript{74} All the objects in the material world are limited to a definite time and place. They are necessarily circumscribed by these bonds that are in Montague's philosophy an essential part of the material universe. However, there is one thing that is not so tied down in its operations and that is the workings of the mind or consciousness. Therefore consciousness is something unique in the physical world. Consciousness gives to external objects an existence other than their own in the mind of the person that knows them. Their external existence however is something quite independent of consciousness.

\textsuperscript{74}William P. Montague, The New Realism, p. 281.
sciousness simply makes us aware of what already is. This faculty according to Montague joins or relates us to reality. He puts it as follows "...objects of consciousness must be real independently of their standing in that relation...consciousness or knowledge can not be anything other than a relation between them."75 This definition is functional in that it describes the operations of consciousness. According to Montague the actual nature of consciousness from an ontological point of view consists in the potential energy of matter. Reality has two sides according to Montague's general theory of matter: one side we can see and measure, the other is unseen and immeasurable. The measurable part of reality is all that is actual, the immeasurable part is all that is potential.

Montague considers this theory, which he calls hylo-psychism, to be a basis of reconciliation between materialism and idealistic ontology, for, he writes: "The potentiality of the physical is the actuality of the psychical is the actuality of the physical."76 By this he means that


the source and nature of mental activity is to be found in what to the physical scientist would be called the potential energy of matter. When this energy is actualized, however, it is part of the measurable universe and can be described in terms of mathematical quantity.

Montague sees in the phenomenon of mind something quite distinct from other entities in the physical world, but still part of the physical universe. He asserts that the explanation of the operations of the mind can be found in the energies of matter: "to treat mind as a field of potential energy is to do justice both to its uniqueness of structure and its homogeneity with the material world, of which it is an integral part." There is more to the physical world he adds than the molecules and atoms that constitute it. There is also that which is between them and gives them their unity of action. This thing between the atoms and molecules of the material universe must be some field of force. This means "that the life of the body cannot possibly be grounded merely in its constituent particles, but must be grounded in a field or something like a

field that pervades these particles." It is in this unifying field that Montague finds a sufficient explanation for the intellectual and volitional processes of the human mind. As a materialist he sees the universe as a closed system that contains within itself all the parts and elements needed to explain itself and even the most elevated thoughts and desires of men. "The physical world is a self supporting system..." There is no need to look outside the world for its cause or direction or purpose. All there is of reality exists in some sense inside the physical universe. "The problem of God is insoluble in terms of the traditional Atheism. The problem of Evil is insoluble in terms of the traditional Theism." The core of his explanation of the universe revolves about his theory as to the nature of matter. He describes this theory about the nature of matter which he calls hylopsychism as follows: "By hylopsychism I wish to

76 Ibid., p. 56.


denote the theory that all matter is instinct with something of the cognitive function, that every objective event has that self-transcending implication of other events which when it occurs on the scale that it does in our brain processes we call consciousness. Even the ability of man to look into himself and be conscious of himself as a thinker of thoughts—even this process of self-consciousness Montague explains in terms of the energy or power of matter. He says that "...The consciousness of our own states...is the consciousness at each moment of the brain processes and implications of the just preceding moment. In this way and in this way only can we be conscious of consciousness or self-conscious."82

The physical organ of the brain is the container of all this energy which is expresses internally to us as consciousness. As Montague says "The mind is an organism within an organism. It is attached to the brain and pervades it, and if it is a field...Its stuff is the stuff of memory,

81: William P. Montague et al., The New Realism, p. 263.
82: ibid., p. 290.
the accumulated traces of sensations; and such field-like activity as it may possess seems concerned (1) with imposing patterns of self-transcending meaning upon the sensory contents, and (2) with imposing patterns of purposeful action upon the intercourse between the body and the environment." Yet one must keep in mind that there is no radical or essential difference between the mind and the body.

