

REASON, TRUTH AND HISTORY

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Preface

In the present work, the aim which I have in mind is to break the strangle hold which a number of dichotomies appear to have on the thinking of both philosophers and laymen. Chief among these is the dichotomy between objective and subjective views of truth and reason. The phenomenon I am thinking of is this: once such a dichotomy as the dichotomy between 'objective' and 'subjective' has become accepted, accepted not as a mere pair of categories but as a characterization of types of views and styles of thought, thinkers begin to view the terms of the dichotomy almost as ideological labels. Many, perhaps most, philosophers hold some version of the 'copy' theory of truth today, the conception according to which a statement is true just in case it 'corresponds to the (mind independent) facts'; and the philosophers in this faction see the only alternative as the denial of the objectivity of truth and a capitulation to the idea that all schemes of thought and all points of view are hopelessly subjective. Inevitably a bold minority (Kuhn, in some of his moods at least; Feyerabend, and such distinguished continental philosophers as Foucault) range themselves under the opposite label. They *agree* that the alternative to a naive copy conception of truth is to see systems of thought, ideologies, even (in the case of Kuhn and Feyerabend) scientific theories, as subjective, and they proceed to *put forward* a relativist and subjective view with vigor.

That philosophical dispute assumes somewhat the character of ideological dispute is not, of itself, necessarily *bad*: new ideas, even in the most exact sciences, are frequently both espoused and attacked with partisan vigor. Even in politics, polarization

