PRELUDE

" While I do not know what is meant by saying that *the* world is simple or complex, I have some idea what is meant by saying that among the many worlds there are, if there are any, some are simple and some complex, some ingenuous, and some ingenious, and even by saying that some are prosaic and some poetic."[1]

" . . . my insistence on the very continuity and unity, the very affinity, of art and science and perception as branches of worldmaking."[2]

NELSON GOODMAN ON TRUTH

Nelson Goodman's theory of truth as depicted in *Ways of Worldmaking* (hereafter *WoW*) seems to fit neatly into the larger system of worldmaking. It fits into the " examination and comparison of the ways we make what we make—call them versions or worlds as you like—and of the criteria we use in judging what we make,"[3] which one can say constitute Goodman's main undertaking already since *The Structure of Appearance*.[4] As he claims that we create world versions as symbols users and that there is no one world that we interpret or understand, his theory of truth reflects a variance, or a relativism (under rigorous restraints as we shall see) in symbol systems and consequently a variance, a relativism in versions generated. He writes in *On Starmaking* : " I maintain that many world versions—some conflicting with each other, some so disparate that conflict or compatibility among them is hardly determinable—are equally right. Although right versions are different from wrong versions : relativism is restrained by considerations of *rightness*."[5] If we had *the* world to interpret or *the* world to describe, truth would play a crucial role; however, since this is clearly not the case for Goodman, the theory of truth he offers must function as a criterion for judging a version only in limited cases. In that respect, Hilary Putnam makes the following comment : "It seems to me that Goodman's view (on truth) is closely related to points recently made by Michael Dummett and by me, notably the point

that the metaphysical realist notion of truth cannot play any role in a theory of *how we understand* our *various* versions—worlds and languages."[6]

In the first chapter of *WoW*, Goodman states that a version is true if "it offends no unyielding beliefs and none of its own precepts."[7] "Evidently this is not meant as a definition of 'true'," Hilary Putnam rightly points out.[8] However, for Goodman, truth furthermore applies to what is said, literally or metaphorically and literal truth to what is said literally.[9] The predicate "true of" may be applied to linguistic world versions in as much as they are linguistic and hence state propositions that can be asserted as true. "Truth applies only to versions that consist of statements."[10] The type of proposition contained in a given world version will however affect the application of the truth predicate depending upon the literal or metaphorical nature of the given version.

Goodman makes clear his distinction between literal and metaphorical propositions and thus the applicability of the truth predicate in *Languages of Art* (hereafter *LA*).[11] The distinction asserts that some "thing" that the proposition refers to falls within range of a particular predicate, then that referent is understood to possess the quality of that predicate. A painting may be said to literally possess the quality of "grey" but only metaphorically possess the quality of "sad". And a referent may possess many qualities literally and many more metaphorically, but the range of application of those predicates relies upon *usage* and what Goodman refers to as "habit".

Application of literal predicates to referents result from the possession of particular qualities or dispositions of the referent in question but the application of metaphorical predicates arises out of various other factors surrounding reference that have little if anything to do with denotation in the strict (literal) sense of depiction or "pointing to". As Goodman stressed on numerous occasions, reference includes expression and exemplification as well as denotation. In Putnam's terms : "...statement making and referential use of language represents only one sort of symbolic functioning (expression and exemplification being cited as others)."[12] A painting may be said to refer to or to express sadness and in fact the application of "sad" as a predicate

is not incorrect; it is, however, metaphorical. In most cases, the application of a predicate that refers metaphorically to a referent results from *the extension* of the range of application of that given predicate provided that it has had prior metaphorical applications to guide it (the extension) or else from the *transfer* of the predicate from one range to another thus involving not only a change of range, but also of realm. One can further say that the application of a predicate that refers metaphorically to a referent results from an *extension* (on the basis of plain metaphorical uses) and/or a *transfer* Goodman writes in LA : "Now metphor typically involves a change not merely of range but also of realm.[13]

Note that a distinction ought to be made between the extension of the range of application of a predicate as happens when the predicate becomes more general (and which only yields another literal use) and the kind of extension referred to above, (which in a sense always involves a transfer, if not from literal to metaphorical, then from metaphorical to metaphorical, as in from-prior-to-new) and by which one can characterize the metaphorical application of a predicate. For example, this may perhaps be the case when we apply "high" to sounds, guided by the earlier metaphorical applications to numbers (via numbers of vibrations per second) rather than directly by the literal application according to altitude; or perhaps the metaphorical application to sounds preceded and guided later metaphorical application to numbers. In any case, says Goodman his point does not depend upon the correctness of his etymology.[14]