Montague holds that all realities in the world are radically the same in that they are all material. This position he naturally holds in reference to the human mind which he describes as follows: "Now the stuff of our brains is different from other stuff, but not so very different. It is made of the same sort of atoms which are subject to the same laws as are found in matter generally. The organization of the stuff is, to be sure, markedly different from inorganic organizations, and markedly more intricate than those found in lower forms of life. But even here the gap is not too great for evolution or descent to bridge." For Montague evolution is the answer to the complexity of

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84 William P. Montague, Belief Unbound, p. 75.
the brain structure and the complexity of the brain structure is the answer to the phenomenon of consciousness. There is no need to appeal to the spiritual when the answer to the intellectual capacity of man can be explained by a deeper appreciation of the capacity of the power of matter. Montague continues "If sentence is based on matter it cannot be based merely upon some special distribution of its particles, it must rather be intrinsic to material being as such. Once this panpsychist postulate is accepted, then indeed we can with comparative ease go on to 'impute and apportion differences of the sentient systems to the differences of their physical organization." This understanding of matter as being essentially sentient or containing life at least is potentiality is his explanation of the presence of life in matter or more correctly in physical organisms. Montague expresses this conception of the physical universe in the following manner when he says that: "Every existent thing possesses two kinds of being, 'actual' and 'potential'. Its actual being is what it overtly is at any given place in any given instant.... Its potential being is private or in-

65 Ibid., p. 76.
ternal, and not capable of appearing externally." This hidden or private aspect of being, this unmeasurable part of matter is the important element in evolution. This is especially true in the case of man. For "In the long course of evolution there came a time when this secondary system of potentialities pertaining to the special life of the brain attained sufficient strength to function with a certain independence, and not merely as an instrument to the sensory and motor exigencies of the bodily situation. It was then that the animal became man."87

This explanation and understanding of the nature of man has a profound effect on Montague's explanation of the knowledge process and of his entire epistemology. The word matter is really the most important work in Montague's philosophy, for all reality including the knower-object relation is explained in terms of it. "...However perishable the parts of the universe may be, the whole itself is enduring, and nothing happens without leaving its trace; while as for the unity of the cosmos, it would seem that the very

86 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
87 Ibid., p. 79.
fact that it is self-contained with nothing beyond into which it can scatter, would confer upon it a higher degree of organicity than would be possible for any system included within it.\(^68\) If the parts of this whole have unity and organization why should not the whole? Would not the very organization of the parts alone confer a certain unity to the whole? An affirmative answer to these questions is the conclusion that Montague finally reaches in his consideration of the nature of the universe. He even suggests that the universe might be an animal of some sort, believing that just as we have conscious life, this super-organism or super-animal of the universe may well also have conscious life and that perhaps in a far higher degree than ourselves, and thus is God. However, he does not hold to a pantheism of the type in which the parts are merged in the whole. He maintains rather that the parts retain their individuality even though they help to constitute the whole. Montague expresses this concept of the universe as follows:

> God...is a self struggling to inform and assimilate the recalcitrant thoughts of his own intellect. For each organic member or each constituent thought

\(^{68}\) *ibid.*, p. 62.
has a being and life of its own, like that of the
whole of which it is a part. The purpose and value
sought by the Great Life is the same as that of the
lesser lives within; no fixed telos or end, but a
maximum increase of life itself. For God as for
us all, goods are relative, variable, and growing.
New values are generated by old, and new summits of
beauty are revealed from the summits already ascend-
ed.

This is the God of Montague. He is the potentiality or hid-
den energy of the physical universe or it might be better
to describe him as the physical universe considered from
the point of view of its potential energy. This God is a
finite consciousness striving to completely realize himself.
Like us he is struggling to attain his fullness through the
process of evolution, which is giving him more of his per-
fection with the passage of time. What he will be when he
is fully actualized neither he nor we know at the present
stage of this process. He is as material as and as much a
part of the universe as we are, if he exists at all. Such
is Montague's conception of God.

Montague did not purposely set out to make innovations
in the world of philosophy, but rather tried to make use of
new arguments to solve the traditional problems of philosophy.

\[69 \text{ibid., pp. 64-85.}\]
The results, however, were usually untraditional solutions to the problems of philosophy. In the field of epistemology in particular Montague tried to find a common basis of reconciliation for the common contemporary philosophical solutions, and he felt that he had done so by the proper combination of the three methods of objectivism, dualism, and subjectivism in his own approach to the problem. He considered indeed that his solution met all the objections raised against it and was in accordance with experience.

