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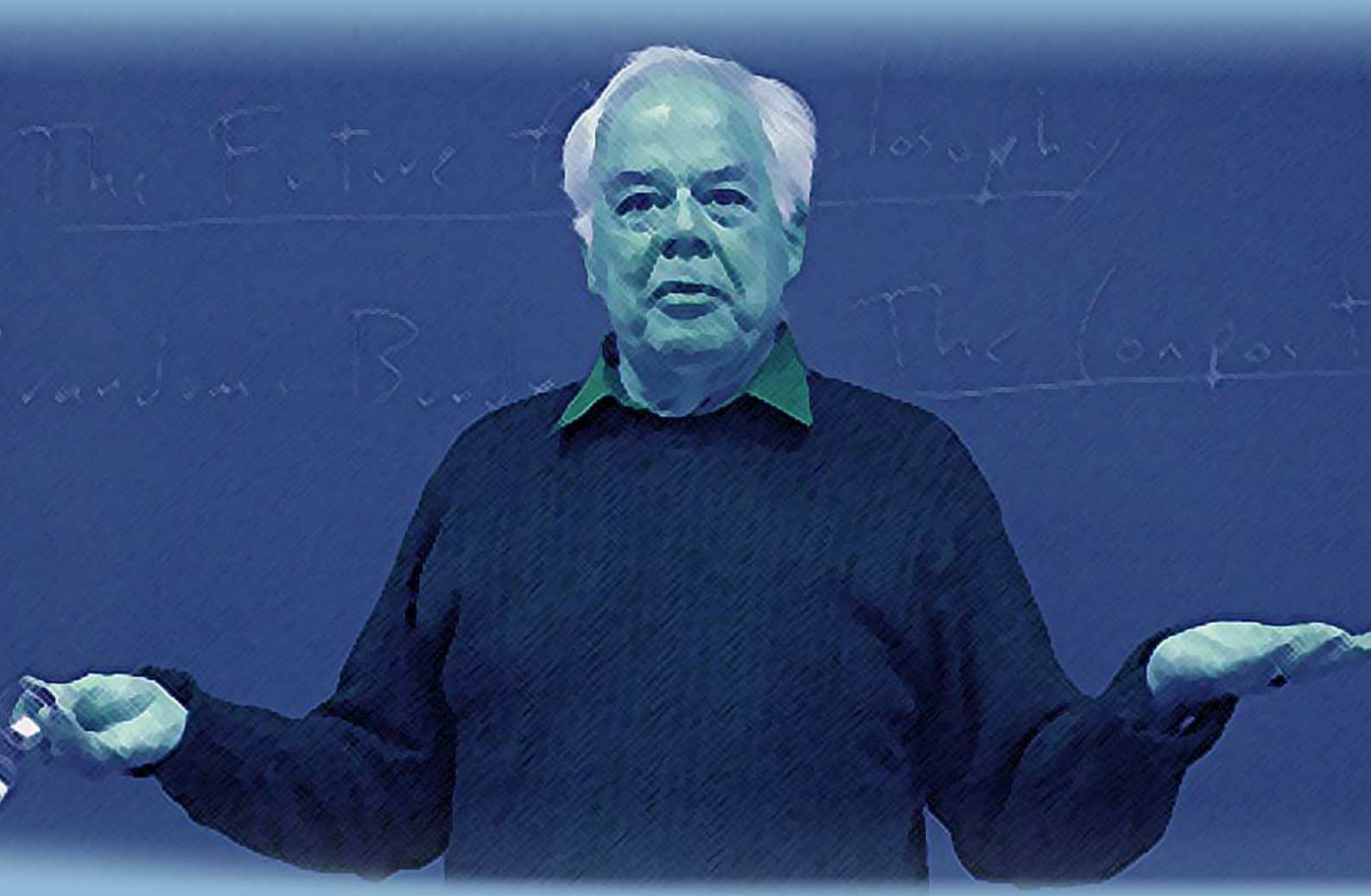

THE ROOTS OF RORTY'S PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION:

AN AMERICAN LEFTIST PATRIOT

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It is my pleasure to introduce the first issue of the second volume of *Pragmatism Today* (Volume 2, Issue 1, Summer 2011), because it is a thematic collection of papers on Richard Rorty's philosophy. Pragmatism again became a significant philosophical approach to human life in the second half of the 20th century, and the reason for this was primarily the influence of Rorty's neopragmatism.

If we look at pragmatism first in general, we can claim that the representatives of traditional pragmatism had already transcended the narrow interpretation of the principle of utility. Of the main representatives of this philosophical movement we should mention three. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), the founder of pragmatism, was an excellent logician. William James (1842-1910), who is the brother of the world famous writer Henry James, traveled to Europe as a child, and later visited Europe frequently, acquiring in this way a nearly perfect understanding of European culture. William was enrolled in fine schools and had gifted tutors, and he later taught psychology and philosophy at Harvard. Last but not least, John Dewey (1859-1952) wrote not only several important books and articles about nearly every important question of contemporary philosophy in his almost a century long life, but he also took part in the life of his communities as teacher, social critic, and political activist.

What is the leading idea of pragmatism that is still alive today? What is worth renewing according to the main representatives of neopragmatism? Not touching now on the cardinal subject of truth, we can say that in James' and Dewey's opinion *philosophy has to speak about real human life, and it must serve our permanent improvement. However, human life is basically practice, and that is why theory is also part of this practice taken it in the widest sense.* Even theory is a tool of our practice, the main aim of which is to improve our social and individual lives. But life, understood as practice, obviously cannot have a more human aim on the social level than to improve our community life, to establish democratic institutions, and to build democracy. *That is why Dewey's ultimate intention was to create a genuinely democratic society.*

These principles were taken seriously by neopragmatist philosophers, first of all by Richard Rorty, who also emphasized the differences between the old and the new pragmatists. The new pragmatism, he wrote in his book *Philosophy and Social Hope*, „differs from the old in just two respects, only one of which is of much interest to people who are not philosophy professors. The first is that we new pragmatists talk about language instead of experience, or mind, or consciousness, as the old pragmatists did. The second respect is that we have all read Kuhn, Hanson, Toulmin and Feyerabend, and have thereby become suspicious of the term 'scientific method'. New pragmatists wish that Dewey, Sidney Hook and Ernest Nagel had not insisted on using this term as a catchphrase, since we are unable to provide anything distinctive for it to denote." (PSH 95)

The obvious reason for these differences is that Rorty knew European culture and philosophy as well as American pragmatism and the analytic tradition. He was familiar not only with the philosophical epoch from Plato to Hegel, but he also wrote several papers about the leading 20th century philosophers (Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer) and about recent developments in Continental philosophy: Habermas, Foucault and Derrida. With respect to intellectual history and ideology, from among the three historically available

possibilities of conservativism, socialism, and liberalism, Rorty chose a liberalism that was forged first of all by Jeremy Betham and John Stuart Mill. That is why he modified slightly Dewey's aim and strived to sketch a utopia of a *liberal* democracy in his 1989 book, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*: „One of my aims in this book is to suggest the possibility of a liberal utopia: one in which ironism, in the relevant sense, is universal. A postmetaphysical culture seems to me no more impossible than a postreligious one, and equally desirable." (CIS xv-xvi)

Who was Richard McKay Rorty in the mirror of „facts"? Perhaps Chrsitopher J. Voparil's „General Introduction" has summarized the essential features of Rorty's oeuvre and life in the best way: „Whether or not one shares Harold Bloom's assessment of Richard Rorty as the most interesting philosopher in the world, that he was for a time „the most-talked about philosopher" is hard to dispute. Catapulted to the intellectual heights by the 1979 publication of his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* – recently called „the most widely discussed philosophy book of the second half of the twentieth century" – Rorty's influence transcends the walls of discipline and culture. Books of his have been translated into over twenty languages and his ideas debated in leading journals in fields as diverse as political theory, sociology, legal studies, international relations, feminist studies, literary theory, business ethics, educational theory, and of course philosophy. His work has spawned a body of secondary literature beyond the limits of a single human being to master and played a pivotal role in the revival of the tradition of American pragmatism. Following his death on June 8, 2007, Rorty was heralded by a chorus of prominent intellectuals as „the most influential philosopher of the last three decades," „the most famous philosopher in the world," and nothing less than „a great philosopher, who, daringly swimming against the tide of modern analytic philosophy, single-handedly revived pragmatism, with great impact on a variety of fields.""(*The Rorty Reader* 1)

„Born on October 4, 1931 to James Rorty and Winifred Raushenbush, Richard McKay Rorty was an only child. „Bucko," as his parents affectionately called him, was intellectually precocious from the start, with a clear gift for the written word. He wrote a play about the coronation of Edward, Prince of Wales, at age 6. At 7 he composed a letter to the Harvard College Observatory inquiring about the possibility of his becoming an astronomer, and at 8 penned a note of congratulations to the new Dalai Lama, accompanied by a present, for „a fellow eight-year old who had made good"." (*The Rorty Reader* 4) Rorty enrolled at age 15 in the University of Chicago, where he later earned his BA (1949) and his MA (1952) degree in philosophy. After his years at Chicago he studied philosophy at Yale University and earned his PhD degree in 1956. In 1957-1958 he served in the army, after which he began to teach at Wellesly College (1958-1961), from where he moved to Princeton University, which was one of the citadels of analytic philosophy. Rorty lived for twenty-one years in Princeton, where he taught primarily analytic philosophy, and then he left Princeton for philosophical and private reasons. „Although there were other contributing factors behind his decision to leave Princeton University in 1982 after two decades, he would not hold a post in a philosophy department again for the rest of his life." (*The Rorty Reader* 2) His pragmatic turn ripened from the end of the 1960s (1967: *The Linguistic Turn*), and he published his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* in 1979 as the result of this mind-changing process. The publication of his *Mirror* book „infuriated then dominant analytic philosophers, who viewed Rorty's tome as a Judas-like betrayal from within." (*The Rorty Reader* 2) However, the almost immediate popularity of his book „across the humanities quickly led to multiple job offers not long after its publication in 1979." (*The Rorty Reader* 10) Rorty became a Kenan professor of humanities at the University of Virginia in 1983, and perhaps his most productive sixteen years had begun. From 1998 to his retirement he taught at the Department of Comparative Literature at Stanford University in California, after retiring from which he lived in Palo Alto as professor

emeritus. Richard McKay Rorty passed away on June 8, 2007, at age 75.

It is not easy to estimate clearly the significance of his oeuvre. „Rorty was a prolific writer who in nearly five decades of writing penned three books, two essay collections, four volumes of „philosophical papers," an influential edited volume, and a co-authored book, plus scores of uncollected essays and reviews in academic journals, as well as numerous pieces in newspapers, magazines, and popular publications. Rorty also was a prolific reader, with expansive interests and an uncanny ability to drop names not only from the entire philosophical tradition, but of novelists, poets, literary critics, legal scholars, historians, and political theorists. A mainstay in contemporary intellectual debates for several decades, he traveled to all corners of the globe and engaged with the leading thinkers of the day across many fields. Widely recognized for his collegiality, Rorty himself was a consummate collaborator, enthusiastically promoting the work of others and always willing to engage even his harshest critics in the hope of furthering ongoing debates." (*The Rorty Reader* 3) Rorty himself was the embodiment of the contemporary intellectual life and a barometer of the most exciting intellectual pocesses in several fields.

* * *

As we know the late Rorty refused the philosophical single vision. *However, in some sense he has created a single vision*. It is not a metaphysical single vision but a *personal single vision*. His neopragmatic philosophy is saturated namely by his political approach. Although he has not created a distinctive political philosophy, his liberal utopia, his liberal democracy – in the sense of freedom and social justice (cf. *Achieving Our Country*) – always stood in the center of his philosophy and created a unity within his diverse thinking. Therefore, we can claim that *the late Rorty's writings are united by one central topic, which is his conception of a liberal utopia*. The late Rorty's neopragmatism is a coherent system of views in its essence because he persistently confirmed his *politically saturated liberal ironist point of view*. We can look at any field of his philosophy, from his concepts of „world" and „truth," through his views on art, morality, and science, to the questions of religion and other matters, and sooner or later we recognize that his analyses of questions of contemporary importance form an integral part of the whole of his philosophy until his death. *The late Rorty assured the priority of liberal democracy over everything*. (Cf. „The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy", in *The Rorty Reader*, Ch 13) Even his interpretation of philosophy as cultural politics serves this aim. (See the title and the content of his *posthumous* book: *Philosophy as Cultural Politics*!) It follows from all of this that Rorty did not want to create a special political philosophy, but the main motive of his philosophy is *nevertheless* political. Rorty gave us a non-systematic, but logical and consistently developed interpretation of our world, with the help of his natural imagination and of the knowledge he acquired primarily through his bridge-building between post-Darwinian American and post-Nietzschean European philosophy.

Our issue, „The Roots of Rorty's Philosophy," seeks to trace the pathways of the influences that affected Rorty's intellectual development. It seemed to be a difficult task, however, because Rorty was not only a prolific writer, but – as we have already seen – also a prolific reader. That is why we unfortunately cannot map absolutely the roots and trails of influences on his philosophy. Thus we gave up the attempt to show the whole of these influences. Readers may note especially the absence of accounts of Rorty's relations to Sartre, Gadamer and Derrida, and they are right, but we could not find authors who had the necessary knowledge, time and enthusiasm to achieve this task. We offer fourteen papers in a chronological order, except Richard Shusterman's very personal introductory reminiscence which assures the proper tone for our approach to Rorty's philosophy. Hopefully, „The Roots of Rorty's Philosophy" will prove useful not only for colleagues, but also for the students and the cultured public.

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THE CONTINGENCY OF RORTY'S SOURCES:

A POETIC EXAMPLE

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I

Contingency is a distinctively central theme of Richard Rorty's philosophy but the roots of this theme can certainly be traced to earlier pragmatist thinkers. Peirce, James, and Dewey expressed it by affirming that reality is in the making and is thus governed by changing probabilities rather than absolutely fixed necessities, and their views can in turn be traced to Darwin's evolutionary theory whose twin engines were natural selection and variability through contingent mutations. Contingency is a vague concept that admits of differing degrees or shades of meaning, depending on what it is being contrasted to. In perhaps the most basic sense, what is contingent is contrasted with what is not absolutely necessary, what could have been otherwise. In that sense, one can say that all the events in our probabilistic universe are contingent, since they are not governed by absolute, unchangeable laws that admit of no possible exception or interruption or change.

Another, closely related sense of contingent is what is not essential or necessary for a given thing to be what it is; it may be essential for a human being to have blood or linguistic competence but it is contingent as to which blood type or language the person speaks, just as it is contingent what gender or race or birthday or education the person has. In Aristotelian language these non-essential features were described as accidents rather than essences, so the notion of contingency has long been associated with the accidental; and since the notion of accidental also includes a sense of being not only not necessary but also unexpected or coincidental or atypical, contingency also includes a sense of being mere chance or idiosyncratic happenstance, something like the whim of fortune. Rorty's account of contingency of self seems to move from the rejection of a universal fixed essence of self to a contingency of mere chance and idiosyncrasy that skips over the possibility of selves being composed of relatively fixed regularities that are to a large extent governed by physiological laws and social norms that while not being necessary or immutable in the strict sense are nonetheless regularities that are deeply entrenched. This idiosyncratic view of the self and its construction by language has led Rorty not only to ignore the body and the physiological dimension of self-construction and self-cultivation but also to neglect the value of the social sciences for improving our self-understanding and our means for self-flourishing.

Having argued these points at length in a number of earlier texts,[1] I will instead very briefly consider here how Rorty's affirmation of this radical notion of contingency as mere chance or idiosyncratic accident has sometimes impacted his writing through his use of sources. I will use only one striking example where this use of contingency became vividly clear to me, drawing on a revealing personal exchange I had with Rorty concerning this use. In sharing this episode of my personal interaction with Rorty and his methods of philosophical writing, I hope to illustrate an aspect of its distinctly pragmatic and Emersonian character that might seem shocking in terms of conventional notions of scholarly writing and philosophical interpretation.

This personal revelation of an incident relating to Rorty's creative process should be prefaced by confirming once again my great respect for his achievement, even though I often depart from his specific views. Had I not met

[1] See, for example, Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routlege, 1997), "Pragmatism and Textual Politics: From Rortian Textualism to Somaesthetics." *New Literary History* 41.1 (2010), 69-94. Rorty's most explicit and vehement response to my critique can be found in Richard Rorty, "Response to Richard Shusterman," in Matthew Festenstein and Simon Thompson (eds.), *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues* (Cambridge: Polity Press), 153-157.

Rorty, I would have never become an American pragmatist philosopher who wrote on such unconventional topics as rap and somaesthetics (even though Rorty disdained them both). I would have remained the conventional, Oxford-trained, Israeli analytic philosopher that Rorty met in Beer-Sheva in 1984, quite contingently, while he was on a brief lecture tour in Israel.

When I first met him I knew very little about pragmatism but shared my analytic mentors' disdain for what we regarded as its mushy way of thinking. Rorty soon convinced me, through conversation, correspondence, and his exemplary new writings, that the American pragmatist tradition (and especially John Dewey) had a great deal to offer a philosopher like me who was especially interested in aesthetics, the arts, and culture. I was surprised that a famous American philosopher like Rorty would pay so much attention to an unknown young lecturer in peripheral Israel. But, as I eventually learned, I was not at all exceptional in receiving such kindness. It was characteristic of Rorty's open-minded largesse to notice and help academics like me who worked in the margins (that is, outside the power centers of the Anglo-American philosophical world), people that he came to know by the mere contingency of meeting them on one occasion and finding some common interest that he thought worth pursuing in correspondence, long before there was the ease of email.

Within a few years, through his inspiration and encouragement, I moved to the United States (my country of birth) and established myself as an American pragmatist philosopher. Because so much of my philosophical work was indebted to Rorty, so much of it was also polemically engaged with determining and justifying my differences from his views. With characteristic generosity, Rorty remained very supportive of my work despite my frequently sharp criticism. He almost never took occasion to respond to such criticism in print. My wife (whose field was fashion design not philosophy) wondered why I should be so critical when I admired him so much, indeed admired him so much more than other contemporaries to whom I was kinder in print. I explained, of course, that philosophers celebrate through critique and that one needs to articulate and defend one's differences from one's philosophical exemplars and heroes in order to enable one's own views to be recognized as a legitimate contribution to philosophy's conversation rather than just an exercise in intellectual mimicry (even if such mimicry is in some sense unavoidable and is often an essential, constructive part of finding one's voice). But gradually such justifications lost their hold on me, and I lost my taste for criticizing Rorty, especially since so much philosophical criticism of him seemed to me petty and unproductive.

Too often Rorty's own views and interpretations have been rejected or demonized because he was very free in his interpretation of the thinkers he used to formulate and advance his ideas. Though he was incredibly sharp and making fine-grained analytic distinctions, Rorty was primarily interested in big ideas, and he did not worry about details. I now turn to the personal exchange that illustrates this point, just as it illustrates his commitment to contingency and to interpreting texts by the lights of his own philosophical agenda.

II

In his major pragmatist monograph *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty begins his crucial chapter on "The contingency of selfhood" by quoting a short passage of poetry from Philip Larkin. The chapter starts as follows:

> As I was starting to write on the topic of this chapter, I came across a poem by Philip Larkin which helped me pin down what I wanted to say. Here is the last part of it:
>
> And once you have walked the length of your mind, what
> You command is as clear as a lading-list
> Anything else must not, for you, be thought
> To exist.

> And what's the profit? Only that, in time
> We half-identify the blind impress
> All our behaving bear, may trace it home.
> But to confess,
>
> On that green evening when our death begins,
> Just what it was, is hardly satisfying,
> Since it applied only to one man once,
> And that man dying.[2]

Rorty then interprets this passage to make his case for pragmatically construing the philosophical quest for self-knowledge in terms of the more poetic quest for original self-creation. Rorty describes this pragmatic reconstruction as a move away from the Kantian project of defining oneself (and living one's life) in terms of a universal human essence and instead adopting the Nietzschean project of stylizing oneself as a distinctive (unique, idiosyncratic) individual. Rorty moreover follows Harold Bloom in describing this project as that of the strong poet, someone who strives to "become an individual in the strong sense in which the genius is a paradox of individuality" (CIS 24), someone who turns her contingent idiosyncrasy into a distinctive life as a work of art. Rorty then tries to combine the distinctive, individualist self-stylization of the strong poet with the ever curious, ever changing self-fashioning of the liberal ironist who is skeptical that any vocabulary that she learns, uses, or develops is finally definitive and irreplaceable.

In *Pragmatist Aesthetics* I critically analyzed Rorty's ideas of self-creation, self-enrichment, and self-creation in order to develop my own pragmatist view of ethics as an art of living, I tried to show the tensions between the liberal ironist and the strong poet and I contested Rorty's preoccupation with language, his insistence that the body did not matter. But in order to analyze Rorty's argument that was generated by Larkin's poem, I also had to quote most of the poetic passage he used. When my book was in production with Basil Blackwell in 1991, the copyeditor told me that in one of the lines of Larkin's poem I quoted there seemed to be a punctuation mark missing. It was the close of the line ending in "lading-list", and, grammatically, it could have been either a comma or a period. I was asked to supply the missing punctuation mark, but when I consulted Rorty's text I found that I had copied it exactly; namely, that there was no punctuation mark at the end of that line in Rorty's own citation of the poem. So I naturally thought of turning to the original Larkin poem.

But here I ran into a problem. Which poem was it? Rorty's book supplied no reference or explanatory note to indicate the poem's title, or its first line, or even the title of the collection in which it was found. Since Larkin had a very large corpus and no digital search engines were then available, I thought I would simply phone Dick Rorty and ask him from which Larkin poem he took the lines on which he based his chapter. When I posed my question, Rorty chuckled teasingly and replied that he hadn't the faintest idea of the poem's title and that he in fact did not take the lines from a Larkin book, since he was not a real reader of Larkin. My shock must have been audible, for Rorty continued by explaining that he got those lines from a newspaper obituary on Larkin that he just happened to read when he was visiting England to give a few lectures, coincidentally at the time of Larkin's death. In short, Rorty simply copied the lines from the newspaper and incorporated them as the foundation of his chapter on the self, never bothering to check the accuracy of the lines or investigate their role in the larger contexts of the entire poem and Larkin's wider corpus.

My disappointment in not having my question answered was largely compensated by this revelation of how seriously Rorty took his philosophy of contingency not only in theory but also most boldly and unabashedly in his writing practice. Though baffled and frustrated by his ignorance of the Larkin source, I consoled myself that this was the fault of his text not of mine, and eager to complete my correcting of page-proofs, I simply kept the matter to myself, while discretely adding (on the basis of

[2] Richard Rorty, *Contingeny, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 23; hereafter CIS.

my own sense of poetic punctuation) a period to end the line in question (on page 248 of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*).

Now, with the aid of Google and through the stimulation of *Pragmatism Today*'s invitation to write on Rorty, I have finally revisited the question of these lines and can offer some factual information for Rorty scholarship. First, the title of the Larkin poem is "Continuing to Live" and its full twenty lines (divided into five quatrains) goes as follows.

> Continuing to live -- that is, repeat
> A habit formed to get necessaries --
> Is nearly always losing, or going
> without.
> It varies.
>
> This loss of interest, hair, and
> enterprise --
> Ah, if the game were poker, yes,
> You might discard them, draw a full
> house!
> But it's chess.
>
> And once you have walked the length
> of your mind, what
> You command is clear as a lading-list.
> Anything else must not, for you, be
> thought
> To exist.
>
> And what's the profit? only that, in
> time,
> We half-identify the blind impress
> All our behavings bear, may trace it
> home.
> But to confess,
>
> On that green evening when our death
> begins,
> Just what it was, is hardly satisfying,
> Since it applied only to one man once,
> And that one dying.

After twenty-years of ignorance, I learned I was right to add the period after "lading-list" that Rorty's citation mistakenly omitted. I was also not surprised to learn that his citation wrongly inserted an extra "as" in that same line, making it somewhat more discursive and prosaic than Larkin intended. I gladly provide these facts about Larkin's poem to set the record straight. But my purpose is not to condemn Rorty for his insouciant infidelity to his sources. Such critiques (with respect to his interpretation of Dewey, Sellars, Davidson, and others) are legion, and they are precisely the kind of criticisms that miss the point of Rorty's hermeneutics. His method of interpreting was that of the Bloomian strong reader who uses the text to say what he wants to say, who is willing to read the text against itself and against its traditional and conventional interpretations. Rorty had an Emersonian impulse to see and write things his own way, to be a non-conformist, to follow his whim in seeking and articulating insights, and then to use his enviable powers of prose to convince his readers to forget conventional scholarship in the excitement of exploring new ways of thinking, a fresh relationship to the text or issue at hand.

With respect to Larkin, Rorty indeed recognizes that the poet's explicit argument in the poem seems in opposition to what Rorty asserts is the true voice of poetry – the celebration of idiosyncrasy as the genius of individuality. "Larkin is affecting to despise his own vocation on the ground that to succeed in it would merely be to have put down on paper something which 'applied only to one man once / And that one dying.'" Rorty thinks Larkin is only "affecting" dissatisfaction because no "poet could seriously think trivial his own success in tracing home the blind impress borne by all his behavings - all his previous poems," because since the Romantics "no poet has seriously thought of idiosyncrasy as an objection" (CIS 24). In short Rorty reads Larkin as "suggesting that unless one finds something common to all men at all times, not just to one man once, one cannot die satisfied." Larkin's poem, Rorty concludes, "owes its interest and its strength to this reminder of the quarrel between poetry and philosophy, the tension between an effort to achieve self-creation by the recognition of contingency and an effort to achieve universality by the transcendence of contingency" (CIS 25).

Without denying the interest and ingenuity of Rorty's reading, we should recall that there are in fact post-Romantic poets (such as T.S. Eliot) who truly critique (rather than merely affect the critique of) the romantic

celebration of idiosyncrasy.[3] Likewise, if we look at the whole of Larkin's poem, we see that its dissatisfaction is directed not so much at the person's individuality but rather at the person's mortality, which is not a contingent matter, but rather a universal condition that Larkin (like most men) finds unhappy or disturbing. Indeed, besides (if not beneath) the blind impress of the individual's idiosyncratic contingencies, there looms a cluster of general human conditions that are themselves far from satisfying: the repeated need to procure the "necessaries" that we as embodied creatures continuously need to continue living, the fact that habits that are necessary for living also structure (and limit) much of our behavior (even its creative and idiosyncratic dimensions), and that our lives (after a certain age) are essentially a matter of losing ("interest, hair, enterprise," energy, strength, memory) rather than expressing only continued, self-cultivating growth, so that in continuing to live we are continually also moving toward death – the great, universal leveler. This theme of individual mortality (at once particularly personal and essential to the entire human race) is common to art and philosophy, and it presents a proper ending for this paper and an occasion to declare again my deep regret that Rorty could not continue to live and provoke us with his own eclectic idiosyncrasies and stimulating romantic interpretations.

[3] On Eliot's critique of romanticism and its celebration of radical individuality, see Richard Shusterman, *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

RORTY, HEGEL AND RORTY'S HEGEL

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For a brief shining moment, Richard Rorty dominated the Western philosophical scene. He was apparently everywhere at once, more than a match for his famous contemporaries Derrida and Habermas, a presence whose every word seemed to resonate, someone who placed himself outside philosophy as ordinarily conceived, which did not diminish but only redoubled his influence on the philosophical debate.

Rorty left the conceptual stage at the height of his influence. It remains to see what will remain of his work in the future, and to determine whether he represents more than a passing phase in the ongoing debate or someone whose influence in the discussion will remain constant or even increase. One cannot say the same for Hegel, who, although this is controversial, is arguably one of the very few true philosophical giants. Though Hegel also departed the scene at the height of his fame, since his death from cholera in Berlin in 1831 his reputation and influence have not diminished but continued to grow. Hegel, who has always been a controversial but influential figure, is arguably the most influential post-Kantian German idealist, directly and indirectly, especially through his impact on Marx, one of the most influential modern philosophers.

Rorty, of course, had no pretentions to be a Hegel scholar. Yet a glance at Rorty's writings will show that Hegel is a constant point of reference in Rorty's texts over many years. Hegel thus functions as one of the numerous thinkers in reference to whom Rorty defines his own philosophical view. This is in itself surprising since Rorty came to philosophical attention within the broader Anglo-American analytic tradition, which, since analytic philosophy emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, has always been suspicious of Hegel and only rarely taken his position seriously.

Rorty was, at least originally, an analytic philosopher. Twentieth century Western philosophy includes four main tendencies: Marxism, which was invented by Engels; American pragmatism, which builds on Peirce; continental philosophy, which continues the form of phenomenology invented by Husserl and continued by his many followers, including Heidegger; and finally analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophy was invented by two philosophers at the University of Cambridge, Russell and Moore, who were later joined by Wittgenstein.

Russell, who came to philosophy from mathematics, and Moore, who studied classics, had very different backgrounds and not surprisingly very different conceptions of analytic philosophy. Russell distrusted intuition on which Moore often relied in favoring the view of the ordinary individual. One thing they had in common was an early interest in idealism, which they both later abandoned in turning against it. Both Moore and Russell wrote dissertations on Kant, Moore on Kantian ethics and Russell on Kant's theory of mathematics. Initially at least both seem to have considered themselves as idealists. This quickly changed. Their shared rejection of idealism was one of the founding acts of analytic philosophy. This was set out in a famous article, "Refutation of Idealism," written by Moore.[1] In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant, who thought he was misinterpreted, inserted a short section of a page and a half to indicate inner thoughts proved the existence of the external world. Moore, who found Kant's view unsatisfactory, argued that all idealists of whatever stripe, and presumably Kant as well, share a rejection of the reality of the external world. This led to an analytic anathema against idealism that has never been lifted. Rorty is one of the analytic instigators of an ongoing analytic (re)turn to Hegel by McDowell, Brandon and a few others. Yet

[1] See G. E. Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," *Mind* 12 (1903) 433-53.

significantly none of the analytic thinkers now turning to Hegel has so far considered Hegel in respect to idealism.

Rorty was never simply a follower, concerned to observe convention, even in his earliest philosophical writings. He always had broad philosophical interests well outside the mainstream of analytic philosophy. He diverged from the vast majority of analytic thinkers in taking Hegel, a clearly non-analytic thinker, seriously. With such prominent exceptions W. Sellars, who taught Hegel over many years at the University of Pittsburgh, and who described his own most important contribution to analytic philosophy of mind as Hegelian meditations, and Charles Taylor who explicated Hegel, few analytic thinkers were willing to devote more than the most passing attention to Hegel.

Hegel, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids"

Rorty emerged as a promising analytic philosopher who quickly reacted against mainstream analytic philosophy in criticizing its epistemological aspirations. Hegel was simply absent in *The Linguistic Turn* (1967), which initially brought Rorty to prominence. In this collection, Rorty was concerned with the nature and viability of analytic philosophy. His focus here was, as his subtitle indicated, on "Recent Essays in Analytic Philosophy." In the important Introduction, Rorty argued in detail that analytic attention to language identified analytic philosophy as one of the great periods in the entire tradition but that efforts to turn it into a science would fail. The extensive bibliography accompanying the volume pointed to many analytic as well as some non-analytic writers, such as Dewey and Heidegger, but Hegel was wholly absent.

Rorty later developed his attention to figures outside any normal understanding of analytic philosophy even as he widened his effort to work out a viable position. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), Rorty turned away from the relation of language to the world while focusing on Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey. At this point, Hegel emerged in Rorty's texts as a minor but ongoing philosophical point of reference that remains throughout all his later writing. In fact, Hegel was apparently an early, even a decisive early interest in Rorty's intellectual development. In an autobiographical piece called "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" (1992), Rorty wrote the following retrospective passage, which, since it indicates Rorty's own understanding of the role Hegel played in his intellectual development, deserves to be cited at length[2]:

> "I have spent 40 years looking for a coherent and convincing way of formulating my worries about what, if anything, philosophy is good for. My starting point was the discovery of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a book which I read as saying: granted that philosophy is just a matter of out-redescribing the last philosopher, the cunning of reason can make use even of this sort of competition. It can use it to weave the conceptual fabric of a freer, better, more just society. If philosophy can be, at best, only what Hegel called 'its time held in thought', still, that might be enough. For by thus holding one's time, one might do what Marx wanted done - change the world. So even if there were no such thing as 'understanding the world' in the Platonic sense - an understanding from a position outside of time and history - perhaps there was still a social use for my talents, and for the study of philosophy.
>
> For quite a while after I read Hegel, I thought that the two greatest achievements of the species to which I belonged were *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Remembrance of Things Past* (the book which took the place of the wild orchids once I left Flatbrookville for Chicago). Proust's ability to weave intellectual and social snobbery together with the hawthorns around Combray, his grandmother's selfless love, Odette's orchidaceous embraces of Swann and Jupien's [sic] of Charlus, and with everything else he encountered - to give each of these its due without feeling the need to bundle them together with die help of a religious faith or a philosophical theory - seemed to me as astonishing as Hegel's ability to throw himself successively into empiricism, Greek tragedy, Stoicism, Christianity and Newtonian physics, and to emerge from each, ready and eager for something completely different. It was the cheerful commitment to irreducible temporality which Hegel and Proust shared - the specifically anti-Platonic element in their work - that seemed so wonderful. They both seemed able to weave

[2] "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids," in Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, Penguin, 1999, p. 11.

> everything they encountered into a narrative without asking that that narrative have a moral, and without asking how that narrative would appear under the aspect of eternity.
>
> About 20 years or so after I decided that the young Hegel's willingness to stop trying for eternity, and just be the child of his time, was [12] the appropriate response to disillusionment with Plato, I found myself being led back to Dewey. Dewey now seemed to me a philosopher who had learned all that Hegel had to teach about how to eschew certainty and eternity, while immunizing himself against pantheism by taking Darwin seriously. This rediscovery of Dewey coincided with my first encounter with Derrida (which I owe to Jonathan Arac, my colleague at Princeton). Derrida led me back to Heidegger, and I was struck by the resemblances between Dewey's, Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's criticisms of Cartesianism. Suddenly things began to come together. I thought I saw a way to blend a criticism of the Cartesian tradition with the quasi-Hegelian historicism of Michel Foucault, lan Hacking and Alasdair MacIntyre. I thought that I could fit all these into a quasi-Heideggerian story about the tensions within Platonism."

This passage is extremely interesting and in some ways at odds with the picture of Rorty's philosophical motivations that results merely from reading *The Linguistic Turn*. Rorty, like many others, famously like Marx, announces that early on he was concerned not merely to do philosophy but with what philosophy amounts to. He did not want merely to be another philosopher whose main contribution lies in either ignoring or even in reinforcing the status quo but rather someone who had a hand in changing things for the better. Philosophy here takes on a clear social role wholly unrelated to transforming philosophy into a science unless scientific philosophy is, as Kant thinks, intrinsically useful to all human beings. But that argument remains to be made and Rorty clearly is not making it here.

Marxism typically suggests that in virtue of their idealism, which seems to amount to the fact that they, like everyone else, depend on modern industrial capitalism, philosophers succumb to ideology that prevents them from grasping the world, which, on the contrary, Marx correctly comprehends. Rorty here implicitly defends an anti or at least a non-Marxist perspective in implying Marx's goal could be reached on Hegelian grounds. The implication is that despite what Engels and other Marxists thought, one does not have to leave philosophy to realize it since philosophy can reach its goals within philosophy. Rorty, who here characterizes philosophy as consisting in a series of alternative descriptions of the world, suggests Marx's stated goal of changing the world can perhaps be achieved, not by grasping the world in itself, which no one can do and which amounts to Platonism, hence not through defending a form of metaphysical realism, but by grasping it philosophically within time and history. I take Rorty to be pointing to a historicist approach to knowledge clearly incompatible with the examination of the so-called linguistic turn in the collection of that name, hence incompatible with a centrally linguistic conception of philosophy. The problem is assuredly not the semantic problem of how words hook onto things, but rather how to comprehend the world when like all human beings one is situated within the historical flux.

Yet there is an obvious tension here between temporality and history or historicity, which surfaces in Rorty's reference to Hegel and Proust in the same breath. Rorty seems very oddly to regard them as doing about the same thing. Yet a reading of Proust and Hegel as sharing similar concerns apparently conflates time and history. Proust's aim is to recover what he calls lost time (du temps perdu), which is preserved in memory that can, through an appropriate stimulus, such as the famous incident of the madeleine, be made conscious. There is an analogy between Proust's concern to revive our memories of what has taken place, but been forgotten, and Freud's stress on the cathartic recovery of the repressed events of early childhood. Hegel's interest, on the contrary, lies in calling attention to the historical element in conceptual claims, which depend on the historical moment in which they occur. If Hegel is right, we cannot go beyond the historical moment in which we are always situated.

Rorty, who apparently overlooks this crucial distinction, draws attention to the anti-Platonic character of Hegel's suggestion that we necessarily think out of our historical moment. This claim requires some discussion. We do not know and cannot now determine Plato's view, if he had one. According to the theory of forms, which is routinely ascribed to him, Plato can be understood to believe, like Parmenides, that if there is knowledge, it must consist in a grasp of what, according to the theory of forms, can be described as mind-independent reality. In other words, and once again if and only if there is knowledge, there is a mind-independent reality that, under appropriate conditions, on grounds of nature and nurture, at least some talented individuals called philosophers can be said to grasp.

This general view of philosophy as social relevant is broadly Hegelian. Rorty shares with Hegel and many others a concern with what philosophy amounts to from a social perspective. This concern, with the exception of Schelling, runs throughout all the great German idealists from Kant through Hegel and, if Marx is an idealist, continues in Marx as well. Yet Rorty's view of philosophical social relevance seems thoroughly un-Hegelian. Thus, although he thinks of Hegel as indicating how philosophy can be socially relevant, he does not seem aware of Hegel's understanding of the philosophical mechanism through which philosophy makes its social contribution. Marx, of course, was skeptical of Hegel's view of philosophy as contributing to society. Early on, he argued that we should turn from philosophy to revolution. Later on, he thought that modern liberal capitalism will through its inner dialectic transform itself into something he called communism, but which has only the name in common with twentieth century political systems that feature that name.

Hegel's argument for the social utility of philosophy does not rely on leaving philosophy behind, or on the related idea of philosophy as pointing beyond itself to an extra-philosophical solution. It rather relies on a claim for the relation between philosophy, which he understands as a historical form of cognition, and the historical moment. According to Hegel, philosophy, which arises only post facto, is a centrally important way of understanding what occurs, in Hegel's language its moment captured in thought. For Hegel, the retrospective capacity to understand what has happened is a key ingredient in making possible a future based on that understanding. In other words, philosophy is socially useful in promoting the realization of ideas through the self-understanding arrived at in comprehending the historical moment.

Rorty, who is an epistemological skeptic, has to resolve the problem of how to attribute a social role to philosophy, a role that cannot be based on its cognitive function, since it has none. His rejection of a historical form of cognition, which follows from his rejection of epistemology in general, leads him toward a novel conception of pragmatism. Pragmatism in all its forms is a-historical. This is a major difference between classical pragmatism, which reacts to Kant, and post-Kantian German idealism, which also reacts to Kant in moving toward a historical reinterpretation of the critical philosophy. Pragmatism, which is anti-foundationalist, can be understood as an effort to continue the epistemological debate after the turn away from Cartesian foundationalism. Peirce, for instance, famously favors an understanding of reality as what science arrives at in the long run. Rorty, who is opposed to knowledge claims in general, turns away from Peirce, arguably the central figure on any of the usual approaches to pragmatism. The result is an idiosyncratic reading of pragmatism beginning in James and continuing in Dewey, whom Rorty presents as the truth of both German idealism and Hegel in particular, as well as the high point of pragmatism. Thus he ends his autobiographical sketch, in which he calls attention to the significance for his own philosophical approach of Hegel and Proust in indicating that both pale before the importance of Dewey. Dewey, who famously declines an interest in the problem of knowledge in general, favors a process of inquiry, whose appeal to Rorty lies in the fact that, instead of fruitless epistemological claims, Dewey

offers a dream of a democratic community based not on knowledge but rather on solidarity. According to Rorty, "The democratic community of Dewey's dreams … is a community in which nobody everybody thinks that it is human solidarity, rather than knowledge of something not merely human, that really matters."[3] Rorty goes on to claim that Dewey's approximation to "a fully democratic, fully secular community" is "the greatest achievements of our species" (sic), and that in comparison "Hegel's and Proust's book seem optional, orchidaceous extras."[4] His preference for democracy, which accords well with the direction of Dewey's thought, does not, however, solve the problem of how to justify the social utility of philosophy, which, in virtue of Rorty's epistemological skepticism, remains unresolved.

In his later writings, Rorty continued to feature Hegel, but, perhaps in virtue of his own anti-epistemological stance, only as a minor strand in a position that turns on the rejection of claims to know. Even in the autobiographical context, Rorty seems to imply Hegel is more important to him personally than he is finally willing to admit. Here the difference between idealism and pragmatism comes into play. An important difference between Kant and Hegel lies in the a-historical form of idealism Kant features that, by the time it gets to Hegel, has become thoroughly historical. Pragmatism of all kinds is not unfriendly toward but also not interested in history as such. None of the classical American pragmatists features a historical conception of philosophy. Rorty, who is an epistemological skeptic, is, unlike Hegel defending a historical view of knowledge. He is rather interested in defending the paradoxical view, familiar in the debate at least since Socrates, that we know there is no knowledge. This explains the fact that even in the autobiographical sketch, where he seems close, or closest to Hegel, or at least close to a form of Hegelianism that seems to promise the realization of social change through philosophy, he is closer still to a pragmatist like Dewey whom Rorty reads as reticent to engage in theory of knowledge.

In giving up Hegel and Proust for Dewey, Rorty turns away from the social function of philosophy, or at least demotes it to a secondary theme. His central concern now becomes the ability of philosophy to carry out its epistemological program, which was central in *The Linguistic Turn*, and which is further developed in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Already in the former book, Rorty indicates toward the end of the Introduction, that the Cartesian spectator view leads to a series of difficulties that disappear in rejecting the view of knowledge as "the presentation of something "immediately given" to the mind, where the mind is conceived of as a sort of immaterial eye," and where "immediately" means, at a minimum, "without the mediation of language."[5]

Hegel and *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*

Rorty develops his critique of epistemology in detail in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, his most important book. The title of this book points beyond the familiar Cartesian spectator view to a particular epistemological thesis associated more narrowly with F. Bacon, Engels, Lenin, the early Wittgenstein and others, and which in Marxism is known as the reflection theory of knowledge. There is a difference between the spectator view and the reflection theory of knowledge. The spectator view, which precedes Descartes, is at least as old as the Platonic conception that on grounds of nature and nurture some among us known as philosophers can intuit invisible mind-independent reality. The spectator view attributed to Descartes, and adopted by many others, takes many forms. One form is the thesis that in knowing the mind must, as the title of Rorty's book suggests, reflect the way the world is, or act as the mirror of nature. In the famous account of the divided

[3] Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 20.
[4] Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 20.

[5] Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, p. 39n.

line in the *Republic*, Plato asserts that if the line is divided into visible and invisible parts, the visible consists of images, including reflections situated in the imagination, which are images of animals, plants and other things.[6] In the spectator theory of knowledge, invisible reality gives way to visible nature that, in the reflection theory of knowledge, one knows by reflecting it.