Also relevant along these lines, Goodman advances the idea that the metaphorical application of a predicate *reflects* its literal use or else its earlier metaphorical uses.[15] The application of "cold" or "sad" to a painting is not incorrect but merely metaphorical, in as much as the predicate's range (which includes prior or simply other metaphorical uses, as in "cold colour") has been extended to include otherwise excluded referents (here, painting) or else in as much as the predicate has been transferred from one range (which could be one where in the predicate applies literally) to another. In the latter case, "sad", for example, which usually, literally applies to persons is here, transferred and applied metaphorically (unusually) to a painting. In the same way, there

is metaphorical use when we talk of "cold" or "hot" colors, in as much as temperature-predicates have been transferred from one range (their *usual* range, which includes certain referents) to another (which includes other referents) and which is in the case here at hand, that of colours.

How then does the application of a given predicate affect the truth of a proposition ? In the case of literal truth it affects the truth of the proposition by delineating the range of application of the predicate and establishing boundaries beyond which the application of that predicate does not hold. Mistakes can surely be made in the application of a predicate or in the truth determination of any given proposition. If a predicate is mistakenly applied, then the resulting proposition may well be false. A painting can be said to express sadness or coldness but not to denote *literally* either of these qualities. The range of application of both of these predicates simply does not include paintings as a referent in the denotative sense, i.e., in the literal-sense of reference. Any proposition then which asserts that in fact a painting denotes or posses the quality of sadness in any *literal* use of the predicate is false. The line dividing false propositions from metaphorical truth propositions *is not* unclear; assertions can be made about the metaphorical truth of any proposition if it is clearly understood that what occurs in the metaphorical use of predicates and the assignment thereof is, as mentioned above, an extension of the range of application of the predicate (guided by prior metaphorical uses) or a transfer of the predicate from one range to another, rather than a misuse of the predicate.

A brief digression is here necessary in order to comment on the remark that Goodman makes (in his letter), according to which my account seems to suggest that denotation is literal while expression is metaphorical. Of course, I can but agree with Goodman that denotation may be either literal or metaphorical. But, for the limited purpose of this paper, I have referred to denotation only when used in the literal sense of reference.[16]

The predicate " true of " then refers to all linguistic world versions, and refers either literally or metaphorically depending upon the application of predicates. The determination of the truth value of any given proposition is fairly obvious if the test is for the literal truth of the proposition; either the predicate applies

in *common usage*, or it does not. The determination of meta-phorical truth, however, becomes more difficult as the range of application of a predicate is extended (on the basis of previous metaphorical uses) or as the predicate is transferred from one range to another. For even Goodman admits that predicates can only stretch so far; for instance, what is a loud movement ? a quick noise ? If this were the only description offered of the movement, the noise, or of the referent, one would want to say that it was mistaken placement of the predicate " loud ", " quick ", rather than to assert that this was metaphorically true.

The distinction then between literally true and metaphorically true depends upon how predicates are applied, the flexibility of the range of application of any given predicate, or the transfera-bility of a predicate from one range to another. Linguistic versions will often combine literal and metaphorical placement of predicates such that propositions contained in any given version may be literally true and metaphorically false or *more commonly*, metaphorically true and literally false. Tests for truth, according to Goodman, if applicable in any useful sense will allow for this flexibility or transferability, and account for the various ways in which the extensions of any predicate can be altered, the transfers be made to " fit " the usage, and more importantly, the intentions of a world maker. Sometimes metaphorical truth may be all that is desired as for instance in the case of the poet many times. Little if anything rests upon his use of language as it *depicts* a world but much rests on his use of language as it *expresses* a world view. In this case, metaphorical uses of words may be more appropriate.

