



The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body and World

Hilary Putnam

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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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