Rorty's aim in this book seems to be to refute the Cartesian spectator view in the form of the reflection theory of knowledge and, hence, epistemology in all its forms. In the Introduction to *The Linguistic Turn*, Rorty presents attention to language as centrally important, but less so than the critique of the spectator view. The refutation of the spectator view is the central task of the *Mirror* book. The main point, which is continuous with but different from the view adumbrated in the autobiographical essay, is that philosophy has no distinctive role to play since theory of knowledge fails.[7] Rorty signals this inference in the last sentence of the book where he recommends continuing the conversation of the West without insisting on a specific place within it for the traditional problems of modern philosophy. Yet this conclusion seems hasty, more than the argument can bear. If I am correct that the reflection theory of knowledge is no more than a variation on the theme of the spectator theory, it follows that a refutation of the former does not necessarily count as a refutation of the latter. It follows that despite the evident interest of what Rorty says in this book, he fails to clinch the case he builds against the Cartesian spectator view.

The other problem is the modified role he now accords to Hegel in this book. In the *Mirror* book, he supplements his earlier remarks Dewey with equally appreciative comments about Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey. As in the autobiographical piece, he again credits the latter with offering a naturalized version of Hegel's vision of history.[8] In the *Mirror* book, the main reference to Hegel is as a counterweight to Kant and the return to Kantian theory of knowledge after Hegel. In this regard, Rorty makes two points: first, it was only after Hegelianism receded that epistemology as we now know it emerged; and, second, it became apparent after Hegel that we cannot ground claims to know in anything like world-spirit but must justify claims for objectivity.[9] Both these points are controversial. Although Rorty takes a softer line on the linguistic turn in this volume, he seems still to overestimate the importance of words in linking the rise of epistemology to the use of "epistemology" and related terms (e. g. Epistemologie, Erkenntnistheorie, Vernunftkritik, etc.) by Zeller and other neo-Kantians. If Kant invented theory of knowledge worthy of the name, then it originated around the time of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. If not, then, as many think, it arguably goes back to early Greek philosophy and merely receives an important make over in at the time of Kant. Second, in suggesting that Hegel wants to ground all the disciplines on world-spirit Rorty, who never discusses Hegel's position, apparently relies on philosophical gossip about it in attributing a view to Hegel that is arguably in what one says about Hegel's writings but not in his texts.

"Dewey between Hegel and Darwin"

In the Mirror book, Rorty contends that with Wittgenstein and Dewey that we should not think of knowledge as a problem for which we have a theory. If the epistemological approach to philosophy is optional, then so is philosophy that focuses on it. In "Dewey Between Hegel and Darwin," Rorty returns to the interpretation of Dewey broached in the auto-biographical sketch. In the sketch, Rorty depicted Dewey as offering a naturalized version of Hegelian historicism. He now enriches that basic claim in focusing on the role

[6] See Plato, *Republic*, 510A, translated by G. M. A. Grube, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992, p. 183.
[7] See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 394.
[8] See Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 5.
[9] See Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, pp. 233-235.

of Darwin in the formulation of Dewey's thought. Rorty now stresses Hegel's historicism in downplaying his idealism.[10] Rorty takes it as a given that there are different Hegels, or at least different ways of reading his position accordingly as we emphasize one strand or another. It never seems to occur to him, since there is no direct interpretation of Hegel's texts, that perhaps Hegel's idealism and his historicism are interrelated through his constructivist approach to knowledge. If this is true, then it is not possible to hold onto the historicism without adopting the idealism as well.

Rorty is interested in finding out what can be defended and what must be rejected in Dewey, whose pragmatism he depicts as the positive outcome of the German idealist tradition. With this in mind, Rorty proposes an interpretation of Dewey's relation to Hegel in which Dewey is neither a panpsychist nor a radical empiricist. Rorty follows Manfred Franks' point that after Hegel philosophers must give up the idea of a transhistorical frame of reference lying beyond language, which in turn allows a distinction between historicism, which denies we can match up language to the world, and scientism, or the claim that natural science is closer to the world than other activities.[11] Dewey's contribution lies in formulating a view of truth that does not rely on getting it right about the world based on a turn to Darwin in merging the vocabulary of epistemology with that of evolutionary biology. [12] In this respect, Rorty makes three key claims. First, Darwin finished the job begun by Galileo in eliminating purpose from nature; Second, Darwin shows us how to naturalize Hegel in retaining a Hegelian account of progress while dispensing with the claim that the real is the rational[13]; and, third, Dewey's position is "a genuine marriage of Darwin with a de-absolutized Hegel."[14]

All three claims are controversial. Rorty is right that there is a close, but probably still not well-comprehended link between pragmatism and German idealism, and further between Dewey and Hegel. American pragmatism is in part the product of a complex reaction to nineteenth century German idealism. Peirce famously clamed to know Kant's first *Critique* almost by heart. He was initially unfavorable to Hegel, whom he later regarded as mainly differing from his own position through a different vocabulary.[15] James never knew much about Peirce or the German idealists. Dewey was influenced by the St. Louis Hegelians as well as by Hegel in ways that we still do not completely understand. Through recent publications, we now know more than Rorty did about Dewey's reading of Hegel.[16]

Rorty's first claim refers to the relation of physics and biology, Galileo and Darwin. Galileo's successful application of mathematics to nature does not eliminate purpose from physics, which is still featured by Newton. In the third *Critique*, it is known that Kant, who focuses on a teleological approach to nature, still dreams of a Newton of a blade of grass. It is further tendentious to claim that Darwin shows us how to naturalize Hegel. It needs to be shown that Hegel, a pre-Darwinian figure, is committed to a form of teleology that after Darwin is attributable to natural selection. It further needs to be shown that after Darwin a recognizable version of Hegel's position can still be maintained. From an epistemological perspective, Hegel's view of progress consists in arriving at a better theory about what is given in experience. This might be paraphrased as a theory that does everything the preceding theory does plus at least one thing it should do but fails to do.

Rorty's second claim implies that Darwinism is incompatible with Hegelianism, which it supposedly

[10] See "Dewey between Hegel and Darwin," in Richard Rorty, *Philosophical Papers 3: Truth and Progress*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 292.
[11] See Rorty, *Truth and Progress*, pp. 293-294.
[12] See Rorty, *Truth and Progress*, p. 299.
[13] See Rorty, *Truth and Progress*, p. 300.
[14] Rorty, *Truth and Progress*, p. 304.

[15] See, for this argument, Tom Rockmore, "Hegel, Peirce and Knowledge," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1999, pp. 166-184.
[16] See *John Dewey's Philosophy of Spirit, with the 1897 Lecture on Hegel*, edited by John R. Shook and James A. Good, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010.

corrects by advancing a theory of biological evolution in place of the development of spirit. Yet this is incorrect. Since the Hegelian conception of spirit cannot simply be reduced to nature, Hegel's problems cannot be solved on the level of modern biology. Rorty seems to believe that Darwinian evolution is incompatible with Hegel's position, and in particular with the view that the real is the rational. This inference is based on the relation between science and philosophy. After Darwin Hegel's thesis that the real is the rational remains unaffected. Hegel's thesis points to a minimal condition for the intelligibility of our surroundings. The alternative is to give up the idea that we can know our surroundings and ourselves if they cannot be grasped through human reason. In this respect, Hegel and Darwin are not incompatible but comptatible. Darwinian evolutionary theory, which can be depicted as a way of grasping the intrinsic rationality of experience, is committed to a form of the thesis that the real is the rational.

Finally the third claim that Dewey's position is a genuine marriage of Darwin with a supposedly de-absolutized Hegel depends on interpretations of both Dewey and Hegel that Rorty never proposes. This has been Rorty's claim all along. The main difference between the way Rorty depicts the relation of Dewey to Hegel in the autobiographical sketch and in the *Mirror* book, and the way he depicts it here, is that Rorty now suggests that in turning to Darwin Dewey discovers the non-metaphysical historicist Hegel. In replacing the Hegelian absolute by Darwinism, historicism by scientism, Rorty substitutes pragmatism for idealism. Yet this is problematic since historicism cannot be understood simply as a claim that we cannot match up a trans-historical frame of reference with mind-independent reality. Kant, an a-historical thinker, denies precisely this point in the famous Copernican revolution. According to Kant, we cannot claim to represent mind-independent reality, which we uncover, discover, or reveal, since we can only claim to know what we in some sense construct, product, or make. Hegel and other post-Kantian German idealists follow this Kantian insight in rethinking the problem of knowledge in historical terms. Yet if as I believe none of the American pragmatists can be described as a historical thinker, in other words as committed to some version of the view that cognitive claims depend on the historical context, then it is incorrect to depict Dewey as naturalizing Hegelian historicism. To put the point simply but not inaccurately: a turn toward Darwin or science in general is not the same thing as, nor a substitute for, a post-Kantian historical account of knowledge.

Conclusion: Rorty, Hegel and Rorty's Hegel

The conclusion is obvious. Rorty, who does not seem to know much about Hegel, uses the latter mainly as a foil, as a promissory note for what is left over after we deny theory of knowledge understood as matching words up to things, our claims about the world to the mind-independent world, or an approach that simply cannot justify its claims to objectivity. Rorty's original objective as described in the autobiographical sketch lies in finding a reason to carry on philosophy, which seemed to be justified through Hegel and Proust, but could finally only be tied to Dewey's form of pragmatism. Yet his identification of Dewey's theory as a naturalized form of Hegelian historicism is undermined by a basic unclarity about the nature of historicism, hence Dewey's relation to historicism and to Hegel.

There is a lack of seriousness in Rorty's claim that "The problem with Hegel and Darwin has always been that Hegel seems to say that human civilization just couldn't casually be wiped out by a plague or a comet …."[17] Yet the difficulty runs deeper than that, deeper than Rorty's deliberately playful tone. Rorty's Hegel is a distant relative of the left-wing Hegelian interpretation, which arose after his death in 1831. The right Hegelians thought Hegel was a kind of theologian, who privileged the religious element, something the left Hegelians accepted as a correct reading of Hegel and criticized. But what if Hegel were not offering a theologically-centered

[17] See Rorty, *Truth and Progress*, p. 300.

theory at all, but rather a form of post-Kantian constructivism consisting in formulating, trying out and then reformulating successive theories, each attempting to go further than preceding theories about experience? In that case Hegel's historicism and his idealism would be two sides of the same position, and, since they could not be simply dissevered, that is, since one could not have Hegelian historicism without Hegelian idealism, it could not be the case that like Marx Dewey gave up Hegel's idealism in adopting his historicism.[18]

Rorty fails to see, perhaps because he is an epistemological skeptic opposed to any theory of knowledge, that the interest of Hegel does not lie only in rejecting metaphysical realism. It also lies in an interesting form of epistemological constructivism without making any claim for a cognitive grasp of mind-independent reality as it is. If Dewey had been a historical thinker, and if he had taken the German idealist turn towards constructivism seriously, then Rorty could correctly have claimed that Dewey provides a naturalized form of Hegelian historicism. But since Dewey's theory differs from Hegel's, and since it cannot merely be understood as a further development of German idealism, I conclude that Rorty's contention that Dewey provides a naturalized form of Hegelian historicism is wide of the mark.

[18] See Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 30: "If all this sounds vaguely reminiscent of Marx, that is because Marx and Dewey were steeped in Hegel, especially his idealism and because both rejected everything nonhistoricist in Hegel, especially his idealism.. Both kept only those parts of Hegel which could easily be reconciled with Darwin."

RORTY AND NIETZSCHE

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I see Nietzsche as the figure who did most to convince European intellectuals of the doctrines which were purveyed to Americans by James and Dewey.

---- Richard Rorty

Introduction

Rorty has never said straightforwardly that, like Dewey or James (1991a), Nietzsche were one of his heroes. But in an autobiographical text, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids", he recognizes that he shares his philosophical views "with Nietzsche and Dewey" (1999, p.5). Nietzsche's influence on his work is undeniable. Like Nietzsche: (i) Rorty is very critical about the sterile works of philosophers who following Plato think of philosophy as the search for the "really real" (2007a); (ii) he assigns novelist and poets a place in midst of philosophers (2008); (iii) he thinks we live in a post-philosophical culture where philosopher has no special "problems" to solve but are all-purpose intellectuals 'who offer a view on pretty much anything' (2008b); and, (iv) that science has no special access to the 'really real' (2008a). For both of them creativity and imagination have a central role in our life. But unlike Nietzsche, for Rorty, democracy and Christianity are not signs of the West's decadency. For him, "one can detach the good Nietzsche – the critic of Platonism – from the bad Nietzsche, the one who had no use for Christianity or democracy." (2006, p. 93). Contrary to Nietzsche, the egalitarian ideals incarnated in a democracy do not represent for Rorty the triumph of the 'slave morality' but the hope of the continuing retreat of all sorts of present and future forms of cruelties. So, as he says in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Nietzsche was an 'ironist', one sufficiently historicist and nominalist not to be scared by the contingency of his most central beliefs and desires. But he was not a 'liberal'[1] -- in fact, he was an 'antiliberal':

> You preachers of equality, the tyrant's madness of impotence cries thus out of you for "equality" (…) I do not want to be mixed in with and mistaken for these preachers of equality. For thus justice speaks *to me*: "humans are not equal." (Nietzsche, 2006, pp. 77-78)

Getting straight to the point, as he sometimes abruptly does, Rorty says: "Nietzsche dislikes both his country and his century, so the Emersonian combination of self-reliance and patriotism found in James and Dewey is alien to him." (1991, p. 2). His philosophical positions are in the extreme opposite of his fellow countryman, Kant. He sees no use of concepts like "knowledge in itself", "thing-in-itself" ("the dogmatic idea of 'things that have a constitution in themselves' is one which one must break absolutely")[2], or "the categories of reason" ("the expedience of a certain race and species").[3] With his perspectivism Nietzsche abandoned any reliance on philosophies such as Kant's which see truth as disentangled from interests and needs.

1. The place of Nietzsche in the history of philosophy according to Rorty

In writing about Richard Rorty's philosophy it is unavoidable to mention the importance of the XXth century's "linguistic turn" for his work. Indeed the Wittgensteinian assumption that language is not a medium for expressing ideas but tools for dealing with the events in the world has a central role in his writings. But one should not underestimate the relevance of another important turn in the history of philosophy: the "historicist turn"[4]. As a matter of fact, this is for him *the* decisive event in the history of contemporary

[1] A Liberal is someone for whom "cruelty is the worst thing they do" (CIS, p. 74). See also, CIS, p. xv.

[2] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (Random House, 1968), sec. 558 apud Rorty, 2007a, p.111, n8.

[3] *The Will to Power*, trans. Kaufmann (New York: Random House,1967), sec. 608 and sec. 515 apud Rorty (1991, p. 2, n. 1 e 2).

[4] See CIS, Introduction, p. xiii.

philosophy. Without it we would not have the works of philosophers like Foucault, Heidegger, Dewey, Habermas and Rawls.

By 'historicist turn' Rorty means the philosophical 'revolution' inaugurated by Hegel. Before Hegel metaphysics and theology dominated the intellectual culture of the West. According to their followers, every human being has the same nature, or essence. So, the individual self-realization is the fulfillment of this very nature or essence. For Christianity this essence was given by our common origin as creature of God: we were born to continue his work, to spread love and goodness all over the world. Before Christianity, Platonian metaphysicians already inferred that in order to fulfill our real nature as rational beings we needed to be altruistic. For them virtuous behaviors were signs of rationality. As a matter of fact, the coincidence between the first and the second is not fortuitous, for Nietzsche "Christianity is the Platonism for the people" (2002, p.4).

Nietzsche was skeptical about the existence of naturally or essentially altruistic human soul. His view about human solidarity and community is in this point very similar to Hobbes; human beings search above all the satisfaction of their desires and individual aspirations. They accept to live in community and help each other only for "fear of the neighbor".[5] But his skepticism, tell us Rorty, was not enough to free him totally from metaphysical frames of thought. Rorty agrees with Heidegger that Nietzsche was not really the post-metaphysician he would like to be. He was rather the *last* metaphysician, the proponent of an inverted Platonism. Similar to the dogmatizers he criticizes, Nietzsche also had his version of the only thing that is really real, the 'will to power'.[6] But besides some inconsistencies in his writings Nietzsche was undoubtedly an anti-representationalist, nominalist, historicist, anti-Cartesian philosopher. So it is impossible to settle him on the side of the Plato-Kantian canon.

The 'historicist turn' promoted by Hegel have overcome all attempts to define the human nature or the human essence. For Hegel and Hegelians like Rorty there is nothing prior to history or prior to socialization which would capture the absolute definition of humanity. This means, first, that we are set free to create either our private identity as we please or to imagine one new society as we please. There cannot be previously any sort of absolute given knowledge about how the future will be like. History is the form in which the human spirit shows its capacity to create and invent new forms of societies and selves. This historicist perspective constitutes a common assumption for all post-Hegelian philosophers such as Heidegger, Habermas, Foucault and Rawls.

The second consequence of the historicist turn is one which perhaps Rorty was the first to notice – he wrote CIS in order to elaborate this second consequence, as he tell us in "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" (1999, p.13). For him one of the important results of the historicist turn is that there is no need any more to unify a search for private self-creation with an urge to engage oneself in a new social utopia. Transposed to the philosophical field this conclusion means that one does not have to choose between Rawls and Foucault, or between Heidegger and Habermas. One can use their writings simultaneous but for different purposes. Authors like Heidegger and Foucault are useful for our private self-creation; while authors like Habermas and Ralws are useful for helping us understand why the mechanisms through which the public institutions try to accomplish their social functions fail, and imagine new regulation's forms. But this division is far from settled. Even those authors themselves do not avoid mixing both spheres. And so we have, for one side, idiosyncratic discourses which also aim a large social resonance and, on the other side, public discourses which attack idiosyncratic discourses as if

[5] See Nehamas (1985), p. 211.
[6] While reading Nehamas's book on Nietzsche I have got the impression that one can deflate the 'will to power's concept, its metaphysical content, and reduce it just to our unavoidable evaluative form of dealing with things, persons, ourselves and events in the world.

they represented a severe threat to democracy. But the amalgamation of both vocabularies, private and public, results disastrous from a Rortyan perspective.

For one side, it would be a disaster, for example, if we try to take Heidegger's conclusions about the decadence of contemporary West societies seriously. He, like Nietzsche, thought he also had a 'social mission' to accomplish with his works, so he unfortunately adopts Nietzsche antiliberal jabber and despise the 'herd'. But on the other side, it would be an error to judge all Heidegger's (and Nietzsche's) contributions to philosophy in the lights of his (their) anti-democratic positions, as Habermas (Rorty, 2007 and 2000), and many others, do.

For Rorty, the strength of Heidegger's and Nietzsche's philosophical writings lay in their idiosyncratic attitudes. With their very personal writing's style they stimulate the creativity and the imagination of their readers. Nietzsche never hide himself behind his writings, on the contrary, they are full of self reference. Through them he presents himself as an author who does not compromise with scholar's etiquette and smooth talk, and who refuses to subordinate himself to the mainstream authority of traditional metaphysician and theologian.

One way to avoid outlived theories about the way one should conduct one's life is to find out a personal style and an own vocabulary for narrating one's point of views, autobiographical or not – and all this with a lively desire for richer, different experiences in the future.

2. Truth

One of the major contributions of pragmatism to philosophy is its critic of the old theory of truth as correspondence. For philosophers like Rorty it makes no sense to talk about a non-linguistic foundation of sentences and propositions since everything, including natural things, are experienced only as we express them in words.[7] Even though Nietzsche is very critical about the metaphysical distinction between reality and appearance, and the dogmatic position of scientific knowledge, he has not confronted deeply enough the old realistic conception of truth as correspondence (Nehamas, p. 52-55). While in early essays like "On truth and lies in a non-moral sense" he holds a position very similar to pragmatism's on truth, in late works, such as *Between Good and Evil*, he admits that a sentence could be false, but this falsity were not a problem:

> We do not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment; this is perhaps where our new language will sound most foreign. The question is how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, (…). (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 7).

Life is a central notion for him. Much more important than to know if a sentence is true or not is to evaluate the power of its message, its capacity of promote 'self-overcominess'. As Rorty asserts (2006a, p.23), in midst of the pragmatists there were never a perspective exactly like what Nietzsche called 'life'.

Rorty is very skeptical about the correspondence theory of truth and also critical about notions like theory, absolute foundation, representations and so on, but his philosophical background, the Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy, is clearly present in his writings. Because 'life' has too many meanings to be used with appropriateness and clarity, it would be better not to make use of it. His way of talking is much more economical, has much less metaphors, analogies and descriptions than Nietzsche's.

In spite of the inconsistence of his positions about truth, Nietzsche, according to Rorty, sustained pragmatist positions in various passages of his works (especially *The Will to Power*, sections 480-544)[8]. Like a pragmatist, Nietzsche take the *effects* of discourses in account, that

[7] Or, as Hegel would say, "Nature is but a moment in the developing self-consciousness of Spirit" (Rorty, 2007a, p. 111).
[8] Rorty, 1991, n. 2.

is, how they manage or not to produce truth-values. In this sense, he was "a good an anti-cartesian, anti-representationalist, and antiessencialist as Dewey. He was devoted to the question "what difference will this belief make to our conduct?" as Peirce or James". (Rorty, 1991, p.2)

3. Nihilism

A central theme of Nietzsche's philosophy is 'nihilism'. Although this expression does not appear in his major work, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, written in the years 1883 to 1885, but only in posthumous fragment from 1881, its implications are clearly there.

Zarathustra is the 'announcer' of the Overman, of the Will to Power and of the Eternal Recurrence. Those three elements jointly build Nietzsche's *tragic* or *Dionysian* philosophy (Machado, 1997). Tragic philosophy wants to celebrate life with all its ups and downs. It mistrusts the apparent positive talk of (rational) Philosophy, science and religion. For Nietzsche these are all nihilistic; they *disempower* us by fixing absolute values like Truth, Free Will, God, Immortality, Soul, and so on. For them those values are eternal and universal. They are not submitted to temporality. For Nietzsche on the contrary to negate temporality is to negate life. The joy of life is dependent of the temporal flux of open possibilities.

On the other side, the modern acceptance of the 'death of God' has created another sort of nihilism, the passive nihilism. And this is also a terrible situation to live with. For some, the absence of absolute religious values created an emptiness, a void, a 'nobody cares' attitude which is totally contrary to life. Those are the ones Zarathustra calls the 'last men'; they do not know about the Overmen.

So, while criticizing the absolute, a-temporal values, Nietzsche is not saying at the same time that we do not need values. He wants us to celebrate the will as an important value. Every creator has a different path to go, but all creators are guided by their will to power, by their strength to carry life through all difficulties without regret. This conception of philosophy is deeply related to tragedy since the tragic hero is the one who celebrates the *amor fati*. He endures all sorts of sorrows and losses but he never concludes that it could or should be different.

As I said above, Rorty is very skeptical about Nietzsche's employment of 'life' as a central philosophical notion. Nonetheless, when one reads his writings, especially CIS, one feels that he is also urging us to search our own path, to avoid following mainstreams positions, or common sense. And above all one feels that he is urging us to get rid of the fear of making mistakes. Like Nietzsche, he believes that one cannot live outside time. Contingency means accepting all our failures, success, and changes.

4. No Representations, but interpretations[9]

With his conception of knowledge as manifestation of a 'perspective' of the knower, that is, as a result of how, due to her cultural background, her intentions and feelings, her interests, she 'sees' the issue in question, Nietzsche showed that anybody who pretend to be capable of absolute neutrality and so, capable of holding 'last words' about anything, that is, words that would be universally true, is a nihilist who neglects the forces of life. Even a scientist interprets her object of study from a specific perspective. *Interpretation* is the way we normally deal with all sorts of phenomena in the world. From life's perspective there is neither mental *representation,* nor pure neutral analysis of how things really are. For Nietzsche there is also no object *per se* or substance, detached from its properties or accidents. An object without qualities has no content. The interpreter

[9] In what follows I make use of Nehamas (1985) clear exposition of Nietzsche's philosophy (see specially, part I: The World). In a note at the introduction of CIS, Rorty tell us that his "account of Nietzsche owes a great deal to Alexander Nehamas's original and penetrating Nietzsche: Life as Literature" (p.27).

is always interacting with persons and things, affecting and being affected by them.

> That things possess a constitution in themselves quite apart from interpretation and subjectivity, is a quite idle hypothesis; it presupposes that interpretation and subjectivity are not essential, that a thing freed from all relationships would still be a thing. (Nietzsche apud Rorty, 2007a, p.111)

Though we all interpret in order to interact with one another and the rest, only a few of us are capable of making others adopt our point of view. But many of those who make us adopt their beliefs and point of views, like the ascetic priest or the scientist, hide their personal motivation or interest. The ascetic priest pretend he is acting altruistically, always for the good of others, never for himself; and the scientist pretend to be discovering absolute facts that were hidden behind the events. Both are metaphysician and dogmatist. The priest is a transcendental metaphysician and the scientist is a materialistic metaphysician. Both sustain that there is *true facts* lying behind the phenomena. But the 'genealogist' does not leave them alone, in peace; she denounces the values and interests that were concealed behind those neutral and altruistic arguments. Every 'true' discourse wants to impose a certain value to all, says Nietzsche. This imposition of private values on others is not wrong *per se*, on the contrary, it is the sign in humans of the 'will of power', the energy that governs everything in the nature. But Nietzsche condemns those two kinds of will of power, the religious and the scientific, for their dogmatism, their incapability of recognizing their limitedness. Opposed to those metaphysicians there are the 'free spirits'.[10] The free spirit knows that the things in the world are constantly changing and that her interpretation/writing is not unconditional. She knows that it reflects her point of view and values. She adopts an attitude of suspicion toward her own beliefs. This 'attitude of suspicion' is what Rorty in CIS calls 'irony'. Like Nietzsche's free spirits, but for other reasons, he also believes that even in rich, literate democracies the ironist intellectuals are outnumbered. For Nietzsche there are few free spirits in the world and it is good so. For Rorty, it is a distress that most nonintellectuals of today "are still committed either to some form of religious faith or to some form of Enlightenment rationalism" (CIS, p. vx) -- "Enlightenment rationalism" is the Rortyan expression for (blind) belief on the truthfulness of scientific theories. Contrary to Nietzsche, Rorty is not insensitive before this situation. He sustains a liberal utopia according to which a 'narrative turn' will take place where sermons and treatises are going to be replaced for novels, movies and TV programs. When this occurs, narratives are going to take the places of theories. Narratives (journalist's reports, docudrama, and, specially, novels) would then display ethical arguments without moral authority. By bringing detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like they would present us with the opportunity of re-describing us by amplifying our capacity of feeling compassion towards persons different from us.

5. *Wie man wird, was man ist* or private self-creation

"How one becomes what one is" constitutes the subtitle of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's autobiographical and last book. At the first sight, it seems obviously a contradictory statement. For if Nietzsche rejects the metaphysician presupposition of the being as that which is (the Socrates-Plato's quest), and instead encourage us to ask 'whose sum of effects is momentary there',[11] how can he encourage us to become what one *is*? Besides this, with his rejection of the metaphysical concept of substance as a substrate for accidental qualities, he also rejects the concept of a central self, who controls our experiences. Like the events and objects in the world, we human beings are constantly changing, being different persons each time we connect ourselves with new set of effects.

[10] See *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*.

[11] See Nehamas (1985), Chap. 3: A thing Is the Sum of Its Effects"

Nehamas[12] make a very persuasive interpretation of this statement. For him we should interpret it in the light of Nietzsche's conception of the eternal recurrence and his analogy between life and novels. He disagrees with the cosmological interpretation of the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche is not affirming that in fact there is an eternal time flux in which we keep repeating the same events of our lives, past, present and future. For Nehamas the eternal recurrence is not a theory of the world but a theory of the self.

The central aspect of his interpretation is the assumption that due to the intrinsic interconnectedness of everything, we could not change anything in our past without changing the world and our identity. "This is because (…) he [Nietzsche] thinks that the properties of each thing are nothing but the effects on other things, the properties of which are in turn nothing but still further such effects." (Nehamas, 1985, p. 155). For Nietzsche's alter ego, Zarathustra, "all things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted a thing twice (…) then you wanted *all* back." (Z., IV, 19). If because of suffering a deception or the effects of a bad choice or action one expresses the desire of having a different life, for Nietzsche, one is in fact expressing the desire to be another person. On the contrary, by accepting the burdens of all our actions ("Thus I willed") and enduring all its bad and good moments, we affirm our individuality and character. We would endure all the suffering again if it is necessary.

We still need to explain how one can talk about identity and self if there is no alienated substance or substrate for Nietzsche. In order to answer that we need to put side by side three concepts: will to power, truth as creation and narrative.

For Nehamas, a central aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy is his view of the world as a text, a narrative.[13] For him there is an analogy between Nietzsche's conception of life and the (good) novel, where everything that occurs with its characters has a reason to be, that is, is connected with all others events of the story.

All human beings engage themselves on thousand of experiences during their lives. There are so many interconnections between us and things, events and persons that one is not capable of capturing, or accessing, all of them consciously. But there is one way where we can find a unified sense for this whole multiplicity of sensations and effects; it is when we narrate our life. As Nehamas notices, Nietzsche admired Goethe profoundly -- as also all strong poets (cf. *The Gay Science,* 299) --, because through his works Goethe managed to create a singular narrative about himself (cf. *Twilight of the Idols*, IX, p. 49). Like a good novel, in an autobiographical narrative about one's life every single part of it needs to be somehow connected. Every detail has a purpose that connects it to the whole, the life of the narrator. A paradigmatic example of this poetic capacity is the work of Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*. The narrator of this romance manages to remember almost every detail of his life, including all its moments of frustrations and disappointments, but by doing so he manages at the end of the book to make a coherent picture of his life. This capacity of make sense of those fortuitous and uncountable situations, aspects, and events of one's life is the fruit of the will of power. One has the possibility to overcome this fragmentary state of life by creating a narrative about oneself. And although this narrative is the result of an intentional work of assembling scattered facts and experiences, it is a *created*-story that is truly coherent. The assemblage will be weak and pale if one is not capable of unifying all its parts coherently. This is not an easy task; one needs to have a disposition for a constant and pénible self examination. Each momentarily closed self-narrative delivers a unique (momentary) image. This momentarily closed image is the self. But it is unstable. If we add to it new facts and stories, it will most probably change itself again.

[12] Op.cit., chap. 5: This Life – Your Eternal Life.
[13] See also Rorty, 2007a, p 117: "(…) Nietzsche was right to think of the world as our poem (…)".

Rorty would endorse this interpretation of life as literature. In fact he writes: "All any ironist can measure success against is the past – not by living up to it, but by redescribing it in his terms, thereby becoming able to say, "Thus I willed it"". (CIS, p. 97)

Like Nietzsche, Rorty also emphasized the importance of reading and aspiring to be 'strong poets'. But his justification for this relevance is less 'emotional'. He did not consider as Nietzsche the strive for self-overcoming and self-reliance as a private search for perfection or 'spiritual cleanliness' (Rorty, 1991, p.2). The strong poets are creative persons, not because they know how to use 'will to power' and like tragic heroes endure all sufferings without regret, but because they manage to create a vocabulary of their own. Both Rorty's and Nietzsche's heroes were poets, writers *and philosophers*. They did not feel the necessity of separating fiction and poetry from philosophy because for both of them there were no reason to still believe that the task of philosophy would be to find out the 'really real'.

With Rorty, we should say that for post-Nietzscheans philosophy is a 'kind of writing'. Because of that, notions like "philosophy *of language*" or '*Kantian* philosophy' are in fact out of place. Philosophy is a name for a sector of the literate culture. As in any literary genre, "is delimited not by form or matter, but by tradition – a family romance involving, e.g., Father Parmenides, honest old Uncle Kant, and bad brother Derrida." (2008a, 92).

6. *How to Philosophize with a Hammer*

The way I read Nietzsche and Rorty, in spite of the many differences we can find between them, at the core their message is the same. Given that there are no absolute values whatsoever the creator or the strong poet has the possibility to create new values (or new vocabularies). But they cannot create *ex nihili*, out of nothing. For Nietzsche, first, one 'destroys' previous 'values' knotted in nonnominalist statements, by showing its genealogy, its specific interests and needs, and then one is free to create new values. Or, using Rortyan vocabulary, first one connects oneself *horizontally* with the history of philosophy, that is, one interprets its zeniths "as the culminating reinterpretation of our predecessor's reinterpretation of their predecessors' reinterpretation …." (2008a, p.92). After doing this one become new 'inspirations' to invent unforeseen possibilities and to regard the so-called eternal objects of philosophy as "artifacts whose fundamental design we often have to alter" (idem, ibidem). For Rorty we recreate, reinterpretate the past vocabularies in the light of today's cultural atmosphere. "The most that an original figure can hope to do is to recontextualize his or her predecessors." (1991, p.2) So 'destruction' here is the same as "recontextualizing". It is not a capricious act but an important step in the creative process of matching philosophy with the flux of history and with the culture's atmosphere of our current time.

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RICHARD RORTY AS PEIRCEAN PRAGMATIST:

AN IRONIC PORTRAIT AND SINCERE EXPRESSION OF PHILOSOPHICAL FRIENDSHIP

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Introduction

What are the limits of redescription, the possibilities of renarration,[1] regarding the relationship between Charles Peirce and Richard Rorty? Is *rapprochement* between these two philosophers, however qualified and circumscribed, even a remote possibility? Is a narrative in which Rorty is advancing Peirce's impulses, rather than ridiculing or obstructing them, simply an even more distant prospect? Indeed, is such an exercise in storytelling anything more than a truly fantastic flight of a narrative imagination beyond anything Rorty himself would proffer or endorse? The value of such an undertaking is far from evident, the obstacles too numerous and obvious to discount, let alone to ignore. Even so, are we simply stuck at an impasse, where advocacy of Peirce entails a rejection of Rorty or sympathy to Rorty demands antipathy toward Peirce? Are the hermeneutic and narrative games in which we are engaged best envisioned as zero sum games (cf. Smith 1983 [1981]) or might these activities be conceived in a more conciliatory, less polemical, spirit?

Indeed, I have always been charmed by William Ernest Hocking's confession regarding his stance toward John Dewey, made at the 1939 meeting of the APA[2]: "I seem to remember reading a paper [ten years ago] at that session [of the APA] at which I recounted the tragedy of thirty-two years occupied in refuting Dewey while Dewey remained unconscious of what had happened!" (*LW* 14, 411). But, then, Hocking rather playfully went on to reveal: "I have now a different and happier report to make. Not … that Dewey has changed, but that I have largely ceased to read him *with polemical intent*: I read him to enjoy him. In this I succeed far better, in fact I am almost completely successful" (ibid; emphasis added). What seems to be implicit in Hocking's altered stance toward his philosophical rival is that such an engagement is not only enjoyable but also profitable: rather than teaching Dewey where he is in error, Hocking seems captivated by the prospect of learning from his interlocutor. Is it possible for at least some Peirceans to read Rorty without polemical intent, for the primary purpose of simply enjoying what he has to say, perhaps for the secondary one of learning where he is on to something? Such, at least, is the experiment undertaken in this essay. This essay is accordingly an essay (or *essai*) in the etymological sense – nothing more (but nothing less) than a trial, an attempt to approach Rorty in a different manner than is now the custom among Peirceans. Pragmatist ought, even more than other philosophers, to be experimentalists. Hence, they ought to be open to trying to comport themselves differently, otherwise than tradition (however recent) prompts them to proceed. Novel possibilities ought not to be dismissed prematurely; unconventional alignments

[1] In "American Pragmatism: The Conflict of Narratives," Richard J. Bernstein stresses: "We should be wary of anyone who claims that there are *fixed* criteria by which we can decide who is and who is not a pragmatist. Such boundary setting is not only unpragmatic, it is frequently used as a power play to legitimatize unexamined prejudices" (1995, 67). In this essay, I have tried to heed Bernstein's advice. This practically means that my argumentative retelling of the pragmatic legacy – or, more precisely, the Peircean inheritance – will inevitably "be in conflict with other argumentative retellings" (ibid.) The ultimate justification for this is that it not only avoids blocking the road of inquiry but also opens new routes, ones leading (I hope) to more convivial settings and thereby civil exchanges. For an important renarration, though one not necessarily at odds with the main emphasis of my own playful retelling, see Bernstein's "The Resurgence of Pragmatism" (1992).

[2] The context was a symposium devoted to Dewey's concepts of experience and nature at which Morris R. Cohen presented a paper entitled "Some Difficulties in Dewey's Anthropocentric Naturalism" and Hocking one entitled simply "Dewey's Concepts of Experience and Nature" (see the Appendix of *LW* 14 for a reprint of these essays). Dewey's response bore the title "Nature in Experience" (*LW* 14, 141-54).

ought not to be rejected unreflectively. There is no more pragmatic adage than this: the proof of the pudding is in the eating – that is, it is *not* in the recipe. Abstract formulae can never take the place of concrete experience. So, too, formal definitions need ultimately to give way to pragmatic clarifications. And this Peircean point (indeed, what point could be more Peircean?) provides an important clue for how to redescribe and renarrate the relationship between Peirce and Rorty. But much needs to be said before we are in a position to explore (indeed, to exploit) this possibility. First of all, the implausibility of what I am proposing needs to be explicitly acknowledged.

On an August occasion, moreover one in which he announced to his analytic brethren[3] his thoroughgoing adherence to American pragmatism, Rorty proclaimed that Peirce did little more than give this movement its name.[4] In response to this and other dismissals or disparagements of Peirce, Peirceans and indeed other pragmatists have used a number of names to characterize Rorty's pragmatism and, more generally, his project. If all Peirce did was to give pragmatism its name, it sometimes seems that all Peirceans can do is call Rorty names, virtually all of them unflattering. The identification of him as a "vulgar pragmatist" and the characterization of his project as an unedifying one are among the best examples of this pronounced tendency.[5] For the most part, however, defenders and interpreters of pragmatism (paleo-pragmatism?) have constructed detailed refutations of what they apparently take to be a hostile takeover of this philosophical movement by Rorty. For the most part, he has blithely gone his way, ignoring these critiques. When he did respond to such critics, he tended to do so in a tempered, conscientious, thoughtful, and respectful manner.[6] If anything, however, his responses to them left these critics even more exasperated than the formulations or texts prompting their efforts in the first place. He became famous for shrugging off criticism, sometimes with a look of gentle bemusement, at other times with a deeply weary look of barely maintained forbearance.

Once again, then, it seems that professional philosophers have reached the impasse of mutual denunciation (when they take notice of each other) or (as is more often the case) assumed the stance of reciprocal disregard.[7] Endless wrangling at the level of abstract definitions seemed to condemn philosophers to go round and round, to no effect. So we might puzzle interminably, Did the squirrel go round the man or the man 'round the squirrel?[8] Is there any way of giving these creatures a rest or, even better, inviting them to take part in a more profitable chase, a more worthwhile

[3] I use this term deliberately, since at the time of his Presidential Address the APA was overwhelmingly not only a masculine but also masculinist association. In this regard, it still lags far behind such fields as history, English, French, Comparative Literature, and Religious Studies.

[4] What more he did was inspire James (1982 [1980], 161).

[5] The person who in the first instance used these labels has been engaged not in simply hurling derogatory labels, but in painstaking analyses and critiques of Rorty's arguments and positions. This is of course Susan Haack.

[6] See, e.g., his response to Susan Haack in Saatkamp (1995) or to Cheryl Misak in Auxier and Hahn (2010)

[7] *Who* can disregard *whom* is an index of relative power.

[8] I am of course referring to the anecdote used by James to introduce his own account of pragmatism as a method. Returning to camp after rambling alone, James discovered his companions to be "engaged in a ferocious metaphysical dispute" (very quickly, it becomes impossible not to detect the irony in this description of the quarrel). The playfulness persists in his pun: "The *corpus* of the dispute was a squirrel – a live squirrel supposed to be clinging to one side of a tree-trunk; while over against the tree's opposite side a human being was imagined to stand." "*Does the man go round the squirrel or not*?" James in introducing the pragmatic method in this playful manner is quite explicit – indeed, emphatic: "The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences" (28). Otherwise interminable verbal wrangling is brought to a halt by a substantive consideration of the practical entailed – or not – by verbally different accounts. "If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show some practical difference that must follow from one side of the other's being right" (ibid.). Or, as Peirce puts it in How to Make Our Ideas Clear, "there is no difference of meaning so fine as not to consist in anything but a *possible* difference of practice" (*CP* 5.400; emphasis added).

endeavor? Might redescription and renarration move us beyond this impasse? This essay is accordingly an attempt to test those limits, to explore those possibilities. In this I am guided by John E. Smith's sage advice at the conclusion of *his* presidential address to the Eastern Division of the APA[9]:

> [T]he task before us now is to initiate [or facilitate] a serious dialogue among the many different philosophical opinions represented in this Association. I believe that this can happen only if everyone is prepared to abandon two claims; first, that any single approach is the only legitimate one, and secondly, that those pursuing philosophical inquiry in any fashion other than one's own are *ipso facto* not engaged in philosophy at all. (1983 [1981], 241-42).

Smith goes on to note that the first claim (the one regarding pluralism) concerns respect for philosophy, whereas the second (the one regarding seeing representatives of different philosophical traditions as no less worthy of the title *philosopher* than adherents of our own intellectual approach) concerns respect for persons (242). Surely there is wisdom in Smith's insistence that "the baffling character of philosophical problems demands nothing less than a cooperative endeavor instead of partisan strife" (ibid.). This is as true regarding what happens *within* a philosophical tradition such as American pragmatism as what transpires between (or among) different traditions.

Peirce's "Canons of Enquiry"/Rorty's Immunity from Refutation

As much as Rorty and indeed any other contemporary philosopher, there is one who has unquestionably taken the irreducible plurality of philosophical traditions with the utmost seriousness.[10] And, very recently, he has done so explicitly in reference to the two thinkers under consideration here. It is consequently instructive to turn to this contemporary philosopher, one of the first rank, whose name is not ordinarily associated with either Charles Peirce or Richard Rorty. For he suggests one way we might describe, possibly redescribe,[11] the relationship between Peirce and Rory. In a recent lecture, we learn of not only Peirce's influence on his early development but also Rorty's role in his ongoing maturation. This is likely to be surprising to even many who know his work well, since he hardly ever mentions Peirce and he almost always refers to Rorty for the purpose of criticism. His engagement with Peirce was mediated by a British philosopher, one whose name (let alone writings) too few are today likely to know[12]; that with Rorty involved face-to-face conversations when both were young men.[13]

In "On Not Knowing Where One Is Going," his John Dewey Lecture to the Central Division of the APA, Alasdair MacIntyre recalled:

> In 1952 W. B. Gallie had introduced British readers to C. S. Peirce in his *Peirce and Pragmatism*. This led me to think about Peirce's canons of enquiry and to ask what analogy there might be between scientific enquiry, as characterized by Peirce, and philosophical

[9] It is significant and, to some extent, ironic that Rorty's presidency made possible Smith's including a parliamentary decision regarding a technical question of voting.

[10] See, e.g., his presidential address to the APA, "Relativism, Power, and Philosophy" (1985).

[11] It is unlikely that Peirceans who have been critical of Rorty would find much, if anything, novel in the substance of what Alasdair MacIntyre claims – that Rorty has refashioned his position to the point where virtually nothing counts as a refutation of it (2010, 72).

[12] W. B. Gallie's "Essentially Contested Concepts" is in my judgment one of the most important essays in Anglo-American philosophy appearing in the second half of the twentieth century. It was first published in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol.56, (1956), pp.167-198 (having been first presented as a paper to that Society). A slightly revised version then appeared in *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964). Rorty's metaphilosophical position might be seen as a strenuous defense of essentially contested concepts and, in light of this realization, a pragmatist response. Moreover, Gallie's book on Peirce is still worthy of consultation. In most important respects, it stands up even given advances in our understanding of Peirce.

[13] "Before I finally emigrated to the United States," Alasdair MacIntyre recently recalled, "I had twice been a visiting Fellow of the Council of the Humanities at Princeton, where the young Rorty was engaged in redefining analytic philosophy by editing *The Linguistic Turn*" (2010, 71).

