Contemporary dissatisfaction with the theme of representation testifies to a significant change in the metaphors guiding philosophical inquiry. The central metaphor is no longer seeing, but doing. William James’ decision to consider truth as pragmatic adaption rather than as accurate representation no longer seems as shocking to us as it was to Bradley. We have gradually become accustomed to the idea that knowing is a strategy for negotiating with reality, rather than a contemplative insight into essences. Although we maintain a verbal allegiance to ideals like objective criteria and rationally discernible ethical standards, we really think of knowing as subjective interpretation and of ethics as the enlightened management of conflicting personal preferences. The rejection of the metaphor of knowing as seeing is not complete, however, since it is commonplace to find criticism of essential insight combined with emphasis on the perspectival character of all knowing. Moreover, whereas the theme of perspective traditionally described the situated status of our intuitive access to what is, now we tend more and more to understand perspectivity in a relativistic manner. Truth claims are merely points of view, in the sense of opinions which cannot justifiably command our assent. Recognition of the historical and cultural conditions governing paradigm shifts in the sciences, and the progressive unmasking of tacit metaphorical and even mythological underpinnings of conceptual systems have generated the widespread conviction that to know is to be confined to a subjective point of view. In short, we no longer believe in
the possibility of objectivity, while still defining our despair in terms of subjectivity.

Whatever may be the task of philosophy, we are told, it should certainly not set as its goal the achievement of disinterested objectivity. We must abandon the dream that philosophical reflection might provide a neutral standpoint, a kind of theoretical gazebo from which we might engage in privileged non-interpretative knowing. There seems to be general agreement that it is our emphasis on the goal of objectivity that leads us to construe interpretation as an inadequate, merely subjective, mode of knowing. One way to remedy this situation is to jettison the entire cluster of themes associated with the metaphor of knowing as seeing: subject, object, perspective, standpoint, correspondence, mirroring. To many thinkers in the analytic tradition, however, it seems appropriate to replace the unhappy metaphor of seeing by that of doing, understood in a naturalistic fashion as behavioral adaption. Thus, the current shift to metaphors associated with doing does not always testify to a new theory of truth; it often indicates simply that we have given up on truth and have settled for pragmatic alternatives.

The most celebrated recent criticisms of the notion of representation, those of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, have unfortunately often been interpreted in such a fashion as to encourage a resurgence of pragmatic relativism, rather than a revitalization of the notion of truth. Since both of these thinkers were convinced that they were offering explanations of truth, rather than merely documenting its impossibility, we ought to ask why it is that they should be interpreted in this way. My thesis is as follows: 1) criticism of representation without concomitant criticism of the naturalistic interpretation of being always leads to relativism; 2) despite the fact that Wittgenstein implicitly and Heidegger explicitly made radical reappraisals of the meaning of being, while questioning the subject-object model of truth, in both cases ambiguity about the transcendental status of their inquiries makes it possible to interpret their de-psychologizing of truth as an advocacy of naturalism, and even of behaviorism. For this reason, I am convinced that a rethinking of Husserl's contribution to the critique of representation is in order. With Husserl, the rejection of naturalism and the emphasis on the priority of the transcendental are unmistakable. This is not to say, of course, that Husserl's theory is without ambiguities. Indeed, my analysis shall take for granted the merits of Heidegger's brilliant recasting of Husserlian transcendentalism. Guided by Heidegger's insights, but working from Husserl's texts, I shall propose a somewhat unconventional interpretation of Husserl's theory of truth, stressing how he blends the metaphors of seeing and doing in such a way as to account for all of the following: 1) the