It is easy to see that the idea of the nature of consciousness that he proposed underlies his solution to the epistemological problem, and stands by itself as a bold attempt to save the spiritual nature of the soul in terms acceptable to modern materialism.

We have considered Montague's interpretation of objectivism, dualism, and subjectivism and his choice of what he considered the elements of truth in them as the foundation of his own epistemological system, which he considered to be a reconciliation of these three mutually opposed systems. We have seen also that the basis of his epistemological system is his understanding of the nature and function of consciousness. With an understanding of
these points of his philosophy in mind, we will in the next chapter try to give a criticism and evaluation of these points of Montague's philosophy.
CHAPTER III

A CRITICISM AND EVALUATION OF WILLIAM PEPPERELL MONTAGUE'S EPISODEMOLOGY AND THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Positive Contribution: The Return to Reality

Montague like all the realists, attempted to base and construct his theory of knowledge on the data of experience. His purpose was to save the external world as an independent reality and as the true cause of our sensations. In this endeavour he opposed the objectivist notion that every object of experience is a real object. This position made the objectivists give to the objects of error and illusion as much reality as they gave to the ordinary objects of perception. Their conclusion Montague rightly could not accept as reasonable, because it would give an objective and real existence to the illusions and fantasies of the mind that most people understand to be purely subjective. He insisted repeatedly and correctly that this explanation of error was the weak point of objectivism. 90

As regards Montague's explanation of the origin and nature of error we can agree with him that it involves two basic factors, the object and the knower. By the object he meant the external reality and its causal influence on us, and these two constituted what Montague called the "existence system" of reality. On the other hand our sense organs and their proper capacity to receive energy from the object he called the "experience system" of reality.\(^9\) The only subjective factor that Montague allowed was the condition of the sense organs or the condition of the ether or space between the knower and the object.

The meeting point of the existence system and the experience system, according to Montague, was in the act of knowing some object; and Montague added it was also the point where the possibility of error and illusion arose. The physical energy from the perceived object can be distorted by a defect in the operation of the senses, or by some change in the medium or space between the object and the senses. Either factor would give rise to a false perception or error of sense. An erroneous judgment based on

\(^9\)ibid., pp. 306-309.
this defective sense perception would give rise to intellectual error.

Weaknesses: Difficulties in His "Return to Reality" Latent Idealism

Actually Montague insists more on the role played by subjective factors than merely the distortion caused by the senses or the environment. His final solution to the epistemological problem is based on a principle of procedure which he calls selectivity. This principle of relative selectivity means that our consciousness of objects at any given moment depends more on our mental activity than it does on the external objects themselves. The reason for this is the nature of the mind itself as understood by Montague as a system of potential energies.

The psychophysical theory that the mind is a system of potential energies enables us to understand how and why its objects are other than itself. For potential energy has a double, self-transcending reference. As the determiner of future motions, it is an agent and faces futureward; but as the "determinee" of past motions, it faces pastward and is a patient. It is the retrospective reference of potentialities to their causes that constitutes the curious cognitive function. We live forward, but we experience backward...This explains the curious relativity of objects known to the subjects that know them, a relativity that is "selective" but never constitutive...Which things we shall know at any moment de-
pends on our internal states at that moment, but the things thus known are independent both in essence and existence of the states that reveal them.\footnote{William P. Montague, \textit{The Ways of Things}, p. 672.}

The mind determines at least to some extent which objects in the environment it will turn its attention to and consider from the various objects that are physically present to it. The problem that immediately arises in this situation is:

What is the criterion or standard by which the principle of selectivity can be extended or restricted in its application to objects?

\begin{quote}
A Begging of the Question
\end{quote}

If the application or the degree of application of the principle of selectivity to objects depends upon the judgment of the knower alone then it can hardly be used as the founding principle of an objective philosophy of reality. Montague himself used this principle to reduce objectivism and dualism to forms to subjectivism.\footnote{William P. Montague, \textit{The Ways of Knowing}, pp. 265-268.} However he considered subjectivism as an over extension of this principle and proposed his own philosophical solution to the problem of
knowledge by a more moderate use of it.