To say that truth plays a role in determining the value of any world is to say that it serves as a criterion for judgment in the case of linguistic versions composed of propositions that are or are not "true". Besides, in *WoW* (Chapter 7), we are told that it depends on *credibility* and *coherence*. " Versions are taken as true when they offend no unyielding beliefs and none of its own precepts." This very statement plays lip service to Goodman's entire system, in which, once again, "the metaphy-sical realist notion of truth cannot play any role in a theory of how we understand our various versions and languages." If one retained, as Donald Davidson (referred to by H. Putnam)[17]

that "to know the meaning of, say 'Snow is white' is to know under what conditions that sentence is true, one can say that *whatever it takes to und istand a sentence* is to be called implicit knowledge of the conditions under which the sentence is true. Then we would be dealing with a tautology which can be expressed as follows : " If X understands the sentence 'Snow is white', then X knows (implicitly) the truth conditions of the sentence 'Snow is white'." But this, Putnam notes, cannot be claimed to be *an explanatory account of understanding.* Therefore, if the notion that truth as correspondence to reality cannot do the job, how are we to explain the notion of truth ? The formal semantics of " true " (especially the equivalence principle : that to say of any sentence that it is true is equivalent to asserting the sentence) enables us to decide as many sentences of the form *S is true* as there are sentences S we are willing to assert or deny. But again, does it allow us to account for what we are doing when we assert and deny statements ? How are we going to do it ? Goodman even suggests that we say " when we assert statements we hope and intend that they should be true ;" but is not this empty, since there are not and cannot be independent tests for truth and present warranted assertibility. In *WoW*, Goodman goes on to say that the familiar dictum "" Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white " must be revised to something like "' Snow is white' is true in a given world if and only if snow is white in that world, which, in turn, if differences between true versions cannot be firmly distinguished from differences between worlds, amounts merely to ' Snow is white ' is true according to a true version if and only if snow is white according to that version."[18] In *On Starmaking,* he insists in a different way : " we cannot find any world-feature independent of all versions. Whatever can be said truly of a world is dependent on the saying——not that whatever we say is true but that whatever we say truly (or otherwise rightly) is nevertheless informed by and relative to the language or other symbol system we use."[19] It may be at this point relevant to raise with Scheffler the question concerning the distinction or interchangeability of " worlds " and " (right) ver- sions,"[20] but I shall not discuss it fully herein, thinking that it is sufficient to recall what Goodman responds in that respect : ". . . talk of worlds and talk of right versions are often inter- changeable."[21] And also : " . . . however distinct worlds may

be from right versions, making right versions is making worlds."[22]

What thought becomes of truth talk relative to non-linguisitic world versions? Goodman maintains that there are ways of world-making that do not involve statements or propositions and will not then be relevant to a truth test. Versions that express or exemplify but do not state are also valid world versions and must be accounted for in any criterion which purports to judge between versions or make choices among versions possible. Art, music, dance, and probably a whole host of other means of expression and exemplification. Truth, I take Goodman would argue, does not apply strictly speaking to expression or exemplification and thus, it fails as a criterion to judge the value of any non-linguistic world version. With truth failing entirely in the case of non-linguistic world version, and necessarily stretched to accommodate linguistic world versions that contain metaphorical uses of language and perhaps even probing to be inconsistent relative to linguistic versions that contain propositions couched in literal uses of language, it becomes clear that a closer examination of truth as a criterion is necessary.

The reasons why truth fails as a test for the value of any given world version vary with the versions. Truth fails as an adequate testing device for literal linguistic versions if the actual trivial truths of the system are over looked in favour of a different account that comes closer to *achieving more, for less* (Principle of Economy). Goodman writes in *WoW* : " Truth is no more a necessary than a sufficient consideration for a choice of a statement. Not only may the choice often be of a statement that is the more nearly true, but were truth is too finicky, too uneven, or does not fit comfortably with other principles, we may choose the nearest amenable and illuminating lie." And he even goes on to state: "Most scientific laws are of this sort."[23]

If, for example, the scientist disregards his actual data in favour of a smooth line that just misses all of them, he may in fact be foregoing "truth" for "*simplicity*". The smooth curve may not only describe accurately enough the actual placement of the data but also adhere more closely to all he has taken with him in to the lab as well as he hopes to take out. He begins his investigation with a whole host of presystematic assumptions that feed into the results and support the resulting theoretical assertion. His

data may or may not correlate with fixed regularity to some given set of assertions but this may matter little in the overall value of the version generated.