> enquiry. I concluded that in philosophy as in natural science falsifiability is crucial, that imaginative conjectures – Popper's terms, of course, not Peirce's – have to be confronted with the widest and strongest range of objections from rival points of view, and in the light of those objections rejected or revised and reformulated. As reformulation and revision proceed through successive confrontations of conjectures with objections a philosophical tradition of enquiry is apt to emerge. And to do good work is generally to work within such a tradition. (2010, 63; cf. Maddelena)

The importance of working *within* a tradition, of self-consciously participating in the debates at the center of any intergenerational community of philosophical inquirers and, thus, taking seriously the responsibility to respond to the champions of rival positions, cannot be underestimated. [14] This enjoins the additional responsibility to craft or formulate our positions in such a way that their weaknesses and limitations, perhaps even their fatal flaws, come to be identified in the back-and-forth so critical for such traditions. Even if philosophers cannot transform their discipline into a science in the same sense as physics or geology, chemistry or biology, they can address their questions in a manner akin, however remotely, to the communal work of experimental inquirers in these paradigmatic sciences.[15]

For responsible participants in a communal inquiry, scientific or otherwise, genuine doubt arises when competent persons actually disagree. This means that doubt is ineliminable. But there is a dilemma regarding this hardly ever acknowledged by interpreters of Peirce. He assists us in formulating this dilemma when he confesses:

> Like irritations generally, doubt sets up a reaction which does not cease until the irritation is removed. … Doubt acts quite promptly to destroy belief. Its first effect is to destroy the state of satisfaction. Yet the belief-habit may still subsist. But imagination so readily affects this habit, that the former believer will soon begin to act in a half-hearted manner and before long the habit will be destroyed. The most important character of doubt is that no sooner does a believer learn that another man equally well-informed and equally competent doubts what he has believed, than he begins by doubting it himself. (*NEM*, IV, 41)

One way to counteract this doubt is, as Peirce suggests elsewhere, to doubt the competence of the person who holds a position other than one's own. He is quite explicit about this tendency on the part of inquirers, including himself.

> … in science a question is not regarded as settled or its solution as certain until all intelligent and informed doubt has ceased and all competent persons have come to a catholic agreement, whereas fifty metaphysicians, each holding opinions that no one of the other forty-nine can admit, will nevertheless generally regard their fifty opposite opinions as more certain than that the sun will rise tomorrow. This is to have what seems an absurd disregard for others' opinions. The man of science attaches positive value to the opinion of every man as competent as himself, so that he cannot but have a doubt of a conclusion which he would adopt were it not that a man opposes it; but on the other hand, he will regard a sufficient divergence from the convictions of the great body of scientific men as tending of itself to argue incompetence, and he will generally attach little weight to the opinions of men who have long been dead and were ignorant of much that has been since discovered which bears upon the question in hand. (1.32)

The medieval schoolmen who far more than more metaphysicians exhibited a due respect for their intellectual rivals were faulted by Renaissance humanists for their lack of literary style (1.33). According to these critics, the schoolmen not only lacked such style but also the disposition to study matters "in a literary spirit" (ibid.). The culture of Renaissance humanism was that of litterateurs, whereas that of the medieval schoolmen was one of a "searching thoroughness" and selfless devotion. In these and other respects, then, Peirce judged the scholastic doctors to be closer in spirit to experimental inquirers than were the humanist writers. This was nowhere more apparent than in "their restless

[14] "The history of a tradition is …," as John E. Smith notes, "an indispensable resource for philosophical understanding" (1992, 86)

[15] Dewey argues that, if philosophical inquirers more resolutely adopted an empirical approach to their subject matter, they would "procure for philosophic reflection something of that cooperative tendency toward consensus which marks inquiry in the natural sciences." (*LW* 1, 389). See Colapietro 1998.

insatiable impulse to put their opinions to the *test*" (1.33). The elegant formulation of a position counted for almost nothing, while the most succinct proffering of evidence counted above all else.

One must accord one's predecessors and contemporaries the respect implicit in the act of hearing them out, of weighing the evidence for their positions (assessing the strength of their arguments), *especially* when one holds a rival position.[16] The very presence of such rivals constitutes a basis for doubt. But the impulse to refute these opponents is strong, but in some instances that of doubting their own relevance or even expertise might even be stronger. This however generates a dilemma. On the one hand, the actual disagreement between (or among) competent inquirers is a basis for doubt. Such doubt is an impetus for honest inquiry, inquiry in which one's own position is treated as possibly mistaken or inadequate. On the other hand, such disagreement can prompt us to doubt not our own belief but the competence of our opponent(s). *Either* we accredit the competence of our opponents, in which case doubt is in most arenas (to all appearances) ubiquitous and ineliminable; *or* we discredit our opponents, judging them to be incompetent at least regarding the question under consideration, in which case the actual disagreements among "competent" inquirers might be defanged.

[16] This claim needs to be qualified. One is not required to listen to anybody and everybody. Determining the justified limitations on who counts as a less than negligible interlocutor is, in practice, often a delicate and difficult task. For example, Simon Blackburn assumes only Continental philosophers are susceptible to the cultish elevation of obscurantist authors such as Heidegger. My suspicion is that such a view can be sustained by such a thoughtful, intelligent person only because he is operating in too narrow a circle of interlocutors (i.e., only because he has in effect launched preemptory strikes on strong representatives of the opposite viewpoint). See my "Tradition, Dialectic, and Ideology" (2006).

Many philosophers today would like to dismiss Rorty as a philosopher.[17] In turn, Rorty himself had a tendency to disregard much of the criticism directed at him, often simply shrugging in response and then continuing to advance positions against which an escalating din of often quite nasty opposition was hurled. His notoriety was secured in no small measure by his skills as a provocateur: his ability to provoke responses and criticisms insured that any change in conversation would have him at or near the center of controversy.

When philosophers such as MacIntyre, Robert Brandom, and Richard Bernstein take Rorty so seriously, is it responsible to dismiss him out of hand? In *critical* deference to them but also in direct appreciation of Rorty's considerable gifts as a philosophical thinker, at least *I* cannot simply dismiss him. Rorty's conclusions and positions are however more often than not directly opposed to those defended by Peirce, a philosopher for whom I have the highest regard and greatest admiration. More than anyone else, Susan Haack has identified the main points of disagreement and, then, criticized Rortyean positions from a Peircean perspective. There is no necessity for me to try doing again what she has done so well, even if at times in too harsh or uncharitable a

[17] Despite fundamental differences, John E. Smith is not one such philosopher. In *America's Philosophical Vision*, he readily admits: "Richard Rorty has written perceptively about the impact of Pragmatism on philosophy in America, and his contribution must certainly be taken into account" (1992, 5). But he quickly points out that doing so is made difficult by the fact (or "inconvenience") of there being "at least two Rortys – perhaps there are even more. There is first the Rorty – I shall use 'rorty' for this persona following his own device with the use of 'philosophy' and 'Philosophy' – who acutely captures the central drift of Pragmatism and brings it to bear on recent discussions in an illuminating way" (6). But there is in addition "a second Rorty – I shall use 'Rorty' for this persona"; he is doing something different in latching onto Dewey and onto the idea of 'overcoming tradition in order to get rid of Platonism and metaphysics or what he sometimes calls 'Philosophy'" (ibid.). There is no doubt something sly and indeed mischievous in Smith's use of *rorty* (lower case) to designate the person with whom he is in deepest sympathy. An even more sympathetic interpreter and critic – Jeffrey Stout – also feels the need to distinguish between two persona – the prophetic and the therapeutic Rorty (2007, 9ff.)

tone. If one wants a Peircean critique of Rorty's creative appropriation of the pragmatic tradition, and if one wants this presented in a straightforward, candid, and indeed uncompromising manner, one cannot do better than consult Haack's work.

But I admire MacIntyre's philosophical acumen no less than Haack's, his erudition as much (if not more) than any other living philosopher.[18] So, from a Peircean perspective, I am given pause. I have no reason to doubt MacIntyre's veracity when he claims that his conversations with the young Rorty "were as philosophically exciting as any I have ever had" (2010, 71). (Indeed, I have no reason to doubt his veracity in reference to any of his other assertions.) MacIntyre's reflections here bear directly on Peirce *and* Rorty. For he goes on to divulge not only his admiration for Rorty but also "the combination of admiration and exasperation that I felt and feel toward his project" (72). MacIntyre feels no *ressentiment* for his at least equally famous contemporary (MacIntyre was born in 1929, Rorty in 1931): "Unlike some analytic philosophers I did not resent his change of professional identification [from philosopher to professor of humanities]. Unlike quite a number of others I did not think that I had a knock-down argument with which to refute him, except perhaps on this or that point of detail." In MacIntyre's judgment, however, the indefeasible character of Rorty's philosophical position speaks not in favor but against his position.

> … just that was my central problem with Rorty's new claims. His ability to respond to his critics' arguments seemed to me more than a matter of his splendid dialectical skills. It was also the case that he had in the end succeeded in formulating his positions so that they were in effect immune from refutation. And this is, as I had learned much earlier from Peirce, the worst fate that can befall any theorist. We need, if we are rational, to be able to say what would show us to be mistaken. But in the end this is what Rorty could not do. (72)

[18] This is so even though I am not sympathetic with many aspects of his critique of liberalism or, more generally, modernity. In this regard, I concur with Jeffrey Stout's critique of MacIntyre's critique of modernity.

I recall here MacIntyre's own recollections because they help me inaugurate my own attempt to consider Rorty *and* Peirce – and to do so as a Peircean, but also (as it turns out) as a Rortyean of a rather extreme stripe (cf. Peirce). I am disposed to agree with Rorty when he claims, "human beings are at their best when they play" (2004, 25). So I intend to be playful rather than polemical, to join him in being ironic, rather than succumbing to what Nietzsche castigated as the spirit of seriousness. Of course, Peirce came to philosophy via Schiller and Rorty makes this suggestion about humans at their best in reference to Schiller (along with Oscar Wilde). Moreover, Peirce is quick to divulge: "… I seriously believe that a bit of fun helps thought and tends to keep it pragmatical" (*EP* 2, 161).[19] So, in being playful, I take myself to be Peircean no less than Rortyean

Playful Experiments: A Strong Misreading and an Ironic Portrait

There is nothing necessarily wrong with polemics or, at least, a forthright exchange of divergent ideas, including the mutual accountability resulting from claim and counterclaim, argument and counterargument, argument and refutation, alleged refutation and critical response. Forthright acknowledgment of fundamental disagreement unquestionably has its proper place in philosophical discourse. It is not too difficult, however, to imagine how a predominantly agonistic conception of philosophical exchange tends not so much to deepen our understanding as it provides an outlet for our baser impulses.[20] When this happens, such discourse is

[19] "There is," he notes elsewhere, "an attitude of spirit that is separated only by a swordblade from fun, and yet is in fully harmony with all that is spiritual and even hungers for that which is devotional" (MS 280, 23).

[20] Such a culture is one in which nonsense, errors, and fallacies are exposed for what they are. It is one in which justice tends to eclipse charity. All of this seems unqualifiedly appropriate, until we consider seriously Peirce's claim: "Suppose, for instance, that I have an idea that interests me. It is my creation. It is my creature; for … it is [in a sense] a little person. I love it; and I will sink

reduced to little (if anything) more than a *polemos*, a war in which the defense of truth warrants the destruction of one's adversary (cf. Foucault 112). This has become such a central feature of philosophical discourse that Michel Foucault (none other than Foucault!) draws a very sharp distinction between discussion and polemic. On the one hand, he is quick to note: "I like discussions, and when I am asked questions, I try to answer them." On the other, he stresses his distaste for polemics. If he opens a book and sees the author calling an adversary a name (e.g., accusing an individual of being an advocate of "infantile leftism"), "I shut it again right away" (111). That is, he emphasizes, his way of doing things: he simply does not want to belong to "the world of people who do things that way." He goes so far as to suggest, "a whole morality is at stake, the morality that concerns the search for truth and the relation to the other" (ibid.)

Discussion in the sense intended by Foucault is nothing less than "the serious play of questions and answers," the overarching objective of which is "mutual elucidation." In contrast, the polemicist "proceeds encased in privileges that he possesses in advance and will never agree to question. On principle, he possesses rights authorizing him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking." This practically means that "the person he confronts is not a partner in the search for truth but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful, and whose very existence constitutes a threat" (112). And *this* practically means that the removal of such a threat entails, justifiably, the annihilation of this adversary.

Rorty certainly does not eliminate entirely the agonistic dimension of philosophical discourse. Part of what he does however is, following suggestions made by Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence* and elsewhere, to locate this dimension in the relationship the younger generation of creative philosophers and their intellectual ancestors. "Strong philosophers" might be modeled on Bloom's image of "strong poets," an emancipatory form of philosophical discourse moreover might be modeled on what he calls "strong misreading." In any event, Rorty was an uncompromising advocate of strong misreading. This is nowhere more evident than in his suggestion that the theorist or critic

> asks neither the author nor the text about their intentions but simply beats the text into a shape which will serve his own purpose. He does this by imposing a vocabulary – a 'grid,' in Foucault's terminology – on the text which may have nothing to do with any vocabulary used in the text or by its author, and seeing what happens. The model here is not the curious collector of clever gadgets taking them apart to see what makes them work and carefully ignoring any extrinsic end they may have [or serve], but the psychoanalyst blithely interpreting a dream or a joke as a symptom of homicidal mania. (1982 [1981], 151)

Later, in "The Pragmatist's Progress," he observes: "Interpretation itself needs no defense; it is with us always …" (1992, 110).[21]

myself in perfecting it. It is not by dealing our cold justice to the circle of my ideas that I can make them grow, but by cherishing and tending to them as I would the flowers in my garden" (*CP* 6.289). Might it not also be the case that it is only by acting likewise toward the ideas presented by others that I can assist in their growth? Think here of James's stance toward Freud's approach to psychology, an approach about which James had deep suspicions and (in some respects, most of all the reductive treatment of religious experience entailed by the Freudian approach) a fundamental antipathy. "After meeting Freud at Clark University, James wrote to a friend: "I hope that Freud and his pupils will push their ideas to their utmost limit, so that we may learn what they are. They can't fail to throw light on human nature …" He expressed this hope despite in the very same sentence confessing: "he made on me personally the impression of a man obsessed with fixed ideas" (Perry, II, 122). To another friend he wrote around the same time: "I strongly suspect Freud, with his dream-theory, of being a regular *halocline*" (II, 123). Despite these severe misgivings, he hoped Freud and his followers would cultivate their ideas with the deep cherishing concern necessary to facilitate the growth of any human idea.

[21] This is part of an exchange with Umberto Eco. There is, for the purpose of understanding Rorty's relationship to Peirce, arguably no more important later text by Rorty, since Eco is in both his own mind and that of Rorty, so closely associated with Peirce's efforts to circumscribe the irrepressibly wild impulses of our hermeneutic imagination.

He would repeatedly call Davidson a pragmatist while Davidson himself would vehemently reject this characterization. Despite Davidson's protestation, Rorty took himself to be justified in applying this appellation to this thinker.[22] Moreover, despite Peirce's prominence in the history of pragmatism, Rorty virtually denied the title of pragmatist to the figure who is generally recognized as the father of this movement. In his Presidential Address to the Eastern Division of the APA, he said (as I have already noted, though not yet quoted): Peirce's "contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James" (1982, 161). Is not turnaround here fair play? In granting, however provisionally, Rorty his hermeneutic right to strip Peirce of the title of pragmatist, I accord myself the right to dub Rorty a Peircean. Despite appearances, I am not playing a game of "Anything Goes." Rather I am engaging in that of "Hermeneutic Turnabout." Rather than calling him a vulgar pragmatist (see, e.g., Haack), calling Rorty a Peircean pragmatist would have likely caused him consternation. But my motive is not to provoke the provocateur or (as it turns out, since he is no longer alive) his disciples and defenders; it is to illuminate otherwise undetected affinities between the most important figure in the inaugural phase of the pragmatic movement and the most influential one in its contemporary resurgence. This does not reduce to name calling. My aim is to help readers of Rorty see a different Peirce than the one Rorty portrayed, also devotees of Peirce to glimpse a different Rorty than they are disposed to discern. Peirce was not nearly the Kantian whom Rorty saw staring back at him from Peirce's writings, just as Rorty is not the literary charlatan or irresponsible litterateur whom all too many Peirceans apparently see staring back at them when they read his texts. As unfortunate as this term likely is, Peirce was a *historicist* no less than Dewey, perhaps even more than James. That is, he was not a formalist in the sense derided by Rorty (see Colapietro 2004). Peirce was not engaged in the task of providing human inquirers with an "ahistoric framework." He was committed rather to methodological improvisations made in the exacting context of some actual inquiry.

If Rorty was mistaken about Peirce in this regard, then Peirceans might consider the possibility of their own role in contributing to this misunderstanding – at least, their failure (if only by omission) of presenting Peirce as a historically self-conscious actor who took his task to be facilitating the *growth* (not the justification) of knowledge. No anachronism has served Peirce more poorly than reading him as a contemporary epistemologist (i.e., an analytic philosopher fixated on the skeptical problem). He was a pragmaticist methodologist, preoccupied with opening fields of inquiry, removing obstacles from the road of inquiry, and forging novel paths (crafting new methods). He was self-consciously a historical actor engaged in an unfolding drama, primarily concerned with questions of how *to go on* (cf. Wittgenstein), how to carry on the work of inquiry. This did not require securing indubitable foundations for the edifice of human knowledge. There is, of course, the text place by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss as the Preface to the *Collected Papers*: "To erect a philosophical edifice that shall outlast the vicissitudes of time, my care must be not so much to set each brick with nicest accuracy, as to lay the foundation deep and massive" (1.1). Peirce in fact wrote these words and there is no need to deny their existence. But do they convey Peirce's defining aspirations in all of their complex character? In particular is Peirce's own *anti*-foundationalism at all evident in this pronouncement of his aspiration? What happens when we juxtapose this text with ones like the following? Science

[22] In the essay on which I have been drawing, MacIntyre notes that he is indebted to Rorty for not only their conversations but also introducing him to Davidson, "both the man and the work": "But the Davidson to whom Rorty introduced me turned out to have a *Döppelganger*, that subtle and imaginative fiction, Rorty's Davidson. And Rorty's Davidson became one of major *dramatis personae* in a story that Rorty developed of how 'analytic philosophy culminates in Quine, the later Wittgenstein, Sellars, and Davidson – which is to say that it transcends and cancels itself'" 2010, 71). MacIntyre is here quoting Rorty himself (*London Review of Books*, January 20, 2005).

> … is driven in desperation to call upon its inward sympathy with nature, its instinct for aid, just as we find Galileo at the dawn of modern science making his appeal to *il lume naturale.* But in so far as it does this, the solid ground of fact fails it. It feels from that moment that its position is only provisional. It must then find confirmations or else shift its footing. Even if it does find confirmations, they are only partial. It still is not standing upon the bedrock of fact. It is walking upon a bog and can only say, this ground seems to hold for the present. Here I will stay till it begins to give way. (5.589)

Peirce no less than Thomas Kuhn or Richard Rorty was convinced that in the actual course of human inquiry the ground will eventually give way. Was Peirce's impulse to jump outside of time and history or was it rather to participate in our ongoing practices of experimental inquiry in a truly deliberate and intelligent manner? Did he strive to construct an ahistoric framework or rather to respond to historical crises in a practical fashion (contributing as a practitioner, thus a historically situated agent, to the immanent crises of various historical undertakings)? Theory is itself a form of practice and, as such, it is an affair of history.

The tendency to see Peirce as first and foremost a philosopher committed to furthering a project akin to Kant's is, in my judgment, one of the main reasons for our distorted understanding of the Peircean project in its historical uniqueness. This also results in the occlusion of Peircean pragmatism in its full force.[23] For a Kantian to abjure from the bottom of his heart his conception of things-in-themselves[24] is much like a Marxist jettisoning the conception of revolution or a Freudian abandoning the notion of the unconscious. If one begins at the very end of Kant's first *Critique* and focuses on "The Architectonic of Pure Reason" and "The History of Pure Reason," rather than being misled mostly by the trappings of Peirce's "New List of Categories" into supposing he was engaged in a transcendental deduction of his categoreal scheme (cf. Zach), then one is likely to understand Peirce's undertaking in a manner much closer to the way he understood his own project. If one then substitutes experimental reason for pure reason, one will not only have an even clearer comprehensive of Peirce's project but also a more accurate measure of the great distance between him and the philosopher by whom his youthful self was so deeply enthralled. Peirce was not Kant with a dash of Darwin and the logic of relations. He was, in his mature thought, far, far distant from Kant. The failure of Peirceans to make this clear is, in part, a reason why Rorty and others are so easily misled regarding Peirce's architectonic aspirations and (of the utmost importance) historicist commitments. The insistence on reading Peirce as a variant of Kant renders him vulnerable to the trenchant critiques of the transcendental project offered by Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and elsewhere.

Even granting this, a vast chasm exists between Peirce's efforts to transform philosophy into a science and Rorty's rejection of scientism.[25] There are differences and there are differences. Some are negligible, too slight to matter much, if at all, in many contexts. Some differences however truly make a difference – widely, deeply, and significantly make a difference. The differences between Peirce and Rorty are almost too obvious to merit much serious attention. They are fundamental, numerous, and (for me at least) mostly uninteresting. These thinkers were for the most part at cross-purposes. Philosophy conceived as an instance of

[23] Of course, Kant can be – and ought to be read – as preparing the way for Peirce. See however Mora 1955.
[24] The Kantian, Peirce suggests, "has only to abjure from the bottom of his heart the proposition that a thing-in-itself can, however indirectly, be conceived; and then correct the details of Kant's doctrine accordingly, and he will find himself to have become a Critical Commonsensist" (*CP* 5.452). Elsewhere, he insists: "we have *direct experience of things in themselves* Nothing can be more completely false than that we can experience only our own ideas. That is indeed without exaggeration the very epitome of all falsity. Our knowledge of things in themselves is entirely *relative*, it is true; but all experience and all knowledge is knowledge of that which is, independently of being represented (*CP* 6.95). Rorty no less than Peirce was committed to jettisoning the notion of the *Ding-an-sich*.
[25] As odd as it might sound, Peirce was not a champion of scientism. See, e.g., Bergman and also Short.

inquiry leaves inadequate room for it envisioned as redescription, renarration, and recontextualization. Peircean inquirers however need not take issue with the Rortyean "poets." They are animated by different purposes, engaged in largely incommensurable undertakings. Neither the one nor the other, given the depth of their historicism, has an unquestionable right to legislate exclusively the scope of what *philosophy* includes. Despite this, Peirce can be read as preparing the way for Rorty in certain fundamental respects; in addition, Rorty can be read as carrying forward some impulses clearly integral to Peirce's project.

This is not likely to make either Peirceans or Rortyeans happy. This is understandable. At first blush, the similarities between Peirce and Rorty seem, nonetheless, superficial, scant, and insignificant. Upon closer consideration, this turns out to be more or less true. Our initial impression is largely confirmed by further reflection. Even so, there are similarities and there are similarities. Not only do some differences make a difference; some similarities also do so, especially when fundamental oppositions obtrude at virtually every turn. They intimate ways of looking at familiar figures in an unfamiliar manner. But, to Freud's expression "the narcissism of small differences," we might add the resolute refusal to acknowledge even the slightest degree of kinship. This might be a species of such narcissism.

So, I persist in what can only appear to most readers as a perverse strategy. (Doth he protest too much? Are not my repeated disclaimers indications of my genuine – not merely rhetorical or heuristic – perversity? That is of course something for my readers to decide.). Despite his denunciations of Peirce, Rorty can be portrayed as a Peircean. But a stronger claim can be made here. In the first instance, he actually was something of a Peircean. This contention is not derived from a strong misreading, but discoverable from a straightforward reading (what the later Rorty would disparagingly call a *weak* misreading) of Rorty's first major publication.[26] The actual development of Rorty's philosophical career does not trace the trajectory from an analytic philosopher to a deconstructive pragmatist. Rorty was not trained primarily as an analyst. Rather he was trained for the most part by such systematic philosophers as Richard McKeown, Charles Hartshorne, and Paul Weiss, but also by John E. Smith, a (if not *the*) major interpreter of the pragmatic tradition (see Gross 2003). There is another figure (Rulon Wells) with whom Rorty as a graduate student studied closely at Yale, moreover, a thinker whose relationship to Peirce was at once informed, nuanced, and (in no small measure) ambivalent. His eventual turn toward pragmatism, so dramatically evident in his Presidential Address to the Eastern Division of the APA in 1979 was to some extent a return (see Gross 2003, 96), a return to a position he had been discussing with Richard Bernstein since their undergraduate days at the University of Chicago (Rorty 2004, 3). So, as a matter of historical record, the young Rorty (roughly the age of Peirce when he wrote the "cognition-series" for the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*) actually *was* as emphatic a champion of Peirce as of the later Wittgenstein. Any unbiased reading of "Categories, Pragmatism, and Language" (1961) incontestably reveals this. This essay appears to be an attempt to work out some of the details of the pragmatist conclusion of his doctoral dissertation: "our description of logical empiricism's difficulties … suggest that we need to strive for the sort of *rapproachment* between [*sic*.] formal logic, semiotics, and traditional epistemology which is found in the work of Peirce"(1956, 573; cf. Gross 2003, 96-97). But, very quickly he will have serious reservations about Peircean semiotics no less than traditional epistemology (apparently, reservations about Peirce's theories of signs and of categories even before any about the theory of

[26] In 1955, he published a very short piece in *The Review of Metaphysics*. Besides this and several also very short book reviews, "Categories, Pragmatism, and Language" is Rorty's first publication (unqualifiedly, it is first published article).

knowledge). Looking back more than thirty years later, hence, he will in "The Pragmatist's Progress" confess to having been a code-cracker (someone devoted to discovering the hidden structures or forms underlying not only everyday language but also even the more rigorous forms of human discourse). "This ambition," he goes on to note, "led me to waste my twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth years trying to discover the secret of Charles Sanders Peirce's esoteric doctrine of the 'reality of Thirdness' and thus of his fantastically elaborate semiotico-metaphysical 'System'" (1992, 93).

So let us now fast forward to the mature Rorty. If anything, the mature Rorty might be read as saying: Let's get on with the business of painstaking, honest inquiry and, in those disciplines where such inquiry seems mostly (if not entirely) beside the point, let's turn to the business of imaginative redescription, recon-textualization, and renarration. Let's be forthright about the purposes animating our endeavors. And let's not allow our antipathies, blindnesses, and misgivings to block the paths of those pursuing their inquiries differently than we are. In these respects, Peirce was as critical of his contemporaries as Rorty was of *his*. Spilling tons of ink on the possibility of knowledge does little or nothing to contribute to the *growth* of knowledge. Virtually everyone actually engaged in some substantive inquiry finds the often technical debates among professional philosophers on epistemological topics of no relevance to what they are doing.

Peirce almost certainly would have taken Rorty to be a litterateur into whose wretched clutches had fallen any number of critical terms (e.g., objectivity, rationality, and truth). Susan Haack and others have ably defended Peirce against the way in which these terms have been abused by this litterateur. But the voice of philosophy is not so unequivocally and incontestably that of science as Peirce and some of his defenders insist. Literary philosophy can be a healthy corrective to unbridled efforts to transform philosophical reflection into a strictly scientific enterprise. There is more than one way to address, say, the question of meaning or that or truth. The relative merits of rival approaches, including literary or rhetorical ones, need to be assessed first and foremost in light of consequences.

As I have already stressed too many times, reading Rorty as a Peircean will likely strike, both Peirceans and Rortyeans (and, no doubt, various others), as perverse. I would be less than candid if I refused to acknowledge this facet of my portrayal. But I insist: it is not simply perverse. Indeed, I am disposed to believe it is both Peircean and Rortyean. A Wittgensteinian (or therapeutic) pragmatist who never tires of warning us against the distortions resulting from our craving for generality is one who might be warmly welcomed by a Peircean pragmatist.[27] In his "Minute Logic" (1902), Peirce after all insisted: "Broad generalization is glorious when it is the inevitable outpressed juice of painfully matured little details of knowledge; but when it is not that, it a crude spirit inciting only broils between [or among] a hundred little dogmas, each most justly condemning all the others" (CP 2,14). He pointedly adds: "It is the usual fruit of sloth." So, too, a Peircean pragmatist who takes texts no less than lumps to be objects of interpretation.

Everything is, as Peirce suggests, similar to everything else in some respect(s). So I have done very little, if anything at all, in insisting upon resemblances between Peirce and Rorty. "After all, any analogy, however fanciful, which serves to focus attention upon matters which might otherwise escape observation is valuable" (*CP* 3, 470). Is my analogy fanciful? Without question. Is it nonetheless illuminating? This is, at least, an open question – a question opened by my strong misreading of a multifaceted philosopher. If I have picked Rorty up more gently than has been the wont of most Peirceans,

[27] Here I am indebted to Jeffrey Stout who distinguishes between the *prophetic* and the *therapeutic* Rorty (see 2007, 10ff). Although I am somewhat more sympathetic to the prophetic side of Rorty's philosophic persona than is Stout, I agree with him that the therapeutic Rorty makes the most unproblematic contribution to contemporary thought.

and if I have turned him around in my hand so a facet rarely seen catches an unaccustomed ray of light, then the polemical spirit might give way to humane interpretation.

Richard Rorty spoke more persuasively to a contemporary audience than any other pragmatist of his generation. Confronted with this fact, the impulse of many Peirceans is to descry the state of philosophy and indeed culture: Rorty's stature is, from their perspective, a function of our culture's decadence and our discipline's backwardness. Another response however might be to try to understand why his texts resonate with intelligent, imaginative, and passionate readers, especially youthful ones. That is, it might be to begin with a question – to begin truly with a question, not the facile pretense of a question and the secure presumption of an answer. Even those who were close to Rorty, in some cases very close (e.g., Richard Bernstein, Robert Brandom, Jeffrey Stout, and Cornel West) found him exasperating as well as exhilarating, frustrating in his insouciant dismissals as well as stunning in his dialectical finesse. But they found him exhilarating, talented, sincere, and insightful. Are we to say to those who knew him far better than most of us, "You are too indulgent and uncritical, allowing your personal affection to color your philosophical judgment, even to blind you from your intellectual responsibility"? This seems all too slighting of them as well as Rorty.

So we might turn (or perhaps return) to the question, What *use* may I (and I precisely s a Peircean) make of Rorty? Was Rorty rejecting the possibility of painstaking, honest inquiry of the kind championed by Peirce or rather was he (precisely in his role as ironist) questioning the actuality of philosophy being an instance of such inquiry? (Was Peirce any more charitable in his judgment of his contemporaries than Rorty was of *his* – in particular, was he more charitable in judging the philosophers of his day to be genuine inquirers than Rorty?). I have no question that Rorty knew that it was, in countless contexts (e.g., the number of civilians killed as "collateral damage" or the percentage of the population who have ceased even looking for work), important to get things right but he was deeply skeptical of philosophical defenses of objective truth. What are we to *make* of this? In large part, the threat of skepticism both is and is not important. It is important insofar as so many contemporary philosophers devote themselves to traditional epistemology and, hence, divert, philosophical attention away from more interesting questions, more genuine concerns. But this obsession should be treated therapeutically, not addressed directly. A metaphilosophical move,[28] rather direct engagement in this particular game, should be encouraged. As the example of Peirce himself shows, however, this threat is not serious, at least to those who are engaged in the business of inquiry. For some purposes, in some settings, the Rortyean manner of deconstructing the dualisms between thought and thing, language and reality, fact and value, might prove as effective (or even more effective) than other strategies. The point is (Is it not?) to turn philosophical attention away from the sterile questions of traditional debates, helping to direct such attention to more fruitful ways of framing philosophical questions. Indeed, the very point of pragmatism is to expose endless verbal wrangling for what it is. The task of breaking the stranglehold of verbalism – the compulsive tendency to become completely absorbed in ferocious debates regarding little more than abstract definitions – is not only salutary but also truly pragmatic. Moreover, I take Rorty to have licensed me and others to turn aside in good conscience from certain technical debates in professional philosophy and to do so for the purpose of indulging

[28] From the beginning of his career, Rorty was more or less preoccupied with metaphilosophy. See, e.g., "The Limits of Reductionism," "Recent Metaphilosophy," and even his comparison of Peirce and the later Wittgenstein ("Pragmatism, Categories, and Language,"). All three articles published in 1961 (i.e., at the outset of his career). One might even say that before he commenced his graduate studies at Yale University, while still a student of Richard McKeown, he was preoccupied with this topic. The extent to which Rorty is carrying on the project of McKeown is still an unasked, but (in my judgment) salient question. McKeon's pluralism might have secured an afterlife in his most famous student's work.

more humanly worthwhile impulses and interests, aims and obsessions.

Of course, the efficacy of any therapy is dependent on a host of factors. What proves effective for this person might actually be harmful for some other person. The difficulties are compounded when the philosophical therapy question is almost always group therapy. Different reactions are inevitable, variable outcomes predictable. For some of us there is often something too dispirited and despairing in Rorty's denunciations and dismissals. For others of us, however, there is something exhilarating and liberating. I tend to be among the former. There are, however, various occasions when I have experienced, if somewhat fleetingly, what other readers have experienced far more often – the power of Rorty's redescriptions to transfigure the field of possibilities. My exasperation with him tends to eclipse my exhilaration. But, more than a decade ago, I made a deliberate decision not to write about Rorty in a dismissive or denunciatory manner, if only because these tendencies were what I liked least about him. I resolutely refused then – and in this essay I renew that resolution – to respond directly to his provocations. My hope is (among other tasks) to have engaged in a more or less random series of therapeutic interventions, ones wherein the link between rationality and persuasion is strengthened, also the tie between the irrepressible impulses of the imagination and the typically exacting demands of intelligence are made into a working harmony, an effective union.

For many, then, Rorty is the social philosopher who makes the distinction between the public and private spheres of our lives into a regrettable and even dangerous dualism. For many, he is the analytic philosopher who used his unrivalled rhetorical skills to build a Trojan horse to gain access into the walled city of professional philosophy, only to have a horde of pluralists stream from his construction. The result was, from the perspective of those enamored of the safety and sanctity of life before these pluralists came to force themselves on the rightful inhabitants of that walled city, destructive, real if only partial of the city itself. For many who identify as pragmatists or simply students of pragmatism, Rorty is the "pragmatist" who has distorted this position beyond anything James and Dewey (let alone Peirce) would recognize. For me, however, Rorty will be, as much as anything else, the author of "Pragmatism, Categories, and Language."[29] He accordingly will be the one who led me from Wittgenstein *to* Peirce (or, more accurately, from my youthful captivation with the later Wittgenstein to a deeper understanding of one of the most elusive figures in Western philosopher). In my own philosophical meandering, this essay invited me to abandon reservations and to explore more boldly possibilities of forging a disciplinary identity rooted in American pragmatism, indeed, in Peirce's distinctive articulation of that philosophical framework. Though it was published fifty years ago, I discovered it over a decade later while just beginning my graduate studies. It is an essay I always assign when I teach Peirce, sometimes when I teach Wittgenstein. In the concluding paragraph Rorty readily acknowledged: "… I have been emphasizing similarities between Peirce and Wittgenstein, and I have played down the differences between them. These differences are real and important" (1961, 223). If anything, the differences between Peirce and Rorty are, at least, equally real and important. But they are very hard to miss. In contrast, similarities or affinities have proven almost impossible to detect. This has seemed to be more a matter of impassioned refusal, than one of intellectual discernment (i.e., more a matter of will than intelligence).

As Whitehead (the teacher of several of Rorty's own teachers, also the subject of his MA thesis) insisted,

[29] Just as Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* helped me to appreciate the force of Peirce's critique of foundationalism, Rorty assisted me in discerning possible links between the later Wittgenstein and the American pragmatist whose thought (to my own amazement) began to draw me as a graduate student more strongly to it than did the thought of James or even Dewey.

philosophy "is not – or at least, should not be – a ferocious debate between [or among] irritable professors" (1937, 125).[30] Truth is not a club with which to beat our opponents. It is rather a largely elusive ideal. The inhumanity of all too many human inquirers toward those with whom they disagree is all too prominent feature of our intellectual history. The truth about truth is one thing, that about our advocacy of truth quite another. However ennobling is the ideal in the abstract, the history of the crimes committed in the name of this ideal is sobering, indeed chastening. Of course, one right readily object that Rorty rejects the very notion of truth, so such an appeal is out of place in reference to him. But am I not entitled to redescribe the Rortyean notion of coping in such a way that, in certain contexts, getting it right is crucial for whatever we might mean by effective coping (cf. Stout 2007)? I do not think that the notion of truth in its modest, experimental sense carries in its wake all or even most of the bad things which Rorty supposed would inevitably trail it, if once allowed into our discourse. If I am wrong and it does threaten to embroil me in the endless verbal wrangling of a purely professional game, I will simply demure – and turn my attention elsewhere. I have seen how effective such a move can be.

Is raising the question of truth inevitably that of raising the question of Truth and, in turn, is that move inescapably a case of reintroducing a surrogate for God? Perhaps. The question to which we are ultimately driven by Rorty's project might just be one pertaining to religion (cf. Stout). Is Truth in the sense advocated by Peirce and others from (at least) his generation accurately interpreted as the surrogate of God?[31] Can we submit to any authority other than that of our own devising and refashioning without effacing ourselves, without abandoning our freedom and betraying our humanity? Is this most anti-Cartesian of philosophers unwittingly committed to a central tenet of the Cartesian framework, for does he not apparently espouse a self whose locus in nature is fundamentally antagonistic and ruptured? What if the critique of Cartesianism requires a fuller recovery of human agency, in particular, a recovery in which authority, authorship, and agency itself demand the prefix *co*-?[32] And what if nature herself is in some manner and measure one of the voices to whom humans ought to accord a hearing? On Rorty's account, an extra-human authority is by definition self-annihilating (*humanly* self-annihilating). To speak of nature speaking is, from his perspective, to deceive ourselves about our own acts of ventriloquism.[33]

In light of what we know, also what we desire, a fuller recovery of nature, experience and indeed language, also practice, inquiry, and science, is needed. Reading Wordsworth and Emerson, Goethe and Schiller might aid us in this task as much as reading Descartes and Locke, Leibniz and Hume, Kant and Hegel. *If* a choice must be made between rigor and range – the rigor of

[30] Smith quotes this at the outset of his Presidential Address to the Eastern Division of the APA "The New Need for the Recovery of Philosophy"), a position made possible by Rorty's parliamentary decision as President of that association (see Gross 2008, 220-22).

[31] "Through the nineteenth century, men like Huxley and Clifford and Peirce still saw," Rorty argues, "respect for scientific truth as the highest human virtue, the moral equivalent of the Christian's love and fear of God. These nineteenth century figures were [Hans] Reichenbach's heroes. But the nineteenth century also say the rise of a *new* sort of secular intellectual, one who had lost faith in science with the same thoroughness as the Enlightenment had lost faith in God, [Thomas] Carlyle and Henry Adams are examples of this new kind of intellectual, the kind whose consciousness is dominated by a sense of the contingency of history, the contingency of the vocabulary which he himself is using, the sense that nature and scientific truth are largely beside the point and that history is up for grabs. This sort of intellectual is secular with a vengeance, for he sees the religion of 'science' or 'of humanity' as just as self-deceptive as the old-time religion" (1982, 228-29).

[32] In "The Essence of Humanism," James argues humanism is "a religion susceptible of reasoned defense." It is, so read, "essentially a *social* philosophy, a philosophy of '*co*,' in which conjunctions do the work" (238). To conjoin humanity and nature, humans and other animals, mortal animals with their irrepressible longings and a sense of the sacred, is central to humanism so understood.

[33] Rorty's love of wild orchids might be taken as a sign of a more inclusive love of the natural world. His father's poetry, some of the best of which involves a celebration of nature, is pertinent here.

philosophical discourse and the range of its legitimate topics – I would choose range. But no such choice is necessary. What rigor, clarity, and responsibility *practically mean* in diverse contexts is, however, a matter to be worked out by the social actors trying to cope with the complex demands defining these variable contexts. That is, they must be worked out on the ground (the ground of our practices themselves), not on high. Indeed, for this task "poets" no less than scientists,[34] the mystically inclined no less than the politically committed are themselves needed. In executing this task, Rorty will be both an ally and an impediment. His therapeutic and pluralist proclivities will assist and (at the same time) thwart our efforts. Yet, in turning once again to his writings, I on this occasion feel neither unqualified antipathy nor unalloyed admiration. More than an exercise in perversity, this undertaking has been for me an attempt, yet again, to achieve something approximate to ambivalence (Segal; cf. Rorty). In response to such a strong "poet," also such a strong misreading of a philosophical author to whom I have devoted my philosophical life, the achievement of ambivalence should not be counted as a mean or insignificant accomplishment. Rather than bemused condescension[35] I feel the need to work toward a finely nuanced ambivalence toward my philosophical ancestors, proximate as well as remote.

Accordingly, Rorty himself is for me not an object of condescension, let alone one of scorn. Like those much closer to him, I find him exasperating and admirable, frustratingly insouciant and delightfully sane about the problems of men and women in our time and place. Quite apart from the most prominent features of my personal attitude toward this philosophical elder, I am appreciate that Rorty so greatly contributed to not only the resurgence of pragmatism but also the recovery of history (not least of all the history of his own discipline as relevant to the *doing* of philosophy).[36] Whatever else our histories are, they are inclusive of countless ironies. Ruptures are hardly as ever as dramatic and deep as their advocates contend, critiques very rarely as thoroughgoing and conclusive as their fashioners suppose. Aristotle was almost certainly far more of a Platonist than he realized, Descartes far more of a scholastic than he appreciated (see, e.g., Etienne Gilson on this score), and Peirce himself arguably more of a Cartesian than this critique of Cartesianism was inclined to suspect. Might not Richard Rory, late as well as early,

[34] A. N. Whitehead, the philosopher on whom Rorty wrote his MA thesis ("Whitehead's Use of the Concept of Potentiality" [1952]), underscores the relevance of the voice of poetry to our appreciation of nature (see, e.g., 1967, 15, also 77). He wrote this thesis under the supervision of Charles Hartshorne, one of the editors of the first six volumes of *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce.* He wrote his PhD dissertation also on potentiality, under the supervision of Paul Weiss, the other editor of these volumes. Of relevance here, is Weiss's "The Essence of Peirce's System" (1940). Hartshorne, Weiss, and Richard McKeown were strenuous champions of systematic philosophy. See Justus Buchler's "The Accidents of Peirce's System" (1940).

[35] The pragmatist … thinks," Rorty contends, "that the quest for a universal human community will be self-defeating if it tries to preserve the elements of every intellectual tradition, all the 'deep' intuitions everybody has ever had. It is not to be achieved by an attempt at commensuration, at a common vocabulary which isolates the common essence of Achilles and the Buddha, Lavoisier and Derrida. Rather, it is to be reached, if at all, by acts of making rather than of finding – by poetic rather than Philosophical achievement. The culture which will transcend, and thus unite, East and West … is not likely to be one which does equal justice to each, but one which looks back with the *amused condescension* typical of later generations looking back at their ancestors" (1982, xxx; emphasis added).