Yet even such a "moderate use" is a fundamental weakness in Montague's epistemology; and he can hardly say that the data of reality determines the extent of the application of the principle of relative selectivity, because it is to the data of reality that the principle is applied. The object that is measured and judged by this principle cannot at the same time be the measure of the application of this principle. Therefore, the only alternative is for the knower to determine the extent of the application of the principle himself and thus the norm to measure reality becomes a subjective norm—the very situation that Montague wanted to avoid. 94

Montague, as we have seen, identified the real and the true as words meaning the same thing. Then he considered the three definitions given for the true by the objectivists, the dualists, and the subjectivists. The solution that he proposed was an attempt to reconcile the three systems, based on a reconciliation of the three definitions of the true. But the fundamental problem that remained was: does the mind really know the object?

94 Ibad., pp. 237-238.
According to Montague the senses do not intuit the object in the act of perception, but only receive physical energy from the object according to their capacity. In other words the act of perception or cognition is completely physical or material. Moreover he defined a physical entity as something that exists in the spatio-temporal universe. This being the case, one asks "where does the known object exist?" If it exists in the brain of the knower, then we have two entities, the real object that exists outside the mind, and the mental object that exists physically inside the material brain. In this situation the knower does not perceive the extra-mental object as such or directly, but what is directly known is the object in the brain. This means that we do not have a true knowledge of extra-mental reality, and the way is open to complete scepticism, because Montague does not hold to any intentional nature for the mental species of the external object. Indeed, he cannot hold to the intentional nature of knowledge because his conception of knowledge is completely physical and material. Knowledge is only implicatory of reality.95

95 *ibid.*, p. 305.
By the intentionality of knowledge is meant the non-physical union between the knower and the thing known by which the object is made present to the knower. This union is impossible on the physical or material level—the level to which Montague clung so tenaciously, and consequently the notion of the intentionality of knowledge is entirely absent from his epistemology.

He does not completely solve his problem when he insists that physical energy from the object causes the sensation of the object in the knower, because physical energy from the object is not the object. Actually in this case all that we would know is the physical energy from the object and not the object itself. Hence a truly realistic explanation of knowledge is impossible for Montague.

The gratuitous assumption on the part of Montague that the potential energy of matter is equivalent to sensation will not solve his basic problem. For despite his insistence that "potential energy" or the latent energy in objects is an accurate guide to our knowledge of things as they are, no proof is ever given in support of it.

If for the sake of argument, we accept Montague's premise that potential energy viewed from inside the knower is
the actual knowing of the object by the knower, the epistemological problem still remains unsolved. For the potential energy which he identified with sensation is only the result of the physical energy that comes to the knower from the object in the act of perception. This energy is at best only implicative of the object. Without an intentional union of knower and object a realistic theory of knowledge is impossible.

Montague himself implicitly admitted this when he criticized the dualists for holding a representative theory of knowledge which made it impossible to know the object directly and immediately, while admitting that we could know a sense image of it. The dualists gratuitously presumed, Montague complains, that the sense-data would be like the external objects that caused them. This presumption he thought was not a good foundation for knowledge or epistemology. Yet he himself presumes that the energy from external objects will be a sufficient guarantee of the validity of knowledge—a position almost identical with that of the dualists.

96 ibid., pp 257-258.
To say that we have a general likeness of the external object is not, however, to say that we know the external object. Unless there is real identity between the object and our knowledge of the object, we cannot really say that we know it. We can at best say that we know something similar to the object, but this is not knowledge in the strict sense of the word.

In other words, Montague failed to fulfill the requirement of identity between the object and the knower in the act of the knowing. The validity of knowledge is "ascertained" simply by repeated experience of the same object. This experience gives us, Montague asserts, a good knowledge of the object, just as even a series of bad photographs can give us a good idea of what they represent, if we compare the pictures with each other. In the case of the distorted pictures, however, we have our eyes that can see the object and then sort the photographs with an experienced mental image in mind. On the other hand, if our senses give us distorted knowledge by their very nature the problem is really quite different, because we have no way of making an objective comparison of them. The only source of information of the outside world that we have is our senses. If these do
not give us true knowledge of reality, then reality remains for us forever unknowable, and knowledge is a pretension without a foundation in fact.

