I. The Linguistic Turn.

1. Replacing "thought", "experience", "consciousness", etc. by "language" is the big achievement of post-WWII philosophy. The difference is just that you can't say much about how the former got here in telling a Darwin-type story but you can say a lot about the latter (as I said last time).

This turn to language replaced Dewey's (Murphy, pp. 64-7) misguided attempt to redescribe experience as empeiria rather than Lockean ideas.

2. The sticking-point comes when you say things like "dogs have consciousness without language and computers have language without consciousness, so consciousness is irrelevant to linguistic competence." Here us "psychological nominalists" (define in Sellars' sense) have to dig in our heals and say that ability or inability to feel pain is not something which has any connection with the difference between knowers and non-knowers--between the things that react to their environment and the things that are aware of their environment.

3. A second distinction is also needed: between things to which it pays to take the intentional stance (dogs, computers, infants) and things that it does not (computers with the electricity off, e.g.). But this is just a distinction between behavior of a given complexity and behavior of insufficient complexity. To postulate something like a Cartesian Theatre behind the more complex behavior is an instance of what N denounced in Twilight as "the ideas engendered by a certain condition have been misunderstood as the cause of that condition". This is an awkward way of stating the pragmatic principle that one must beware of virtus dormativa explanations which do not enable anything to be related to anything else, and thus serve no practical purpose.

4. The post-linguistic turn pragmatist attitude toward notions like "thought" "consciousness" and "experience" is that anything useful you can do with them (as opposed to creating mysteries) you can do with "language", and that that is a sufficient reason to drop them from your philosophical vocabulary.

5. Sellars erected psychological nominalism on the ruins of British empiricism--diagnosing the mistake of British empiricism to be the confusion of causal explanation of knowledge with justification of knowledge-claims.

Wittgenstein (Quote) and Quine more or less simultaneously did away with the idea that the ability to use language was a matter of "the internalization of rules", and thus broke down the Socratic-Platonis assumption that rationality is a matter of obeying rules or looking to standards rather than of "knowing how to go on" as Euthyphro did and as language-users generally do, of being acculturated by a community rather than of having access to something
which transcends, and thus could help change, the community.

So from here on we look to linguistic innovation rather than Reality to change society. We follow Nietzsche in thinking that volition rather than cognition is what makes us better—although we also drop this faculty psychology when we drop Cartesianism.

II. The Relation of Language to Reality

1. James spoke of a "world of pure experience"; it would be better to speak of a seamless web of relations, with every object being a node in a web of such relations, and nothing more than that.

2. So speaking, one can say that what is the case for language—that it is a play of differences—is true for everything (e.g., the number system, the web of elementary forces connecting elementary particles).

3. What then is the relation of language to the world? Not a relation of representing what is there anyway—the Lockean idea behind the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Nor a way of "constituting" the world of "constitution" has some quasi-causal force. Rather, it is just more world—just the marks and noises produced by certain organisms in patterns which enable those organisms to interact causally with the world better.

4. Does this "privilege" a biologistic-naturalistic way of speaking? Sure. But privilege is here a matter of finding the tool that works, not the one which represents reality and forms an unwobbling foundation for further inquiry.

5. If we give up the idea of "representing" and "making true", we can say that all that we know of non-causal relations between bits of language and bits of the world is that objects (any objects: round squares, Hamlet, moral virtue, the luminiferous ether, the English language, masculinity, femininity, etc.) is that it is what most sentences using the relevant term are true of. This makes the use of the term rather than the essence of the thing or the idea of the thing (the meaning in the head of the user of the term) what everything turns on.