[36] "Pragmatism is," Rorty announced in 1961 in "Pragmatism, Categories, and Language," "becoming respectable again. Some philosophers are still content to think of it as a sort of muddle-head first approximation to logical positivism. … But those who have taken a closer look have realized that the movement of thought here is more link a pendulum than like an arrow" (197). So the young Rorty set out to show "how Peirce was in advance of the positivism of his day and how close his views are to the present trends in philosophy which have arisen in reaction to the more sophisticated positivism of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and of the Vienna Circle." Rorty in this essay goes so far as to claim, "Peirce's thought envisaged, and repudiated in advance, the stages in the development of empiricism which logical empiricism represented" (197-98). To say in 1961 that pragmatism was becoming respectable again seems less an established fact that a Jamesian bid, an instance of courage and hope wherein faith in the fact may help to create the fact!

be more of a Peircean pragmatist than *he* would be disposed to admit? But what's the use of calling Rorty a Peircean? *Of course*, there is something misleading about this characterization. There is, as I have already acknowledged, also something perverse about portraying Rorty as a Peircean. So, *then*, what is the use of calling him a Peircean? We are thereby thrust into a position to hear a strand in his voice otherwise inaudible to his contemporary admirers and Peircean critics. But do we not run the risk of losing either Peirce's voice or Rorty's – or indeed both in their singularity? Hardly. The differences are too numerous, important, and crucial for anyone to miss – so numerous, significant, and fundamental that they almost render completely implausible any suggestion of kinship. But irony might serve to facilitate solidarity, suggesting moreover a dash of contingency: Peirce is not necessarily opposed to Rorty in all fundamental respects. Animated by the spirit of playfulness, we might yet be able to see the relationship between Peirce and Rorty as being otherwise than one of invincible opposition or absolute divergence. The fruits of doing so might be far from plentiful and hence far from sufficient to nourish us for any length of time. They may however be as sweet as they are scarce, as subtly delicious as they are widely overlooked.

It is often missed that Peirce was no less than Dewey repulsed by epistemology (including the word itself). He tended to identify his project (or, at least, the heart of his project) as logic and, in turn, logic as a theory of inquiry (not an account of knowledge allegedly already in our possession or possibly never anything we could possibly attain). Willy-nilly we are thrust into processes of inquiry. In its most rudimentary and pervasive forms, this has nothing or little to do with our love of truth or of anything else; it has everything to do with impasses of our agency. The point of logic, as conceived by Peirce, was not to answer the skeptic, but to advance inquiry.

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty writes: "we should not try to have a successor subject to epistemology, but rather try to free ourselves from the notion that philosophy must center around the discovery of a permanent framework of inquiry" (1979, 380).[37] It decidedly makes a difference whether we take hermeneutics or methodology to be the successor to epistemology (Rorty 1979, 380). This however might deflect attention from a point of agreement. Rather than attempt to offer from on high a method or strategies of inquiry, it would be better (for those of us who have the training, temperament, and inclination) to engage, on the ground, in substantive inquiries unfolding in some more or less recognizable philosophical tradition (cf. MacIntyre 2010). This is, for the most part, precisely what Peirce did. It would at the same time be instructive for those of a different intellectual temperament to reflect upon our practices of inquiry vis-à-vis other undertakings (including imaginative literature and religious rituals) (see, however, Haack). This is for the most part what Rorty did. To open the space for a wide-ranging and deep-cutting inquiry into not only inquiry but also the full spectrum of human discourses seems to be either recognizably philosophy or (at the very least, to recall the words of Wittgenstein in *The Blue Book*) "one of the heirs to the subject which used to be called 'philosophy" (28). There is no compelling reason to deny the right of those engaged in this undertaking to call themselves philosophers (cf. Smith 1983, 242; quoted above).

[37] This is arguably the main reason for what he takes to be Peirce's philosophical project: "Peirce himself remained the most Kantian of thinkers – the most convinced that philosophy gave us an all-embracing ahistoric context in which every other species of discourse could be assigned its proper place and rank. It was just this Kantian assumption that there was such a context, and that epistemology or semantics could discover it, against which James and Dewey reacted. We need to focus on this reaction if we are to recapture a proper sense of their importance" (1982, 161). Thus, James and Dewey emerge as the heroes of Rorty's renarration of the history of pragmatism, while Peirce is cast as the villain (cf. Bernstein in Saatkamp [ed.]).

Conclusion

Peirce's theory of signs was designed not simply to offer a normative account of objective inquiry (though it was fashioned primarily to provide just such an account). In crafting his semeiotic, he was animated by the hope of offering resources for nothing less than the full range of human articulation, discursive and otherwise. The field of philosophy might be even more encompassing than the one envisioned by Peirce, whereas the capacity of this discipline to transform itself into a humanly useful discourse about the full spectrum of human articulation might be far greater than Rorty was disposed to acknowledge. Peirce's theory of signs invites explorations of fields quite removed from the main focus of his philosophical project (objective inquiry as paradigmatically illustrated in such experimental sciences as physics, chemistry, geology, and to some extent biology), while Rorty's manner of *doing* philosophy suggests a relevance and power beyond what he was disposed to grant at the meta-level (i.e., grant when he was philosophizing about philosophy itself). Philosophers should be inquirers who have devoted themselves to some undertaking other than philosophy and, as maturity, experience, and possibly even wisdom are acquired in the course of having done so, should only then feel entitled to join Aristotle or Kant, Scotus[38] or Hegel, Leibniz or Schröder, as a historically self-conscious participant in an intergenerational community of resolutely experimental inquirers. Discoursing about the practices of inquiry apart from extended participation in some historically evolved and evolved practice (or, even better, set of such practices) is a suspect undertaking. Peircean inquirers are not – or should not be – preoccupied with offering a justification of knowledge in the abstract (i.e., in abstraction from the history of our practices); rather they are – or should be – concerned with facilitating the *growth* of knowledge. In order to conduct any inquiry, we assume that we know countless things. We cannot take the first step without doing so. Some of the things we assume we know turn out in the course of inquiry to be not instances of knowledge at all. The actual course of this or that passionate pursuit tends to expose some of them, often quite pivotal ones, as erroneous assumptions, unreliable beliefs. To attempt to go on those beliefs is to condemn ourselves to frustration (the failure to attain our purposes, to achieve or even simply approximate our aims). The point is not to provide an abstract, formal definition of knowledge, but a pragmatic, hence contextual clarification. This would be a pragmatic clarification of (above all else) the dispositional properties of epistemic agents no less than investigated objects. It should always be a clarification directly relevant to the task at hand. Hermeneutics is a site wherein questions of method and virtue might be posed by practitioners for the sake of the growth of their practices.

Philosophers pontificating from on high about the meaning of truth and meaning in, say, religious, scientific, or literary discourse tend to be as convincing as celibate pontiffs speaking *ex cathedra* about sexual morality. Cannot Rorty's therapeutic interventions in contemporary philosophy be read as more or less effective efforts to drive home this basically Peircean point? (One cannot determine their efficacy *überhaupt*.) Regarding established fields of experimental inquiry, the lot of practitioners on the inevitably shifting ground of their own practices reflecting upon how *to go on*, especially in the face of disciplinary crises, (the lot of practitioners in this regard) is one thing.[39] The position of deracinated intellectuals presuming the unquestionable right to legislate the terms of responsible debate is, however, quite another.

[38] In his response to Susan Haack, Rorty makes a very important point, moreover a distinctively Peircean one: "it is hard to see Duns Scotus as more or less open to questions of justification than Darwin, even though his views about what beliefs were relevant to what other beliefs were quite different" (152-53).

[39] See MacIntyre's "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narratives, and the Philosophy of Science." This piece originally appear in The *Monist*,60 (1977), 453-71, was thereafter reprinted in Paradigms and Revolutions (1980), a volume edited by Gary Gutting, and more recently has been included in *The Tasks of Philosophy* (MacIntyre 2006).

If I have disregarded at least half of Rorty in sketching this ironic portrait, he has provided me with the example and, thereby, the license to do just this.[40] If I in what can only strike some as an excessively conciliatory spirit have betrayed Peirce's more pugnacious tendencies, I can invoke his own words as central to my inspiration. Did not the youthful Peirce himself castigate "the inhumanity of the polemic spirit" (*W* 1, 5)?[41] In any event, the love of truth demands us to be more truthful about how mixed, often how violent, is our love of truth or anything else. Here as elsewhere we are likely to be "blind to our own blindness" (*CP* 6.560). We might profit from refusing to treat each other as knaves, or fools, or dupes, or charlatans, or sophists.[42] The treatment which a shy, brilliant, stubborn, witty, and imaginative thinker received at the hands of other philosophers seems to me too often to have been a disgrace to our discipline.[43]

Our often warranted exasperation might have taken various forms, not simply shrill ridicule or especially caustic ripostes. It might have taken the form of playful irony, specifically in offering an ironic portrait of this somewhat Protean figure, but a portrait offered as a sincere expression of philosophical friendship.[44]

Is the fun to be had in refuting Richard Rorty truly greater than that of redescribing him as a Peircean? Is it greater in narrating a straightforward, serious – all too serious – account of pragmatism than in renarrating the complex history of Rorty's therapeutic interventions in this evolving tradition? These therapeutic interventions are, after all, more often than not helpful reminders[45] of what might without too much distortion be read as Peircean points or warnings. In general, a bit of fun does indeed help thought and also tends to keep it pragmatic (*CP* 5.71).[46] Might not Peircean playfulness encompass a

[40] Again, I encourage readers to consult John E. Smith's playful distinction between *rorty* and *Rorty* cleverly modeled on Rorty's own distinction between *philosophy* and *Philosophy*. The ability to have deep misgivings about *Rorty* while having pragmatic sympathy with *rorty* seems clearly to signal (to use once again Segal's expression) the achievement of ambivalence.

[41] "These reflections [on *Errare est hominis*]," writes Peirce when he was not yet twenty-one, "should teach us the inhumanity of the polemical spirit and should teach us still to revere a great man notwithstanding his mistakes." But they also argue for the identification of intellectual error with moral perversion: "The fact is, essential error can only arise from perversion, from wickedness, or from passion. Sincere and philosophic production have no other falsity than that which is inseparable from every human proposition" (*W* 1, 5). The conviction that this is so prompts us to question the motives of those whom we regard as essentially wrong, not just challenge the strength of their arguments or the reasonableness of their positions. Aye, here's the rub.

[42] Here, once again, it is instructive to recall Kuhn's remark to his friend and colleague regarding the conduct of philosophers:

[43] Rorty hated bullies. (This of course does not preclude the possibility of this individual playing, in some respects and situations, precisely this role. My own take, however, is that he mostly avoids unwittingly replicating the role he most despised.) He appears to have been at a young age the target of their malevolence, a situation made especially complex for a boy who has not small for his age. He was also a child who loved to explore nature on his own. One of his professors at Yale worried that the bashful graduate student might actually bolt from the room when first assigned the task of teaching. Rorty's father rather cruelly told his son, as a late adolescent, that he had no talent for literary fiction. Nothing reductive is intended by assembling these biographical fragments. But, in some small measure, they might illuminate certain marked tendencies in Rorty's philosophical persona.

[44] Though I did not know Rorty well, I did know him. Moreover, I liked him a great deal. A colleague and I had lunch with him the last time he visited my university, not long before he died. On this occasion, I was reminded, once again, why I found him so likable and exasperating.

[45] "The work of the philosopher consists," Wittgenstein remarks in the *Investigation*, "in assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (I, #127). The extent to which philosophers, including most self-avowed pragmatists, need to be reminded of their implicit satisfaction with abstract, formal definitions – hence, their failure to feel the need for pragmatic, contextual clarifications (framed explicitly in terms of dispositional properties of objects and deliberately cultivated dispositions of agents) – is a measure of the extent to which the spirit (indeed, simply the letter) of Peirce has not been internalized by them.

[46] In "Thinking Cheerfully," James Ryerson observed: Rorty's gambit "placed him under pressure to project a certain attitude: unfazed, affable, confident." Perhaps the deepest spilt in Rorty's intellectual persona is evident right here. "With his heartfelt expressions of and his gift of blithely shrugging off criticism, on the printed page Rorty could be quite convincing at this. So it was striking to discover that he did not convey this lightness of tone in person. Few persons who heard him speak failed to remark on the contrast between the buoyancy of his written persona and his slightly depressive and weary mien. His friend and fellow philosopher Daniel Dennett once told me that Rorty reminded him of Eeyore, the gloom stuffed donkey from

measure of Rortyean irony, might not also the ironic portraitist be himself a subject for ironic portrayal, the uncompromising champion of strong misreading an occasion for a strong misreading? In turn, might not Peirce's periodic failures to move beyond abstract definitions and advance toward truly pragmatic clarifications be candidly acknowledged, might also not the endless wrangling at the level of formal definition fostered by avowed Peirceans be seen for what it is – a betrayal of Peirce's pragmaticism, not an appropriate defense of a pragmatic orientation too often honored in word and disregarded in practice?

So let us translate our all too verbal quarrels into practical terms having directly to do with what at this historical juncture the defining exigencies of our evolving practices. In so doing, we would be following the sage advice of a Peircean pragmatist who ironically failed to see himself as such.

'Winnie-the-Pooh.'" Ryerson seems to me insightful when he concludes by suggesting, Rorty "carried some unspoken burden or sorrow, as if, however liberating it might be to live without the idea of The Way Things Are, it could be hard to let it go." Whether or not this was truly the source of Rorty's burden or sorrow, it was difficult in his presence not to sense at least something akin to sorrow.

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PUTTING PRAGMATISM INTO BETTER SHAPE:

RORTY AND JAMES

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> *I think Dewey and James are the best guides to understanding the modern world that we've got, and that it's a question of putting pragmatism into better shape after thirty years of super-professionalism*.
>
> Richard Rorty[1]

One of the most important and surprising developments in recent philosophy has been the great revival of interest in pragmatism.[2] And, no one has done more to generate that revival than Richard Rorty. The historical story that embeds Rorty's role is a complex one, and it is still unfolding. Nevertheless, it is worth risking oversimplification to highlight three themes that any worthwhile account needs to acknowledge:

1. The notoriety of the philosophical context within which Rorty has invoked the ideas and thinkers of pragmatism has itself helped draw more attention to those ideas and thinkers. Some claim this can only be a good thing. Others believe it is highly regrettable.

2. Rorty's interpretations of the work of pragmatism's founders have encouraged fresh interest in them and yet also provoked vigorous defences of what are contended to be more accurate and philosophically serviceable interpretations.

3. Rorty's own version of pragmatism has attracted some enthusiastic supporters. But it has, at the same time, both alienated those who favour other versions and reinforced some of the basic concerns of many who are suspicious of pragmatism *per se*.

Clearly, there is good deal of common ground between these themes. They all indicate that Rorty's relationship to pragmatism is a controversial one – celebrated by some, contested by others. They also suggest that much of the controversy surrounding Rorty is caused by overlapping tensions between (a) his construal of classic pragmatist thinking and more orthodox conceptions, (b) his version of pragmatism and other versions, and (c) pragmatism, however defined, and other forms of philosophy. To sort out these intertwined tensions in detail and then distinguish between the negative and positive consequences is far too big a task for a single, brief article. But, an instructive start can be made by exploring how the above themes play out in the case of Rorty's handling of one of the classic pragmatists he deeply respected; namely, William James.[3]

At first blush, Rorty's notoriety factor is less significant in his dealings with James than it is in his approach to the other founding figures Peirce and Dewey. In the case of Peirce, Rorty's flippant denial of his importance[4] and a

[1] 'From Philosophy to Post-Philosophy: An Interview with Richard Rorty'; reprinted in *The Rorty Reader*, Christopher J.Voparil and Richard Bernstein (eds), Wiley-Blackwell:New York, 2010, p.294.

[2] I say "surprising" because although Carnap, Quine, and others ensured that the flame of pragmatism would keep gently burning despite the attempts of early critics to snuff it out, it was difficult to predict that that flame would suddenly start burning so brightly and generate so much heat.

[3] I choose James because so much has already been written about Rorty's appropriation of Dewey and Peirce is a special case for which I do not have sufficient expertise to adequately comment on.

[4] See Rorty's famously provocative comment in 'Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism': "[Peirce's] contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James;" reprinted in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Richard Rorty, Harvester: Sussex, 1982, p.162. The story behind Rorty's turn against Peirce, on whom he had once expended a good deal of time and energy, has yet to be told. My hunch is that Rorty simply couldn't find anything useful to do with Peirce. At any rate, those critics who constantly try to catch Rorty out on textual grounds alone should, for reasons explained in the body of the main article here, make more effort to engage him on pragmatic terms (i.e.

tendency to set him firmly aside when discussing pragmatism seem to have galvanised a counter-movement. Stung by what they regard as Rorty's neglectful and uncomprehending attitude, members of this back-to-Peirce movement have been busy elevating his status as a pragmatist. And in doing so, they have often argued that the best, if not the only viable, form of pragmatism has to follow the path originally carved out by Peirce. This path by-passes Rorty's contribution to pragmatist studies, considering it to be no more than an aberrant interlude. No doubt there are, as well, a few haters who have turned to Peirce simply on the principle that he must have something interesting to say if Rorty wants us to avoid him.

With Dewey, things are somewhat different. Though there are also key similarities. He is the dominant figure in Rorty's thinking about pragmatism. Hence, there are no grounds for any straightforward charge of neglect. Furthermore, by making Dewey one of the three heroes of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,[5] Rorty has undoubtedly stirred up greater interest in someone who, despite his historical stature, seemed to have fallen off the philosophical horizon.[6] But, there is also a parallel with Peirce in the sense that Rorty's approach to Dewey, although it is not dismissive, provokes hostile reactions. Many commentators take issue with Rorty's interpretation of Dewey because it severely downplays his attachments to experience, metaphysics and scientific method. The upshot has additional affinities with Rorty's treatment of Peirce: some have been persuaded to take Dewey more seriously or at least give his work a fair hearing when it would otherwise have been ignored and others have been persuaded that if Dewey *is* to be taken seriously, then the aspects of his work that Rorty abandons must be reincorporated and further developed. Again, Rorty's notoriety is causally instrumental.

With regard to James, Rorty neither gives him the philosophical cold shoulder, as he does with Peirce, nor affords his work the fairly systematic refashioning he conjoured up for Dewey.[7] His approach is engaged, but at the same time piecemeal. And as such, it exemplifies a general feature of his overall connection to classic pragmatism that is frequently overlooked, and one that is, as a result, the cause of much misguided criticism. Rorty greatly admires James, but views him as source of "suggestive ideas"[8] rather than a purveyor of doctrine and method. This means that he turns to Jame's writings for inspiration rather than detailed philosophical guidance, for colourful sketches of future possibilities rather than accurate maps of existing terrain.. And for that reason, we have to be careful in assessing Rorty's use of those writings. To accuse him of textual infidelity when we have not understood the grounds on which Rorty appeals to James can be a big mistake.

Those who are annoyed by what they see as Rorty's irresponsible reading of pragmatist texts will undoubtedly baulk at the very idea that he should be let off the hook because he is acting under the constraints of inspiration alone. And, they will be right if they do so. For such constraints amount to no constraints at all. By itself, the notion of inspiration is entirely permissive. But, there is more to it than that. Rorty's relationship to James, our case in point, is contrained by three interdependent factors: inspiration, practical utility and the task of "putting pragmatism into better shape". When viewed against that more complex background, rather than reprehensible, Rorty's attempts to bend James' words out of their original shape can seem perfectly acceptable, or even laudable,.

show, in concrete detail, just why a Peirce-based pragmatism is more useful than the version Rorty offers).

[5] Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Richard Rorty, Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1979.

[6] The same could be said for other figures. Rorty certainly stirred up interest in Hegel and Heidegger amongst analytic philosophers at least.

[7] The key, but still very controversial, text remains 'Dewey's Metaphysics'; reprinted in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, *op.cit.* pp.72-79.

[8] The phrase is Thayer's; see *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism,* 2nd edition, Hackett: Indianapolis, 1981, p.xviii).

Were Rorty to put forward some dubious claim simply on the grounds that James inspired him to make it, then if the dubious element was clearly absent in the relevant texts, he would not have a leg to stand on when critics voiced the objection that he was being grossly unfair to James. However, Rorty does not work like that. Inspiration is important and its role should not be underestimated. Rorty is, after all, someone who argues that the imagination rather than rational argument is, and *should be*, the primary vehicle of significant cultural change. For such change requires new ways of thinking and speaking, and generally these cannot normally be acquired simply by pushing further along the tracks already constructed by reason.[9] However, pure inspiration can only lead to chaos or a cultural void. And, this is where Rorty's interwoven constraints come into play. Insipiration does not provide a blank pragmatic check. It has to produce cultural artifacts about which a narrative can be told that rationalises their relationship to the original source in terms of practical utility. So, for example, if Rorty claims that James has inspired him to quit trying to produce a general account of truth then to square this with James's own talk of a 'theory of truth', he needs to tell a story that shows why it makes useful sense to take this stance on the basis of reading James. Much of Rorty's discussion of truth involves constructing just such a story, one that frequently touches base with James in order to acknowledge a source of inspiration. As it stands, this is a mundane example, but one worth kicking off with because controversy is unlikely to muddy the main point of it (I am assuming that even though he used the term, James was not really all that interested in building or expounding a full-blooded *theory* of truth[10]).

More contentious is Rorty's attempt to make James the inspiration for ditching empiricism in total. Critics find this distasteful because it tries to turn James into a modern-day anti-epistemologist when they believe he clearly saw himself as working within the empiricist tradition, though pushing it to its utmost limits. This James fits snugly into the Locke, Berkeley, Hume tradition and is therefore grudgingly admired by Russell even as he denigrates James's own pragmatism. Rorty takes James at his word about wanting to expand the empiricist tradition, but claims he did not push far enough: taken to its limit, empiricism eliminates itself. And here, the other constraints are important. For the story that Rorty needs to tell about this cannot be just any old story. It has to be useful and feed into a version of pragmatism that is sufficiently contemporary.

Rorty uses Davidson as collateral inspiration to shore up his approach to James. When Davidson erases the boundary between knowing our way about a language and knowing our way about the world, he thereby shows us how to dispense with problematic intermediaries. These include ideas and experience, the lynchpins of traditional empiricism. The story Rorty wishes to weave around his attempt to extract James from the empiricist tradition is one that tries to show us that what he says about topics such as knowledge, truth, and our relationship to the world is far more useful to us *now* if we imagine he not only aborts his attempts to formulate a non-dualistic conception of experience, one that somehow bridges the supposed gap between its content and the world, but stops making reference to experience philosophically essential.[11]

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[9] It important to note that Rorty cashes out the imagination in terms of a propensity to discover new ways of talking rather than just fresh images.

[10] Putnam is persuasive on this last point; see, for example, 'James's Theory of Truth', Hilary Putnam, in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, Ruth Anna Putnam (ed.), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997, pp.166-185. James used the phrase "theory of truth" sparingly (e.g. "What I have said of the theory of truth will, I am sure, have appeared obscure and unsatisfactory ot most of you by reason of brevity"; in *Pragmatism and The Meaning of Truth*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass., 1975 p.37).

[11] Rorty also argues that James makes the mistake of conflating the linguistic and the psychological when appealing to experience, but does not elaborate on what this amounts to; see 'Dewey Between Hegel and Darwin'; reprinted in *Truth and Progress Philosophical Papers Volume Three*, Richard Rorty, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998, p.295.

Experience is not something that Rorty finds intrinsically problematic.[12] It is certain accounts of its nature that worry him, primarily because they flow from an historically influential picture of how human beings are related to the world that he believes is now defunct. This is the ubiquitous Cartesian picture in which minds are receptacles for ideas that either represent or fail to represent how things are in the world at large. Rorty argues that the Cartesian picture has been systematically dismantled since the middle of the twentieth century. He takes from Sellars, for example, the lesson that experience has no natural epistemic properties: we cannot read off from the bare content of an experience anything that qualifies as knowledge. And, he considers Wittgenstein to have exploded the notion that experience is essentially private, something that only occurs behind the closed doors of the mind. What he tries to do with James, is keep the holistic thrust of his pragmatist message intact, but update it by bleeding in the results of the philosophical progress that has been made since the linguistic turn. Rorty's James is thus someone who has learned to link truth to language rather than experience:

> Dewey's and James's attempts to give a "more concrete", more holistic, and less dualism-ridden account of experience would have been unnecessary if they had not tried to make "true" a predicate of experience and had instead let it be a predicate of sentences.[13]

This James can easily be persuaded to endorse Rorty's two main recommendations for putting pragmatism into better shape: (1) stop talking about experience and talk about language instead and (2) stop regarding science as a discipline that philosophy should strive to emulate.[14] Historical purists, those who believe that there is only one James worth discussing, the James that emerges from an historically-sensitive reading of his texts that situates him within the empiricist tradition, will scoff at all this. Their James, being a product of his own time and place, cannot be persuaded of anything that does not logically follow from his explicitly stated beliefs and intentions. To claim that he could be persuaded to update his pragmatism by accepting (1) and (2) is to indulge in wild speculation. If he could leap outside his time and place to go in that direction who is to say that he might not leap to somewhere else that gives him access to a radically different philosophical perspective, one that attracts him even more?

At first sight, there does seem to be an awkward tension here between Rorty's own Hegelian historicism that stresses the importance of time and place and his profligate inclination to bend historical figures into shapes that suit his own present purposes. But, the tension is resolved by Rorty's resolute, and entirely consistent, efforts to make *everything* subservient to pragmatic constraints. Yes, James set great store by experience and is in certain ways enthusiastic about science.[15] But if, going along with Rorty, we think of James's writings and his related beliefs as a set of tools for coping with the world, then we may find that he is more useful to us when we throw away some of his favourite devices and modify others in the light of more recent tool-making innovations. This is equivalent to putting some classic Greek pillars in a modern building or splicing a chunk of Miles Davis into a Mahler symphony. When such counter-intuitive experiments work, purist objections are beside the point. To his credit, Rorty never tries to pass off his interpretations of historical figures as historically accurate readings. Nor should they be criticised as such. Given James's open-mindedness and generosity of spirit, it does not stretch the imagination too much to think of him endorsing Rorty's

[12] Some critics seem to assume that in rejecting the classic pragmatist's empiricist dependence on experience, Rorty is somehow denying the value of experience in general. Clearly this is wrong.

[13] 'Dewey Between Hegel and Darwin', in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume Three*, Richard Rorty, *op.cit*., p.298.

[14] Rorty's beef is not with science itself, but with attempts to elevate it to the pinnacle of intellectual disciplines as something that should be emulated by other disciplines.

[15] In divesting James of scientistic inclinations, Rorty has far less work to do than he does with regard to Dewey who was enamoured of scientific method. James's enthusiasm for science amounted to little more than rhetorical garnish on his philosophical pursuits.

lively attempts to make his work more useful. As for those who want to polish an accurate image of James to be kept in the museum of ideas, we can reasonably envisage that James would have some respect for that but nevertheless find it hard not to be far more interested in what Rorty is up to.

ANTI-AUTHORITARIANISM,

MELIORISM, AND CULTURAL POLITICS:

ON THE DEWEYAN DEPOSIT IN RORTY'S PRAGMATISM

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Introduction

Placing John Dewey in the narrative of the roots of Richard Rorty's philosophy is not as straightforward an undertaking as one might initially suppose. While it is certainly true that Dewey and Rorty held several philosophical theses in common, of which a shared repudiation of epistemological foundationalism was probably the most noteworthy, the exact nature and extent of their philosophical camaraderie is a question of (sometimes) hot scholarly debate.[1] And while it is also true that Dewey was — at least by Rorty's own frequent insistence — the philosopher who most embodied the role of mentor and forefather to Rorty's exciting brand of neopragmatism, a significant number of Dewey scholars have been stubbornly reluctant to grant the authenticity of such insistences. They see Rorty as having distorted or misread Dewey in a number of crucial ways, as having attributed to him many beliefs and theses that, they say, Dewey never held. Larry Hickman sounds the general complaint when he writes, "Rorty may describe himself as a 'follower' of Dewey…but his Dewey is not one that I am able to recognize." (Hickman 2007, 59) Robert Westbrook, another of John Dewey's most passionate champions, echoes the complaint:

> Having labored hard to figure out what Dewey had to say, we strenuously object when Rorty tries to get him to say things he did not say and that we cannot imagine him saying. Thus, over the last several years historians such as James Kloppenberg and I have found ourselves participating with Rorty in conferences in which our role is to say to him, often repeatedly, 'Gee, that argument that you say that you and Dewey make is very provocative, but Dewey never made it and I do not believe he ever would make it since it is at odds with arguments he did make.'[2](Westbrook 2005, 175)

On Westbrook's view, Rorty "borrow[s] very selectively from Dewey's philosophy" thus enabling him to "link pragmatism to more fashionable currents of thought and thereby earn Dewey a second look among the fashionably inclined." (Westbrook 2005, xiin9)[3] It might be replied that Rorty borrowed selectively from just about everyone from whom he was a borrower: "selective borrowing" is simply what Rorty did with the philosophers and books he read. Controversially, and to the aggravation of many critics, Rorty bestowed upon an oddly diverse lot of figures the title of honorary Rortyan pragmatist. Rorty became notorious for compiling lengthy litanies of names, each of whom, his readers were assured, advanced more or less the same arguments and held more or less the same positions. As Jay Rosenberg expressed this common criticism, "Rorty is the great *mentioner*. He doesn't just drop names; he sprays them, scatters them, hurls them about." (Rosenberg 1993, 197) Rorty has been accused more than once of misrepresenting the heroes of his canon. That Dewey should be among the misrepresented is neither surprising nor particularly noteworthy.

[1] Nevertheless, I regard the following rundown of some of the theses and ideas Rorty and Dewey held in common as more or less uncontroversial. Both Dewey and Rorty were thoroughgoing anti-foundationalits; both powerfully repudiated a representationalist conception of knowledge and the "epistemology industry" that thrives on it; both men were committed naturalists (though, there are some important differences here in how "naturalism" is understood); both put great stress on the promotion of a decidedly "Darwinian" understanding of things; both were historicists (at times of an admittedly romantic or "Hegelian" stripe), and "public philosophers" on a certain understanding of that term; both were ardent defenders of liberal democracy (yet, here again, there are important differences). One might also mention certain commonalities arising from their shared disinclination toward religion, their distaste of Marxism, and so on.

[2] "It is important to stress," Westbrook also points out, rightly, "that Rorty's pragmatist lineage, particularly from Dewey, is in important respects uncontestable" (Westbrook 2005, 145n17).

[3] It is appropriate to point out that Hickman and Westbrook, while no doubt impatient with aspects of his appropriation of Dewey, have plenty of complimentary things to say about Rorty. Both are quick to admit that reading Rorty is an exciting, worthwhile, and fruitful undertaking. This is an important point to make, I think, because many "Deweyan" critics of Rortyan pragmatism begin and end their praise of Rorty with the colorless observation that Rorty performed a useful service by reigniting an interest in Dewey — by making pragmatism (*semi*) respectable again among professional philosophers.

The plausibility of Rorty's many proclamations about "We Deweyans" will not be my concern here. It will be enough, I think, to mention in passing that an erroneous extremism can be found on both sides of the question. On the one hand, there is no doubt some validity to the criticism that Rorty habitually overlooked or glossed over many important differences between himself and Dewey. Indeed, one could rather easily get the impression from reading his books and essays that, on Rorty's view, there was in the end extremely little — some of Dewey's occasional and naive "metaphysical" moments notwithstanding[4] — on which the two men did not see eye to eye. And yet, on the other hand, it is also true that many critics over-accentuate the differences and under-appreciate the commonalities. Again, one could easily come away with the false impression from some of the critical literature on Rorty written by self-professed "Deweyans" that the claimed links between Rortyan and Deweyan pragmatism is nothing more than a big mistake, the product of little more than Rorty's delusion. The truth in this case is to be found somewhere in the middle: there *is* an important and unique legacy that Rorty inherits from Dewey, even if Rorty sometimes exaggerated and misrepresented it.

My task in what follows is to explore the uniquely Deweyan deposit in Rorty's philosophy. This undertaking requires attention to the fact that (no less than Wittgenstein or Heidegger) there were two very different and sharply contrastable periods in Richard Rorty's philosophical career. Rorty's thinking is rightly characterized as having undergone a transformative *kehre* sometime in the mid to late 1970's.[5] The "early" Richard Rorty was a "thrusting young analytic philosopher" (Rorty 1998a, 10n5), a highly professionalized Princeton professor, and the author of tightly argued papers on specialist's topics in the philosophy of mind bearing titles like, "In Defense of Eliminative Materialism," "Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental," and "Functionalism, Machines, and Incorrigibility".[6] The early Richard Rorty believed that analytic philosophy as it was then practiced in many of the leading American philosophy departments pointed the way forward and he did his very best to digest as much of it as he could. The "late" Richard Rorty in contrast was a world famous man of letters, someone whose reputation and influence was felt far outside the narrow confines of professional analytic philosophy. Writing on an eclectic variety of topics, in a vivid but accessible prose, this was the Richard Rorty who was labeled by Harold Bloom "the most interesting philosopher in the world".

If it is true then that Richard Rorty had, for lack of another way to put it, two different careers as a professional philosopher, it is also true that Dewey, while scarcely mentioned in the first career, comes to occupy the significant role attributed to him only in the second one.[7] I am suggesting that the moment of Rorty's professional "turn" also happens to be the moment at which Dewey appears on the Rortyan map. Getting clear on the Deweyan deposit in Rorty's thought therefore involves understanding the nature of Rorty's turn, and trying to see more clearly the complicated vision at its center. That vision can be clarified, I think, by attending to the broad, sweeping, cultural-political significance that Rorty claimed to have recognized in Dewey's work. For, despite all their agreements on what Rorty might have called "merely philosophical" matters, Rorty read Dewey as having contributed to "a world-historical change in Humanity's self-image" (Rorty 1998a, 132). On Rorty's view, Dewey's monumental significance involved his contribution to a "long-term attempt to change the rhetoric, the common sense, and the self image of [his] community." (Rorty 1998a, 41) Along with the Romantic poets and Nietzsche, Dewey helped partially fill in a

[4] Rorty seems to have held that metaphysics formed a rather peripheral and insignificant part of Dewey's thought. We were often told that Dewey was merely getting "sidetracked into doing 'metaphysics'" (Rorty 1982, 82), that such concerns were not central to Dewey's philosophical enterprise. Many readers and interpreters of Dewey beg to differ.

[5] Where precisely to make the "cut" between the early and late periods in Rorty's career is largely a matter of interpretation. I won't weigh in on that largely biographical, and, for my present purposes, relatively unimportant question here. See Gross (2008) for an excellent and detailed biographical account of the early Rorty's growing dissatisfaction with mainstream Anglo-American analytic philosophy in general, and the philosophy department at Princeton more particularly.

[6] See Rorty 1970a, 1970b and 1972.

[7] As Rorty told the story in an autobiographical essay, he was taught contempt for Deweyan pragmatism while studying at the University of Chicago during the so-called "Hutchins period". "Since Dewey was a hero to all the people among whom I had grown up," he reflected, "scorning Dewey was a convenient form of adolescent revolt." (Rorty 1999, 8-9.)

"startlingly counterintuitive self-image sketched by Darwin" (Rorty 1998a, 41), a self-image, Rorty argued persistently, from whose adoption we would all stand to benefit in the long run.[8]

> What seems to me most worth preserving in Dewey's work is his sense of the gradual change in human beings' self-image which has taken place in recorded history — the change from a sense of their dependence upon something antecedently present to a sense of the utopian possibilities of the future, the growth of their ability to mitigate their finitude by a talent for self-creation. Dewey saw religious tolerance, Galileo, Darwin, and (above all) the rise of democratic governments and literate electorates, as central episodes in this story. His own effort to overthrow representationalist doctrines, an effort which embroiled him in endless controversies about objectivity, truth, and relativism, was undertaken because he thought that these doctrines had become impediments to human beings' sense of self reliance. I think that he was right about this, and that his effort is worth continuing. (Rorty 1991, 17)

Three broad and inter-related themes stand out as jointly articulating Rorty's attempt to continue this Deweyan effort: (1) Anti-authoritarianism, for which what we may call Dewey's democratic constructivism serves as a guide, (2) Meliorism, which forms the background against which Dewey's and Rorty's mutual enthusiasm for Darwin is best understood, and (3) Cultural Politics, which can be understood as an instantiation of the future-oriented experimentalism that was central to both philosophers. I will discuss these three themes in turn, while intermittently trying to show how they hang together and mutually reinforce one another.

The impact of Deweyan pragmatism on Rorty is admittedly vast and complex. The emphasis here placed on my three themes should not be understood as an argument against the significance of *other* Deweyan legacies in Rorty's thought. To quickly mention but one that I here overlook: it can be suggested that Dewey (like James) is representative of a brand of "anti-professionalism" — a certain publicization of academic philosophy — that Rorty sought to emulate. As is well known, Rorty spent much of his time debunking the grand, self-congratulatory aspirations of traditional philosophy (with a capital 'P'), arguing, as did Dewey before him, that philosophers should dedicate their energy to the "problems of men" not the "problems of philosophers".[9] While I do not claim that Dewey was the *sole* influence on Rorty vis-à-vis my three themes, I believe that it is in Dewey's bequest that these commitments and the broader hopes and temperament of which they are a significant part come together in their richest and most coherent whole. It is, in short, a distinctly American, secularist, anti-foundationalist, historicist, naturalistic, deeply democratic, quasi-romanticist, future-oriented vision of what we have been, what we are, and what we might yet become.

1. Anti-authoritarianism

Rorty famously interpreted Darwin as providing support for a new self-image for humanity, a new way for human beings to think of themselves and their relation to everything else. On Rorty's view, Darwin's theory suggests "[a] picture of humans-as-slightly-more-complicated-animals" (Rorty 1998a, 48). Rorty thought that coming to see ourselves in this way — as differing only in complexity from the rest of the animal kingdom; "clever beasts" in Nietzsche's jargon — would help free us from "the notion that there are nonhuman forces to which human beings should be responsible" (Rorty 1989, 45). The "authoritarian" idea that there *are* such forces, Rorty argued, represents the least common denominator between a belief in god and Platonic metaphysics. Both are manifestations of the idea that "There is [an] authority called Reality before whom we need to bow down."(Rorty 2000b, 376) Rorty labored long and hard to eschew the spell that that idea (in all its guises) has cast on our thinking. It was his great hope that we might "try

[8] Perhaps here is a suitable place to point out that the grand, historical-philosophical significance that Rorty located in Dewey's work strikes many philosophers as wildly implausible. To be sure, even readers sympathetic to Dewey and classical American pragmatism would have been surprised to find Dewey's name mentioned alongside Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's as one of the three most important philosophers of the twentieth century (cf. Rorty 1979, 5).

[9] I have argued elsewhere (cf. Rondel 2011) that the anti-professionalism shared by Dewey and Rorty rears its head in the "lay sermon" quality of their otherwise very different prose styles. The "lay sermon" occupies a middle ground between a large, systematic philosophical theory and a policy recommendation. Both Dewey and Rorty, I argued in that paper, are quite at home in this middle ground.

to get to the point where we no longer worship *anything*, where we treat *nothing* as a quasi-divinity…" (Rorty 1989, 22) This was also Heidegger's hope (insofar as Heidegger was capable of hoping for anything), in his struggle to overcome metaphysics, to "sing a new song," to repudiate the powerful grip of "onto-theology". [10]

Rorty hoped that this kind of "authoritarianism" would go away. Not because one day we will have discovered its objective falsity (or incoherence or unintelligibility), but because we will stop thinking of it in terms of what William James called a "live, momentous hypothesis" — because one day no one takes it seriously anymore.

> [I]n its ideal form, the culture of liberalism would be one…in which no trace of divinity remained, either in the form of a divinized world or a divinized self…The process of de-divinization…would, ideally, culminate in our no longer being able to see any use for the notion that finite, mortal contingently existing human beings might derive the meanings of their lives from anything except other finite, mortal, contingently existing human beings. (Rorty 1989, 44-45)

Rorty was inspired by the possibility that his remote descendants will find it obvious and platitudinous that there is no god; that there is nothing in the universe to which we are answerable save for our fellow human beings. Such descendants would look back at present-day "author-itarians" (religious or philosophical) with the same incredulity as present-day New Englanders think about *their* ancestors who hanged witches. In this possible future, everyone would know — again, as a matter of banal platitude — that there is nothing in the cosmos to hang on to except other human beings (and that we are none the worse for it). All of these fuzzy hopes are manifestations of what Rorty has called his "militant anti-authoritarianism". (Rorty 2000, 376) Expressed generally, it is the hope that one day we shall reject all sources of authority, save for the outcome of free and open human cooperation. Rorty did not argue that an anti-authoritarian future of this kind would be more rational, more in accordance with reality, or more faithful to our true nature. It is simply a promising, long-term experiment, a direction in which humanity might, with encouragement, go. Rorty's anti-authoritarianism is rightly understood, not as an attempt to accurately represent reality, but rather as a bold instance of "cultural politics" (about which more in section 3).

Such anti-authoritarianism was at the very heart of Rorty's philosophy. "I think of my work," he once wrote, "as trying to move people away from the notion of being in touch with something big and powerful and non-human." (Rorty 2006a, 49) Anti-authoritarianism was central not only to his more professional views on truth, justification, knowledge, and rationality but also — and more dramatically — to his synoptic retelling of western philosophy's recent history. It is not an embellishment to say that an anti-authoritarian perspective provides the background against which virtually all of Rorty's views are best understood.

John McDowell provides an eloquent "simple outline" of the anti-authoritarian story that was at the center of Rorty's work:

> The sense of sin from which Dewey freed himself was a reflection of a religious outlook according to which human beings were called on to humble themselves before a non-human authority. Such a posture is infantile in its submissiveness to something other than ourselves. If human beings are to achieve maturity, they need to follow Dewey in liberating themselves from this sort of religion of abasement before the divine Other. But a humanism that goes no further than that is still incomplete. We need a counterpart secular emancipation as well. In the period in the development of Western culture during which the God who figures in that sort of religion was stricken, so to speak, with his mortal illness, the illness that was going to lead to the demise famously announced by Nietzsche, some European intellectuals found themselves conceiving the secular world, the putative object of everyday and scientific knowledge, in ways that paralleled that humanly immature conception of the divine. This is a secular analog to a religion of abasement, and human maturity requires that we liberate ourselves from it as well as from its religious counterpart…*Full human maturity would require us to acknowledge authority only if the acknowledgement does not involve abasing ourselves before something non-human.* (McDowell 2000, 109-110. My emphasis)

[10] There are a number of thinkers whose "anti-authoritarian" chorus Rorty claimed to be joining, including but not limited to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Dewey, Foucault, and Habermas. One may well add the later Wittgenstein to the list, insofar as he made respectable the idea that language and meaning are self-enclosed, and repudiated the idea that some language games correspond to something nonhuman better than others.

The parallel drawn with religion here is noteworthy, not only because the vocabulary of a "secular analog to a religion of abasement" was one of Rorty's favorite anti-authoritarian rhetorical strategies, but also because this rhetorical, analogical use of religion sheds light on a strong similarity between the Deweyan and Rortyan brands of anti-authoritarianism. Even if Rorty was, as is undeniable, the much more raucously secularist (and atheist) between them, it was not uncommon for both men to express their hopes for the future in a more or less religious idiom.[11] Paradoxically in Rorty's case, it was a sort a religious faith in a future that is utterly without religious faith.