Montague was not completely unaware of this difficulty, but he did not think that knowledge was made completely unattainable because of it. He realized that the overwhelming majority of men feel that we have a true knowledge of reality, and felt that such a universal conviction could not be wrong. On the other hand, he did not see how a closer identification between knower and known could be achieved. His explanation of sensation as "implicatory of reality" was offered as a guarantee of the validity of our knowledge of external objects, yet the only genuinely philosophical guarantee of true knowledge would include a union or identity between the content of knowledge or object known and the external object, and this is absent in his system.

The question that naturally comes to mind at this point is whether it is possible or not to have a union between the knower and the thing known? The answer is that it is only impossible, if the mind is a material entity, because matter

97 ibid., pp. 258-259.
as an object cannot communicate itself to matter as a subject. St. Thomas himself admitted this implicitly when he wrote as follows:

…the material thing known must needs exist in the knower, not materially but immaterially. The reason for this is that the act of knowledge extends to things outside the knower; for we know the things that are even outside us. Now by matter the form of a thing is determined to some one thing. Therefore it is clear that knowledge is in inverse proportion to materiality. Consequently, things that are not receptive of forms, save materiality have no power of knowledge whatever… But the more immaterially a being receives the form of a thing known, the more perfect is its knowledge. 98

It is precisely this materialism in Montague's philosophy that makes it impossible to have a union between the knower and the object known. Matter is the principle of limitation in the world; it is the individuating principle that limits a particular essence to some particular existent, and the more material an object is the more limited is its ability to escape its self-confinement and enter into a cognitive union with other things. Knowledge, on the other hand, by its very definition is an identification of the knower with the thing known; and consequently the basis of such a union must be the immateriality found in the act of knowing.

98 C.G., II, 84, 2.
Knowledge is an immaterial act uniting the knower with the thing known...

That which is known is not only a thing existing in and for itself, but, as known, it is a thing existing in and for the knower: the knower is not only what he is in himself, but he is intentionally the thing known. This act whereby the knower becomes the known, whereby the known exists for the knower, is...the act of intentional existing. This act is knowledge itself....Intentional existence makes a thing be known. Thoroughly relational in character, opposed to simply being in itself, it is an act whereby a knower is the other as other.99

If the mind could not take the information that the senses gave it concerning external objects and form a union with them, it would never really know them. In knowing the external object the mind is not physically but intentionally united with the object. The object is in no way changed by being known. The object retains its physical existence in the external world, but also now begins to exist in a new way in the mind of the knower. The object must exist in some way in the mind of the knower in order to be truly known. The object cannot exist in a physical way in the mind for that would really posit two physical objects: one in the mind and another outside the mind. Moreover if only some effect of the object existed in the mind, then the mind would only know the effect of the object and not the object

itself. The object must exist then in a non-material or intentional way in the mind of the knower. This intentional mode of existence is completely relational in character, for the thing known is not the mental existent, but the external physically existing object.

**Disguised Materialism**

There is no radical or essential distinction between the operations of the senses and the operation of the intellect in Montague's philosophy. According to Montague the potential energy of matter is sensation. Matter by its very nature is full of life and sensibility. All the degrees of intelligence in animals and men can be explained in terms of matter and its powers and abilities. We know from experience, however, that there are two distinct aspects to our knowledge of objects. We know objects both as particulars and as belonging to a class.

In the act of sensation, Montague points out, we know the object directly in all its concreteness. We know it not only in its primary qualities, but in all those characteristics which it possess in the real world. Although these objects are concrete and singular, the concepts that we form
of them are universal, and by means of these concepts we are able to group external objects into various categories and classes. These categories and classes, however, do not exist as such in the external world.

The mind, as experience shows, is able to grasp certain characteristics of objects and consider them apart from the objects in which they inhere. These characteristics, though they are considered without the object, actually are found in the object. In other words though the mind can consider the object under a universal aspect, it knows that the object exists as a single, definite, concrete thing. Montague himself recognizes that this is part of the process of knowing the object. He expresses his notion of the universal idea as follows:

Experience is indeed originally of particulars, that is, of objects that are presented at particular times and places. But each of these experienced objects has a universal nature which is as indefeasibly its inclusive property as is its unique position in space and time its exclusive property. In other words, the given elements of experience are complexes of universals, each complex being associated with a particular position in the space and time series. It is this latter factor of position which constitutes particularity and makes each individual numerically different from every other individual....In short, a particular is nothing but a complex of universals endowed with a position in space and time.100

100William P. Montague, The Ways of Knowing, pp. 77-78.
The particular difficulty with this notion of the nature of the universal is that instead of the universal being based on the individual, the individual is based on the universal; for Montague, while admitting that we have experience of particular objects, regards their nature as universal, because every particular individual has the same nature. This definition of the universal seems to deprive the individual object of its particular concrete nature, for the nature of a thing is not something that exists apart from the particular object that possesses it. The nature of the universal is based on the particular and not that of the particular on the universal.

