1. **What is realism?**

Realism or antirealism is typically *domain specific*, i.e. philosophers typically debate about *moral realism/antirealism; mathematical realism/antirealism; scientific realism/antirealism; external world realism/antirealism*; etc. One may be a realist in one domain without being a realist in another.

The *Official Definition*: Realism about a particular domain entails:

- The existence thesis: there are facts or entities distinctive of that domain; and
- The independence thesis: the existence and nature of these facts/entities is in some important sense objective and mind-independent.

1.1. **Facts and entities**

- Facts are “sentence-shaped” structures in the world: it’s a fact that *Khalifa has ten fingers*.
- Entities are “word-shaped” structures in the world: *Khalifa* is an entity.
- Realists can (but need not) claim that there are facts that are distinctive of a domain without claiming that there are entities that are also distinctive of that domain.
  - Ex. One may be a realist about social facts (e.g. that unemployment is at 6.7%) while claiming that there are no distinctively social entities (e.g. that unemployment is reducible to the actions of individual people.)

1.2. **Mind-independence**

- Realism entails that the relevant facts/entities are “discovered, not constructed [nor invented]”
- Roughly, this means that, these facts/entities would still exist existed, even if we didn’t believe that they existed.
  - There would be a “fact of the matter” even if we didn’t have any thoughts about it.
- Examples of mind-dependent views:
  - Phenomenalism: the only things that exist are our sensations
    - Example of a phenomenalist fact: Right now, something appears red to me.
    - Physical facts are nothing but constructions of phenomenalist facts.
  - Idealism: the only things that exist are our ideas
    - Ex. I believe that the table is five feet long.
  - Kantianism: independently of our mind, the world is without structure; our concepts impose structure upon the world.
  - Verificationism: facts are defined essentially by the way in which we can come to know them to be true.

1.3. **The spectrum of positions in the realism-antirealism debate:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Existence</th>
<th>Existence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mind-independence</strong></td>
<td>Error theory</td>
<td>Realism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fictionalism</td>
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<td>Instrumentalism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Non-factualism</td>
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<td><strong>Mind-dependence</strong></td>
<td>Why is this empty?</td>
<td>Idealism</td>
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<td>Verificationism</td>
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<td>Social-constructivism</td>
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<td>Response-dependence</td>
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2. **Epistemological aspects of realism**

- The *confidence thesis*: Although it may in some circumstances be difficult, we are always capable of coming to know about the existence and nature of the domain we are realists about. ("Anti-skeptical realism")
- The *insecurity thesis*: It is possible to be in ignorance or error about the domain we are realists about. In order to avoid such mistakes, one must make appropriate contact with the domain in question, and there is no guarantee that anyone will succeed in doing that. ("Fallible realism")
Confident but insecure: While there is no guarantee that we ever succeed in actually making appropriate contact with the world (insecurity), knowledge of the world is always possible (confidence).

2.1. Realists: neither confident nor insecure?

2.1.1. First Argument

P1. If the confidence thesis is true, then anything unknowable is unreal.
P2. Some unknowable things are real.
C1. ∴ The confidence thesis is not true. (From P1, P2)
P3. If the insecurity thesis is true, then anything known with certainty (i.e. an absolute guarantee) is unreal.
P4. Some things known with certainty are real.
C2. ∴ The insecurity thesis is not true. (From P3, P4)

C3. ∴ Neither the insecurity thesis nor the confidence thesis is true. (From C1, C2)

2.1.2. Second Argument:

P1. If the insecurity or confidence theses are true, then realism is true only if our minds are very feeble or very capable.
P2. If realism is true only if our minds are very feeble or very capable, then realism is true only if facts/entities stand in the right relationship to our minds.
P3. If the facts must stand in the right relationship to our minds, then facts/entities depend on our minds.
C1. ∴ If the insecurity or confidence theses are true, then realism is true only if facts/entities depend on our minds. (From P1-P3)
P4. But realism is true only if facts/entities do not depend on our minds (Independence Thesis, §1).
C2. ∴ The insecurity or confidence theses are not true. (From C1, P4)

3. Semantic aspects of realism

The truth thesis: there are statements distinctive of a given domain, and the truth and falsity of these statements are independent of our means for coming to know whether these statements are true/false.

3.1. BE/M is the truth thesis:

P1. If the truth thesis is a central feature of realism, then the relationship between truth and realism is merely one of definition.
P2. If the relationship between truth and realism is merely one of definition, then it is uninteresting.
P3. The relationship between truth and realism is interesting.
C. ∴ The truth thesis is not a central feature of realism. (From P1-P3)

4. Correspondence and representation

4.1. Objectivity and correspondence

The Objectivity Thesis (OT): The belief that \( p \) is true if, and only if, with respect to the belief that \( p \), things are as they are believed to be.