> My sense of the holy, insofar as I have one, is bound up with the hope that someday, any millennium now, my remote descendants will live in a global civilization in which love is pretty much the only law. In such a society, communication would be domination-free, class and caste would be unknown, hierarchy would be a matter of temporary pragmatic convenience, and power would be entirely at the disposal of the free agreement of a literate and well educated electorate. (Rorty 2005, 40)

This might have been John Dewey's sense of the holy too, once he gave up on the Congregationalist Christianity in which he was reared in Vermont. Despite his firm secularism, Dewey would very often articulate his defense of democracy in religious language. When he wrote that, "Democracy is a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature." (Dewey 1993, 242), someone would be forgiven for supposing that when Dewey stopped attending Ann Arbor's *First Congregational Church* in 1894, democracy assumed the central ethical role once occupied by his Christian belief. Indeed, Alan Ryan is exactly right to suggest that Dewey conceived of democracy "as the modern secular realization of the kingdom of God on earth." (Ryan 1995, 86)

What I will call Dewey's democratic constructivism served as a powerful inspiration for Rorty's "militant anti-authoritarianism". On Dewey's view, there is no independent criterion of "right action" to which democracy reliably leads (or, if there is, it is a thin, minimal criterion). The quality of the associations themselves — the fact that decisions were *made in the right way*, viz., deliberately, experimentally, and democratically — determines the worth of the prescriptions so derived. Just as Rawls understands justice as the outcome of an idealized legislative procedure (The Original Position), Dewey appraises democratic decisions according to the conditions under which they arise. We do not value the answers democracy produces because they are independently valuable answers — as if an authoritarian king or a coin flip might have arrived accidentally at the very same conclusions; as if antecedently sound political outcomes were out there all along, waiting patiently for some *demos* to come along and apprehend them — but rather because they were reached democratically. Dewey celebrated democratic decision-making because it (and it alone) constitutes the social and political expression of a rich community of associated men and women, governing their affairs in relations of mutual respect and equality. Take care of democracy, Dewey might have said (echoing Rorty's constructivist slogan about truth),[12] and sound political outcomes will take care of themselves.[13]

Dewey's democratic constructivism and anti-authoritarianism fit comfortably together, as different expressions of the same basic idea. I would suggest that democracy was for Dewey precisely the form anti-authoritarianism takes in social and political life; it is what societies which have outgrown their need for what Nietzsche called "metaphysical comfort" can, at their best, be like. Dewey and Rorty are united, then, in rejecting the idea that we have a duty to anything — Truth, The Will of God, The Moral Law, The Dictates of Reason, and so on[14] —

[11] For a useful account of John Dewey's wrestling with the very idea of authority — metaphysical, religious, philosophical, and political — see Diggins 1994, chapter 5.

[12] Viz., "Take care of freedom and truth will take care of itself." Cf. Rorty 2006a.

[13] See Talisse (2007) for the argument that Deweyan democracy is not a wholly proceduralist ideal, but ethically substantive and "comprehensive" in Rawls's sense of the term.

[14] Some philosophers like to use capital letters to distinguish between ordinary and philosophical usages of concepts, *viz.,* Truth/truth; Reality/reality; Justice/justice, and so on. Others philosophers think that only frivolous postmodernists make such use of capital letters. I have no strong feelings on the matter. I have used capital letters here if only to remind readers that Rorty was a rather famous practitioner of such capitalization, even applying the technique to "philosophy" itself.

that can supersede our duty to cooperate with one another in reaching free consensus.

Fittingly, Dewey sometimes conceived of this duty in terms of "Creative Democracy" (cf. Dewey 1993, 240-245). He took for granted that, "the task [of democracy] can be accomplished only by inventive effort and creative activity." (Dewey 1993, 241) The concept of creativity brings into focus the fundamental anti-authoritarian insight here. Rather than helping citizens locate what is antecedently valuable in communal life — though it can do that too — democracy is valuable inasmuch as it encourages the creation and articulation of a community's moral identity. It is the social and ethical context within which a community can meaningfully pose questions that arise about its own character and self-image. Democracy, then, provides the moral and political background against which a deliberative community can pose questions like: "Who are we?" and "What shall we become?" It is the social, ethical and political context within which "we, who are also parts of the moving present, [can] create ourselves as we create an unknown future." (Dewey 1993, 88)

Deweyan democracy was for Rorty tantamount to the sort of community that has achieved the "full human maturity" that was at the heart of his anti-authoritarian hopes. Citizens of such a community, Rorty seems to have thought, would all take for granted that there is no authority to be appealed to apart from the free, deliberative consensus of fellow democratic peers. The citizens of such a community would believe that it is "solidarity" rather than "objectivity" that really matters. As Rorty explained in an important essay,

> There are two principle ways in which reflective human beings try, by placing their lives in a larger context, to give sense to those lives. The first is by telling the story of their contribution to a community. This community may be the actual historical one in which they live, or another actual one, distant in time or place, or a quite imaginary one, consisting perhaps of a dozen heroes and heroines selected from history or fiction or both. The second way is to describe themselves as standing in immediate relation to a nonhuman reality…. I shall say that stories of the former kind exemplify the desire for solidarity, and that stories of the latter kind exemplify the desire for objectivity. (Rorty 1991, 21, emphasis added)

If someone is challenged about a deeply held belief, Rorty is here saying, she can — beyond succumbing to "helpless passivity or a resort to force" (Rorty 1989, 73) — respond to the challenge in at least one of two ways. On the one hand, she can appeal to what Rorty called "objectivity" (something like "God's Will," or "The Dictates of Reason," or "The Nature of Ultimate Reality," or "The Moral Law") — that is, something big and non-human that makes beliefs of the relevant sort true or false. On the other hand, she can appeal to some community, some *ethnos*, with which, by virtue of the deeply held belief in question she is announcing her solidarity. The first kind of "authoritarian" response appeals to something unconditioned and timeless; the second "anti-authoritarian" response appeals to something human and contingent. As Rorty interpreted it — not implausibly in my opinion — Deweyan democracy is one name for the kind of society that would fully and consistently embody the latter, solidarity-inspired, anti-authoritarian option. "The democratic community of Dewey's dreams," Rorty wrote, "is a community in which everybody thinks that it is human solidarity, rather than knowledge of something not merely human, that really matters. The actually existing approximations to such a fully democratic, fully secular community…seem to me the greatest achievements of our species."[15] (Rorty 1999, 20)

It is here, however, in its unflinching commitment to an increasingly tolerant and humane democratic culture, that Rorty's anti-authoritarianism reveals its distinctly Deweyan (and American) colors. Unlike other (mainly European) anti-authoritarians — Nietzsche, say, or Foucault — the anti-authoritarianism of Dewey and Rorty is of a decidedly "meliorist" stripe. Both see a possible anti-authoritarian future as cause for hope, not nihilism, despair, or cynicism. Both see a possible anti-authoritarian future (melioristically) as one in which greater freedom and a reduction of suffering can, with intelligent effort and luck, be achieved, a future in which men and women can live richer, fuller, more satisfactory lives. For Rorty, it is a future in which the idea that "cruelty is the worst thing we do" is accepted by just about everyone, without thinking that it can be justified by reference to a non-human authority of any kind.

[15] This thought is much more fully developed in Rorty 1998b.

2. Meliorism

Meliorism belongs to a worldview for which indeterminacy, uncertainty, and impermanence are the central features. It stems from acceptance of the fact that, "[t]he future is always unpredictable" (Dewey 1993, 87). It is made plausible by the incompleteness and contestation inherent in experience. Recognizing that there shall always be conflicts among our ends, that even our most systematic efforts to resolve such conflicts will invariably generate new ones, and so on — *ad infinitum* — is the first step on the road to pragmatist meliorism.

Accepting that there are no final answers to life's most pressing questions — no set of habits and beliefs that will end, once and for all, the need for reflection about what we should care about and what we should do — makes attractive what James and Dewey call an ethos of "meliorism". Meliorism makes no predictions about how the future will unfold; it claims no superior knowledge about the forces that govern human history; it offers no unique insights into the nature of the human condition. It is "not concerned with prophecy but with analysis." (Dewey 1954, 185) As Dewey says, it is simply the belief "that the specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered."[16] (Dewey 1959, 178)

Pragmatist meliorism is not just an attitude or disposition — though it is that too. It is also the more concrete thesis that the reformer's work shall never be complete, that growth, modification, and improvement do not admit of an eschatological terminus. They are their own ends: "The end of human activity is not rest, but rather richer and better human activity." (Rorty 1991, 39) The meliorism shared by James, Dewey and Rorty is tantamount to the hope "not that the future will conform to a plan, will fulfill an immanent teleology, but rather that the future will astonish and exhilarate." (Rorty 1999, 28) What Dewey called "growth" points to nothing save for more growth, a better future, more capacious and humane individual habits and social institutions — a more effective set of tools with which to cope with our problems (or "problematic situations" as Dewey would call them). Meliorists do not believe there is such a thing as "The Good Life for Man," at least not in the way that Socrates supposed. Nor is there such a thing as "an Ideal Society," at least not in the way Plato, Augustine, or Marx supposed. There are only "more interesting modes of life" and "better future societies" and so on, forever, until (or unless) our species becomes extinct.[17]

I invoke the notions of "species" and "extinction" here so as to emphasize that pragmatist meliorism and the broader way of thinking of which it is a major part owes much to pragmatism's encounter with, and reception of, Darwin. Pragmatists take from Darwin the idea that ethical, cultural, and political life be regarded as continuous with biological evolution — that "cultural evolution takes over from biological evolution without a break." (Rorty 1999, 75) From Darwinism Dewey and Rorty learned that individuals and societies were not distinct from nature, but organic extensions of evolutionary processes. Just as the evolution of species admits of no *telos,* no predetermined *raison d'être* beyond the vague "improved fitness" (and "even more improved fitness" thereafter, and so on), so do our individual and social lives lack a circumscribable terminus, some set of beliefs and practices that would conclusively seal the gap between "the actual good" and "the future better". It is implausible to suppose, after all, that there is a way of life or a politics or a set of beliefs upon which it would be *impossible* to improve, even if only slightly. This idea is summed up in the Deweyan slogans, to paraphrase: "growth is its own end," and "there is nothing to which growth is relative except more growth".

For both Dewey and Rorty the invocation of Darwin here is not incidental. Indeed, as Rorty sketched his version of recent philosophical history, the growing plausibility among

[16] Unsurprisingly, James's gloss was similar. "There are unhappy men who think the salvation of the world impossible. Theirs is the doctrine known as pessimism. Optimism in turn would be the doctrine that thinks the world's salvation inevitable. Midway between the two there stands what may be called the doctrine of meliorism… Meliorism treats salvation as neither necessary nor impossible. It treats it as a possibility, which becomes more and more of a probability the more numerous and actual conditions of salvation become." (James 1981, 128)

[17] See Koopman 2009 for a recent (and splendidly wide-ranging) account of the meliorism shared by James, Dewey, and Rorty.

philosophers of an open, indeterminate future — their increasing skepticism about what Dewey called "philosophy's search for the immutable" (Dewey 1960, 26-48), its quest for "a certain finality and foreverness" (Dewey 1954, 194-5) — is largely attributed to "Darwin's theory… [having] become the common sense of European intellectuals." (Rorty 1999, 264)

> After Darwin … it became possible to believe that nature is not leading up to anything — that nature has nothing in mind. This idea, in turn, suggested that the difference between animals and humans is not evidence for the existence of an immaterial deity. It suggested further that humans have to dream up the point of human life, and cannot appeal to a nonhuman standard to determine whether they have chosen wisely. The latter suggestion made radical pluralism intellectually viable. For it became possible to think that the meaning of one human life may have little to do with the meaning of any other human life, while being none the worse for that. (Rorty 1999, 266)

This is the kernel of wisdom in the pragmatist maxim, hyperbolically expressed by Rorty, that "there is no such thing as the search for truth, as distinct from the search for happiness."[18](Rorty 2000, 376) Since "happiness" is not the sort of thing we should expect to get right once and for all — since it will always be possible and desirable to become happier still — pragmatists are always on the look out for something better.

Nowhere was Rorty's meliorism more evident than in his writings on private irony and individual self-creation. I would argue that Rortyan "irony" is simply what meliorism looks like when it is pointed inward, when it is applied to the creation of an individual self. [19] Rorty thought that genuine moral progress had been made "since the time, with Hegel, we began to think of self-consciousness as self-creation." (Rorty 1989, 24) He regarded the need to "create new ways of being human, and to dream up new projects" (Rorty 2001, 154) — a need that blooms as religion and metaphysics wane — as the most uplifting achievement of recent intellectual history. Rorty thought of individuality much as Emerson and Whitman thought of America: a wild frontier out of which endless possibilities flow, "the greatest poem," a locus of hope. He agreed with Dewey that "Individuality is at first spontaneous and unshaped; it is a potentiality, a capacity of development." (Dewey 1993, 86)

> [N]o past achievement, not Plato's or even Christ's, can tell us about the ultimate significance of human life. No such achievement can give us a template on which to model our future. The future will widen endlessly. Experiments with new forms of individual and social life will interact and reinforce one another. Individual life will become unthinkably diverse and social life unthinkably free. The moral we should draw from the European past, and in particular from Christianity, is not instruction about the authority under which we should live, but suggestions about how to make ourselves wonderfully different from anything that has been. (Rorty 1998b, 24)

Rorty's "liberal ironist" is someone who delights in expanding her ethical horizons by learning about different goods, interesting modes of life, and new ways of being human.[20] Above all, the ironist is consumed by the prospect of making things new, rather than discovering what has always been there. She is forever trying to enlarge her sympathies, extend her loyalties, and seek out new modes of life with which to experiment. She exhibits an almost religious "willingness to refer all questions of ultimate justification to the future, to the substance of things hoped for." (Rorty 1999, 27) The ideal is to be ironic about one's self, to take one's present self lightly (ironically) in the hope of a yet better future self, "to shift attention from the eternal to the future," to substitute hope for knowledge (Rorty 1999, 29). "[T]here is no center to the self," Rorty argued in impeccable meliorist fashion, "there are only different ways of weaving new candidates for belief and desire into antecedently existing webs of belief and desire" (Rorty 1989, 83-4), and that the point of being human

[18] "Happiness" here means something like: "discovering new ways to get the things we want, and inventing splendid new things to want."

[19] "Irony isn't a spiritual path you might pursue. It's just a matter of sitting loose to one's present self and hoping that one's next self will be a bit more interesting." (Rorty 2006b, 56)

[20] Rorty placed much more emphasis on the private, idiosyncratic, inward side of our nature than did Dewey. As Ryan makes the point, "The individual in Dewey always seems to be going outward into the world; 'the bliss of solitude' is not a Deweyan thought, even though Wordsworth was one of his favorite poets…It is not only the *vie intérieure* that gets shortchanged; one result of this lack of interest in the private, the intimate, and the sexually charged is that family life gets shortchanged as well…this is rather a loud silence." (Ryan 1995, 368)

therefore — at least in private[21] — is to weave together the best, most interesting self that one can.

Cultural Politics

What Rorty called "cultural politics" is a term that covers arguments about what words to use, as well as "projects for getting rid of whole topics of discourse." (Rorty 2007, 3) Arguments about what words to use were, on Rorty's view, a crucial element in campaigns for social progress. This is because "rather than… an attempt to grasp intrinsic features of the real…redescription…[is] a tool for social or individual change."[22] (Rorty 1999, 220) This is the basis for Rorty's suggestion that certain novels — *Uncle Tom's Cabin; Bleak House; 1984; Lolita*, and others— can serve as sources of acute moral learning. It is also the basis for his suggestion that young people be encouraged to read the New Testament and the *Communist Manifesto* for the reason that "[they] will be morally better for having done so." (Rorty 1999, 203) The main reason is that literature and poetry — in Rorty's capacious sense of those terms — aid in the process of popularizing alternative descriptions, a process which is the driving force both for private projects of self-creation and a more humane (less cruel) public culture. Popularizing alternative descriptions in accordance with long-term cultural and political hopes is what "cultural politics" is all about.

> Something traditionally regarded as a moral abomination can become an object of general satisfaction, or conversely, as a result of the increased popularity of an alternative description of what is happening. Such popularity extends logical space by making descriptions of situations that used to seem crazy seem sane. Once, for example, it would have sounded crazy to describe homosexual sodomy as a touching expression of devotion or to describe a woman manipulating the elements of the Eucharist as a figuration of the relation of the Virgin to her Son. But such descriptions are now acquiring popularity. At most times, it sounds crazy to describe the degradation and extirpation of helpless minorities as a purification of the moral and spiritual life of Europe. But at certain periods and places — under the Inquisition, during the Wars of Religion, under the Nazis — it did not. (Rorty 1998a, 204)

In addition to providing grist for projects of idiosyncratic self-creation, Rorty thought that certain books can help us become less cruel. The latter sort of book, wrote Rorty, "can be divided into (I) books which help us see the effects of social practices and institutions on others and (2) those which help us see the effects of our private idiosyncrasies on others." (Rorty 1989, 141)

The transformative power of words and language suggests that, "we look at relatively specialized and technical debates between contemporary philosophers in the light of our hopes for cultural change." (Rorty 2007, x) While most professional philosophers will think this suggestion both reckless and wrongheaded, I think that Rorty's idea can be made to look more sensible when viewed — as is proper — against the background of the open-ended experimentalism that both he and Dewey shared.[23]

[21] Dewey would surely have been unhappy with Rorty's bifurcation of public and private. As Westbrook argues, correctly: "For Dewey…democracy was 'a way of life' not merely a public way of life…and he would not have accepted Rorty's contention that 'there is no way to bring self-creation together with justice at the level of theory' for that would have required him to give up a principle article of his democratic faith. Rorty contends that the belief that 'the springs of private fulfillment and of human solidarity are the same' is a bothersome Platonic or Christian hangover. If so, Dewey suffered from it." (Westbrook 1991, 541) Nevertheless, Dewey's commitment to "the chance to become a person" makes it clear that he valued an individual's ability to be originally self-authoring no less than Rorty did.

[22] This adds plausibility to Christopher Voparil's observation that Rorty performs a clever refutation of Marx's Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, *viz*., "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world…the point, however, is to *change* it." According to Voparil, "Rorty's stance responds to Marx's thesis by refuting it. Reinterpreting the world, or to use Rorty's term, redescribing it, contra Marx, *is* a way of changing it. Redescriptions have the power to change minds because seeing our world in a transformed light is part and parcel of action to transform it." (Voparil 2006, 183)

[23] I do not claim that the "experimentalism" that Dewey and Rorty shared was identical. On the contrary, Dewey thought that a commitment to experimentalism required philosophers to become more scientific, whereas Rorty defended his experimentalism — and attributed the same view to Dewey — in terms of something called "pragmatism without method". Yet the experimental "method" was extremely important for Dewey. "When we say that thinking and beliefs should be experimental, not absolutistic," Dewey wrote in the *Public and Its Problems*, "we have then in mind a certain logic of method, not, primarily, the carrying on of experimentation like that of laboratories." (Dewey 1954, 202)

For pragmatists, fallibilism and experimentalism are mutually enforcing doctrines. The recognition that we may always be wrong (fallibilism) engenders an open-minded, scientific, and deliberate approach to inquiry (experimentalism). Since "no concrete test of what is really true has ever been agreed upon," since we lack an "infallible signal for knowing whether [a proposition] be truth" (James 2000, 207-8), the most fruitful method of inquiry is to treat beliefs as hypotheses to be tested and assessed in experience. In "The Will to Believe," James made this connection explicit:

> Objective evidence and certitude are doubtless very fine ideals to play with, but where on this moonlit and dream-visited planet are they found? I am, therefore, myself a complete empiricist as far as my theory of human knowledge goes. I live, to be sure, by the practical faith that we must go on experiencing and thinking over our experience, for only thus can our opinions grow more true; but to hold any one of them — I absolutely do not care which — as if it never could be reinterpretable or corrigible, I believe to be a tremendously mistaken attitude, and I think the whole history of philosophy will bear me out.[24] (James 2000, 207)

If we construe our fallibility in terms of the idea that improved habits and beliefs are always possible and desirable (that is, melioristically), then it is plausible to view inquiry, not as the search for absolute truth or unmovable certainty, but as the generation of hypotheses to be used and tested in projects of reform (cf. Dewey 2000). To "test" in this context does not mean to "look and see". On the contrary, as Barry Allen writes, "To experiment calls for controlled intervention, contrived observation, deliberately changing the normal conditions of perception." (Allen 2004, 52) Pragmatist experimentalism's "essential feature," according to Dewey, "is to maintain the continuity of knowing with an activity which purposely modifies the environment…to adapt the environment to our needs and to adapt our aims and desires to the situation in which we live." (Dewey 1997, 344) Otherwise put, it is a matter of deliberately aligning our means with our ends, while also bringing our ends into a more intelligent configuration with the means currently at our disposal. To experiment in the pragmatist sense, then, is to mediate between what Dewey calls "The Art of Acceptance" and the "Art of Control" (cf. Dewey 1960, 74-107)

If this sounds a lot like the so-called "scientific method," there is good reason for that: "Pragmatism was born of Peirce's conviction that…[w]hat is philosophically pregnant in the new science is… the admission of experiment as a way, a method, even the preferable method of knowledge." (Allen 2004, 52) Pragmatist experimentalism rejects the disinterested "contemplationism" common to Plato and Descartes, as well as the "look and see" empiricisms of Locke and Hume. Instead, pragmatists take inspiration from the experimentalists of the new science — "Galileo, Bacon, Boyle, Hooke, Newton, Franklin, Faraday, Helmholtz, and others." (Allen 2004, 52) Knowledge is not the fruit of passive contemplation; we don't get it by pondering axioms in front of the fireplace. The "actual procedures of knowledge," Dewey wrote, "interpreted after the pattern formed by experimental inquiry, cancel the isolation of knowledge from overt action." (Dewey 1960, 48) It is worth remembering that the subtitle to Dewey's most important work about knowledge, *The Quest for Certainty*, is "A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action".

Experimentalism is not just a corrective to the prevailing biases of epistemologists, not just a repudiation of what Dewey calls the "spectator theory of knowledge". On the contrary, it is presented (especially by Dewey and Rorty) as a method of inquiry and problem solving, in the widest possible senses of "inquiry" and "problem solving". Experimentalism goes all the way down; there is nothing that should not be viewed as another experiment, something fixed and permanent, to which experimentalism shall reliably lead us. Experimentalism is not a handy way to arrive at enduring truths. It does not constitute a helpful new answer to an old metaphysical problem — a promising new method with which (at last!) to cut past mere appearances and arrive at Reality. Rather, pragmatist experimentalism is predicated on the assumption that there are no such things as eternal truths or enduring Reality. As Dewey and Rorty understood it, moreover, experimentalism bears on the resolution of *every* kind of human problem. Whether the issue is delivering electricity to crowded cities,

[24] James does allow that we might be infallible with respect to "abstract propositions of comparison (such as two and two are the same as four)". Unfortunately, such propositions "tell… us nothing by themselves about concrete reality." (James 2000, 207)

feeding the hungry, building more fuel-efficient cars, deciding whom to vote for, considering the comparative merits of disparate utopian visions, devising educational strategies for overcoming racism and homophobia, or, as we saw earlier, "trying to move people away from the notion of being in touch with something big and powerful and non-human" (Rorty 2006a, 49), the best way to proceed is experimentally. In this respect, then, ethics, aesthetics, and political philosophy should be no less "experimental" than chemistry, psychology, or biology.

Taking "cultural politics" and experimentalism seriously, as Dewey and Rorty both did, is effectively to locate knowledge and truth in the world of our problems and challenges, align them with our needs, set them within practical human life — ground them in "what works," as the old slogan has it. It is to construe theory and practice, not as adversarial opposites, but as coalescent, integrated, interdependent domains of intelligent inquiry. In one of pragmatism's many metaphors of the marketplace, it is to hone in on the "cash-value" of our habits and ideas.

Conclusion

Anti-authoritarianism, meliorism, and cultural politics buttress one another, standing together in a sort of mutually reinforcing triangulation. Once we abandon the idea that we are answerable to a non-human authority, the appropriate response is neither despair nor cynicism nor optimistic delusion. A universe that is cold, indifferent and godless is to be responded to — melioristically — with the idea that the future *can* (but might not) be made wonderfully better by human hands alone. Neither Dewey nor Rorty thought that a better future was inevitable. Such a future (if we shall have it at all) must be planned for, intelligently organized, deliberately and experimentally cultivated, and this requires, in turn, careful reflection about all sorts of things — and even then, surely, there are no guarantees. The best way to try to address these problems, both Dewey and Rorty agreed, is experimentally. Indeed, it is *the only way left* once one takes seriously the conclusion that "philosophy's search for the immutable" has been, for better or worse, a fool's errand.

Despite important dissimilarities that remain between them, and despite Rorty's occasional misappropriation of Deweyan ideas, it has been my argument here that the Deweyan deposit in Rorty's pragmatism is best accounted for in terms of the broad, fuzzy, cultural-political vision that was fundamental for both philosophers — a vision that is best described, I have been suggesting, by the thematic trinity of anti-authoritarianism, meliorism, and cultural politics. That fundamental vision strikes me as an uplifting blend of sober inquiry and Romantic dreaming; an inspiring mediation between our inexorable finitude on the one hand, and a boundless future on the other; a uniquely American mélange of prudence, intelligence, courage, cooperation, and hope. William James was right: "If death ends all, we cannot meet death better." (James 2000, 218)[25]

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A CASE STUDY ON THE LIMITS OF IRONIC REDESCRIPTION:

RORTY ON WITTGENSTEIN

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In this paper I shall examine Rorty's interpretation of, and his relation to, Wittgenstein. After placing his reading of Wittgenstein into a context of other interpretations, I shall argue that the central issues for Rorty regarding Wittgenstein are representationalism and mysticism. Generally, he is interested in the later Wittgenstein because he provides good arguments against representationalism without mysticism, and he is uninterested in the early Wittgenstein because he is a representationalist and/or a Schopenhauerian mystical thinker. I shall claim that for some of Rorty's central purposes, the most suitable framework is Wittgensteinian. This makes Wittgenstein special among Rorty's heroes in a certain sense. Then I shall argue that even though Rorty's Wittgenstein seems to imply a constructive doctrine, both Wittgenstein and Rorty draw only the negative conclusions of them. Finally, I shall allude to a reading of the *Tractatus* that could well fit into an ironic redescription of the early Wittgenstein which could make him a positive hero of Rorty. However, Rorty intentionally rejects this reading, giving up, in favour of his pragmatism, not only a "thorough Wittgensteinianism" but a thorough Rortyanism as well.

Wittgenstein's role in current philosophy

Rorty claims that "[t]here are profound differences of opinion among contemporary philosophers both about whether Wittgenstein is worth reading and about what one can learn from him" (Rorty 2007, p. 160). Rorty divides how late 20th-century philosophers relate to Wittgenstein into three categories. First, he argues that naturalists (as he calls them) "want to get past the linguistic turn", and hence want to get past Wittgenstein as well. So-called therapist followers of Wittgenstein think that "the importance of the linguistic turn lies in helping us realize that philosophers have failed to give meaning to the words they utter", whereas certain pragmatists called 'pragmatic Wittgensteinians'[1] (most notably, Rorty himself) hold that "replacing Kantian talk about experience, thought, and consciousness with Wittgensteinian talk about the uses of linguistic expressions helps us replace worse philosophical theories with better ones" (Rorty 2007, p. 163). Though pragmatist Wittgensteinians "see no point in picking out something called 'language' as the source of philosophical problems" (Rorty 2007, p. 166), they think that speaking in linguistic terms instead of terms of experience and consciousness helped Wittgensteinians overcoming Cartesian pseudo-problems of philosophy.

Wittgenstein is often used as an authority that gives an emphasis to views that are attributed to him without sufficient evidence that he really held those. There are philosophers who saw Wittgenstein as an ancestor of their own views (in some aspects at least). Dummett (1978), Kripke (1982), Brandom (1994) and Putnam (1999) (or Habermas and Lytoard in the Continental tradition, see Redding (1986)) are Wittgensteinian in some important sense without having close readings of the author.[2] Someone might argue that they directly interpret Wittgenstein's passages but their readings are selective, supporting their own views (or at least the views they attribute to Wittgenstein). They are problem-oriented rather than text-based followers of him who see Wittgenstein as a highly important figure in the

1 As 'pragmatic' refers to pragmatics rather than pragmatism, below I shall follow my own terminology and call Rorty's pragmatic Wittgensteinians as pragmatist Wittgensteinians.

2 There is no place here for supporting this double hypothesis in details. I would only mention one ironic remark made by the late Sir Michael A. E. Dummett about his earlier period: "I regarded myself, doubtless wrongly, as a Wittgensteinian" (Dummett 1993, p. 171). I find this paradigmatic regarding (once) Wittgensteinians: in my view, beyond the most famous, general views of him, quite a few contemporary philosophers would support Wittgenstein's thinking after having a close reading of at least a considerable part of the approx. 20,000 pages of his *Nachlass* (see Wittgenstein 2000).

history of philosophy, whose work has to be understood in a wider context. This approach is very far from Wittgenstein scholarship in a traditional sense in which Wittgenstein's remarks are important directly by their own right, and in which e.g. superficial inconsistencies between different paragraphs can be treated as historical facts rather than anomalies that have to be eliminated. Problem-based Wittgensteinians are interested in Wittgenstein's arguments rather than his opinion because they are more interested in truth than facts of history of philosophy – they need his texts insofar as those texts support certain views or, on the contrary, provide counter-arguments which have to be refuted by them or their opponents.

Rorty's reading of Wittgenstein: Some methodological remarks

Rorty is definitely closer to the problem-based Wittgensteinians than the historians of Wittgenstein's ideas. He claims that "[p]ragmatic Wittgensteinians do not want to recapture Wittgenstein's own way of thinking, but rather to restate his best arguments in more effective ways" (Rorty 2007, p. 165). As often in the case of other heroes of him, Rorty subordinates his understanding of Wittgenstein to the purpose he attributes to the Austrian philosopher in his picture of history of philosophy, dividing the Great Dead Philosophers into good and bad guys. Wittgenstein is not an exception; moreover, due to the fact that it is used to think we have got (at least) two Wittgensteins, the early and the late, he can be straightforwardly placed into both categories.

However, there is an apparent contradiction between the claim that Rorty is close in reading Wittgenstein to the problem-oriented thinkers on the one hand, and Rorty's own philosophical stance regarding philosophical problems on the other. From Rorty's general approach to philosophy, it would be odd to say that he is more interested in (allegedly eternal) problems of philosophy than a history of philosophy. Rather he is interested in the history only to a degree to which historical investigations serve as tools for a better future. He is also interested in problems of philosophy only to a degree to which investigations on truth serve as tools for a better future. He claims, nonetheless, that whereas investigations on the field of history of philosophy *do* serve as such tools (precisely because we can apply the views of past philosophers to present problems of ours), investigations focusing on eternal problems do not serve as any such tools. This line of thought seems to suggest that Rorty is closer to the approach of historians than that of the problem-oriented analytic philosophers. But it is not an accident that I have formulated the difference between these two trends as a difference between text-based and problem-oriented views. Even though Rorty prefers dealing with texts to dealing with eternal problems, he also prefers dealing with *contemporary* problems to dealing with out-of-date texts. He finds central problems of philosophy being different from the problems most problem-oriented philosophers deal with. He thinks central problems are *external to* the philosophical tradition; i.e., problems cannot be found in the texts themselves. He follows Hegel in thinking that central problems of philosophy are always up-to-date general problems of the contemporary society. In this sense, he is even less text-based than those problem-oriented philosophers who apply arguments from past texts to (allegedly eternal) problems of recent texts. Problems are out there; all what texts can provide are arguments and other sorts of tool with which we can try to solve our very own problems.

In this spirit, it would be extremely anti-Rortyan to argue that Rorty "understood" or "misunderstood" Wittgenstein. For him, Wittgenstein, as any other thinker, is important precisely insofar as his thoughts support achieving our own goals. Hence, at least in the first instance, Rorty's Wittgenstein can be quite well reconstructed without any serious reflection on Wittgenstein or the literature on him. It is much more important to understand how Rorty's Wittgenstein

relates to Rorty's interpretation of some other philosophers, and philosophy in general. That is not the same as saying that it is unimportant what Wittgenstein said, but where a conflict rises between his thinking and Rorty's understanding of him, for the purposes of this paper, I shall accept Rorty's views as superior to Wittgenstein's. If inconsistency were to be demonstrated, it would have to be an inconsistency between Rorty's interpretation and his thinking in general.

Wittgenstein's role for a Rortyan perspective I.

Rorty sometimes seems to imply something like an "end of philosophy" but his reason is that he understands "philosophy" much more specifically in these contexts. In his seminal book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* Rorty criticises the view that perception, knowledge and language were representational and truth was correspondence (Rorty 1979). When declaring the end of philosophy, he does not attack *non-correspondentist* and *non-representational* theories of truth and knowledge. He argues against a very specific notion of philosophy, though that notion was the obligate in his academic environment: the paradigm of philosophy that has been set up by the Descartes-Kant epistemological tradition and then transformed into a linguistic version by Frege, Russell, Carnap, and the early Wittgenstein. An end of philosophy would mean an end of *this* sort of philosophy: the view according to which language and thinking is representational; or words and thoughts correspond to facts that makes (at least some of) them meaningful and true. According to Rorty, this paradigm of philosophy reached its limits, it ignores the actual problems of the society which gave birth to it, and the reason why it has to be abandoned is focusing on other, more vivid and urgent problems, in order to make philosophy socially more useful. Philosophy in this sense started in the ancient Greece with the distinction between appearance and reality, and reached its limits with the representational theory of knowledge and language (which is closely connected to the correspondence theory of truth), that attempted to establish a bridge between appearance and reality. However, without the pre-modern belief in the supra-natural, there is no need to suppose anything outside appearances; hence, the bridge that Cartesians, Kantians and Fregeans are building is a useless one.

In this picture of the history of philosophy, Wittgenstein takes a very special place. As mentioned above, his early *Tractatus* was one of the major contributions to a transformation of the Cartesian-Kantian epistemological project into a linguistic approach. The *Tractatus* establishes a one-to-one correspondence between the realm of facts and propositions, claiming that the two are isomorphic. True propositions are correct representations of facts; knowing a fact is therefore holding a true proposition about it. This work is one of the most comprehensive elaborations of the idea that representation establishes a bridge between reality and appearance – and hence is one of the main targets of the Rortyan criticism.

It is also widely held that in his later period, Wittgenstein himself significantly contributed to the destruction of his own views. From 1929, he had started developing a theory of meaning that finally resulted in a view that is mostly interpreted as *abandoning* the requirement of a theory of meaning. Whether the late Wittgenstein held a theory of meaning or a non-theoretical approach to meaning is an issue not discussed here; but it could be hardly denied that Wittgenstein developed an idea of language that gave up representation and correspondence as central notions. What, if any, his constructive view about language and thought was in his later period is a matter of debates (and so is the supposition how many different "later" periods he had), but for Rorty, the destructive movement is the more important, since this is what raises Wittgenstein out of the group of representationalist philosophers and makes him to be one of Rorty's heroes like Dewey, Heidegger, Quine, Davidson, Derrida, and others. However, what makes Wittgenstein special to him cannot simply be a

rejection of antirepresentationalism, precisely because *all* of his heroes do so. In order to understand why Rorty sees Wittgenstein as central, something distinctive must be identified in his thinking that significantly contributes to Rorty's views.

The early Wittgenstein and mysticism

In the camp of Rorty's philosophical ancestors, one reason why Wittgenstein's place is unique is that he related to the representationalism vs. pragmatism issue in his early and late period differently. Rorty makes a parallel between the turning from the early to the late Wittgenstein and an imaginative turning from the late back to the early Heidegger. The parallel is based on a question of mysticism: both the early Wittgenstein and the late Heidegger held a certain form of mysticism, in contrast with the early Heidegger's and late Wittgenstein's pragmatism (Rorty 1991, p. 50-52). According to Rorty, "the older Heidegger retreated from sentences and discourse to single words - words which had to be abandoned as soon as they [...] entered into relations with other words and thus became tools for accomplishing purposes" (Rorty 1991, p. 52). In parallel, in the final, "Schopenhauerian sections" of the *Tractatus* mysticism occurs as well: "[t]he early Wittgenstein had defined the mystical as 'the sense of the world as a limited whole'" (Rorty 1991, p. 50).

Rorty is resistant to philosophical arguments that claim problems or views of philosophy to be 'nonsense'. His reason is that "[a]s a result of the popularity of the linguistic turn, 'nonsense' became term of philosophical art - just as 'representation' had become one in the wake of Kant. Philosophers began to think of themselves as specialists in detecting nonsense" (Rorty 2007, p. 171) and he prefers thinking of philosophers as no kind of detectives and philosophy as having no special fields to detect.

Wittgenstein's early transcendentalism, just as Kant's own one, is a strategy of 'stepping back' to a neutral terrain from the battlefield where one of the untenable positions has to be taken necessarily. However, this 'stepping back' strategy must be abandoned if language is treated with the later Wittgenstein as social practice that is an open, unlimited sphere from which no back-step can and should be done.

The early Wittgenstein saw "social practice as *merely* social practice" which urged him "thereby rising above it" (Rorty 1991, p. 61) in order to be capable of "fixing the limits of language" (Rorty 1982, p. 23). Social practice became a central notion of the later Wittgenstein as well as Rorty; they found it unnecessary to seek for something beyond or above it.

The later Wittgenstein and representation

What makes Wittgenstein more special than Heidegger is that regarding the parallels between the early Wittgenstein and the late Heidegger, representationalism plays no role. Though both the early Heidegger and the late Wittgenstein were antirepresentationalists, the late Heidegger is hardly understood as a representationalist. Wittgenstein was a thorough opponent of representationalism precisely because he was, in some readings at least, an earlier defender of it. But it is no less important *how* he rejects representationalism.

Rorty claims that there are "philosophers who, as [Rorty] do[es], find support in [Wittgenstein's] writings for pragmatist views of truth and knowledge" (Rorty 2007, p. 161). This support undoubtedly comes from Wittgenstein's Anti-Cartesian philosophical attitude. According to Rorty, the importance of Wittgenstein's later thinking lies in that

> "[The *Philosophical Investigations*] is the first great work of polemic against the Cartesian tradition which does *not* take the form of saying 'philosophers from Descartes onward have thought that the relation between man and the world is so-and-so, but I now show you that it is such-and-such'" (Rorty 1982, pp. 33-34).

For the later Wittgenstein, the central issue of philosophy was no more establishing the relation between humans and the rest of the world – a task that has traditionally been thought to be done by theories of representation. Wittgenstein rejected *the question* what this relation lies in, dissolving rather than solving the problem.

Rorty emphasises the later Wittgenstein's views regarding ostensive definition, private language, and rule following as central in his thinking (Rorty 2007, p. 165). He thinks that Wittgenstein anticipates Quine's and Davidson's arguments against the language-fact distinction as well as Sellars's and Brandom's arguments against the idea of knowledge by acquaintance.

Nevertheless, representationalism is perhaps *the* central issue in Rorty's relation to the later Wittgenstein. In Rorty's view,

> "To drop the idea of languages as representations, and to be thoroughly Wittgensteinian in our approach to language, would be to de-divinize the world. Only if we do that can we fully accept the argument I offered earlier – the argument that since truth is a property of sentences, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truths" (Rorty 1989, p. 21).

Here Rorty claims that a central thesis of him, namely that truths (in plural and with a decapitalised "t") are human constructs, *presupposes* a Wittgensteinian attitude toward language. Without accepting (the later) Wittgenstein's views about language, one cannot follow Rorty in accepting antirealism (or, one might say, constructivism) regarding truth. The reason is, Rorty explains, that the claim that truths are human constructs hangs upon the claim that vocabularies are human constructs, and sentences (i.e., the bearers of truth) are vocabulary-dependent. Hence, it seems that it is not sufficient to reject representationalism; in order to follow Rorty in his most radical and controversial claim, one has to reject it in a specific way, at least one component of which is "thorough Wittgensteinianism" in the approach to language.

Wittgenstein's attack on representationalism can be summarised in two central claims as follows:

(1) Meaning atomism is untenable.

(2) Individual language use is impossible.

From this, it follows (though quite indirectly) that

(3) Representationalism is false.

This syllogism has to be explained in some details.

Meaning contextualism and language use as social activity

For (1), Wittgenstein argues that ostensive definitions are necessarily ambiguous. If someone did not know what the word "red" means, it would help her nothing if a red card were provided since without a previous understanding of what red is, she would not know whether a red card represents redness, cards, squares, paper, the number one, or nothing at all. Similarly, if she had a mental picture of red in her mind, she would still need to understand what its redness lies in, in order to be able to apply it to red objects. Mental images support knowledge and meaning no more than physical pictures, and without a fixed system of reference, pictures or images do not represent anything. However, it is precisely the system of reference that should be established by representation.

Hence, one should not define meanings in terms of one-to-one correspondence. A possible way can be defining meaning contextually. It involves that atomic building blocks of Fregeans and Tractarians are meaningless without a holistic, or at least contextual, background. If it is the context that fixes meaning and the system of reference required, meaning and reference is relative to the context. At least one powerful denial of meaning atomism is explaining the meaning of a word in terms of its relation to other words. It is what Wittgensteinians mean by the meaning-use identity: word meaning is

determined by, and can be explained in terms of, its usage in different contexts. In other words,

(1') Meaning is contextual.

For (2), Wittgenstein argues that from the perspective of an individual, no criteria of correct rule following can be fixed – i.e., an individual can never be sure whether she follows a rule correctly (or she follows another rule correctly, or eventually she does not even follow any rule). The reason is that all she has got is patterns that are understood in terms of rules only under certain descriptions. Hence, her recognition of a rule depends on her own description, being description-relative, and in an individual framework, she has no ground for comparing her descriptions to anything but the pattern *under her description.*

Thinking (and language use) are explained as rule following activity since Kant's account of conceptuality and schematism. As any other rule-following activity, thinking and language use can also be understood only relative to a description. In order to avoid an all-out textbook relativism and/or a Kripkean meaning scepticism, the only possible way is explaining rule-following activities in a social framework, in which the "objective" (i.e., intersubjective) criteria of correctness are publicly accessible and being subject to comparison. From this, it also follows that a "private language" (supposed to be an individual, subjective mental rule-following activity that is privately accessible only to one's own mind) is nonsense: without public criteria, rule-following is impossible. Private language can be imagined as parasitic on public language at most, hence being both temporarily and logically secondary to social language use and thinking. Hence, from (2), it follows that

(2') Language use and knowledge acquisition are social phenomena.

From ((1') & (2')), it is easier to see how (3) follows. Representation is thought to be a one-to-one correspondence between entities of reality and objects appear to the mind. But if (1'), i.e., meaning (and hence knowledge) is contextual, no method of isolating singular objects can be provided. Without the bridgehead on the side of appearances, no bridge of representation can connect appearances to reality. Representation is therefore worthless if possible. But it would still be an extremely dangerous position, from which scepticism, subjectivism or relativism could equally follow. Moreover, as a consequence, even more emphasis would be given to the mystical Kantian-*Tractarian* question of "the limits of language".

But if (2'), i.e., contexts as socially constructed systems of reference *do* fix meaning without fixing any limits of language, there is something that makes a connection between reality and humans not only impossible but unnecessary as well. Knowledge and meaning via language use and social activities are embedded into reality. No correspondence is required, precisely for the reason that because of the overlap, no isomorphy supposed by the *Tractatus* is possible. Setting up the "limits of language" is also not an issue: language is continuous via social practice with the rest of reality, and hence no clear borders of it can or should be established. If (1') then representation theories (at least in their present form) are impossible, but if (2') then they are also theoretically unnecessary since there is a more useful framework that can still explain the same explanandum.

Wittgenstein's role for a Rortyan perspective II.