The mental process by which the mind considers elements of likeness and unlikeness in particular objects and hence forms universal concepts concerning things is called the process of abstraction. The foundation or basis for abstraction is found in the external object. If the foundation for the universal did not exist in the particular the mind would be deceiving us in the process of abstraction. Abstraction can be defined as the mental representation of one or several elements of a thing, the other elements in it not being represented. St. Thomas says that there are two kinds of abstraction that
the mind can apply to material things. He describes this twofold process as follows:

Abstraction may occur in two ways. First, by way of composition and division, and thus we may understand that one thing does not exist in some other, or that it is separate from it. Secondly, by way of a simple and absolute consideration; and thus we may understand—one thing without considering another....For it is quite true that the mode of understanding, in one who understands, is not the same as the mode of a thing in being; since the thing understood is immaterially in the one who understands, according to the mode of the intellect, and not materially, according to the mode of a material thing.101

The mind does not falsify nature by this process of abstraction, but only considers this or that particular aspect of the object as it applies to all similar objects, or compares objects of different classes to see points of similarity or dissimilarity. This mental process does not affect the material object because of the immaterial mode or manner in which the object exists in the mind of the knower; and the process of abstraction is quite valid because the mind does directly know the concrete object through the senses and is well aware of the true nature of the object existing in the external world. The foundation for abstraction, however, is

101 C.G., II, 85, l.
found in extra-mental reality, because the same concrete natures are shared by many particular things.

However this complicated process of abstraction is certainly radically different from the operations of any of the senses. No matter how complex the sensory processes are in man they can not explain the formation of universal ideas. The universal idea is not seen as such by the senses, but is discovered by the thinking mind by considering the data of reality.

The Basic Failure of Montague's Theory of Consciousness

The corner-stone, however, of Montague's epistemology was his theory of the nature of consciousness and the physical universe. Montague put consciousness and the material world on the same level as parts of the material universe. Consciousness was considered as a relation of awareness between the knower and the object, with the object exercising physical influence on the knower. Knowledge was considered as physical and material as the known object. This brings up the question: Where in the physical universe does knowledge exist? Montague would say in the hidden or potential energy
of matter. When physical energy from an object reaches the brain it passes into "potential energy", the equivalent to sensation or knowledge.

Montague did not prove that the potential energy of matter was sensation. He merely asserted it as a possible explanation in materialistic terms of the nature of the mind or soul, and indeed of the entire physical universe. Apart from the fact that whatever is gratuitously asserted can be gratuitously denied, let us consider if matter has the quality of natural vitality that Montague ascribed to it. If we examine the physical universe and the living organisms in it, we find one universal fact that applies to each and every one of them. That fact is that all of them die. No person can deny the universal fact of physical death among all living organisms. To say, as Montague did, that death is merely the changing of one form of life for another is an impossible assumption on the purely physical level. Though the death of an animal may give rise to some lower forms of life, this can hardly be said to be a continuation of the life of the animal. There is no quantitative difference between a dead and a live organism, but there is a real and radical difference between them. Experience proves that matter is not vital by reason
of its own proper nature, because there is no material or quantitative difference between a living and a dead organism. "An organism is a unity, a substance determined in itself, not a colony of cells or atoms....It is the form or soul...which explains the unity of the compositum, the unity of the living thing, the proper character of organic development, of growth and protection."102

Montague claims, however, that the nature of knowledge and of consciousness is material. For him the only existent reality is the material universe. This means that operations that we would ordinarily consider spiritual or the result of spiritual power are due to the potential energy of matter. Although it set forth to save the reality and validity of knowledge, this view contains the seeds of its own destruction, because it makes impossible any satisfactory union between the mind and its object. No proof can be given that the physical effects of the object in the brain are identical with the object. Montague himself admits that they are only "implicative", and this is not sufficient for knowledge. The basic failure in Montague's system of philosophy, as we have

