



The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body and World

By Hilary Putnam

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The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body and World By Hilary Putnam

What is the relationship between our perceptions and reality? What is the relationship between the mind and the body? These are questions with which philosophers have grappled for centuries, and they are topics of considerable contemporary debate as well. Hilary Putnam has approached the divisions between perception and reality and between mind and body with great creativity throughout his career. Now, in *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body, and World*, he expounds upon these issues, elucidating both the strengths and weaknesses of current schools of thought. With his characteristic wit and acuity, Putnam offers refreshing solutions to some of philosophy's most vexing problems.

Putnam first examines the problem of realism: is objective truth possible? He acknowledges the deep impasse between empirical and idealist approaches to this question, critiquing them both, however, by highlighting the false assumption they share, that we cannot perceive the world directly. Drawing on the work of J. L. Austin and William James, Putnam develops a subtle and creative alternative, which he calls "natural realism."

The second part of the book explores the mind-body question: is the mind independent of our interactions with the physical world? Again, Putnam critically assesses two sharply antithetical contemporary approaches and finds them both lacking. *The Threefold Cord* shows the entire mind-body debate to be miscast and draws on the later work of Wittgenstein, once more advancing original views on perception and thought and their relationship with both the body and the external world. Finally, Putnam takes up two related problems: the role of causality in human behavior and whether or not thoughts and sensations have an "existence" all their own.

With Putnam's lucid prose and insightful examples, *The Threefold Cord* loosens the Gordian knots into which philosophy has bound itself over the issue of epistemology.

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Editorial Review

Review

[A] combination of intellectual enthusiasm and dialectical ingenuity... [this] new book... defends a kind of common sense realism. The lectures that are collected in this volume... are philosopher's philosophy.

(The New Republic)

From the Back Cover

"One of the most exciting of contemporary philosophers" (Times Literary Supplement) illuminates and reconfigures a perennially intriguing problem: the relationship between our perceptions and reality. Putnam first examines the problem of realism: Is objective truth possible? He acknowledges the deep impasse between empirical and idealist approaches to this question, critiquing them both, however, by highlighting the false assumption they share -- that we cannot perceive the world directly. Drawing on the work of J. L. Austin and William James, Putnam develops a subtle and creative alternative, which he calls "natural realism".

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About the Author

Hilary Putnam is Cogan University Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Harvard University. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a corresponding fellow of the British Academy. Among his many books are *Philosophical Papers*, *Realism with a Human Face*, *Words and Life*, *Renewing Philosophy*, and *Pragmatism*.

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