After all, I can come back to the question why Wittgenstein is so special to Rorty. Contexts used to be called as language games by Wittgensteinians, and sometimes vocabularies by Rortyans. In the light of this, it can be seen why Rorty claimed that in order to accept his claim that truth is a human construct, one has to follow Wittgenstein in philosophy of language. For

Wittgenstein, language use is a context-relative activity of humans, where the context is fixed by social activity. If semantic notions like meaning, reference, and truth are constituted contextually, and contexts are constituted by social rule-following activities, Rorty's argument is conclusive that humans construct truth. Otherwise the notion of truth would be open to be understood in terms of correspondence and representation (which, if Wittgenstein is right, would make truth relative to an individualistic and atomistic framework). Such a notion of truth could not be seen as a human construct without falling into relativism, subjectivism, scepticism, and other capital crimes of which Rorty is nonetheless often accused. But if a Wittgensteinian account of language is accepted, according to which language use is social and contextual, truth cannot be expressed in terms of individualism and atomism, without which correspondence and representation are groundless and hence are relativism, subjectivism, and scepticism. That is why Wittgenstein is a central figure to Rorty. Even though he would have sufficient munitions against representationalism on the grounds of Deweyanism or Heideggerianism, he also needs some grounds for his stronger claim that truth is a human construct. For supporting this, Wittgenstein's philosophy of language seems to him the most powerful weapon.

From the above-mentioned, it seems to follow that Wittgenstein did not only argue against representationalism but also provided a constructive theory that founded an arguable response to possible Cartesian criticisms. Rorty claims,

> "As Wittgenstein grew older... he gradually dropped the notion of the 'limits of language'. So he turned the *Tractatus* distinction between saying and showing into the distinction between assertions and the social practices which gave meaning to assertions" (Rorty 1991, p. 64).

A distinction between saying and showing can be seen as a residuum of the distinction between the conceptual and the perceptual, and hence is still affected with dualistic approaches that require a connection between the internal and the external (typically in terms of representation). The latter distinction between assertions and the social practices is less sharp (especially on the ground that language use, and hence asserting, *is* a sort of social practice). It provides a unique, monist framework that is immune to a criticism of how connection can be established between the two sides of the distinction precisely because there are no two sides.

Rorty should celebrate such an account of Wittgenstein's thinking if his only purpose would be rejecting representationalism and claiming that any truth is a human construct. But from the latter claim he concludes that any philosophical doctrine taken seriously would miss its target. If truths are human constructs, so are philosophical theories. Hence, he claims, no constructive philosophical theory should be developed. About constructive opponents of the Cartesian tradition he claims that

> "Typically, attempts to overthrow the traditional problems of modern philosophy have come in the form of proposals about how we ought to think so as to avoid those problems. When Wittgenstein is at his best, he resolutely avoids such constructive criticism and sticks to pure satire. [...] He does not say: the tradition has pictured the world with gaps in it, but here is how the world looks with the gaps closed. Instead he just makes fun of the whole idea that there is something here to be explained" (Rorty 1982, p. 34).

Wittgenstein's constructive doctrine about language is self-destructing since it undermines the possibility of any constructive doctrine about language. It is therefore highly supportive for Rorty who has to say something constructively about his own theory of truth and language, but only via throwing away his ladder, i.e., without committing himself to any particular theory of truth and language.

Why not to redescribe the *Tractatus* ironically

An understanding of the later Wittgenstein as an anti-theoretical thinker is mostly popular among those who Rorty calls as the "therapist" Wittgensteinians. But those

therapists like Conant (1989) and Diamond (1991) also claim that "on the whole, the metaphilosophical slogans of the *Tractatus* all applied as aptly to the *Philosophical Investigations* as they did to the early work" (Conant 1989, p. 247). They, as opposed to the commonly held interpretation accepted by Rorty as well, also hold that the early Wittgenstein did not constantly fight against the limits of language and thought, but on the contrary: the *Tractatus,* just as well as the *Investigations,* attempts to show why such a fight is worthless (Diamond 1991, pp. 184-5). From these and similar remarks, Rorty and others (like Williams 2004) conclude that Conant and Diamond take the connection between the early and later works of Wittgenstein to be *too strong,* almost claiming that there is only one Wittgenstein. In order to dispel this misunderstanding of them, Conant and Diamond argue that

> "If one assumes that the *only* way to account for the profound changes in Wittgenstein's thought is in terms of his having put forward a metaphysical theory or a theory of meaning or both in his earlier thought, and his having given up the theory or theories later, then one will take resolute readings [i.e., the authors' own view that Rorty calls as "therapist" reading - I.D.] to be committed to 'strong continuity'; but the idea that that is the only way to understand the profound changes in Wittgenstein's thought should in any case be rejected" (Conant-Diamond 2004, p. 81).

Whether it is the only way or not, it is undoubtedly the way how Rorty understands the connection between the early and late works of Wittgenstein. He claims that for pragmatist Wittgensteinians like himself, Wittgenstein's "importance consists in having replaced a bad theory about the relation between language and non-language, such as that offered in the *Tractatus,* with a better theory, the one offered in the *Philosophical Investigations*" (Rorty 2007, p. 161). (The expression "better theory" should probably not be understood here literally since it would contradict the above-cited "fun of the whole idea that there is something here to be explained" (Rorty 1982, p. 34)).

For Rorty, the difference between the early and the later Wittgenstein is straightforwardly metaphilosophical: they differ in their relation to the general task of philosophy as a discipline. In accordance with his unique understanding the difference between the transcendental unity of the *Tractatus* and the pluralism of language games, Rorty argues that

> "The *Tractatus* had said: there can be no genuine discursive discipline which deals with those matters called 'the problems of philosophy' for *here* are the limits of language, and thus of discursive inquiry. The *Philosophical Investigations* said: there can be as much of a discipline as you care to develop, but do you really wish to do so?" (Rorty 1982, p. 20).

While the *Tractatus* in the Rortyan interpretation attempts (and fails) going beyond the "limits of language", the *Investigations* (successfully) attempts going beyond the going-beyond attitude. In the first case, this makes philosophy unified but (in some interpretations) nonsense, whereas plural and hence senseless or at least vague in the latter. From a Rortyan perspective, Conant and Diamond transform the later Wittgenstein's pluralist metaphilosophy into a unificationist metaphilosophy of a unified Wittgenstein.

Above I have argued that for Rorty, the explicit contrast between the early and the late Wittgenstein is a difference between mysticism and pragmatism, though I have assumed that regarding Rorty's purposes, a similarly significant contrast could be drawn between early representationalism and late antirepresentationalism. I have also assumed, in accordance with Rorty's interpretation, that the later Wittgenstein argued against representationalism via arguing against his own earlier views.

But if the contrast between the early and the late Wittgenstein is blurred, as therapist Wittgensteinians claim, it can have three alternative consequences. Firstly, an opposition between a representationalist and an antirepresentationalist should be seen as less sharp. This is clearly unacceptable for Rorty who sees the

representationalist-antirepresentationalist debate as central in the opposition between the Plato-Kant philosophical tradition and pragmatism. Secondly, Wittgenstein could not be understood as a represent-tationalist who later became an antirepresentationalist. But the *Tractatus* accepts a fact-proposition correspondence and hence it cannot be claimed to be an antirepresentationalist work (and therefore, if no turning point is supposed, the later Wittgenstein cannot be claimed to be an antirepresentationalist either). This would make the later Wittgenstein an uninteresting figure for Rorty – a too high price for showing limited sympathies toward the early Wittgenstein. Thirdly, one could also say that Wittgenstein's philosophy is discontinuous regarding the representationalist - antirepresentationalist debate, but his metaphilosophy is continuous regarding the mystical-pragmatist opposition. This would be a well-balanced harmonisation of the therapist view with the pragmatist one. But Rorty rejects this as well.

His reason to do so is nevertheless not that he has any philological arguments in order to support his understanding. On the contrary: Rorty says he *accepts* the therapist reading as valid, admitting that a possible reading of the book is that "Wittgenstein designed the *Tractatus* to be a self-consuming artifact" (Rorty 2007, p. 168). It would be a particularly Rortyan interpretation to say that the Tractatus is a masterpiece of deconstruction, intending to include its own ironic redescription in its final paragraphs with the claim that all that Wittgenstein said throughout the book do not touch upon its subject, precisely because of the untouchability of that subject.

It would also be a support for the sort of "thorough Wittgensteinianism" urged by Rorty when claiming the above-cited statement that "[w]hen Wittgenstein is at his best, he resolutely avoids [...] constructive criticism and sticks to pure satire" and that Wittgenstein "just makes fun of the whole idea that there is something here to be explained" (Rorty 1982, p. 34).

But Rorty has "no interest in undertaking the project Conant describes" (Rorty 2007, p. 169). He admits that he grounds his interpretation in a selective reading: "pragmatic Wittgensteinians agree with the therapists that there are *some* important links between early and late Wittgenstein", but "it would have better for Wittgenstein to have criticized the kind of philosophy he disliked on grounds of uselessness rather than as 'nonsense'" (Rorty 2007, p. 166). Even if one reads the *Tractatus* from its end backwards, the above-mentioned "Schopenhauerian" spirit places the early Wittgenstein on the side of mysticism in the mysticist - pragmatist opposition (Rorty 1991, p. 50) that proved to be unforgivable.

While arguing against Conant's reading of the *Tractatus,* Rorty dogmatically takes stance against the wild orchids in favour of Trotsky.

> "Admirers of Dewey like myself think that the point of reading philosophy books is not self-transformation but rather cultural change. It is not to find a way of altering one's inner state, but rather to find better ways of helping us overcome the past in order to create a better human future" (Rorty 2007, p. 169).

Pragmatist Wittgensteinians are pragmatists rather than Wittgensteinians or even Rortyans – where those views differ from each other, they, including Rorty himself, choose pragmatism.

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MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S INFLUENCE ON RICHARD RORTY'S PHILOSOPHY

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I) Introduction

In order to shed more light on the following train of thought I have to start with three general preliminary remarks about my topic.

1. *Philosophical influence appears mostly in the interpretations of the influenced*. It is almost always possible to write a monograph on the relationship of two world-famous philosophers. This is especially the case if they belong to essentially the same culture and one of them has confessed the other's influence. In addition, the earlier thinker had also evaluated openly the philosophical background of his latter „colleague," i. e. pragmatism. In the Heidegger-Rorty case, we can easily recognize such a situation.[1] Furthermore, the interpretations under consideration are also rich, multi-faceted, and show historical changes. As we have recognized in similar cases, it is also possible that the earlier philospher's influence is more considerable than the interpreting philosopher acknowledges it to be. (We can recognize this even in the case of Heidegger if we remember, e. g., Kierkegaard's influence.) Nevertheless, it is extremely easy to get lost in the field of hypotheses if we base our theory only on guesses. That is why I reconstruct first of all Rorty's own intentions, for he wanted to write a book on Heidegger, but he never completed this Heidegger monograph. However, he wrote on Heidegger many times independently from this intention. It has occurred in his writings from the 1970s in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (*CP*), through the pages of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (*PMN*), *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (*EHO*), *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (*CIS*) and *Philosophy and Social Hope* (*PSH*) to his posthumous work, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (*PCP*). We can also mention his interviews and lectures, in which Rorty evaluated and criticized Heidegger several times. Unquestionably, Heidegger is one of the thinkers who influenced Rorty's philosophical development very strongly: both his confrontation with analytic philosophers and his neopragmatic renaissance.

In the present case, however, I naturally have to limit the scope of my research. I am focusing, therefore, only on Rorty's interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy. I could have chosen several other special topics (truth, history, world, language, etc.), but I am persuaded that on a general level we can understand a relationship between two philosophers mostly through examining their interpretations of philosophy, since this provides a sort of frame for their thinking. On the following pages, using the method of philosophical hermeneutics, I will provide a general survey of Rorty's Heidegger-interpretation in the above mentioned field on the basis of his main books and papers.

2. *Our philosophers*. There might be lots of readers who do not know too much about Heidegger and Rorty. Let me summarize for them, in a short form, the main philosophical views of our philosophers.

Martin Heidegger (Sep 26, 1889 – May 26, 1976) achieved the ontological turn in Western philosophy and wanted to answer the question of Being (*Sein*) throughout his whole life. He combined his ontological approach with his transformed version of Husserlian phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics. (The latter was established by Heidegger himself in the 1920s.) The early Heidegger (1919-1929) wanted to fulfill his project in *Being and Time* (*BT*), that is, to create a fundamental ontology through an existential analysis of *Dasein*, but his work remained a torso. After „the Turn" (*die Kehre*, 1929-1935), the late Heidegger (1935-1976) evaluated his early work, *BT* as a subject-centered philosophy, and absolutely neglected the existential

[1] See Heidegger's and Rorty's main works and abbreviations in references

analysis. The late Heidegger focused directly on Being, on the history of Being and *Ereignis*.

Richard McKay Rorty (Oct 4, 1931 – Jun 8, 2007) is the founder of neopragmatism, an American, leftist patriot, who had a long and varied career. He thoroughly criticized analytic philosophy in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (*PMN*, 1979) and after leaving the analytic tradition he established neopragmatism (*CIS*, 1989) as an anti-metaphysical, anti-foundationalist, anti-essentialist, and naturalist, pan-relationist, meliorist philosophy. Rorty is one of those American philosophers, who also knows well the Continental tradition of philosophy in addition to Anglo-Saxon philosophical movements. He was influenced, first of all, by a tradition of post-Darwinian American philosophy (James, Dewey, Kuhn, Quine, Putnam, Davidson) and a tradition of post-Nietzschean European philosophy (Heidegger, Sartre, Gadamer, Derrida, Foucault).

3. *The structure of my paper*. Rorty's relation to Heidegger shows a historical change. It is worth distinguishing at least two main periods within Rorty's Heidegger-interpretation. Essentially, this distinction gives the structure of my paper together with the final chapter:

II/A Heidegger's influence on the early Rorty (1958-1979-1982)
II/B Heidegger's influence on the late Rorty (1983-1989-2007)
1. Rorty on the early Heidegger after 1989
2. Rorty on the late Heidegger after 1989
III Heidegger's Nazism from Rorty's point of view

II/A) Heidegger's influence on the early Rorty (1958-1979-1982)

a) *The early Rorty had already read lots of texts from the late Heidegger*. As we know, the late Heidegger did not think highly of traditional pragmatism, nevertheless the neopragmatic Rorty for the whole of his life treated Heidegger as one of the exceptional thinkers of Western philosophy. Rorty considered Heidegger the most influential European thinker regarding his own neopragmatic turn, although Heidegger received different emphases in different periods of Rorty's oeuvre due to the historical dimension of his interpretation. In one of his interviews in 1994, Rorty confessed the following:

> BORRADORI: Who is the „Continental" author who has had the most influence on your philosophy?
> RORTY: I would say, Martin Heidegger. I first read him in the late fifties because I was curious about what was happening in Europe.
> BORRADORI: Which Heidegger interested you most: the existential Heidegger of *Being and Time*, or the hermeneutic Heidegger of *Holzwege*?
> RORTY: At the beginning, the only work we knew about was *Being and Time*. Until the early sixties, even in Europe, Heidegger meant *Being and Time.*
> BORRADORI: In Italy today, some philosophers, like Gianni Vattimo, tend to unite the two phases of Heideggerian thought into a single curve, thereby incorporating the existential Heidegger into a new postmetaphysical perspective. What do you think?
> RORTY: I agree. I prefer to think that Heidegger struggled all his life to reach one objective: self-overcoming. The *Letter on Humanism* repudiates *Being and Time* in the same way that *What Is Thinking?* repudiates the *Letter on Humanism*. This is significant for the „Heidegger case" and his relationship to Nazism. (*TFT* 38-39)

Rorty regarded Heidegger's permanent self-transcendation as the inducement and essence of his oeuvre! However, we can recognize that Rorty did the same, but in a more radical way. There is obviously a self-conscious self-transcendation also in Rorty's oeuvre, but he does not stop there, where Heidegger does. Rorty admired talented, imaginative, provocative, and innovative thinkers, because he himself had a similar

personality. Rorty had a double vein, and during his whole life he always consciously tried to harmonize the dimensions of his private self-creation and his public life that was constantly connected to the purpose of a liberal democracy, that is, to solidarity, social justice, and freedom.[2]

In his very personal autobiography, „Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" (1992) Rorty has recollected the early results of Heidegger's philosophical influence in this way:

> About 20 years or so after I decided that the young Hegel's willingness to stop trying for eternity, and just be the child of his time, was the appropriate response to disillusionment with Plato, I found myself being led back to Dewey.[3] Dewey now seemed to me a philosopher who had learned all that Hegel had to teach about how to eschew certainty and eternity, while immunizing himself against pantheism by taking Darwin seriously. This rediscovery of Dewey coincided with my first encounter with Derrida (which I owe to Jonathan Arac, my colleague at Princeton). Derrida led me back to Heidegger, and I was struck by the resemblances between Dewey's, Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's criticisms of Cartesianism. Suddenly things began to come together. I thought I saw a way to blend a criticism of the Cartesian tradition with the quasi-Hegelian historicism of Michel Foucault, Ian Hacking and Alasdir MacIntyre. I thought that I could fit all these into a quasi-Heideggerian story about the tensions within Platonism. The result of this small epiphany was a book called *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. (*PSH* 11-12)

b) *The early Rorty had not interpreted the early Heidegger as a pragmatist yet.* The first period of Rorty's Heidegger-interpretation is the epoch of *PMN* and *CP*. When Rorty launched the *PMN* (1979) and when the *CP* was published (1982), it was just after his „conversion": he converted from analytic philosophy to neopragmatism that he had established. In those days we *cannot* speak about his pragmatist interpretation of *Being and Time*, because he recognized this possibility only after reading Robert Brandom's article in 1983[4] and Mark Okrent's book in 1988.[5] While writing the *Mirror*, Rorty had already known Heidegger after the 'Turn' (Kehre), for he had read Heidegger's works after the *Kehre* from the beginning of the 1960s, but he had not interpreted *Being and Time* as a pragmatist work.

c) *According to PMN, Heidegger is a revolutionary and edifying philosopher*. At the time, Rorty celebrated Heidegger, together with Dewey and the late Wittgenstein, only as one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century:

> It is against this background that we should see the work of the three most important philosophers of our century—Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey. (…) I present Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey as philosophers whose aim is to edify—to help their readers, or society as a whole, break free from outworn vocabularies and attitudes, rather than to provide „grounding" for the intuitions and customs of the present. (*PMN* 5, 11-12)

As is well-known, Rorty had shaken the whole traditional philosophy in the *Mirror* from his new meta-philosophical point of view. He brought into question not only the concept of 'analytic philosophy' by developing further the self-critique of the best representatives of that philosophical movement in those days (Sellars, Quine, Davidson, Ryle, Malcolm, Kuhn and Putnam), but even that of 'philosophy' itself. After analysing and repudiating the traditional concepts of 'mind', 'knowledge' and 'philosophy' in the three main parts of *PMN*, in its last chapter he classified philosophers with Kuhnian words into *normal* and *revolutionary* types. Then Rorty made a distinction within the revolutionary type between the *systematic* philosophers and the *edifying* philosophers:

> The mainstream philosophers are the philosophers I shall call „systematic," and the peripheral ones are those I shall call „edifying." These peripheral, pragmatic philosophers are skeptical primarily *about systematic philosophy*, about the whole project of universal commensuration. In our time, Dewey,

[2] See my treaties in refrences.
[3] Thus, it happened in the middle of the 1970s.
[4] Robert Brandom, „Heidegger's Categories in Being and Time," *The Monist*, 60 (1983)
[5] Mark Okrent. *Heidegger's Pragmatism*. Itacha, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988.

> Wittgenstein, and Heidegger are the great edifying, peripheral, thinkers. All three make it as difficult as possible to take their thought as expressing views on traditional philosophical problems, or as making constructive proposals for philosophy as a cooperative and progressive discipline. They make fun of the classic picture of man, the picture which contains systematic philosophy, the search for universal commensuration in a final vocabulary. They hammer away at the holistic point that words take their meanings from other words rather than by virtue of their representative character, and the corollary that vocabularies acquire their privileges from the men who use them rather than from their transparency to the real. (*PMN* 367-368)

But we cannnot speak about a pragmatist interpretation of the early Heidegger's philosophy neither in Rorty's *Mirror*, nor in Rorty's *CP*, which has first of all historical reasons. *CP* primarily contains Rorty's articles from the period of 1972-1980, that is those articles which were written before the *Mirror* or during the time he was writing the *Mirror* (e.g. "Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey" from 1976 and "Dewey's Metaphysics" from 1977). It would allude to a schizophrenic state of mind if the *CP*'s Heidegger-interpretation were greatly different from the *Mirror's* one.

d) *Heidegger's main conribution is his recounting of the history of ontology*. Husserl and Russell belong to the systematic philosophers, but Heidegger belongs to the edifying philosophers, and his greatest contribution is, according to Rorty, the historical awareness and critical distance achieved by his descriptions of the history of ontology. It has created historical distance from, and awarness of, the tradition of the history of ontology:

> But Wittgenstein's flair for deconstructing captivating pictures needs to be supplemented by historical awarness – awarness of the source of all this mirror-imagery – and that seems to me Heidegger's greatest contribution. Heidegger's way of recounting history of philosophy lets us see the beginnings of the Cartesian imagery in the Greeks and the metamorphoses of this imagery during the last three centuries. He thus lets us „distance" ourselves from the tradition. (*PMN* 12)

II/B) Heidegger's influence on the late Rorty (1983-1989-2007)

Rorty's neopragmatism has changed in the 1980s, because he did not express himself first of all in critiques (as he did in *PMN*), but he worked out his own views. They were published in his book, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989). His main aim here is to *deny* the possibility of a philosophical *single vision*, that is to refute the metaphysical type of philosophical theories which „allegedly" describe the essential, unchangeable structure of the world. Instead of this kind of philosophy, Rorty suggested we accept the *public-private distinction* not only in our everyday life, but also in the field of philosophy. In his opinion, we can speak about the philosophers of the public who deal with the questions of social development and about the philosophers of the private who deal first of all with the questions of self-creation, self-perfection. These mean different vocabularies, and we have to handle them separately like brushes and wrenches. They are—according to Rorty—different tools for different purposes, and it is prohibited to mix them. Rorty created also a new theory of *solidarity*, which says that solidarity is not given for us, but it is regarded as a goal to be achieved. He also sketched in *CIS* a *liberal utopia* which is a liberal democracy of the future created by the people who will be *liberal ironists*. This is a new type of human personality. According to Rorty, 'liberals are the people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we do.' He uses „ironist" 'to name the sort of person who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires' (*CIS* xv), that is if he or she accepts the contingency of the main columns of his or her life (language, self and community) (cf. *CIS* Ch 1, 2 and 3). His friend, Richard Bernstein claimed that there was an additional aesthetic strain to Rorty's writings that become more and more pronounced since the 1980s, a claim that Rorty accepted.

The second period of Rorty's Heidegger-interpretation started in 1983, when he read Brandom's above

mentioned article („Heidegger's Categories in Being and Time"). It is important to emphasize that Rorty wrote almost at the same time the Heidegger-texts of the *CIS* (published in 1989) and that of the *EHO* (published in 1991), that is, these text were written or altered in the second half of the 1980s. That is why *they are saturated essentially with the same Heidegger interpretation*. According to my thesis, (a) from the middle of the 1980s Rorty had interpreted Heidegger's *Being and Time* in a pragmatist way and (b) as a representative of the radical historicity. But Rorty had interpreted the late Heidegger first (a) as a representative of the radical historicity (it assured a kind of continuity in his Heidegger-interpretation); second (b) as a defender of poetry who was not radical enough; third (c) as a person who had opted for pragmatism in a wry and ironic way; and finally (d) as the refuser of the public sphere.

1) Rorty on the early Heidegger after 1989

a) *Rorty interprets the early Heidegger as a pragmatist from 1983*. The Rortyan evaluation of the early Heidegger is shown nicely in his following sentences:

> This qualified sympathy for pragmatism is clearest in *Being and Time*, the book which Dewey described as „sounding like a description of 'the situation' in transcendental German." In Part I of his *Heidegger's Pragmatism*, Mark Okrent has shown, very carefully and lucidly, how to read *Being and Time* as a pragmatist treatise. (…) With Okrent, I read Division One of *Being and Time* as a recapitulation of the standard pragmatist arguments against Plato and Descartes. I read Division Two, and in particular the discussion of Hegelian historicism, as recapitulating Nietzsche's criticism of Hegel's attempt to escape finitude by losing himself in the dramas of history. (*EHO* 32, 33)

Rorty accepts Brandom's, Okrent's and Charles Guignon's interpretation that the center of *Being and Time* is a critique of Cartesianism. These writers agree in thinking—as Rorty says—that „what Brandom describes as the recognition that social practice is determinative of what is and is not up to social practice is Heidegger's crucial insight in this work." (*EHO* 60-61) Brandom interprets as an expression of this recognition even the claim that the analytic of Dasein is fundamental ontology. As further examples we can mention the relationship between the ready-to-hand and the presence-at-hand entities, and also the question of truth. The existential-ontological primacy of the ready-to-hand to the presence-at-hand is possible exclusively on the basis of the pragmatic circumspective dealing (*Umgang*), which has a priority to discursive recognition. Similarly, the existential-ontological conception of truth can also lay the foundation of the epistemological truth only in the case of a pragmatist approach. Other examples of this from *Being and Time* could also be enumerated. In accordance with all of this Rorty claims that:

> One can imagine a possible Heidegger who, after formulating the Dewey-like social-practice pragmatism of the early sections of *Being and Time*, would have felt that his job was pretty well done. But the early Heidegger was driven by the same urge to *purity* which drove the early Wittgenstein. The same drives which led Heidegger to develop the notions of „authenticity" and „being-toward-death" in the later portions of *Sein und Zeit* led Wittgenstein to write the final section of the *Tractatus* – the sections in which the doctrine of showing is extended from logic to ethics. (*EHO* 60-61)

In harmony with this interpretation, Rorty claims in several places that Being does not even have an essential ontological role in *Being and Time*. In his opinion, Heidegger regarded Being only as a good example to emphasize the importance of *contingency*:

> The reason Heidegger talks about Being is not that he wants to direct our attention to an unfortunately neglected topic of inquiry, but that he wants to direct our attention to the difference between inquiry and poetry, between struggling for power and accepting contingency. He wants to suggest what a culture might be like in which poetry rather than philosophy-cum-science was the paradigmatic human activity. (*EHO* 36)

In other words, according to Rorty, Heidegger wanted to evocate the feeling of *contingency*, that is, the feeling of fragility and incalculability of the human activity already in *Being and Time*. He wanted to emphasize the feeling, the approach, that was almost absolutely destroyed by the metaphysical ontological tradition. One of the early

Heidegger's methods, formal indication (*formale Anzeige*) served also this aim. Probably not accidentally, but H.-G. Gadamer and J. Grondin characterized similarly formal indication as something that prohibits dogmatism and calls us on „personal fulfilment." (Cf. Gadamer 1994, Grondin 1991.) On the one hand, it follows from the basic feature of the Heideggerian phenomenological procedure that it must always be fulfilled personally, and the procedure cannot be shortened without casualties, for phenomena in the Heideggerian sense are always personal. On the other hand, using his conscious procedure of formal indication which prohibits dogmatism, Heidegger demonstrates that contingency identified as chance plays a very important role in our life. Rorty also claims on the basis of Heidegger's texts (including even his early ones), that the role of language has changed during Heidegger's philosophical development:

> The stock of language rises as that of Dasein falls, as Heidegger worries more and more about the possibility that his earlier work has been infected with the „humanism" characteristic of the age of the world picture, about the possibility that Sartre had not misread him, and that Husserl had had a point when he said that *Being and Time* was merely anthropology. More generally, Heidegger's turn from the earlier question „What are the roots of the traditional ontotheological problematic?" to the later question „Where do we stand in the history of Being?" is accompanied by a desperate anxiety that he be offering something *more* than, as he puts it, „simply a history of the alterations in human beings' self-conceptions." (*EHO* 62-63)

b) *The early Heidegger is still the representative of radical historicity for the late Rorty*. It is obvious if we know that in *Being and Time* human being's (*Dasein*) historicality does not follow from the history of the world, from the fact that we are „parts" of history. Quite the contrary, according to Heidegger we can create world-history exclusively because we are originally beings characterized by temporality and historicality. We cannot exist in other ways, and – according to the early Heidegger – even the so called „supernatural" is temporal (cf. *BT* § 5).

2) Rorty on the late Heidegger after 1989

a) *Radical historicity*. In the second epoch, the late Rorty continued to interpret the late Heidegger as a representative of radical historicity. What is more, Rorty saw the late Heidegger as a more radical representative of historicity than the early Heidegger, because not human being (*Dasein*) but Being (*Sein*) itself is characterized first of all by historicity according to the late Heidegger. Existential analysis was refuted by the late Heidegger as a kind of subject-centered philosophy. After his philosophical Turn (*Kehre*), that is after the period of 1929-1935, Heidegger did not see Being through Dasein (as he did in *BT*), but approached directly Being, which he regarded ab ovo historical and saw from here the entities. This is the period in Heidegger's oeuvre (1935-1976), when he deals with the history of Being, with different epochs of this history, and *Ereignis*. *The late Heidegger focused directly on Being, on the history of Being and Ereignis*. From his Turn on he has abandoned philosophy as *fundamentum absolutum et inconcussum*, and the *ab ovo* historical Being has become his philosophical starting point. In the frame of this history of Being, the history of the European culture and philosophy appeared as a procedure of the increasingly deeper and deeper oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*).

However, the general frame of his Heidegger interpretation (and that of the interpretation of other philosophers) is the age-long competition of philosophy and poetry in this period. Rorty interpreted even Heidegger's pragmatism within this frame. This connection, on the one hand, is emphasized in several of his texts (*CIS*, *EHO*, etc.) as his general philosophical intention. On the other hand, it also holds true with regard to his own intellectual development. Looking at his whole oeuvre from his analytic philosophy to his neopragmatism, it is obvious that he emphasized not only contingency and dominance of metaphors, but also the importance of literary culture.

b) *Competition between philosophy and poetry.* When comparing philosophy and poetry, the latter (and later – as we are going to see – the novel) is favoured by Rorty. In his opinion, from the 19th century on neither the theologian, nor the philosopher, nor the scientist, but much more the poet characterizes our epoch. As long as procedures, initiated by the French Revolution, Romantic poetry and classic German Idealism, made clear the idea that truth is made rather than found, the theologian, the philosopher, and the scientist were replaced by the poet as the main intellectual character of society. In one of his essays of 2004, „Philosophy as a transitional genre" – at the beginning of an earlier version of this article, accepting his friend and colleague, Richart Bernstein's claim, that the aesthetic feature is getting stronger and stronger in his oeuvre – Rorty expresses his viewpoint as follows:

> Equipped with these definitions of "redemptive truth" and "intellectual," I can now state my thesis. It is that the intellectuals of the West have, since the Renaissance, progressed through three stages: they have hoped for redemption first from God, then from philosophy, and now from literature. Monotheistic religion offers hope for redemption through entering into a new relation to a supremely powerful non-human person. Belief in the articles of a creed may be only incidental to such a relationship. For philosophy, however, true belief is of the essence: redemption by philosophy would consist in acquiring a set of beliefs that represent things in the one way they truly are. Literature, finally, offers redemption through making the acquaintance of as great a variety of human beings as possible. Here again, as with religion, true belief may be of little importance. (*PCP* 91)

The center of the literary culture is the so called *strong poet*. Thus Rorty in his *Contingency* book has showed the contingency of language with the help of Wittgenstein and Davidson, as he utilizes Nietzsche's and Freud's help for justification of the self's contingency. Everybody has a contingent personality, but only the strong poet can recognize in this the possibility of freedom, that is, the possibility of self-creation. Only the strong poet can transfer the freedom of recognized necessity into—as Rorty says—the freedom of „recognized contingency" (cf. *CIS* 40).

Who is the „strong poet"? As Rorty puts it, the strong poet is „someone like Galileo, Yeats, or Hegel (a „poet" in my wide sense of the term – the sense of „one who makes things new")" (*CIS* 12-13). Hence it follows that the „strong poet" is someone who is able to redescribe things in a way that creates a new vocabulary and changes human practice. It means that the strong poet can be regarded as the possible peak of the freedom understood as self-creation, someone who renews our way of approach, our social practice. It is true, however, also in connection with the strong poet, that his self is a center of narrative gravity, but he is more than an everyday person. He is more, because he creates the new redescriptions, the new narratives that are—with Rorty's words—the new *vocabularies*. The strong poet creates the new vocabularies with the help of *metaphors* that are expressions without clear and publicly accepted meanings. A metaphor is essentially a sign without a publicly accepted, common meaning. It will require a habitual use, a familiar place in a language game, and it will thereby have ceased to be a metaphor. It will have become a dead metaphor.

In Rorty's opinion, the strong poet's fear of death is always much stronger than that of everyday people. That is why Rorty ascribes far bigger possibilities to *poetry* than to philosophy in connection with the self-creation belonging to our private sphere, which can stand not only in harmony with the public sphere, but also – in several cases – in contradiction with it. As Rorty puts it:

> Only poets, Nietzsche suspected, can truly appreciate contingency. The rest of us are doomed to remain philosophers, to insist that there is really only one true lading-list, one true description of the human situation, one universal context of our lives. (*CIS* 28)

In the second chapter of his *Contingency* book, which is entitled „The Contingency of Selfhood," Rorty analyses the relevant views of Nietzsche and Freud. According to Rorty, Nietzsche gives an antidemocratic, but – at the same time – radical interpretation of individual freedom understood as self-creation (*CIS* 27-28):

> Nietzsche *saw self-knowledge as self-creation. The process of coming to know oneself, confronting one's contingency, tracking one's causes home, is identical with the process of inventing a new language - that is, of thinking up some new metaphors*. For any *literal* description of one's individuality, which is to say any use of an inherited language-game for this purpose, will necessarily fail. One will not have traced that idiosyncrasy home but will merely have managed to see it as not idiosyncratic after all, as a specimen reiterating a type, a copy or replica of something which has already been identified. *To fail as a poet - and thus, for Nietzsche, to fail as a human being - is to accept somebody else's description of oneself, to execute a previously prepared program, to write, at most, elegant variations on previously written poems.* (*CIS* 27-28. – Emphases added.)

This is what Heidegger did not want at all! He did not want to become a new philosopher in a queue. He wanted to create a philosophy which could *not* be transcended. From the 1930s, when he became preoccupied with Nietzsche (who had barely gotten a look-in in *Being and Time*) until his death, Heidegger concentrates – according to Rorty – only on one question

> "How can I avoid being one more metaphysician, one more footnote to Plato?" (…) For Heidegger, this task presented itself as the task of how to work within a final vocabulary while somehow simultaneously "bracketing" that vocabulary - to keep the seriousness of its finality while letting it itself express its own contingency. He wanted to construct a vocabulary which would both constantly dismantle itself and constantly take itself seriously. (*CIS* 110 and 112)

However, Rorty says, this is exactly what Heidegger could not manage. One of the examples of the strong poet, worked out in the fifth chapter of the *Contingency* book, is Martin Heidegger himself. In this chapter, Rorty distinguishes the ironist theory and the ironist novel from metaphysics, and from the competition of the two former ones the ironist novel wins, which also is able to avoid the metaphysical features. The ironist artist creates his works according to the standard of beauty, but the ironist theorist always wants to grasp the universal presuppositions of *sublimity*, and he always suffers a defeat in this way. *Sublimity always creates metaphysics*. It follows from this – in Rorty's opinion – that Heidegger himself had also suffered a defeat in this sense. He could not solve the paradox: „how can we write a historical narrative about metaphysics – about successive attempts to find a redescription of the past which the future will not be able to redescribe – without ourselves becoming metaphysicians?" (*CIS* 108) It means that Heidegger could not become a defender of such radical poetry.

At that time, Rorty had undoubtedly already read the early Heidegger as a pragmatist and the late Heidegger as a radical representative of historicality. In Rorty's opinion, however, the late Heidegger—„thinking from the *Ereignis* (the event, the happening, the appropriation)," instead of telling a narrative on the History of Being and Truth—is still a Nietzschean ascetic priest, since his procedure remains essentially the same as that of Plato and Augustine. Heidegger also creates the distinguished place of his own thinking and claims his story as *the only remarkable* story. Meanwhile, he leaves his fellow humans alone, because he does not deal with their problems and features himself as the saver of his epoch precisely by his abstention from action. As an ascetic priest, however, he hopes that he will be able to cleanse himself of, and to distance himself from, what he is looking at. This hope drives him to the thought that there must be some kind of cleansing *askesis* which makes him able to contact with the Wholly Other, to be saturated with the *Openness to Being* (cf. *EHO* 70).

It is enough to recall the charge of the oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*) and the question of Being (*Frage nach dem Sein*) or later this Wholly Other, and Heidegger's essentialism becomes entirely obvious, which is—in Rorty's opinion of the 1990s—already a characteristic of philosophy and poetry. Rorty contrasts with this the novel and its Kundera's interpretation, that is, he opposes the essentialist culture to the narrative culture, because the former one is featured by philosophy and poetry, but the latter one by novel. As long as the former one is the society of the Thinker and the Poet, the latter one is the society of the intellectuals

who are able to renew themselves permanently by the force of imagination. (Rorty offers a longer description of that story in his article, „Heidegger, Kundera, Dickens," published in *EHO*.)

But Rorty is also disturbed by the reification of language in the philosophy of the late Heidegger. As we have already seen, the value of language rises as that of Dasein falls in Heidegger's eyes. While language does not have a distinguished role in *Being and Time*, in the 1947 *Letter on Humanism* it is already „the house of Being,"[6] and from 1951 sentences of the following kind can be read:

> Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man. (…) For, strictly, it is language that speaks. Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal. (*Poetry, Language, Thought* 213-214)

Rorty understands that Heidegger wants to grasp language not merely as a tool, as Dewey and Wittgenstein did, but as something more than a tool. The late Heidegger treated language as if it were „a quasi-agent, a brooding presence, something that stands over and against human beings." (*EHO* 3) It means that Rorty criticizes Heidegger in *EHO*, because he does not handle language in a naturalistic, Darwinian way, but—in some sense accepting still the Diltheyan distinction between *Geist* and *Natur*—he looks at language as if it would be a kind of „God." Critiques written in his article, „Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the reification of language" mean Rorty's protest against „letting „Language" become the latest substitute for „God" or „Mind" – something mysterious, incapable of being described in the same terms in which we describe tables, trees, and atoms" (*EHO* 4). The next sentences summarize the essence of Rorty's actual Heidegger-critique clearly:

> But although the younger Heidegger worked hard to free himself from the notion of the philosopher as spectator of time and eternity, from the wish to see the world from above „as a limited whole," the older Heidegger slipped back into a very similar idea. The limited whole which that Heidegger tried to distance himself from was called „metaphysics" or „the West." For him, „the mystical" became the sense of himself as „thinking after the end of metaphysics" – as looking back on metaphysics, seeing it as a limited, rounded-off whole – and thus as something we might hope to put behind us. The old Heidegger's final vision was of the West as a single gift of Being, a single *Ereignis*, a chalice with one handle labeled „Plato" and the other „Nietzsche," complete and perfect in itself – and therefore, perhaps, capable of being set to one side. (*EHO* 51)

The exceptional philosophical importance of the late Heidegger's thoughts is without question, but his self-overestimation cannot be accepted from a pragmatist point of view, because it is still burdened with metaphysical remains:

> *But the reification of language in the late Heidegger is simply a stage in the hypostatization of Heidegger himself* – in the transfiguration of Martin Heidegger from one more creature of his time, one more self constituted by the social practices of his day, one more reactor to the work of others, *into a world-historical figure, the first postmetaphysical thinker*. The hope for such transfiguration is the hope that there is still the possibility of something called „thinking" after the end of philosophy. It is the hope that the thinker can avoid immersion in the „always already disclosed," avoid *relationality*, by following a single star, thinking a single thought. (…) From the later Wittgenstein's naturalistic and pragmatic point of view, we can be grateful to Heidegger for having given us a new language-game. *But we should not see that language-game as Heidegger did* – as a way of distancing and summing up the West. It was, instead, simply one more in a long series of self-conceptions. *Heideggerese is only Heidegger's gift to us, not Being's gift to Heidegger.* (*EHO* 64 and 65. – Emphases added.)

c) *Heidegger and pragmatism*. We can see in the late Heidegger not only a change in his relation to the Western philosophical tradition, but also to pragmatism. His relative sympathy with pragmatism in *Being and Time* has changed into a wry and ironic opting for pragmatism. Rorty starts his article, „Heidegger,

[6] Martin Heidegger. *Basic Writings*. (ed. by David Farrell Krell) San Francisco: Harper, 1992, 217.

Contingency, and Pragmatism" (1991) with a claim regarding Heidegger after his philosophical Turn (*Kehre*):

> One of the most intriguing features of Heidegger's later thought is his claim that if you begin with Plato's motives and assumptions you will end up with some form of pragmatism. I think that this claim is, when suitably interpreted, right. But, unlike Heidegger, I think pragmatism is a *good* place to end up. (*EHO* 27)

In this article, Rorty shows the possibility for a pragmatist to go together with Heidegger, and also the point where they have to split their ways. *Rorty analyzes first Heidegger's charge againts pragmatism, then refutes the philosophical presuppositions of Heidegger's charge, and in this way – in the end – the defendant becomes the accusant, and the accusant becomes the defendant.* According to Heidegger's charge, the history of Western philosophy looks like an escalator moving down, and nobody can get off before the end station, which is pragmatism. Heidegger summarized these conceptional transformations in the second volume of his Nietzsche book, under the title, „Sketches for a History of Being as Metaphysics." This condensed the history of Western philosophy stretches from the Greek researches of final principles and substances greater than human beings, to the American conviction that its ultimate goal is a technologically developed society with things dominated by humans. If somebody accepts Plato's starting point, then she will wind up on this downward moving escalator with Nietzsche and, as Rorty ironically says, „worse yet, Dewey." According to Plato's starting point the only sense of human thinking is the search for unconditional certainty. That is why Aristotle also claims in *Metaphysics* that above all, philosophy is a science of „ulimate reasons." The entire history of metaphysics, in the sense of this onto-teological tradition which cuts out chance and contingency, is only a sequence of such interpretations of things, which aims at the ultimate certainty and wants – with Kant's expression – to lead philosophy on the safe way of sciences. However, after centuries it became obvious that at the end of these philosophical attempts „the only thing we can be certain about is what we want" (*EHO* 29). But, it means that Plato's requirement of the absolute certainty leads us necessarily to pragmatism, that is – according to Heidegger – we can consequently fulfill Plato's aim only as pragmatists:

> Once we take this final step, once human desires are admitted into the criterion of „truth," the last remnants of the Platonic idea of knowledge as contact with an underlying nonhuman order disappear. *We have become pragmatists*. But we only took the path that leads to pragmatism because Plato told us that we had to take evidence and certainty, and therefore skepticism, seriously. *We only became pragmatists because Plato and Aristotle already gave us a technical, instrumental account of what thinking was good for*. (*EHO* 30. – Emphases added.)

In Rorty's interpretation, Heidegger says that „if one is going to stay within this tradition, then one might as well be a pragmatist… So, if the only choice is between Platonism and pragmatism, Heidegger would wryly and ironically opt for pragmatism." (*EHO* 32) The direct reason of his recognition – in Rorty's opinion – that can already be read in his works at the beginning of the 1920s and on the pages of *Being and Time* is that Heidegger woke up to the truth that *contingency* is a permanent part of our lives. The signs of this recognition are, among others, that the early Heidegger became a *philosophical atheist* (cf. *GA* 61); he used consequently the above mentioned *formal indication*; and, within the so called ontological difference, he understood *even Being only as a phenomenon*. It is clear from all of this that Heidegger wanted to preserve the force of the most elemental words already in *Being and Time* (cf. *EHO* 34), and language became more and more important in his philosophy. Rorty understands these distinguished, most elemental words as metaphors, and that is why this tendency of Heidegger's philosophy means for him the victory of poetry over philosophy in the late Heidegger (cf. *EHO* 34-35).

