

LANGUAGE AND REALITY. Goodman begins by warning us about the dangers of ‘linguomorphism’, the idea that the world has the same features as our descriptions thereof. This invites a *reductio*. Even if our descriptions are couched in English, the world isn’t. A less trivial danger is that even a more respectable feature like simplicity can’t be read into the world itself: the world is not simple, even if our descriptions and theories are. 48

But if linguomorphism is wrong, should we embrace ‘mysticism’ and a form of scepticism. We might say: 49

Our theories *distort* the world. As its objects are filtered through our representations (of them), they and their relations get distorted. How the world is can never be found out.

Goodman claims that this is not the view he wants to defend.

THE GIVEN. To understand how the world is, and in accordance with our empiricist credentials, we may naturally turn to the question how the world is given to us in experience. Goodman mentions three positions: monism, atomism, and pluralism. The details turn out not to matter much, because Goodman complains that the locution ‘given as’ is meaningless. The world is not given to us in any particular way. *We* interpret the world in some way, whether atomistically, monistically, or what have you. 50 51

SEEING THE WORLD. The next possibility for discovering how the world is would be to appeal to a camera-like view of the world. But, Goodman complains, there is no special faithfulness to expect from the camera shots. It all very much depends on the camera’s position. 52

The other point is that what *we* take as ‘faithful’ representations of the world would depend on our training and habits. 52–53

Now this last idea may seem rather trivial. There isn’t any *a priori* reason to expect our parochial visual representations to give a completely faithful representation of the world. Various visual illusions much explored in psychology since Descartes and Berkeley would illustrate this *ad nauseam*. But I think that Goodman means to make a general point. There is no on faithful visual representation in principle, since in principle it must be made from some perspective and some (arbitrary) standards of correctness.

DESCRIBING THE WORLD. Could we hope to get the most faithful description of the world? Well, our ways of describing, as Goodman noted already, are the world’s ways of being. They are just a reflection of our standards and conventions. To achieve, in our descriptions, the likeness to the world (to the way the world is) is a ‘delusive goal’. 54

CONCLUSION. So there is no way the world is. Not because we don’t know or can’t know what way it is, but because the original question was meaningless, and the assumption behind it false. There isn’t *the* way the world is, only *a* way. Each of our descriptions or pictures may be correct, if it meets *our* standards. Change the standards, and you change the ‘truth’ of your descriptions or pictures. 55

So mysticism mentioned earlier is false too, so far as it assumes that we can’t know the one, *real* state of the world. If questioned about it, the mystic should fall silent. But we shouldn’t: there are many answers, many of them equally good answers.

Remark 1 (Scepticism). Note that Goodman’s position is not remotely sceptical (well, given some plausible assumptions about ‘scepticism’). To be filled in class. . .

Remark 2 (Grue). How is Goodman’s discussion related to the new riddle of induction? To be filled in class. . .