What the scientist does, like all world makers, is to begin with old worlds and create new worlds. This may be easy to say but not so easy to do. Goodman is aware that "making right world versions—or making worlds is harder than making chairs or planes, and failure is common largely because all we have available is scrap material recycled from old and stubborn worlds." [24] However, he would respond significantly enough as far as the brand of epistemology he is trying to propound is concerned, that : "we have to start with some premises and principles; and there are no absolute and incontrovertible certainties available. But that does not mean that we must start from careless guesses." [25] The old world of the scientist may range from presystematic beliefs and assumptions to other systematic assertion to other types of world versions that may come to bear upon his resulting version. The world version that he will generate does not have to pass some stringent test for " truth" by consistently and only corresponding to some set of data he has endlessly generated but rather the version must accurately describe the results of the findings as they relate to a framework that includes all that has come before as well as all that will follow as a result of the investigation. His version must work.

To say then that a given assertion of a scientific, or any other linguistic version is true, is to say that it is *approximately true*. "What does matter is that the approximations are preferred to what may be regarded either as truths or as more exact truths." [26] It accounts for as much as possible, given the scope of the investigation and the allowance for the necessary "fitting" of sometimes trivial truths into a larger picture that says more by saying it in a more comprehensive way. Truth then understands in a narrow sense of matching the propositions to the "facts" and only to the "facts" fails to describe not only *what happens* in the construction of *a world* but also fails to describe what *should happen* in the construction of a *world version*. "Truth is far from sufficient." [27]

The scientist who ditches his data for a smooth curve is not

the only world maker who relies little on truth as a criterion for the construction of a world version. The writer who builds versions from linguistic components denies truth every time he takes the small step from literal meaning to metaphorical meaning. Those statements in linguistic versions that incorporate metaphorical uses of language often have no relation to truth understood literally. An entire world version may be built upon statements that have no literal truth to speak of and may be merely metaphorically true if true at all. To say then that a world version may be metaphorically true may in fact say that there are nothing but literally false statements within the version. As already mentioned above, the application of a truth predicate to linguistic versions that use metaphorical language requires an obvious stretching of the notion of truth to make "fit" the use of language. Either truth must be altered or replaced entirely as a criterion of judgment when a version is linguistic but metaphorically so.

Versions even farther removed from the application of a truth predicate are those that express or exemplify but do not state anything in terms of propositions or language in general. These versions may in fact express much or exemplify much relative to the actual description offered as a version but they cannot be said to be true or not true in any sense of the predicate. There is no test for the truth of non-linguistic versions, but Goodman asserts that there is a test that serves the same purpose and in fact replaces truth as a criterion in most every case, not only those of those non-linguistic world versions; that criterion is " RIGHT-NESS". It serves to apply to all the possible ways worlds are created and stated. And thus, *truth* is subsumed under it as only one aspect.[28]

But Goodman has not really substantiated his ideas on this central issue (only a few pages in *WoW*): perhaps he has not yet worked out what he wishes to say exactly.[29] However, one can see that the direction is clear.

"The direction in which Goodman's thought takes him is the direction of verificationist or "non-realist" semantics. That is, Goodman is saying, I think, that what we understand our language in terms of is a grasp of conditions of warranted assertibility and rightness; not a grasp of "truth conditions" in the old realist

sense,"[30] that truth is an idealization of warranted assertibility. In *WoW* he writes: "Truth, like intelligence is perhaps just what the tests test."[31] A couple of pages further: "shall we, then, identify unattainable total and permanent credibility with total truth[32] which in the context, seems to say that "total truth" is an idealization of "credibility."[33] In *On Starmaking*, Goodman brings a precision that is significant as regards his relativism : "note that my suggestion that truth might be equated with permenent credibility is itself credible only if credibility is no more to be equated with belief than being red is to be equated with looking red. We often believe what is not credible and disbelieve what is credible. Standards of credibility do not vary with individual opinion, over the worlds in the world of worlds sketched in *WoW*. But neither are they absolute; they may vary from one world of worlds to another. Relativity goes all the way up."[31]

One may be bothered by Goodman's sketchy and *descriptive stance* in his discussion of truth and the tests for truth,[35] and hence be tempted to think of the whole story he tells about how we build verisons, from versions, about not starting ex-nihilo, about precepts and unyielding beliefs, as a relativism that can be reduced to a " true for me but not for you " or vice versa. But, as Putnam points out, I think, in according with Goodman's view, " relativity of rightness and admissibility of conflicting right renderings in no way precludes rigorous standards for distinguishing right from wrong."[36] Indeed, Goodman states that not all versions are true. His relativism is restrained by considerations of rightness—which is neither constituted nor tested by correspondence with a world independent of all versions. It seems that in Goodman's view any superiority of version(s) over other versions would have to be judged and claimed from *within* our collection of versions. There would be no neutral standard (or place). However, he does not say much about what makes our versions superior to others *by our criteria*. To say that there are some criteria—neither total relativity nor total absolutism,—that " not any criteria are used "[37] is not enough.