Focusing now on a thought that seems to be a mistake at the first glance, it is Rorty's opinion that Being is not essential for the early Heidegger. I am persuaded that this short excursus of his article, „Heidegger,

contingency, and pragmatism" (cf. *EHO* 36-39) has a dominant role in Rorty's line of thought, because he here offers us Heidegger's philosophical presuppositions of his charge against pragmatism, and Rorty shows the contradiction within Heidegger's viewpoint. This context gives the reason for Rorty's strong, neopragmatic Heidegger-interpretation, and it would be difficult to question, from this point of view, that it is a just interpretation. At the same time, it is clear to him what he is doing in his critical Heidegger-interpretation:

> I think that Heidegger goes on and on about „the question about Being" without ever answering it *because Being is a good example of something we have no criteria for answering questions about*. (…) The crucial move in this redescription, as I read Heidegger, is his suggestion that we see the metaphysician's will to truth as a self-concealing form of the poetic urge. *He wants us to see metaphysics as an inauthentic form of poetry, poetry which* thinks of itself as antipoetry, a sequence of metaphors whose authors thought of them as escapes from metaphoricity. He wants us to recapture the force of the most elementary words of Being – the words on the list above, the words of the various Thinkers who mark the stages of our descent from Plato – by ceasing to think of these words as the natural and obvious words to use. We should instead think of this list as as *contingent* as the contours of an individual cherry blossom. (*EHO* 36 and 37. – Emphases added.)

What is Being then? *„Being is what vocabularies are about*… More precisely, Being is what *final* vocabularies are about" (*EHO* 37). We can learn from the *Contingency* book and also from *EHO*, that final vocabularies are not created by the individuals. Final vocabularies are given in a historical way, and we only grow into them, and that is why we can also become aware of their contingency only after acquiring them. If Being cannot be anything else as the final vocabulary of the actual philosophy (e. g. *physis* or *subiectum* or *Wille zur Macht*, which are just abbreviations for whole vocabularies – cf. *EHO* 37), then Being is not the same thing under all descriptions, but is something different under each. It follows from this, that *none of the descriptions of Being could be more or less a true understanding of Being than any other*. If this claim is acceptable, then Rorty is right to ask whether Heidegger „has any business disliking pragmatism as much as he does"? (*EHO* 39) Rorty's answer seems very clear. Sometimes Heidegger seems to accept this logical consequence, „but often, as his use of the term „Forgetfulness of Being" suggests, he seems to be saying the opposite." (*EHO* 39)

d) *Heidegger and politics*. All of the preceding leads us to the political dimension of Rorty's Heidegger-interpretation which is very consistent. Both in the *Contingency* book and in the *EHO*, Rorty presents his viewpoint that Heidegger has never been a believer of solidarity or democracy. In one of his articles, „Philosophy as science, as metaphor, and as politics" Rorty wants to show not only the three main versions of how we conceived of our relation to the Western philosophical tradition in the 20th century, but he also emphasizes the similarities and differencies between Heidegger's and Dewey's philosophy (cf. *EHO* 9). They both refused foundationalism and visual metaphors, but the refusal itself took radically different forms in their works. Rorty examines these differences under two headings. On the one hand, Rorty analyzes their different treatments of the relationship between the metaphorical and the literal. On the other hand, he analyzes their different attitudes towards the relation between philosophy and politics. Only the latter thorough analysis is important for us now:

> The pragmatist would grant Heidegger's point that the great thinkers are the most idiosyncratic. They are the people like Hegel or Wittgenstein whose metaphors come out of nowhere, lightning bolts which blaze new trails. But whereas Heidegger thinks that the task of exploring these newly suggested paths of thought is banausic, something which can be left to hacks, the pragmatist thinks that such exploration is the pay-off from the philosopher's work. He thinks of the thinker as serving the community, and of his thinking as futile unless it is followed up by a reweaving of the community's web of belief. That reweaving will assimilate, by gradually literalizing, the new metaphors which the thinker has provided. The proper honor to pay to new, vibrantly alive metaphors, is to help them become dead metaphors as quickly as possible, to rapidly reduce them to the status of tools of social

> progress. The glory of the philosopher's thought is not that it initially makes everything more difficult (though that is, of course true), but that in the end it makes things easier for everybody. (…) Whereas Heidegger thinks of the social world as existing for the sake of the poet and the thinker, the pragmatist thinks of it the other way round. For Dewey as for Hegel, the point of individual human greatness is its contribution to social freedom, where this is conceived of in the terms we inherit from the French Revolution. (*EHO* 17 and 18)

It is obvious for Rorty, that the essential difference between the Heideggerian and pragmatist attitude towards the philosophical tradition stems from a difference in attitude towards recent political history. As I above mentioned, Rorty always had a double vein and kept himself as the heir of Dewey in some sense. As a precocious child, Rorty had dealt both with the natural but nominous beauty and botanic characteristics of the North American wild orchids, and – according to the Trotskyist tradition of his family – with the life of the oppressed, the poor. (cf. *PSH* 6-7). During his entire life, Rorty tried to reconcile the private and the public dimensions of his personality. As for Dewey, he was admired not by the philosopher who discussed for decades the nitty-gritty questions of truth, but the thinker who was able to give visions for his audience and readers. Essentially the meliorism of the traditional pragmatism and Dewey's social democratic commitment belong to the heritage, which is undertaken consciously by Rorty. Dewey and Rorty are both philosophers of democracy. Rorty's true political commitment can be seen first of all in his *Achieving Our Country*, but he gave voice to his liberal utopia (do not forget that in Europe „liberal" means *social democratic*) in several of his works (*CIS*, *EHO*, *PSH*) and interviews.

As for Heidegger, Rorty admired his philosophical talent, but disliked his anti-democratic attitude and political and social awkwardness. Heidegger „was a miserable human being, but he was also a man of great imaginative power, whose influence will endure" (*TFT* 94). What Rorty wrote on Nabokov in his *Contingency* book (*CIS* 141-168) is valid also – mutatis mutandis – even in connection with Heidegger. As Nabokov was chasing artistic perfection, so Heidegger was chasing the perfection of the philosophical self-creation and became cold-hearted toward the pains of the others in some sense. However, Nabokov was aware of it, and he suffered even from its possibility, but Heidegger visibly did not care about that. According to Habermas, in 1945 Heidegger saw the Holocaust and the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe as two instances of the same phenomenon (cf. *EHO* 69). In accordance with all of these Rorty says that

> although Heidegger was only accidentally a Nazi, Dewey was essentially a social democrat. His thought has no point when detached from social democratic politics. His pragmatism is an attempt to help achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number by facilitating the replacement of language, customs, and institutions which impede that happiness. Heidegger dismissed this attempt as one which we can no longer take seriously. (…) The pragmatist agrees with both Husserl and Heidegger (and with Horkheimer and Adorno) that the age of scientific technology *may* turn out to be the age in which openness and freedom are rationalized out of existence. But his reply is that it *might* turn out to be the age in which the democratic community becomes the mistress, rather than the servant, of technical rationality. (…) My preference for Dewey over Heidegger is based on the conviction that what Heidegger wanted – something that was not a calculation of means to ends, not power madness – was under his nose all the time. It was the new world which began to emerge with the French Revolution – a world in which future-oriented politics, romantic poetry, and irreligious art made social practices possible in which Heidegger never joined. He never joined them because he never really looked outside of philosophy books. (*EHO* 19 and 20, plus 48 and 49)

III) Heidegger's Nazism from Rorty's point of view

Heidegger's Nazism is naturally also part of the Heidegger-Rorty relationship. The first reason is that questions like „Has Heidegger's politics influenced his philosophy?" and „Can we evaluate his philosophy according to his personality?" belong indirectly to the whole of Heidegger's philosophy. The second reason is that Rorty himself took up a position on the question of Heidegger's Nazism, where the turbulent debates

contained many exaggerations. *These debates will not be dealt with here*. On the one hand, I neglect them, because the analysis of those arguments would need a monograph. On the other hand, I am persuaded that the *philosophical* essence of the debates does not rest on a choice of whether or not Heidegger was a Nazi. It is a question of „facts" first of all. The only interesting question here is from a philosophical point of view, namely, to what extent and how Heidegger's Nazism influenced his philosophy. *This* is the really important question that needs serious consideration, because we can exclusively understand the merits of the problem only if we have thoroughly thought through the relationships between personality and its intellectual products. Specifically, the relationships between personality and philosophy, and between morality and philosophy.

In my opinion, Rorty's viewpoint is worth mentioning for at least four reasons:

1) On the one hand, Rorty claims clearly that Heidegger was a Nazi. It is part of their relationship, because Rorty sees the main difference between their personalities in their different relations to politics and democracy:

> I would grant that Heidegger was, from early on, suspicious of democracy and of the 'disenchanted' world which Weber described. His thought was, indeed, essentially anti-democratic. But lots of Germans who were dubious about democracy and modernity did not become Nazis. Heidegger did because he was both more of a ruthless opportunist and more of a political ignoramus than most of the German intellectuals who shared his doubts. Although Heidegger's philosophy seems to me not to have specifically *totalitarian* implications, it does take for granted that attempts to feed the hungry, shorten the working day, etc., just do not have much to do with philosophy. For Heidegger, Christianity is merely a certain decadent form of Platonic metaphysics; the change from pagan to Christian moral consciousness goes unnoticed. The 'social gospel' side of Christianity which meant most to Tillich (a social democratic thinker who was nevertheless able to appropriate a lot of Heideggerian ideas and jargon) meant nothing to Heidegger. (*EHO* 19)

2) On the other hand, Rorty makes it clear in several places that personality and philosophy do *not* stand together necessarily and directly. In his opinion, we cannot justify a perfect and direct congruence of personality with philosophy, although they surely influence each other:

> QUESTIONER: Habermas has been active in the current debates over Martin Heidegger's Nazism, arguing that a deep connection exists between Heidegger's fascism and his philosophy. Others, such as Derrida, have downplayed the connection. Where do you stand on that question?
> RORTY: I think Heidegger's philosophy and his politics can be explained on the basis of some of the same biographical facts. But I don't think the politics contaminate the philosophy. You can explain Sartre's Stalinism by reference to the same biographical facts that gave rise to *Being and Nothingness*, but I don't think that book is contaminated by the Stalinism. (*TFT* 32-33)

3) It follows from all of this that Rorty does not share those arguments that reject Heidegger's philosophy just because of political and/or moral reasons.

4) Finally, Rorty has ascribed a distinguished role also to *moral luck*. It follows first of all from his conception of personality which says that every personality is a center of narrative gravity, and its negative content is the exclusion of any kind of final, metaphysical center of personality. *Self* – as it has been shown in the 2nd chapter of *CIS* – is only a permanently changing, narratively centered network of beliefs and desires without any final, metaphysical center or essence. On the basis of this, Rorty thinks that *one's moral attitude can be considered also a case of luck in many situations*. It is much easier to keep our moral attitude if we do not get into such situations where difficult moral decisions should or must be made among extreme circumstances. If we want to demonstrate moral luck in the simplest way, we should perhaps take an example from the field of bioethics. One of the best examples is organ transplantation. As long as you are not asked to donate one of your kidneys to your son, whose life is at stake (or at least you could free your son from the misery of dialysis), you can easily keep your moral attitude when

telling others about your hypothetically positive decision. What is more, you are absolutely lucky if such difficult moral situations can be avoided during your entire life. In this case, you could evaluate your own moral attitude very positively and never learn what the situation would be like if you personally experienced such an extremely difficult moral situation or you had to live through your moral failure.

Rorty is persuaded that even Heidegger's personality would have been different if his way of life had a morally luckier proceeding. Imagining for Heidegger another fictive, but possible way of life, Rorty shows, on the one hand, that there is no direct and necessary connection between one's personality and one's philosophy. On the other hand, he gives a special example of his contingency principle with this witty solution, because he shows that chances are not only much more important in our life than we believe, but we cannot eliminate them.

If we take a longer quote from Rorty's article, „On Heidegger's Nazism" (1990), it will demonstrate exceptionally well the content of the first three points:

> In our actual world, Heidegger was a Nazi, a cowardly hypocrite, and the greatest European thinker of our time. In the possible world I have sketched, he was pretty much the same man, but he happened to have his nose rubbed in the torment of the Jews until he finally *noticed* what was going on, until his sense of pity and his sense of shame were finally awakened. In that world he had the good luck to have been unable to become a Nazi, and so to have had less occasion for cowardice or hypocrisy. In our actual world, he turned his face away, and eventually resorted to hysterical denial. This denial brought on his unforgivable silence. But that denial and that silence do not tell us much about the books he wrote, nor conversely. In both worlds, the only link between Heidegger's politics and his books is the contempt for democracy he shared with, for example, Eliot, Chesterton, Tate, Waugh and Paul Claudel – people whom, as Auden predicted, we have long since pardoned for writing well. We could as easily have pardoned Heidegger his attitude towards democracy, if that had been all. But in the world without Sarah, the world in which Heidegger had the bad luck to live, it was not all.
>
> To sum up: I have been urging that we can find in the early Heidegger's pragmatic antiessentialism reasons for abandoning the attempt to see the man and the books in a single vision, and perhaps even the attempt to see the books as stages on a single *Denkweg*. If we take that antiessentialism more seriously than Heidegger himself proved able to take it, we shall not be tempted to dratmatize Heidegger in the way in which he dramatized his favourite thinkers and poets. We shall not assign thinkers and poets places in a world-historical narrative. We shall see both them and their books as vector sums of contingent pressures. We shall see Heidegger as one more confused, torn, occasionally desperate, human being, someone much like ourselves. We shall read Heidegger's books as he least wanted them read—as occasions for exploitation, recent additions to our *Bestand an Waren*. We shall stop yearning for depth, and stop trying either to worship heroes or to hunt down criminals. Instead, we shall settle for useful tools, and take them where we can find them. (*PSH* 196-197)

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RICHARD RORTY'S SELLARSIAN UPTAKE

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Introduction

Acknowledgments of the importance of other thinkers frequently pepper Richard Rorty's writings in an offhanded, name-dropping sort of way. These mentions serve to bring to mind the general spirit if not the exact letter of these others' works, and Rorty used this to emphasize resonances between his positions and those he brought up while simultaneously downplaying (or just leaving out) their differences. Wilfrid Sellars is one philosopher who received this treatment; his name appears throughout Rorty's work, but most of these mentions are cursory and lack reference to any particular quotation or essay.

This is primarily an introduction to the influence of Wilfrid Sellars's thought in the work of Richard Rorty. In a short paper like this, it is necessary for important issues to be deemphasized and, in some cases, ignored. Despite this, because Rorty claimed that during his PhD training at Yale "Sellars became my new philosophical hero, and for the next twenty years most of what I published was an attempt to capitalize on his achievements,"[1] a key to understanding the origins and development of Rorty's thought is understanding at least something of Sellars's. Exploring the relationship between these two thinkers could easily sustain a book-length work, and each of the points of contact I take up here rightly deserves its own essay. Nonetheless, by briefly looking at three marginally interrelated themes, a preliminary picture of Rorty's Sellarsian inheritance emerges. This picture shows that while Rorty clearly took up Sellarsian insights, many of these were utilized in ways somewhat different than Sellars intended.

Inarguably, Rorty's most influential writing is the 1979 *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. In this book, he engaged directly with Sellars's most widely-read piece, the 1956 "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." As is well-known, this essay is "a general critique of the entire framework of givenness,"[2] the upshots of which Rorty applied and extended in ways somewhat at odds with Sellars's own conclusions. This paper's first section will explore Rorty's use of Sellars's arguments against and response to "The Myth of the Given."

The second section moves from the epistemological sphere to the metaphysical. In particular, I intend to see what application the overused term 'naturalism' has for both writers. Necessarily related to this is the question of what role scientific inquiry plays for each of them. The influence I argue for here is potentially more tenuous than that explored in either of the other two sections, largely because Rorty's commitments are difficult to nail down and his reading of Sellars's position is, stated charitably, shaky.

Finally, I will take up an ethical theme, the role of what Sellars called "we-intentions." His writings on this topic are especially complex and obscure, a worrying fact when the notorious difficulty of the rest of his work is kept in mind. Sellars's thoughts on this topic are almost entirely ignored, even among notable Sellarsians. One of the few contemporary thinkers to identify his ethical positions as directly descended from Sellars's is Rorty. Their positions differ, however, in important respects. From Rorty's exploration and practicalization of Sellars's arguments, important insights may be gained. Most important is a shift which allows Sellars's claims to touch ground, providing applicability for an otherwise systematic and interesting but altogether too rarified metaethical schema.

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[1] Richard Rorty, "Intellectual Autobiography," in *The Philosophy of Richard Rorty, Vol. 32 in The Library of Living Philosophers*, Randall E. Auxier and Lewis Edwin Hahn, eds. (Chicago: Open Court Press, 2009), p. 8.

[2] Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 14.

While much of the secondary literature on Rorty's work contains reference to his dependence on Sellars's epistemological and metaphysical insights, almost no one mentions the impact of his ethical work.[3] Because the already more-explored connections involve the best-known portions of Sellars's work, this paper's longest section is the third: by working through the role of Sellarsian ethics in a Rortian context, two underappreciated birds will be hit with but one stone.

Rejecting "The Myth of the Given" – and Then Some

So many elements of Richard Rorty's later works can be traced back to insights and arguments found in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. The rejection of foundationalist epistemology undertaken there had wide-ranging impact, opening for Rorty particular research paths while precluding him from others. Central to the arguments in that piece is what Rorty called Sellars's "attack on logical empiricism … that … raise[s] questions about the epistemic privilege which logical empiricism claims for certain assertions, qua reports of privileged representations."[4] Rorty relied heavily on Sellars's attempt to bring a behaviorist critique to the privileged access of 'mental states' empiricism has long held:

> Sellars asks how the authority of first-person reports of, for example, how things appear to us, the pains from which we suffer, and the thoughts that drift before our minds differs from the authority of expert reports on, for example, metal stress, the mating behavior of birds, or the colors of physical objects.[5]

Traditionally, following Descartes and others who endorse substance dualisms, a strong distinction has been held between the latter category of items, which includes the physical stuff of the world, and the former, which is made up of the mental events to which the only possible access is privileged and private. But with this distinction made suspect, with the separations between 'mind' and 'body' and 'inner' and 'outer' brought into question, how can the authority of these seemingly disparate kinds of reports be unified?

Sellars located the answer to this in a critique of givenness, his rejection of the position that there can be knowledge about pre-conceptual perceptual experiences, the results of which apply—*mutatis mutandis*—to Rorty's worries about the privilege of mental discourse. Sellars went on to explain, "the point of the epistemological category of the given is, presumably, to explicate the idea that empirical knowledge rests on a 'foundation' of non-inferential knowledge of matters of fact,"[6] a summary that suggests his critique applies to foundationalist epistemology generally.

Sellars presented the difficulty of 'givenness' accounts as an inconsistent triad:

A. *X senses red sense content s* entails *x non-inferentially knows that s is red*.
B. The ability to sense sense contents is unacquired.
C. The ability to know facts of the form *x is ϕ* is acquired.

A and B together entail not-C; B and C entail not-A; A and C entail not-B.[7]

Each of these three propositions is in some way fundamental to traditional empirical accounts of knowledge, and each seems remarkably intuitive. The first suggests that when one looks upon an object and sees that it is red, he or she knows it is red. The second speaks to humans having bodies that allow them to interact at a basic level with their environments without training. The third, which is where Sellars's nominalism is on full display, indicates that the particular objects to which and ways in which humans have come to assign

[3] An important exception to this is Christopher J. Voparil's *Richard Rorty: Politics and Vision* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), which contains three explicit references to Sellars's writings as the launching pad for important parts of Rorty's ethics.
[4] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 173.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 19.
[7] Ibid., p. 21.

the labels of 'subject' and 'predicate', and even that humans divide the world in this way at all, is contingent.

Consequently, something like this inconsistent triad also has had significant impact on traditional understandings of language acquisition: historically, it was thought that children acquired language by their parents repetitiously pointing out given objects and conjointly using identifying terms. Sellars, following Ludwig Wittgenstein, referred to this account of language-learning as 'Augustinian', though this is in large part caricature.[8] Regardless, Sellars noticed that for this picture of language acquisition to make sense, children would have to have non-inferential access to the way in which the world's myriad objects are divided one from another prior to learning their names. Said more directly, on this view, children are required to have concepts before they have learned how the world is to be conceptualized, which seems to involve a linguistic miracle.

Sellars argued at length that "instead of coming to have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing, to have the ability to notice a sort of thing is already to have the concept of that sort of thing and cannot account for it."[9] As he wished to save the second two propositions of the inconsistent triad and still make sense of language-acquisition, Sellars jettisoned the first proposition, suggesting that there is an inference necessary to move from sensation to knowledge. The majority of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" is an extended argument that such inferences should be understood as causal necessities, rather than foundations, for knowledge. Robert Brandom has summarized the upshot of this, especially in reference to language and concept-acquisition, by saying that "in order to master *any* concepts, one must master *many* concepts. For grasp of one concept consists in mastery of at least some of its inferential relations to other concepts. ... [T]o be able to apply one concept noninferentially, one must be able to use others inferentially."[10]

Sellars noted that a consequence of rejecting the first proposition in the trilemma and accepting the other two is that

> all awareness of *sorts, resemblances, facts,* etc., in short all awareness of abstract entities—indeed, all awareness even of particulars—is a linguistic affair. Accordingly, not even the awareness of such sorts, resemblances, and facts as pertain to so-called immediate experience is presupposed by the process of acquiring the use of language.[11]

This claim, that all awareness is linguistic, provided the launching point for Rorty's later claims that human knowledge and experience of reality is linguistic. At first blush, this seems a reasonable extension of Sellars' claim, for Rorty could argue that for the stuff of experience to be experienced, one must be aware of the experiencing. Likewise for knowledge: for generalizations, categories, and facts as such to come to be requires that one first be aware of their referents during the process of generalization, categorization, fact-finding, and so on. By subsuming all awareness under the heading of linguistic behavior, Sellars's position extended the reaches of language throughout much of human life and inquiry, though not as far as Rorty's ultimately did.

This tension between Sellars himself and Rorty's use of Sellars arises because, as Teed Rockwell argues in his "The Hard Problem is Dead…,"[12] Rorty was not attentive to later Sellarsian texts in constructing his arguments in

[8] See, for instance, Christopher Kirwan's "Augustine's philosophy of language," in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 186.
[9] Wilfrid Sellars, op. cit., p. 87.

[10] Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 49.
[11] Wilfrid Sellars, op. cit., p. 63.
[12] Teed Rockwell, "The Hard Problem is Dead; Long live the hard problem," unpublished manuscript, available online, http://www.cognitivequestions.org/hardproblem.html. In this piece Rockwell comments extensively on Rorty's use and misuse of the Sellarsian reply to "The Myth of the Given," ultimately showing that John Dewey and Sellars are more in line than Rorty and either of the two.

Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, texts that show a striking ambivalence toward awareness's linguistic character. While the Sellars of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" was clear that awareness is linguistic, he later insisted that

> [n]ot all 'organized behavior' is built on linguistic structures. The most that can be claimed is that what might be called 'conceptual thinking' is essentially tied to language, and that, for obvious reasons, the central or core concept of what thinking is pertains to conceptual thinking.[13]

This is a significantly weaker claim than that defended by Rorty, as when he stated, "either grant concepts to anything (e.g. record-changers) which can respond discriminatively to classes of objects, or else explain why you draw the line between conceptual thought and its primitive predecessors in a different place from that between having acquired a language and being still in training."[14]

But even if we admit that Sellars and Rorty were at odds on the depth of their linguistic idealism, there is a key upshot of Sellars's rejection that Rorty used to lasting effect. In undermining traditional accounts of givenness, "the essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state, we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says."[15] It is here that the irreducibly normative and social character of justification becomes apparent, a point which has received significant development in the hands of Rorty's student Brandom. A portion of Rorty's application of the communal nature of justification will be unpacked in this paper's third section.

[13] Wilfrid Sellars, "The Structure of Knowledge." In *Action, Knowledge, and Perception*, ed. Hector-Nari Castañeda (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), p. 305.
[14] Rorty, op. cit., p. 186.
[15] Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 76.

Disputing the Priority of Science

A recent account of "Sellars's substantive philosophical commitments" begins "Sellars's deepest philosophical commitment is to naturalism."[16] It goes on to express the difficulties of this term, including Sellars's own statement that "Naturalism … was as wishy-washy and ambiguous as Pragmatism. One could believe *almost* anything about the world and even *some* things about God, and yet be a Naturalist." Despite his frustration, Sellars ultimately stated his allegiance to this position: "I prefer the term 'Naturalism,' which … has acquired a substantive content, which, if it does not entail scientific realism, is at least not incompatible with it."[17] This last criterion was of moment for Sellars because of his explicit commitment to scientific realism: "In the dimension of describing and explaining, science is the measure of all things: of those that are, that they are, and of those that are not, that they are not."[18] While this *scientia mensura* is regrettable to later Sellarsians more interested in his account of the irreducibility of social normativity, [19] it is a feature that remains consistent throughout his work. In another article, for instance, Sellars spoke directly of the "primacy of the scientific image," claiming that people's commonsense way of talking about middle-sized objects is at base false.[20] Sellars's scientific realism is not therefore an easily ignored misstep but rather an oft-repeated and central component of his philosophy, tied up with many

[16] Willem A. deVries, *Wilfrid Sellars* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), p. 15.
[17] Wilfrid Sellars, *Naturalism and Ontology, the John Dewey Lectures for 1973-74* (Reseda, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1980), p. 1-2.
[18] Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Robert Brandom, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 83.
[19] It is precisely this point that motivated Rorty to divide Sellarsians into right- and left-wing camps. The former see scientific realism as the key Sellarsian commitment, while the latter see it, in Robert Brandom's phrasing, as an instance of backsliding, "a pre-Sellarsian remnant," that is at odds with other Sellarsian positions.
[20] Wilfrid Sellars, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," in *In the Space of Reasons*, Robert Brandom and Kevin Scharp, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 369-408.

of his positions, including (importantly) his philosophy of perception.

One who comes to Sellars's thought by way of Rorty may consider the preceding paragraph bizarre. Introducing the first book-length republication of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," Rorty wrote of Sellars's "justified suspicion of the science-worship which afflicted the early stages of analytic philosophy."[21] In support of this, Rorty approvingly noted Sellars's statement that "empirical knowledge, like its sophisticated extension, science, is rational, not because it has a *foundation* but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put *any* claim in jeopardy, though not *all* at once."[22] James O'Shea has argued convincingly that Rorty here downplayed the differences between his positions and Sellars's and in so doing weakened the utility of his introduction by misrepresenting Sellars's ideas.[23]

A favorite point of criticism against Rorty, especially from followers of earlier pragmatists, is the way in which "Rorty holds that science is now quietly receding into the background."[24] Compared with Sellars's scientific realism, this statement is true, but Rorty does not think that "technoscience becomes only one 'vocabulary' among others with no particular privilege,"[25] for this would suggest he was a relativist of exactly the sort he consistently asserted himself not to be.[26] Instead, Rorty suggested, "the question should always be 'What use is it?' Criticisms ... should charge relative inutility."[27] And science is very useful indeed, something Rorty admitted when he went on to say that he "retain[ed] the conviction that Darwinism provides a useful vocabulary in which to formulate [his] pragmatist position."[28] A similar sentiment underwrote his ostensible acceptance of the title 'naturalist', which he defined as being "the kind of antiessentialist who, like Dewey, sees no breaks in the hierarchy of increasingly complex adjustments to novel stimulation—the hierarchy which has amoeba adjusting themselves to changed water temperature at the bottom, bees dancing and chess players check-mating in the middle, and people fomenting scientific, artistic, and political revolutions at the top."[29]

It is clear that the results and method of science do not take center stage in Rorty's work and in this way may be said to "recede into the background," but this seems largely because his project had aims other than those to which science was immediately relevant. It is also clear that Rorty rejected scientific realism, largely for reasons related to his disdain for talk of a 'way the world is', a vocabulary with which Sellars was comfortable. Despite this, Rorty was surely a naturalist who thought there was an important, though not ultimate, role for science. When asked in an interview about lingering scientism in some of his work, Rorty initially demurred, explaining that "there are lots of different justifiable assertions, including not only scientific assertions but aesthetic and social judgments." On further pressure, he invoked Sellars, stating, "I think of myself as stealing the point … that one's categories in metaphysics should be the categories of the sciences of one's day. But that's simply to say what a boring subject metaphysics is."[30]

[21] Richard Rorty, "Introduction," in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Robert Brandom, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 10.
[22] Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Robert Brandom, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 79.
[23] James O'Shea, "Revisiting Sellars on the Myth of the Given," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2002): pp. 490-503.
[24] Larry A. Hickman, *Philosophical Tools for Technological Culture: Putting Pragmatism to Work* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 88.
[25] Ibid., p. 96.
[26] See, for instance, "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), esp. pp. 166-68.
[27] Richard Rorty, "Putnam and the Relativist Menace," in *The Rorty Reader*, Christopher J. Voparil and Richard J. Bernstein, eds. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 182.
[28] Ibid., p. 184.
[29] Richard Rorty, "Inquiry as Recontextualization: An Anti-dualist Account of Interpretation," in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 109.
[30] Richard Rorty, "From Philosophy to Postphilosophy," interview by Wayne Hudson and Wim van Reijen, in *Take*

An Application of Sellarsian "We-Intentions"

In his 2005 book on Sellars, Willem deVries wrote, "Almost thirty years ago, W. David Solomon lamented the neglect of Sellars's ethical writings. The situation has not changed in the interim."[31] It is clear that Rorty was exposed to these writings or at least some of the ideas they contained, and he describes key components of his ethical thinking as "borrowed from Wilfred [*sic*] Sellars."[32] The differences between their positions, however, are marked: like many other contemporary metaethical accounts, Sellars's is one in which form is stressed rather than content, but Rorty consistently eschewed formal characterizations. Part of the aim of this section is to show how Rorty's ethical positions may be called broadly Sellarsian despite his sloughing off so much of what Sellars took to be central.

In his ethical writings, Sellars's focus "[wa]s to identify moral judgments as one form of practical judgment and to explore the relationship between them and other practical judgments."[33] He considered morality to be "a field of inquiry in which good reasons can be offered for answers to questions belonging to that field."[34] This focus on the process of developing new judgments is necessary, Sellars argued, because rarely does normative reasoning move from a single belief to an obvious action; rather, it is only through a progression of related beliefs that one determines a proper course for action. On his account, ethical statements and beliefs are not inert: real belief cashes out in real consequences or, as Peirce claimed, "*belief* consists mainly in being deliberately prepared to adopt the formula believed as a guide to action."[35]

The reason for this seems plain enough: in normative discourse, an individual who accepts one judgment frequently commits him or herself to another, which may entail some action taking place. An example of this may be seen in an individual simultaneously believing "I want my children to go to college" and "For my children to go to college, I will have to pay for their tuition." By having both of these beliefs simultaneously, the individual is required to do what he or she can to engage in an action, namely tuition-paying. But there is more to this chain of reasoning than just these two statements; there are enthymematic linking terms that play into this sort of decision-making. Beginning with but one or two practical judgments can frequently set off a long series of further judgments, all of which eventually lead to consequent action.

Many traditional accounts of practical philosophy in general and ethics in particular have been content to claim that judgments of this kind are best rendered in the imperative mood; for instance, the prescriptive character of normativity has frequently been cashed out as 'thou shalt' this or that. Sellars was convinced that any account of imperative inference cannot fully express the entailment-relationship of these judgments, so he required that they instead be treated as nonimperatives.[36] His way of doing this was to recast such judgments as *intentions*,[37] which are always in the

Care of Freedom and Truth Will Take Care of Itself, Eduardo Mendieta, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 27.

[31] Willem deVries, *Wilfrid Sellars* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), p. 246.

[32] Richard Rorty, "Postphilosophical Politics," in *Take Care of Freedom and Truth Will Take Care of Itself* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 33.

[33] W. David Solomon, "Ethical Theory," in *Synoptic Vision: Essays on the Philosophy of Wilfrid Sellars* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 155.

[34] Wilfrid Sellars, "Science and Ethics," in *Philosophical Perspectives: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Reseda, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1967), p. 194.

[35] Charles S. Peirce, "The Meaning of 'Practical' Consequences," Collected Papers 5.27.

[36] It is in this way the Sellarsian system avoids emotivism. Quite a lot more could be said about where Sellars's work fits into the history of analytic metaethics; for the moment, it is enough to note he was attempting to put flesh on the bare bones of Prichard's insights (cf. Solomon, p. 155) while pushing back fervently against Ayerian emotivism.

[37] Sellars's treatment of intentions is where his formalism becomes most apparent. James O'Shea explains, "As a tidy formal device, Sellars in his various discussions of human agency formulates … action-generating volitions in terms of a 'Shall' operator on first-person propositional thinkings: for example, 'Shall (I

indicative mood. If all normative judgments are understood with this modality, they can be used as elements of indicative inference, which preserves the explanatory efficacy of a practical-reasoning account of moral decision-making. For Sellars, indicative-volitional statements functioned simultaneously as intentions, reasons, and causal antecedents of action, which are precisely the results needed when one makes a moral judgment.

As I emphasized in prior sections, Sellars recognized the irreducibility of the social in both his dismissal of givenness and his synoptic philosophical vision. This attentiveness to cultural imbeddedness continued in his ethical writings. With it established that moral judgments can only be understood as intentions, Sellars examined how this plays out in communities, especially when norms disagree. In these cases, we feel a sense of contradiction: For instance, one speaker might think the United States should be at war while another thinks quite the opposite. Each of these two likely believes in the exclusivity of his or her judgment; from speaker A's position, speaker B is wrong, and the same is surely the case for speaker A's position in the opinion of speaker B. If either of these positions were understood as nothing more than individual ethical expressions, there could never be normative contradictions, for "I believe the United States should be at war," said by Speaker A seems to be contradicted by either "It is not the case that Speaker A believes the United States should be at war" or an additional utterance by Speaker A, "I believe the United States should not be at war." But neither of these proposed contradictions is acceptable: the first is a negation of ascription instead of a negation of intention, while the second is an entirely different positive intention.[38]

Even if these forms were to contradict, it is notable that no statement at all made by speaker B could in principle contradict those of speaker A. The intentions, dispositions, and judgments of B may certainly disagree with those of A, but if Sellars's normative-intentional scheme is correct, they may never individually be brought into contradiction.

In order to account for normative contradiction, Sellars reconstructed intentionality, asserting that there is more to moral discourse than only an individual interlocutor's intentions. Maintaining the universality he desired while simultaneously keeping ethical beliefs as action-motivating thoughts required that he posit "We-Expressions of Intention."[39] These are intentional statements that "express the intention of a group but are asserted (or expressed) by members of a group."[40] Thus, when speakers A and B genuinely disagree about whether the United States should be at war, they are not each merely expressing their own respective I-intention but rather making a claim about the desirability of the aims of one of the groups to which they both belong. So while speaker A and B might each individually assert, "I

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will *now* do A)'," *Wilfrid Sellars: Naturalism with a Normative Turn* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), p. 179. Sellars later devised use of a subscript after the 'Shall' to denote the intender, such that "$\text{Shall}_{\text{Brown}}$ (Jones will go to the store)" is read "Brown intends that Jones will go to the store."
While Sellars's 'Shall' operator is handy and worth discussion, giving a full account of its proper use would lead us too far afield, for Rorty disregards it entirely. Readers seeking more on this topic should see the relevant chapters of deVries's and O'Shea's books as well as Wilfrid Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1968), p. 180 and following; Bruce Aune, "Sellars on Practical Reason," in *Action, Knowledge and Reality: Critical Studies in Honor of Wilfrid Sellars,* Hector-Neri Castañeda, ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975); Hector-Neri Castañeda, "Some Reflections on Wilfrid Sellars' Theory of Intentions," in *Agent, Language, and the Structure of the World: Essays Presented to Hector-Neri Castañeda, with His Replies*, J. E. Tomberlin, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).

[38] A third potential formulation, "It is not the case that I believe the United States should be at war," uttered by the same speaker A, does contradict "I believe the United States should be at war," but it cannot be cashed out as an intention in the same way any of the other pseudo-contradictions may for reasons related to well-formed and proper deployment of the (here intentionally neglected) shall-operator.
[39] Wilfrid Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1968), p. 215.
[40] W. David Solomon, op. cit., p. 175.

intend that the United States will (or will not) be at war," insofar as they are making a normative claim, there is a deeper form underlying their utterances. This underlying position is expressed in the form "We intend the United States will (and will not) be at war," though neither of the disagreeing speakers explicitly says this. This formal referent—the objects of which are interrelated, intersubjective, and shared—preserves the possibility of genuine and direct deliberative contradiction. We-intentions thus solve a problem that remained apparent in any individualistically intentional account of practical judgment.

Sellars was clear that we-intentions are not just conjunctions of individual intentions. While two individuals might each share a certain judgment and intention, their individual assertions taken together do not account for the features of we-intentions Sellars needed to make morality truly robust. Likewise, we-intentions cannot be an individual intention attached to a belief that others in one's community hold a similar position. This fails on two accounts: Sellars was clear that I-intending and we-intending are different forms of intention,[41] and more significantly, "we-intending involves a special 'form of consciousness' … [or] 'form of life'."[42]

This latter criterion is undeniably provocative, especially insofar as it directly sheds light on how Sellars took communities to be something more than simply the sum of their constitutive members. Intending in this new mode or form of life, intending within a group *is* the very form of moral discourse.[43] Due to his use of we-intentions, the particular moral judgments of an individual are inherently linked in virtue of explanation to those of the individual's particular group-affiliations.

In an October, 1998, article in the *London Review of Books*, Jonathan Rée chided Richard Rorty for "using a histrionic 'we' to align himself with some group that was being hounded by self-appointed guardians of philosophical propriety: 'we pragmatists', 'we anti-representationists', or 'we historicists', for example."[44] While this way of expressing his inclusion in these disparaged philosophical movements may seem at first impression over the top or insincere, it also may reveal the degree to Rorty was influenced by Sellars's group-centered ethical framework and inasmuch evinces sincerity. Beyond this, Rorty freely admitted that he "was trying to describe social progress in a way borrowed from Wilfred [*sic*] Sellars: the expansion of 'we' consciousness, that is, the ability to take more and more people of the sort fashionably called 'marginal' and think of them as one of us, included in us."[45]

Rorty's use of the term "borrow" is at once appropriate and somewhat misleading: while it is clear his ethical writings were influenced by Sellars, there are major differences between their presented understandings of "we-intentional" ethics. While Sellars has a robust, systematic account that gets him from experience to ethics, Rorty seems to slough off much of this formal work, making use of Sellars's conclusions without any particular regard for how they were developed.

Despite the centrality of Sellars's positions in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, it was not until ten years later, in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, that Rorty began to engage directly with Sellars's metaethical findings. The interstitial articles "Method, Social Science, Social Hope," "Solidarity or Objectivity," and "Science as Solidarity" all made passing references to the communal upshot of the Sellarsian view, but all were substantially within the bounds of epistemology and concerned with 'we' as members of a shared conceptual schema or language game rather than anything more obviously ethical.[46]

[41] Wilfrid Sellars, "Imperatives, Intentions, and the Logic of 'Ought'," in *Methodos*, Vol. 8 (1956): p. 203.
[42] W. David Solomon, op. cit., p. 176.
[43] Wilfrid Sellars, op. cit., p. 204.
[44] Jonathan Rée, "Strenuous Unbelief," in *The London Review of Books*, Vol. 20, No. 20 (Oct. 15, 1998): p. 7.
[45] Richard Rorty, "Postphilosophical Politics," in *Take Care of Freedom and Truth Will Take Care of Itself* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 33.
[46] This is not to say, of course, that one can have epistemology without ethics or ethics without epistemology but only that the three noted articles

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* Rorty argued that if Sellars was right that all experience is conceptually mediated and all concepts are linguistic, and if Rorty was right that all language is contingent, then there is no way for philosophy—or any other human enterprise—to put together the one true account of how things really are. Without this possibility, [47] Rorty advocated giving up on metaphysical and epistemological enterprises within philosophy and instead finding ways to increase *solidarity*, which he took to be "the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers."[48] Rorty summarized his take on ethical discourse by stating the relevant application of his epistemic arguments:

> [this is] a way of looking at morality as a set of practices, *our* practices, [which] makes vivid the difference between the conception of morality as the voice of a divinized portion of our soul, and as the voice of a contingent human artifact, a community which has grown up subject to the vicissitudes of time and chance.[49]

From this, Rorty argued that since all moral claims are ours, attempts at justification must be limited to ourselves; gone is any hope for universal justification. Here is where the influence of Sellars's metaethical system may be seen most strongly, for Rorty proposed that "what counts as rational or fanatical [and, one might add, justified or unjustified] is relative to the group to which we think it is necessary to justify ourselves—to the body of shared belief which determines the reference of the word 'we'."[50]

Even without a specific referent of his use of the term 'we', a formal point may be made: 'we' are those "individuals who find themselves heir to the same historical traditions and faced with the same problems."[51] At different points in his writings, Rorty made reference to a number of different 'we's, but the one that consistently trumps all the rest is that of the political liberal: "the audience I am addressing when I use the term 'we' … is made up of people whom I think of as social democrats."[52] He then offered a laundry-list of positions to which the majority of these people might agree, but they distill down to one key belief that is both descriptive and normative in scope: "cruelty is the worst thing we do."[53] This definitional principle is borrowed from Judith Shklar, who "highlights the psychological origins and burdens that accompany a commitment to liberal politics."[54]

In one of his last books, Rorty explicitly identified his political ideal: "the hope [is] that someday, any millennium now, my remote descendents will live in a global civilization in which love is pretty much the only law."[55] If we understand a society based on love to be one in which cruelty is anathema, then it is clear how this ideal vision is an intimately linked extension of his earlier comments on the liberal's disdain for cruelty. But how did he imagine we might move from here to there? Two years prior to his death, he admitted ignorance: "I have no idea how such a society could come about. It is, one might say, a mystery."[56] But nearly twenty years earlier, in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty took himself to be offering a firmer plan of action for bringing

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engage their questions from the perspective of knowledge-acquisition.

[47] No doubt this will be a point of tremendous contention, and it is fair to object to Rorty's construction of such a strongly exclusive disjunction: either we can get the one true account of things, or we should stop doing epistemology and metaphysics. Here I do not offer a defense or criticism of Rorty on this point, though either could be presented.

[48] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press,1989), p. xvi.

[49] Ibid., p. 60.

[50] Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophy Papers Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 177.

[51] Ibid., p. 184.

[52] Richard Rorty, "Thugs and Theorists: A Reply to Bernstein," in *Political Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Nov. 1987): p. 564.

[53] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. xv.

[54] Bernard Yack, ed., *Liberalism without Illusions: Essays on Liberal Theory and the Political Vision of Judith N. Shklar* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. ix.

[55] Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo, *The Future of Religion*, Santiago Zabala, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 40.

[56] Ibid.

about this ideal, and this plan was absolutely Sellarsian in content.