102 A.D. Sertillanges, Foundations of Thomistic Philosophy, pp. 196-197.
indicated, is his radical materialism. The mind or soul is looked upon as a part of the physical universe. It is considered as material as any other part of the physical universe. In fact the soul is reduced to a system of energies that pervade the brain—energies which, Montague asserts, when viewed from the outside are "potential energies", but viewed from the inside are "the actuality of sensation". "This is such stuff as souls are made on."\textsuperscript{103} Can such a soul be considered as capable of immortality? Montague hopes that it can, but is not sure.

Montague's Contribution to American Philosophy

The influence of Montague upon American philosophy can be measured to some extent by the fact that the October 13, 1954 issue of the \textit{Journal of Philosophy} was dedicated to him. The tribute there given to him indicates that he made a lasting impression on those who knew and were associated with him both as a man as well as a philosopher. As regards his contribution to the field of American philosophy, he certainly made definite contributions to the naturalistic trend in

\textsuperscript{103}William P. Montague, \textit{The Ways of Things}, p. 415.
American thought and to the neo-realist movement. His conception of the knower-object relation was one of the distinctive features of the neo-realist movement. It enabled the neo-realis
ts to give a far more satisfactory explanation of error and illusion than they had previously offered. The neo-realis
ts, however, were never able to give a completely satisfactory explanation of the origin and cause of error and illusion in sense perception.

Montague's theory of consciousness as a relation between objects rather than as a substance enabled him to emphasize the independence of external objects as far as any dependence on the mind is concerned, and also clarified the need for the secondary qualities of objects to have as much of an objective existence in the world as the primary qualities of objects. For, according to Montague, consciousness was in no sense a creator of reality, but only served the function of making us aware of what already existed in the object.

On the other hand his principle of relative selectivity emphasized the role of the individual knower in choosing the objects to be known. This principle is of cardinal importance

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in Montague's philosophy in his explanation of the acquisition of knowledge and the genesis of error. Indeed his conception of the role of the principle of selectivity in acquiring knowledge seemed to make consciousness more than a mere relation between objects, although Montague denied this.

Another distinctive feature of Montague's philosophy was his theory of "hylopsychism". According to this theory, sensation, intrinsic to material reality, was expressed externally to a given object as the potential energy of that object. All reality can be considered from two points of view. What is viewed as the potential energy of an object from the point of view of the external observer is expressed as sensation within the object itself.

In the realm of religion Montague held to a conception of God that made Him a part of the material universe. Indeed he was inclined to look upon the entire physical universe as some super organism. This super organism had a consciousness of things, and this consciousness was God. He felt that this was the only way to keep God as part of reality, and the necessary finiteness of such a God made it easy for Montague to solve the problem of evil in the world. Such, indeed, were
the contributions of Montague to the field of American philosophy. Most of these philosophic positions were not original with him, but he did contribute to their development on the American scene.

All of Montague's contributions to American thought were not of equal importance, nor do we have to accept them as the best solution to the particular problems to which he applied them. His explanation of consciousness is at best only a refined materialism. His conclusions, therefore, as to the immortality of the soul was on his own admission a sincere hope and wish. Logically his hope was vain for no real proof was offered by him for the immortality of the physical material soul.

Montague's theories on epistemology do not give sufficient attention to the intellectual operations of the mind. He did not make a radical distinction between the operations of the senses and the intellect, but tried to explain the entire process of knowledge in materialistic terms. Finally, because he cannot adequately the object and the mind in this materialistic conception of knowledge, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that he failed to solve the epistemological problem. Without the intentional identity between the
mind and the object, there can be no realistic theory of knowledge, and there is no adequate theory of intensionality in Montague's writings.

Montague's theories on epistemology and the nature of consciousness do not fit all the facts of experience. Moreover, his explanation of these realities though ingenious was not based on correct first principles of being, and hence was doomed to failure from the beginning. These in brief are the principal objections that can be brought against Montague's philosophical positions.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by John Joseph Monahan has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dec. 1, 1956

Date

Signature of Adviser