Substantive theories of truth seek to explain why OT is true.
The oldest theory of truth is a substantive theory called the Correspondence Theory:

- Causal-Correspondence: The belief that \( a \) is \( F \) is true if and only if the object causally mapped by \(<a>\) has the property causally mapped by \(<F>\).

General idea: causal mappings are a kind of representational relation.

4.2. The scope problem

P1. The beliefs that \( 2+2 = 4 \) and "recreational torture is morally wrong" is true.
P2. There is no object that is causally mapped by \(<2+2>\).
P3. There is no property that is causally mapped by \(<\text{morally wrong}>\).
C. ∴ There are true beliefs of the form \( a \) is \( F \) where no object is causally mapped by \(<a>\) or no property is causally mapped by \(<F>\).
5. **Pragmatism**

5.1. **Pragmatist theories of truth**

Like OT, another “truism about truth” is the following:

- **The End of Inquiry Thesis (EIT):** Other things being equal, true beliefs are a goal of inquiry.

Pragmatist theories of truth take EIT to have priority over OT. Thus, Putnam’s pragmatic theory of truth states:

- **Pragmatist Theory (PT):** The proposition that \( p \) is true if and only if the proposition that \( p \) would be warranted to believe in ideal epistemic circumstances for assessing the proposition that \( p \).

5.2. **The conditional fallacy**

P1. Suppose that it’s true that the ideal epistemic circumstances for assessing this proposition will never obtain.

P2. Then, according to PT: the proposition, the ideal epistemic circumstances for assessing this proposition never obtain, would be warranted to believe in ideal epistemic circumstances for assessing the proposition that the ideal epistemic circumstances for assessing this proposition never obtain.

P3. But P2 is a contradiction.

C1. :. Either PT is false, or the ideal epistemic circumstances assessing all propositions will obtain.

    (from P1-P3)

P4. The ideal epistemic circumstances for some propositions will never obtain.

C2. .: PT is false. (from C1, P4)

6. **Superwarrant**

A fancier kind of pragmatist theory relies on the notion of superwarrant, i.e. warrant to believe something regardless of any further information that comes in.

- Recall the notion of defeasible reasons from Boghossian, Chapter 2. Superwarranted beliefs are justified beliefs that are never defeated.

**Superwarrant theory of truth (SW):** A belief is true if and only if it is superwarranted.

6.1. **Scope problem**

P1. If SW is correct, then all true beliefs are superwarranted.

P2. If a belief is superwarranted then it has evidence for it.

P3. There is no evidence for the proposition that the number of stars in the universe right now is even.

C1. :. If SW is correct, then the number of stars in the universe right now is even is not true. (From P1-P3)

P4. There is no evidence for the proposition that the number of stars in the universe right now is not even.

C2. :. If SW is correct, then the number of stars in the universe right now is not even is not true. (From P1, P2, P4)

C3. :. If SW is correct, then neither the number of stars in the universe right now is even nor the number of stars in the universe right now is not even is true. (From C1, C2).

P5. Either the number of stars in the universe right now is even or the number of stars in the universe right now is not even is true.

C4. :. SW is incorrect (From C3, P5)

7. **Deflationary theories**

7.1. **Deflationism defined**

Both correspondence and pragmatist theories assume that:

- Truth has a real essence (e.g. causal mapping or superwarrant);
- This essence explains truisms such as OT and EIT.
Deflationary theories of truth deny these claims, insisting instead that:

1. The concept of truth is a merely logical device, typically expressed via the T-schema:
   \(<p>\) is true if and only if \(p\).
   
   - The use of the concept of truth is that it allows us to accept a (potentially) large set of propositions without enumerating each of those propositions, e.g. “Everything that Heidi said was true.” In other words, truth is a useful “generalization device.”

2. Truth plays an expressive, but not a (significant) explanatory role, i.e. any explanatory role other than as a generalizing device.

7.2. The norm of belief problem

Like OT and EIT, the following appears to be a truism about truth:

- The Norm of Belief Thesis (NBT): It is prima facie correct to believe that \(<p>\) if and only if \(<p>\) is true.

Deflationists can’t account for this:

P1. If deflationism is correct, then a general prescription, NBT, is justified by specific prescriptions for each proposition \(p\):
   
   - It is prima facie correct to believe that \(<p>\) if and only if \(p\).

P2. Specific prescriptions are justified by general prescriptions.

C. ∴ Deflationism is incorrect. (From P1, P2)

7.3. The explanatory toolbox problem

P1. If deflationism is correct, then truth plays no significant explanatory role.

P2. If plays no significant explanatory role, then truth does not explain why linguistic expressions have the meanings that they do.

P3. Linguists have been very successful in explaining why linguistic expressions have the meanings that they do in terms of truth(-conditions).

C. ∴ Deflationism is incorrect. (From P1-P3)