To draw this discussion to a close, I shall consider another but related aspect of Goodman's theory. *The fact is* that we build world versions as diverse as possible. And " only an extraordinary realism would require that a version, to be faithful,

must not only describe ' the world as it is ', but also be simple or at least match the world in simplicity, whatever that might mean. "[38] Besides, and Goodman recognizes it, *we wish* to build world versions, because doing so enriches us in so many ways. This, it seems, points to the fact that Goodman entertains an idea of what is good for us under his notion of " truth ", or rather under the notion of rightness.

If one takes for example the often-wished properties of *simplicity, systematicity* and *scope* in scientific theory, Goodman considers the search for them as part of the more general search for " rightness ". Certain versions which do not have these properties are abandoned, rejected in favor of others which on the contrary exhibit simplicity generality, or universality and internal coherence of a higher order and are more useful in terms of technology and prediction. And we do so, because it is an end in itself for us, and because, to have scientific world versions of that sort is part of our notion of *increasing human understanding*. Also, if one agrees with Goodman that art also serves cognitive functions and enlarges our perception and conception, the reason why we value the perception and conception that art brings to us or provides us with is because of the place we attribute to it in our notion of increasing human understanding. "The very term that Goodman chooses for the characteristic of the versions that meet our desiderata 'rightness', is a term that bears its *normative character* on its face."[39] Another direction in which Goodman seems to be pointing is its possible extension to the moral domain.[40]

To summarize : the movement that his work seems to be articulating is from unique truth and a world fixed and found to a diversity of right and even conflicting versions or worlds in the making and also one that insists on the very continuity and unity, the very affinity of art and science and perception as branches of worldmaking.[41]

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NOTES

1. N. Goodman, "On Starmaking", *APA Symposium on Ways of World-making* (December 1979, p. 45).

2. N. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*. (Indianapolis : Hackett Publishing Company, 1978), p. 133.

3. Goodman "On Starmaking", p. 44.

4. Goodman, *The Structure of Appearance* (Indianapolis : Boobs—Merrill Company, 1966).

5. Goodman, "On Starmaking", p. 39.

6. H. Putnam, "Reflections on Goodman's Ways of Worldmaking", *APA Symposium*, December 1979, p. 13. See also note II, p. 13 for references to the works of M. Dummett.

7. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

8. Putnam, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

9. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

10. Putnam, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

11. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, (Indianapolis : Hackett Publishing Company 1976), p. 50-51, 68-70, 76-80, 84-85.

12. Putnam, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

13. N. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, p. 72.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75, Note 24.

    For most of the dscussion carried on this page (and the following), I must acknowledge my debts to Prof. W. Ruchti, and to Prof. N. Goodman who expressed some valuable criticisms of the first version of this paper. (Reference : Personal letter, dated January 26, 1984).

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 76.

16. I am here referring once again to the personal letter from Goodman (dated January 26, 1984) in which he writes : "...you seem to suggest that denotation is literal while expression is metaphorical; but of course, denotation may be either literal or metaphorical".

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14. See also Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, p. 120.

18. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, p. 120.

19. Goodman, "On Starmaking", p. 41.

20. I. Scheffles, "The Wonderful Worlds of Goodman", *APA Symposium*, December, 1979.

21. Goodman, "On Starmaking", pp. 41, 43 (note 11).

22. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

23. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, p. 121.

24. Goodman, "On Starmaking," p. 42.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

26. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, p. 121.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
29. Putnam, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
31. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, p. 122.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
33. Putnam, op *cit.*, p. 14.
34. Goodman, "On Starmaking", pp. 39-40.
35. Putnam, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
37. Goodman, "On Starmaking," p. 43.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
39. Putnam, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
40. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, p. 109 (Chapter 7, note 1).
41. *Ibid.*, p.   (forword), 133.