



1982.03.28

Querido amigo Pepe:

Many thanks for yours of the 16th. I am grateful to you for having taken the time and trouble to try--alas, unsuccessfully--to allay my fears concerning the right wing of the Popperian movement.

True, one cannot judge a doctrine exclusively by its adherents, for every bandwagon has its undesirable joiners. The questions are to ascertain whether (a) there is any logical connection between the doctrine and the ideology or the interests of such undesirables, and (b) the latter are insignificant or, on the contrary, are numerous or are increasing fast relative to the good guys.

I think it is no accident that Popper's social philosophy and philosophy of mind attracts conservatives and some reactionaries. The former because it is individualistic and the latter because it leaves the "mystery" of mind in the paws of ideology instead of putting it into the hands of science. Mind you, by 'individualism' I do not mean only methodological individualism but also ontological and ethical individualism, according to which there are no social systems, and individuals are the only valuable entities. (Sure, there is also the 'logic of the situation', but KRP has never explained what this concession to holism is.) It is no coincidence that this ideology fits in so perfectly with neoclassical economics and Reaganomics.

As for the increase of the relative importance of the right wing of Popperianism, so far there are only some indications--the ones I listed in my previous letter. But they are disquieting enough. Has it ever occurred to you that you are the only outspoken democrat (or rather social-democrat, or social-liberal, as I tend to call myself these days) in Popper's camp? I am afraid you tend to see the other members of the school as yourself. I see them accepting invitations from the Moon church and not caring to examine, let alone criticize, the practical implications (in terms of socioeconomic policies) of philosophical (methodological ontological and ethical) individualism.

Let us leave that disquieting ground and come to grips with your question: Do I allow the existence of things without structure? Yes, there may be such things and in fact I need at least to pretend that there are in order to define the very notion of a complex thing, and also in order to build my relational theory of space, in Vol. 3 of my Treatise. According to current particle physics there are simples, namely all the leptons and the components of hadrons (e.g. quarks and gluons).

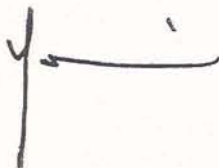
However, it does not follow that structure has an "inferior ontic status", as you put it. Simply, every structure is the structure of some complex thing: it is a property of a thing of a certain type. (Not being a Platonist I do not countenance properties in themselves, the way Popper and Thom do.) Structure, like shape and size, emerges together with systems. An

electron is (presumably) structureless, shapeless, and sizeless; or, if you prefer, it adopts the shape and size of its container if any. On the other hand heavy atoms and a fortiori molecules do have a fairly well "defined" size and shape. The latter are emergent properties that their elementary constituents lack. For an analysis of the geometry of atoms and molecules (a theme carefully avoided by all quantum theorists) see my paper with García-Sucre in Inter. J. Quantum Chemistry (1981).

Raimo Tuomela spent two weeks at this Unit. We had interesting discussions on epistemological problems, in particular those of realism and the so-called correspondence theory (or rather vague idea) of truth. We also took part in a conference on neurolinguistics, where the mind-body problem was vigorously discussed, this time by scientists. And in two weeks' time I'm flying to Spain, where the 1st national congress of philosophy & methodology of science will be held. My work is becoming quite well known in Spanish speaking countries. My Economía y filosofía, a scathing attack on economic theory and practice (both neoclassical and Marxist) is due to appear in Spain. It carries a very flattering presentation by Prebisch, the well known UN economist.

I do hope you'll settle in Toronto, particularly since there seems to be no hope for a solution of the Palestinian problem in the near future. You won't win the cause of reason by brandishing arguments alone. Remember the motto that Louis XIV had inscribed on his cannons: Ultima ratio regum.

Best,

A handwritten signature consisting of a vertical line on the left and a horizontal line extending to the right, with a small tick mark above the horizontal line.