Without the possibility of transhistorical justification, Rorty recognized that no satisfaction can be found for a desire to condemn universally and fundamentally. The bugaboos of first year introduction to ethics courses, horrors such as the Holocaust and clitoridectomy, strike us as so repugnant that it is not enough to say they are wrong; rather, one must say they are *absolutely* wrong, wrong in all instances. On Rorty's account, this can still be said, but only by reference to community standards and the historical institutions that fund them, because there is nothing other than artifacts of this type. "I have been urging," Rorty indicated, "that we try *not* to want something which stands beyond history and institutions."[57] The question for a reader of Rorty must be whether one will join him in giving up the idea of "something that stands behind history."[58]

Instead of this kind of justificatory notion, Rorty offered *human solidarity*, the capacity of people to think of others as "one of us." This does not require an analysis of what it means to be 'us' or how one shall understand the other; "rather, it is … the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation. [It is] the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of 'us'."[59] The liberal 'we', which takes cruelty and humiliation to be its greatest enemies, gradually finds itself less and less concerned with the dissimilarities that have traditionally gotten in the way of greater fellow-feeling. If the liberal is sincerely concerned with eradication of cruelty, then engagement with any other feature of human life—whether communal or individual—must be thought of as subordinate to recognizing and stopping the humiliation of others. For Rorty, the effort to make others morally considerable is not founded on philanthropic action at a distance but instead by considering others to be "one of us," or within our present 'we'. In the final analysis, the 'we' of "we liberals" is in fact—ideally, ultimately, and hopefully—subsumed and replaced by something more like "we sufferers."

This speaks to what Christopher Voparil notices as a developmental tension in Rorty's work:

> Rorty initially claimed that our sense of solidarity with others is strongest when we identify with them as a part of some particular--that is, less than universal--community, as 'one of us,' whether it be as Americans, as liberals, or the like. More recently, however, he seems to have abandoned this view, suggesting that we replace the ideas of justice and universal moral obligation with the idea of ... "loyalty to a very large group--the human species."[60]

I take it that the ideal of Rorty's solidaristic account in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* already had the seeds of loyalty to (or solidarity with) something like the human species, as the potential to suffer is common to both the present and limited 'we' but also to whatever more-universal one moral action attempts to develop. While sympathy at a distance may be difficult and thus our sense of solidarity easier in local communities, stopping there would be to abandon the Rortian pursuit of "think[ing] of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of 'us'." In this way, Rorty went one better than Sellars, who wrote that "the commitment to the well-being of others *is a commitment deeper than any commitment to abstract principle*."[61] For while Sellars is right that the moral stance requires that other people matter to us more

[57] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 189.
[58] Ibid., p. 190.
[59] Ibid.

[60] Christopher J. Voparil, op. cit., p. 86n.40. In the omitted portion of the quotation, Voparil suggests Rorty may have taken up the term 'loyalty' from Royce. Interestingly, Sellars claims that "the only frame of mind which can provide direct support for moral commitment is what Royce called Loyalty, and what Christians call Love of Neighbor." See "Imperatives, Intentions, and the Logic of 'Ought'," in *Methodos*, Vol. 8 (1956).
[61] Wilfrid Sellars, "'Ought' and Moral Principles," unpublished manuscript dated "Pittsburgh, February 14, 1966," available online http://www.ditext.com/sellars/omp.html.

than do vague principles, he identifies attention to other people with a "love of neighbor." Rorty pressed further than this, encouraging us to press at the traditional boundaries of our neighborhood, of the 'we' or 'one of us', ever aiming to enlarge the sphere of moral consideration, looking only to a baseline sense that other people can hurt and be hurt just as we can.

ELIMINATIVE MATERIALISM ELIMINATED:

RORTY AND DAVIDSON ON THE MIND-WORLD RELATION[1]

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Abstract

In this paper I shall deal with some impact of Donald Davidson's work on Rorty's philosophy. I shall take a rejection of the distinction between natural sciences and humanities to be one of Rorty's central theses – a view for which he paid as high price as abandoning the investigations of central philosophical notions like truth or representation. This movement made him possible to exceed the analytic-Continental divide and hence opening up the possibilities of his analytic-originated philosophy to topics uncovered in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. If my arguments are correct, Davidson did not only serve him as an example of philosophers who can be taken "as grist to be put through the same dialectical mill" (Rorty 1989, p. 74) but Davidson's philosophy – especially what Rorty calls "non-reductive physicalism" – is the millstone of Rorty's dialectics.

After a short introduction, I shall characterise a difference between "the" truth and "truths" or facts. Rorty rejects not only truth but facts as well, on the ground that they depend on language and hence cannot fulfil the role attributed to them. From this it seems to follow that he holds a sort of linguistic idealism which directly contradicts his materialist, physicalist and naturalist commitments. I shall argue therefore that his reason for rejecting the notion of fact is not idealism but on the contrary: a sort of physicalism compatible with Davidson's account. After introducing some slight but important distinctions between materialism, physicalism, and naturalism, I shall demonstrate a turning point in Rorty's philosophy when he gave up his eliminative materialism in favour of a still naturalistic pragmatism. I shall argue that at least one of the reasons for doing so was his recognition that Davidson's transformation of the mind-world dualism into a 'mental description'-'physical description' dualism is a suitable tool for his purpose of blurring the division between the arts/humanities and hard sciences, while holding naturalist principles at the same time.

1 I am grateful to György Pápay for our many conversations on these topics over years which essentially formed the present line of thoughts.

Introduction

In the 1980s, Rorty celebrated Davidson's work as the culmination of "holist and pragmatist strains in contemporary analytic philosophy (Rorty 1987, p. 116) and that of "a line of thought in American philosophy which aims at being naturalistic without being reductionist" (Rorty 1987, p. 113). In the long run, Davidson's importance goes even beyond philosophy departments insofar as his "non-reductive physicalism gives us [...] all the respect for science we need, combined with more respect for poetry than the Western philosophical tradition has usually allowed itself" (Rorty 1987, p. 125). Rorty reminds us that since Plato, poetry and art have been managed as opposites to philosophical and scientific research; more recently this opposition has been transformed to the clash between natural sciences and humanities departments. Rorty extensively argues in several of his works that if we abandoned central notions of Modernity like truth and representation, the distinction between the two sorts of intellectual activities would disappear. Sciences (and scientific philosophy) are traditionally thought to be aiming at the true representation of reality; from this, it may follow that non-scientific enterprise of the arts, literary criticism, or so-called Continental philosophy either would be unable to present similarly true representations or, even worse, they do not even have such aims. Rorty fights against this unjust treatment – not independently of his recognition that non-analytic pragmatists and certain Continental philosophers

provide us more useful tools for developing a better future of humankind than scientific philosophy.

Rorty's relation to Davidson is most often discussed (both by themselves and their interpretors) via a presentation of their debate on the nature of truth (Rorty 1986, Davidson 1986, Bilgrami 2000, Davidson 2000, Rorty 2000a, Rorty2000c, Sandbothe 2003 – just to mention a few of the more interesting references). In the 1980s, Rorty thought Davidson's views about truth to be pragmatist. This interpretation was not fully accepted by Davidson. Though the latter gradually gave up the idea that his coherence theory of truth could finally result in correspondence, he urged to keep a primitive notion of truth because it is one of those notions which "are essential to thought, and cannot be reduced to anything simpler or more fundamental" (Davidson 2000, p. 73). As opposed to that, Rorty thought truth is an abused philosophical concept better to forget in order to open up new possibilities for philosophical enterprise. If Davidson's impact is significant regarding Rorty's views about truth, it is significant only in the sense how Rorty gradually turns from a Davidsonian understanding of truth and knowledge to non-Davidsonian perspectives.

However, there are some clearly Davidsonian sources of these "non-Davidsonian" perspectives. Except truth, Rorty and Davidson agree in several philosophical questions about language, mind, and reality. The main reason can be that for a Davidsonian, it is not truth but causality that warrants a connection between our beliefs and worldly facts. I shall argue below that this difference between Davidsonians and non-Davidsonians is central to Rorty's view about Davidson as well as his own relation to naturalism. Presumably, even his views about vocabularies at least partially depend on Davidson's theory of descriptions.

Truth and Truths

Rorty is often labelled as a linguistic idealist (for *counter*-arguments see Brandom 2000b and Williams 2009). Some distinctions are in order, however, regarding what linguistic idealism is *about.* Idealism is mostly understood as a dominant form of antirealism. Insofar as realism can be held about several things (e.g. realism about truth, realism about facts, realism about meaning, realism about mathematical objects, etc.), idealism, and its linguistic form, can also be about different fields. Rorty's alleged idealism can be understood in at least two important senses. On the one hand, he is certainly an antirealist regarding truth as he directly denies its existence. On the other hand, in some sense he is also an antirealist regarding facts or truths.

Rorty use terms of truths and facts interchangeably, supposedly in an opposition with the general notion of "the" truth. He thinks that "'truths' and 'facts' are pretty nearly equivalent notions" (Rorty 2000b, p. 184). Just as he claims that truth is a property of *sentences* (Rorty 1989, p. 21), he also thinks that truths/facts are to be understood as descriptions belonging to certain vocabularies. As Brandom read him,

> "to talk of facts is to talk of something that is conceptually structured, propositionally contentful, something, that is, with the right shape to stand in inferential and hence justificatory relations. [...] Rorty can explain our talk of facts: to treat a sentence as expressing a fact is just to treat it as true, and to treat a sentence as true is just to endorse it, to make the claim one would make by asserting the sentence. But he rejects the idea of facts as a kind of thing that *makes* claims true" (Brandom 2000b, p. 161).

This notion of "fact" clearly differs from how philosophers use the word. Facts are precisely claimed to be *non*-linguistic. But for Rorty, a non-linguistic entity cannot stand in a truth-making, normative relation with a linguistic entity. If a fact makes a statement to be true, that can only be a linguistic fact, transmitting the validity of a statement to another statement. Statements can only be justified by other statements insofar as a

correspondence theory of truth is rejected in favour of a coherence theory. The reason why the notion of truth is philosophically useless is precisely that there is nothing behind justifications. Hence, the reason why we call something as "true" is simply that we hold it to be true. The expression "It is true" only gives a stronger emphasis to expressions like "I guess so" or "I believe it".

After rejecting correspondence between facts and statements – i.e., accepting antirealism regarding truth – , there are two traditional ways how our relation to facts can be understood. First is the view of direct realists who claim that we humans are directly aware of facts. This is a combination of antirealism regarding a metaphysical notion of truth and realism toward facts and hence particular truths. According to direct realism, facts are "real" in the same sense as correspondentists think but in order to warrant our access to them, no robust theories of truth, reference, or justification are required. If there is no mind-body dualism, one can claim appearances to be real sensory inputs represented in a wrong way. Hence, representations and misrepresentations can be explained in the same theoretical framework (e.g. via causal explanations).

The alternative solution is idealism, the view according to which facts depend on us. In this view, facts are mind-dependent, or, in its linguistic form, language-dependent. Truths are invented rather than discovered. Facts are true because we made them to be true. Hence, facts are conceptually/linguistically structured entities, and there is no well-distinguished part of them to be called "the given" which could be isolated from the rest of them in order to warrant the objective validity of our claims about them. Objective validity is therefore not derived from their being real but their being constructed: could anything be "more real" than something that has been *made to be real* by ourselves? According to idealism, we have an access to facts precisely insofar as facts are our constructions, and they are still real because they have been constructed.

None of these views are accepted by Rorty though. He rejects that we have any (whether direct or indirect) awareness-relation with language-independent facts. Nor does he think that truths were made by us. As Williams (2009) put, Rorty is sometimes "accused of linguistic idealism – the view that facts are 'made' rather than 'found'. This charge [...] is unfounded. [...] Rorty is not arguing that everything is *nomos* and nothing *physis* but rather questioning the made/found distinction itself" (Williams 2009, p. xviii). Rorty's solution differs from idealism precisely in the claim that "facts are made" would only be meaningful if facts could be compared to any sort of *x*s of which it were meaningful to claim that "*x*s are, as opposed to facts, found". Since it is precisely facts about which philosophers used to think that they are subject to be found, and no novel opposition has been introduced between entities that are found and those that are made, the claim "facts are made" can be meaningful only if it is read somehow like "the explanatory framework which identifies facts (being subject to be found) as opposed to e.g. poems (being subject to be made) is a misleading one because it supposes a false dichotomy between what is made and what is found". Not reading it that way is a misunderstanding of Rorty. Anyway, this confusion is not unique, due to Rorty's well-known temptation to abbreviate his critical remarks into ostentatious phrases.

Admittedly, Rorty follows the idealist tradition in several aspects – most notably he follows recent offsprings of idealism called textualism (Rorty 1980) and historicism (e.g. Rorty 1995). However, he is clearly an anti-idealist in the most important sense of idealism regarding facts. Namely, he denies that the world around us would be purely an effect of some sort of epistemic activity of the mind and also denies that appearances would purely be products of the mind. The best way to explain this is introducing a distinction between Kantian and Hegelian idealism. Rorty's philosophy shows several Kantian inspirations (see Danka 2010) but he still thinks Kant to be the last great dead philosopher to be rejected and Hegel the first to be followed. His reason for this is

probably that Kant still took seriously that the mind is primarily an observer; that the *prima philosophia* is epistemology. Hegel can be understood as the first philosopher who gave up this concept of philosophy. Rorty agrees with the idealist that things are to be explained in terms of construction rather than in terms of acquiring them. However, the construction is not epistemic but action theoretical. We do not construct *fictions* called "Vorstellungen" once we did not find anything out there. We take mundane objects *themselves* (in a sense in which no Kantians but only Heideggerians suppose an access to them) and make them to be tools supporting our purposes. Rorty agrees with the idealist that what is yet unknown has to be created rather than acquired. However, the reason why it has to be created is that it *has not been created yet.* This seemingly pointless remark is central because in pre-Hegelian, atemporal models of knowledge acquisition, this distinction could not be made. Temporality (or, more precisely, history) is a key aspect of Rorty's relation to idealism and constructivism.

Idealists claim that facts are made epistemically; linguistic idealists claim that facts are made linguistically. As opposed to them, Rorty claims that neither our epistemic nor our linguistic capacities are suitable for making facts. For (epistemic or linguistic) idealists, facts are made *ex nihilo.* For historicists, facts are altered by time but not in the sense that a fact that was true can be made false (as some sort of relativism might involve) but in the sense that with the flow of time, things happen to change by their own and also by our coping with them. However, for Rorty, coping with reality is definitely not an epistemic activity.

All the same, this is no answer to the question how Rorty *does* relate mind- and language-independent facts to humans. It would be a *too easy* answer to simply claim that for him, there are no language-independent facts. Namely, it would be the same as following the superficial reading that "everything is language-dependent", from which the above-refuted "nothing is found because everything is made" shortly follows. This line would therefore contradict the above-mentioned interpretation of Michael Williams (which I am tempted to follow, except that the distinction between *nomos* and *physis* would be Kantian in any sense – see Danka 2010). This would still be not a knock-out argument against this reading though. The main problem with it is that Rorty often describes himself as a materialist, naturalist or physicalist. These positions are in such an evident contradiction with any form of epistemic/linguistic idealism that no one can seriously think this contradiction to be unapparent for Rorty himself.

Materialism, Physicalism, Naturalism

First, some conceptual clarification is in order. Rorty calls himself a materialist as well as a physicalist or naturalist, and even though the three are very close positions, a difference in emphasis has to be made. Materialism is the view according to which everything consists of matter. What matter is claimed to be is of course different from author to author but materialists definitely hold a monist ontology according to which everything consists of material components. As opposed to that, physicalism is the view according to which everything consists of physical properties. (Or, in a weak version that will be proved to be highly important below, everything can be *described* in terms of physical properties.) Materialism is a doctrine about *substances,* whereas physicalism is a doctrine about *properties.* Ontologically speaking, materialism, as opposed to traditional mind-matter dualism, is a sort of monism about substances. Contemporary materialists do not necessarily speak in terms of substances. They keep holding the view, however, that there are only material objects "out there".

In contrast, physicalism is better characterised as a sort of antiessentialism. For a physicalist, in order to explain physical events, no substances or objects "out there" have to be supposed but only properties. Materialism

agrees with physicalism that properties are physical because this claim well fits to the materialist world view. Physicalists, on the other hand, do not necessarily hold any ontological commitments regarding substances or objects. They only need to be committed to the existence of (physical) properties.

A third closely related position is also worth to mention. Naturalism is the view which denies any supranatural being or, expressing the same positively, naturalism claims that all beings are in accordance with the laws of natural sciences. Naturalism is compatible both with materialism (in denying mental substance) and physicalism (in denying non-physical properties). Though naturalism also has versions with ontological commitments, in this comparison, I shall use the term in its so-called methodological version which, for purely methodological reasons, supports weak physicalism but does not hurt or support strong physicalism or materialism either.[2]

Idealism clearly stands in an opposition to all these views. Idealism is a sort of monism just as materialism, but it claims that the only substance that exists is mental. In this sense, idealists are comrades of materialists, physicalists and naturalists in their campaign against substance dualists. But their ways how dualism should be dissolved clearly differ. Materialists, physicalists and naturalists think the cement of reality to be (or to be explained in terms of) causal relations. Idealists, on the other hand, explain reality in terms of reasons instead (except a few *physicalist* idealists like Berkeley who claimed mental substance to be a *causal* power. This is compatible with slight physicalism but certainly not with materialism and naturalism).

Despite all their common purposes regarding dualism, idealist principles become the main target of the other three views. The reason is that all the three traditionally argue against dualism via attacking the mental part – i.e., the one which serves as the ground for idealism. How stressfully they attack the mental is different from case to case, however, and understanding the whole picture requires some further classification.

The most offensive weapon against idealists in the hands of materialists is eliminativism. Eliminative materialism claims that there are no mental/psychological states or properties but they are (falsely) supposed to be just in order to make folk psychological explanations consistent. Hence, the mental could be eliminated if folk psychology were replaced with a physiological description of neural states. A similar but less radical methodology is reductionism, often mentioned simultaneously with some sort of physicalism. Reductionism claims that anything can be adequately explained by explaining its components; wholes can be reduced to their parts. Reductive physicalism is therefore the view that complex mental phenomena, though exist, can be reduced to purely physical components. Via this reduction, anything seemingly non-physical disappears in the explanation. A third alternative seems to be a sort of "golden mean" between the acceptance and the rejection of the mental. Namely, a *purely* methodological or instrumental naturalism – or, as also labelled sometimes, naturalistic pragmatism – does not deny the existence of mental states like eliminative materialism, nor does it say with reductive physicalism that mental states can be reduced to physical properties. Naturalistic pragmatism is namely naturalist only at the level of methodology: it interprets Quine (1953)'s claim that our only reason for preferring a physical explanation of reality e.g. to a mythological world view is (roughly) that it explains phenomena more

2 An Aristotelian or Lockean concept of matter is no less supranatural than God or the soul. However, as physical phenomena can be described in terms of interactions of material objects, a materialist vocabulary is more suitable for naturalist purposes than a mental one. Strictly speaking, I would take naturalism to be opposite of both idealism and materialism, assuming that the connection between materialism and naturalism is only a contingent historical fact. However, admittedly, the borders between these positions had never been clarified as sharply as my approach would require. Hence, I shall follow the mainstream view that naturalism and materialism are compatible with each other, regarding their *target* (which is the mental part of substance dualism) though not their purposes.

comprehensively, more economically and in a more aesthetical manner for our naturalist taste.

Naturalistic pragmatism tends to hold that everything can be described causally but they see causal explanations as a purely methodological device that should be applied with care. Though it assumes that e.g. interpersonal relations can be explained in causal terms to a certain degree, it also assumes that we have no need of such an explanation for the reason that interpersonal relations can be much more plausibly explained in sociological and/or psychological terms. Non-reductionist physicalism is in this sense closer to naturalistic pragmatism than to reductionist physicalism: a non-reductionist physicalist like Davidson does not claim that everything is physical; rather she claims that everything *depends on* the physical. She allows that there are mental properties at a higher level of complexity but mental properties supervene on physical properties at a micro-structural level. Hence, any alterations at the level of mental can be physically explained by some alterations at the level of micro-structures. The difference between a Davidsonian non-reductive physicalist and a Rortyan naturalistic pragmatist is that the former *does not deny* that there really are physical properties at the micro-structural level, because the efficiency of a physical vocabulary is a sufficient reason to extend its claims to ontology. In contrast, the latter thinks that Davidsonian "physical properties" and "the micro-structural level" are just theoretical suppositions that are meaningful only within a description or vocabulary. They think that it is sufficient for a *denial* of the existence of physical properties at the level of ontology, precisely because they are still description-dependent.

Insofar as a plurality of explanations is not applied to a "plurality" of reality (resulting in two distinct spheres of beings like in substance dualism), there is no conflict between the point that everything is explicable by a causal vocabulary of natural sciences on the one hand, and the point that something is better explained by other vocabularies for certain purposes. For a naturalistic pragmatist, ontologies can be seen as tools or models just as scientific theories. They are not to be managed as some fundaments of all that can be said about reality. The only ontologically relevant claim of a naturalistic pragmatist is that we should prefer any ontology that excludes such features of mental phenomena that can hurt the causal closure of reality. Mental phenomena should be explained as physical/natural insofar as they can be identified as parts of a causal chain on the grounds that they have physical causes and effects. Brandom interprets Rorty's naturalism in an opposition to his linguistic idealist readings as follows:

> "[Rorty's] critique of representationalism is founded not on denying or ignoring the causal context [...] but precisely on a hard-headed insistence and focus upon the significance of that context. What distinguishes his view is rather his claim that the sense in which the talk answers to its environment must be understood *solely* in causal terms" (Brandom 2000b, pp. 160-161).

According to Brandom, this Rortyan view echoes the Sellarsian idea that things cannot affect us normatively (normativity is one of the key notions of idealism), and hence the only connection between us and reality can be causal. Similarly to "the" pragmatist notion of truth, representation also has to be explained in, or perhaps explained away by, an account of human-world interaction in terms of causes and effects. No sort of idealism is compatible with a world view in *solely* causal terms. This is a conclusive argument against Rorty's idealist interpretations.

At this point we have arrived at a statement that now seems to be *too strongly* anti-idealist for Rortyan purposes. How could a primacy of causal explanations over all sorts of non-causal explanations be serving as a bridge between causal/scientific and non-causal/artistic vocabularies? How can this sort of naturalism be harmonised with the claim that natural sciences are not superior to humanities? The answer follows from a shift from the level of the explanations of reality to the meta-level of explanations of explanations. While ontological

naturalists agree with eliminative materialists that physical explanations are about reality and hence what will ever remain unexplained by natural sciences cannot exist, naturalistic pragmatists agree with non-reductive physicalists that physical explanations are descriptions just as mental explanations, and from this they conclude that description-independent reality in itself is neither mental nor material.

Descriptions and Events

Davidson claims that his own position about the mind-matter dichotomy called anomalous monism

> "resembles materialism [in my terminology, rather physicalism is appropriate here – I.D.] in its claim that all events are physical but rejects the thesis, usually considered essential to materialism, that mental phenomena can be given purely physical explanations" (Davidson 1970, p. 141).

This remark contains two statements. On the one hand, anomalous monism is physicalist in accepting that all events are physical. But on the other hand, it is non-physicalist in rejecting that mental phenomena can be explained purely physically. It seems that the apparent contradiction between the two statements could be dissolved if an appropriate distinction were made between events and phenomena. A possible way to do so is that non-reductive physicalism allows mental properties at a higher level but only claims they are explicable by physical properties at micro-structural level. I accept this as a valid pathway but relating the point appropriately to Rorty's interpretation of Davidson (and Davidson's action theory rather than his philosophy of mind), I would prefer to understand this remark within the framework of an ontology of events. According to an ontology of events, the only kind of entities is events in a causal chain, and phenomena other than causal can only occur at the level of descriptions (not a level of alleged high-order *ontological* beings). Hence, what I offer as an interpretation of this statement is a distinction between events and *explanations* instead of events and phenomena. At the level of *ontology,* Davidson supposes that only physical events exist ("all *events* are physical"). At the level of *explanations,* there are, however, phenomena described in mental terms (which cannot be given "purely physical *explanations*").

An ontology of events supposes two sorts of relations between events: causality and identity (Davidson 1969). If the fundamental structure of reality is explained in terms of events (rather than in terms of objects), one can plausibly explain both static explanandum (an object's being there) and dynamic explanandum (e.g. moving) within the same framework. It means that an ontology of events is suitable for providing a temporal extension of ontology which is highly important for Rortyan historicists. All the same, if there is basically one type of ontological entities, namely, events, our metaphysics is monist regarding first-order ontological categories (since causality is a derivative, second-order category, serving as relations among events). It does not mean, however, that our *explanations* or *descriptions* of those events could only be causal. In order to rationalise events (i.e., to treat certain events as intentional actions), it is preferable to use a normative vocabulary of reasons, beliefs, and other pro-attitudes. Certain events are simply more elegantly explained (in accordance with instrumental naturalism) in a way like "Brutus killed Caesar because he *wanted to* keep Rome as a republic and he *believed* his killing of Caesar supports his desire".

The problem with such explanations is that they *seem to* commit us to a supposition of mental entities like reasons, beliefs, desires, etc. Davidson's landmark thesis was the assumption that pro-attitudes can be described as causes of an action (Davidson 1963). In the final analysis, propositional attitudes (serving as reasons for an act) *cause* the agent to do its act. Causal descriptions are superior to normative descriptions insofar as every event can be described in terms of causes and effects, but only certain events – and definitely not certain *types* of events – can be described in normative terms. The mental-physical distinction is a contrast at the level of

descriptions, whereas at the level of ontology, everything is supposed to be, in accordance with physicalism, explicable in causal terms. With Rorty's words,

> "to say that Davidson is an *anti-reductionist* physicalist is to say that he combines [physicalism] with the doctrine that 'reduction' is a relation between linguistic items, not among ontological categories. To reduce the language of X's to the language of Y's one must show either (a) that if you can talk about Y's you do not need to talk about X's, or (b) that any given description in terms of X's applies to all and only the things to which a given description in terms of Y's applies. But neither sort of reduction would show that 'X's are *nothing but* Y's', any more than it shows the converse" (Rorty 1987, pp. 114-115).

If so, anti-reductionist physicalists ignore (either positive or negative) ontological commitments to the mental. From this angle, Davidson's physicalism seems to be rather irrelevant regarding his anti-reductionism. He could even assume that reality is neither mental nor physical but, let us say, "ontical" (where "ontical" could be explained only in a non-mentalist and non-physicalist vocabulary). Davidson carefully applies his physicalism to *descriptions* instead of properties as reductive physicalists do (Baker 2009). In fact, it is very hard to argue in what sense events themselves can be claimed to be physical in a Davidsonian framework, except the unprovable hypothesis that our causal descriptions are applicable to each and all events.

For Davidson, every event is claimed to be describable in physical vocabularies but there are at least some events that cannot be described in mental vocabularies (Davidson 1970, p. 141). Roughly, this is *all* his argumentation for the claim that reality itself is physical rather than mental. Events – the building blocks of spatio-temporal reality – can be described several ways, among which physical and mental descriptions have been central to the interests of philosophers. They do not cover, however, two different fields of investigation, and especially do not refer to two ontologically distinct sets of entities (even though the mental is irreducible). Rather the mental and the physical are ways of descriptions: they consist in two different ways of explaining certain partially overlapping aspects of reality.[3]

Davidson, Rorty, and Naturalistic Pragmatism

Nevertheless, it is more than a coincidence or an impact of the recent *Zeitgeist* that both Davidson and Rorty claim themselves to be physicalists. Davidson builds up all his philosophy to a causal account of an ontology of events and causal explanations are hardly compatible with idealist or dualist accounts. Davidson follows Quine in rejecting non-empiricist dogmas of empiricism, claiming that the scheme-content dualism is as worthless as the analytic-synthetic dualism (Davidson 1974). His attempts can be well put into a pragmatist trend of leading an all-out attack against any theoretical backgrounds of a Cartesian-inspired dualism between the external and the internal, between the physical and the mental, and, perhaps with less emphasis but no less importance, between the scientific and the artistic. This line has been developed further by Rorty who, in order to reject representationist vocabularies, also has to deny that the human-world relation could be normative. If the human-world relation is normative then normative categories like truth, reference, justification, and other stuff of the representationist vocabularies would apply

3 Following Davidson, two different interpretations can be provided to this "overlap". The difference between the two is central to the way *how* to dissolve the mental-physical dualism at the level of ontology (though irrelevant for Rortyan purposes). First, one can assume that the physical *entails* the mental; events that have mental descriptions is a subset of events that have physical descriptions. Second, one can say that because of the structural differences in causal chains and normative chains like chains of reasoning, supervenience can only be applied holistically, and hence speaking in mental terms commits us to an entirely different ontology of particular events from the one supposed by speaking in physical terms. I assume the two ways can be held independently but can also be easily harmonised. Whichever route one chooses, however, the distinction has been transformed to the level of descriptions and even if one holds that there are ontological implications of our distinction in our descriptions, she has to admit that these are not *genuinely* ontological questions.

to it. This would also count for the primacy of science over arts.

Clearly, the most appropriate candidate for the role of a non-normative description is a causal vocabulary supported by materialism, physicalism and/or naturalism. At first sight, this can be done only by a naturalisation of normativity *at the level of ontology* as well, since if one ignores ontological questions, one cannot say anything about the human-world relation *itself*. Actually, this was the way Rorty chose in the 1960s when he developed his own sort of eliminative materialism. According to Brandom, Rorty's views had contained several insights still at this point that became later central to him. Most notably, Rorty had held "pragmatism about epistemic norms", the view according to which "any normative matter of epistemic authority or privilege [...] is ultimately intelligible only in terms of social practices" (Brandom 2000b, p. 159). In his reply, Rorty says he did not realise this connection, and although he finds it illuminating, he also admits that "in the 1960s I was over-ontological, and too inclined to talk about what 'really' exists" (Rorty 2000b, p. 190. fn. 4).

Certainly, Rorty's eliminative materialism is about eliminating sensation-*terms* rather than directly sensations themselves or other mental phenomena (see esp. Rorty 1965, Rorty 1970) but via this by-pass, it intends to attack sensations themselves on the supposition that linguistic analysis results in ontological differences. Hence, whether it is deeply grounded in pragmatism (as Brandom thinks) is a doubtful point. Pragmatism, in Brandom's use of the term, is an often illuminating but by no means generally accepted characterisation of the method of tracing back ontological and epistemological questions to a vocabulary in terms of social practices. Brandom argues for his point as follows.

> "Although Rorty did not put the point just this way, I take it that it is specifically pragmatism about epistemic norms that structures this diagnosis of the conceptual bankruptcy of *epistemological foundationalism*" (Brandom 2000b, p. 159 – emphasis added).

With no doubt, the early Rorty's masterpiece by which he provided the most comprehensive "diagnosis of the conceptual bankruptcy of epistemological foundationalism" is his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.* Rorty's *therapy* to this diagnosis was a sort of therapism he attributed, somewhat surprisingly, to Carnap. In the *Preface* to the book, he identified his own inspirations as follows:

> "Getting back to [the assumptions behind most of modern philosophy], and making clear that they are optional, I believed, would be 'therapeutic' in the way in which Carnap's original dissolution of standard textbook problems was 'therapeutic'. This book is the result of that attempt" (Rorty 1979, pp. xiii-xiv).

However the results of this attempt can be understood retrospectively in the light of his later pragmatism, Rorty's original purpose with the *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* was a good old positivist elimination of metaphysical problems, and he thought that metaphysical problems could be explained away by clarifying linguistic misunderstandings. Much later on, he argues against therapism (particularly, in the case of Wittgenstein – see Rorty 2007, Danka 2011). But in the 1970s when he further developed his eliminative materialism introduced in the 1960s, he clearly agreed with the aims of that approach.

A de-ontologisation of Rorty's early arguments is central to my present purposes. Namely, he reformulated his views about the mind-body dualism in his 1987 paper *Non-reductive Physicalism* that he owes to Davidson. Why he prefers the term "non-reductive physicalism" to its original name anomalous monism is probably a matter of emphasis. While for Davidson, it was important to state that he is a monist *but* he does not accept psychological laws (reducible to neurological laws), for Rorty, it was important to state that he is a *non-reductivist,* as opposed to his early quasi-reductionism (but, anyway, he still prefers the physical

vocabulary). Rorty (1987) has good reasons why he does not need to eliminate ontological entities anymore (whether on linguistic grounds or not). Namely he claims that

> "once we drop the notion of 'consciousness' there is no harm in continuing to speak of a distinct entity called 'the self' which consists of the mental states of the human being: her beliefs, desires, moods, etc. The important thing is to think of the collection of those things as *being* the self rather than as something which the self *has*" (Rorty 1987, p. 123).

If we say that there is no centre of consciousness but our pro-attitudes *constitute* what we call "the self", there is no reason to think that the self is something *behind* pro-attitudes which Davidson (1963) put into the causal chain. Hence, there is no reason to think that an acceptance of a mental vocabulary would commit us to any causally inexplicable entities. On the contrary, an acceptance of a mental *vocabulary* has nothing to do with ontological beings themselves.

Hence, one can keep speaking, contrary to Rorty's early eliminative materialism, about mental phenomena without actually committing us to the existence of them. If we are Davidsonians, without falling into reductionism, we can satisfy our physicalist needs. Instead of reality based on linguistic grounds, we can speak about pure descriptions like Continental philosophers do. Hence, on Davidsonian grounds, Rorty was able to eliminate his eliminative materialism, and also open the door to his late, open-minded approach to different philosophical traditions. He did not need much to do. He was instrumentalist enough to replace his less efficient theory with Davidson's one that fits better to Rorty's own purposes and differed from his views only in the ontological commitments which were otherwise unnecessary, if not straightforwardly awkward, consequences of eliminative materialism.[4]

If someone is a physicalist, she can avoid problems of linguistic idealism (most notably, the problem of how reality could be "made" linguistically but objectively). If she is a non-reductive physicalist, she can also avoid problems of reductionism (first of all, the problem how we explain away mental phenomena without throwing the baby out with the bath water). A non-reductive physicalist does not even have to claim physical explanations to be prioritised over other sorts of explanations. On the contrary, other explanations can be equally valid for her. She only claims that "an overall physical description of the world" is definitely one of the valid explanations (Nyírő 2010, p. 4).

All the same, if someone is a non-reductive physicalist, she can keep a minimalist realism about facts or truths, even if she gives up explaining them in a robust theory of truth. She can assume with Davidson that the world is physical, and when we speak about it, our statements can be true or false in a Tarskian way. She can assume all these even though she has only linguistic reasons to do so. She can hold that there is something language- and mind-independent "out there", even though she can say this only via language- and mind-dependent descriptions. These assumptions cannot be refuted precisely for the same reasons why they cannot be proved, since what we have as refutations and proofs are only descriptions. Why the Davidsonian still can hold that she is justified in her belief that there is something beyond descriptions is her notion of *cause.* She claims that, at the end of the day, reality can *really* reward or penalise us, because, as Rorty and Davidson hold, our relation to reality is causal rather than representational or, in other words, the human-world relation lies in coping with our environment rather than going to a Cartesian play.

4 Interestingly enough, Rorty was seemingly uninspired by Davidson in the 1970s, even though they were fellows at Princeton from 1967 to 1970. He started frequently referring to Davidson's work only in the 1980s. I hardly believe that Rorty had been unaware of Davidson's philosophy of action (developed in the 1960s-1970s) before his turn toward Continental philosophy. Presumably it was precisely his turn that made him realise how usefully Davidson's views can be applied for his purposes.

Paradoxically enough, Rorty differs from Davidson precisely in that he exploited what is more Rortyan in Davidson's non-reductive physicalism than Rorty's own eliminative materialism could ever be. It is an advantage for Rortyans that Davidson never wanted to exploit fully. Namely, the possibility of speaking about descriptions without any ontological commitments. The reason why Rorty did not follow Davidson in committing himself to physicalism about events or facts is that he thought that the notion of facts and non-robust truths, in any minimalist sense, still contain normative elements (like individuating the event in question). Even some Rortyans like Brandom dangerously think facts to be reasons and hence norm-governed, instead of thinking the same with Davidson conversely, that reasons are factual (i.e., causal) and this is why they mostly work effectively in our coping with reality. Rorty protests against the view that causal connections, especially perceptual experience, could provide *reasons* to us. If he accepted this, he should accept the science-art opposition on the grounds that science does have such reasons but art does not. The alternative, Davidsonian way claims that whatever our reasons are (being even groundless perceptually), they *were* caused by reality and *do* have causal effects on it. Insofar as those effects are appropriate, it is indifferent if at the level of mental descriptions, our reasons counts as valid or not.

Nevertheless, denying that we can *identify* language-independent facts is not the same as denying language-independent facts *themselves*. Language-independent facts are not denied by Rorty either. His only claim is that without identification, it is senseless to *talk about* them but it is much better to *cope with* them. There is no need to talk about "how the world really is" because we can cope with our environment without such theories quite well. On purely instrumentalist grounds, it is reasonable to say with Davidson for a naturalistic pragmatist that she is a physicalist, because physicalist vocabularies work quite effectively, and that is all that pragmatists need to have in order to accept them. But Rorty is right that nothing forces naturalist pragmatists to do so because descriptions as instruments work quite well without ontological commitments as well.

What distinguishes Davidsonian non-reductionist physicalists from Rortyan naturalistic pragmatists is that no naturalistic pragmatist can say that *the world itself* is physical. "Why cannot we get Reality (aka How the World Really Is In Itself) right?" - asks Rorty and then he replies: "Because there are no norms for talking about it" (Rorty 2000d, p. 375). Getting reality would mean grasping it linguistically. It would mean that reality should have to conform our norms and our vocabularies could force reality to do what we want. Thanks to Davidson, Rortyans think they occasionally could, though not by a proper description of, but causal effects on, it.

Conclusion

I may predict (obviously with no decisive evidence supporting my claim) that from a historical perspective, Rorty's attempt to unify some of the most prominent analytic and Continental philosophers' views will be seen one of his most significant contributions to the history of philosophy. Regarding his professional impact strictly, his argumentation against representationist theories of knowledge, language and mind may be seen as most central. In the light of the final paragraphs of his *Non-reductive Physicalism,* it nonetheless seems that anti-representationism also supports his further purpose of unifying arts and sciences.

Rorty is able to ignore questions of a representation-like world-human relation only if he supposes that relation to be causal. He cannot simply say that there is no such relation at all, because it would involve one of the following three undesirable consequences: (1) scepticism, often attributed to him, which claims that there is no connection between us and reality; (2) linguistic idealism, which is another frequent accusation, claiming that the Cartesian gap can be bridged over only by an extension of the internal to the external; (3) reductive physicalism or eliminative materialism, his

early but over-ontological attempt, claiming that the Cartesian gap can be bridged over only by an extension of the external to the internal. None of them is acceptable if one's purpose is harmonising sciences and arts, i.e., the two most important forms of our relation to the external and the internal.

Rorty prefers rejecting the whole theoretical framework of fundamental philosophical questions instead of choosing one of the overworked alternatives. But he cannot ignore the problem that there *must* be something to be said about our relation to the rest of the world. By his good fortune, he found a good comrade to his interests. Davidson's theory that our pro-attitudes, constituting the self, are under some descriptions in a causal relation with reality, is a plausible account of the mind-world relation in non-representational terms by which Davidsonians can avoid falling back into the representationist way of speaking, while developing a pragmatist view about how we humans relate to the rest of the world.

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"A Liberal Who Is Unwilling To Be An Ironist"

Rorty's Relation to Habermas

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The relation of recent pragmatist thought to the distinguished German philosopher Jürgen Habermas – and inversely, the relation of Habermas to pragmatism – is an interesting topic in itself. Thinkers considered as pragmatists like Hilary Putnam or Richard Bernstein refer to his work frequently, and some of them even classify him as a quasi-pragmatist: take, for example, Matthew Festenstein's *Pragmatism and Political Theory* in which the author devotes many pages to Habermas' ideas on politics.[1] The catalyst of the neopragmatist revival, Richard Rorty also treats Habermas with a distinctive respect and regards him as one of the most important contemporary philosophers.[2] Therefore one might think that the investigation of Habermas' influence on Rorty's thinking could result in deep and subtle insights. But a closer look to Rorty's writings does not verify this assumption and makes it clear that his relation to Habermas is much more complicated than it seems at the first sight.

Although Rorty's admiration for Habermas as a thinker is indisputable, it is restricted to a very general level. As he mentions in a response given to Habermas, "His *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* made an enormous impression on me. Ever since I read it I have thought of the 'linguistic turn' as subsumable within the larger movement from subject-centered rationality to communicative rationality."[3] One of Rorty's central aims is to create a broader narrative framework in which he can synthetize the main figures of both the Continental and the analytic tradition who rebelled against the Cartesian–Kantian – or else, "epistemological" – conception of philosophy, and, as the quotation shows, Habermas seems to provide him useful conceptual tools for this purpose. For Rorty, the switch from subject-centered rationality to communicative rationality is the abandonment of the idea of philosophy as a strict science or queen of the sciences. If we attribute epistemic authority to the subject in the Cartesian way, then we will need a quasi-science – epistemology – to bridge the gap between the subject and the world; but if we attribute it to a communicative community, we can dissolve the need for hard scientific objectivity in the need for intersubjective agreement.[4]

The notion of community is also suitable to connect the two fields of interest those are common to both thinkers: post-Hegelian philosophy and democratic politics. Both of them are suspicious of the core philosophical project of the Enlightenment – that is, epistemological foundationalism – while provide a massive support for its political project. According to Rorty, the *ethos* of the Enlightenment was to create more inclusive societies in place of the former traditionalist and exclusivist ones, and the best present form of such an inclusivist community is the constitutional, liberal democracy of Northern-Atlantic countries. Rorty counts Habermas among those philosophers who work on the latter project rather than the former one; as he puts it, "For Dewey, as for Habermas, what takes the place of the urge to represent

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[1] Cf. Matthew Festenstein, *Pragmatism and Political Theory,* Polity, Cambridge (Mass.), 1997, 146–168.

[2] See, for example, Richard Rorty, „Religion as a Conversation-stopper", in *Philosophy and Social Hope,* Penguin, New York, 1999, 170 („Rawls and Habermas [are] the two most prominent social thinkers of the present day") or Richard Rorty, „Habermas, Derrida and the Functions of Philosophy", in *Truth and Progress,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge (Mass.), 1998, 307 („I think of Jacques Derrida as the most intriguing and ingenious of contemporary philosophers, and of Jürgen Habermas as the most socially useful").

[3] Richard Rorty, *Response to Jürgen Habermas,* in Robert Brandom (ed.), *Rorty and His Critics,* Blackwell, Oxford, 2000, 56.

[4] This is, of course, the main line of the argument that Rorty presents in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton UP, Princeton, 1979, 173–182). Thus Habermasian concepts of subject-centered and communicative rationality contribute only to a later reformulation of the position that he labels there as „epistemological behaviorism".

reality accurately is the urge to come to free agreement with our fellow human beings – to be full participanting members of a free community of inquiry."[5] The Deweyan–Habermasian branch of philosophy puts "the warfare between science and theology" aside and results in what Rorty describes as "a combination of intellectual history and cultural criticism".[6]

On this general level Habermas does seem to be a quasi- or a fellow pragmatist from Rorty's perspective, too. However, when it comes to more specific philosophical questions, Rorty's relation to Habermas becomes rather polemical. What is more, sometimes he even uses Habermas to illustrate a philosophical position that he finds problematic. The explanation for this seemingly contradictory situation is Rorty's conviction that Habermas is heading the right direction but his break with foundationalist philosophy is not consequent – or else, not radical – enough. According to Rorty, he tries to preserve certain features of metaphysical thinking which will prove to be unnecessary if we get rid of the notion of philosophy as a foundational enterprise. In the following I will examine three questions which are connected to each other and in which Rorty's opinion diverges from Habermas' significantly. The examination of these questions – about the function of philosophy, the ideal of universal validity, and the use of a philosophical theory of democracy – sheds a different light on the relation of the two philosophers and shifts the emphasis from their similarities to their differences.

1. The function of philosophy

As Rorty notes in his *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity,* "Habermas shares […] the assumption that the real meaning of a philosophical view consists in its political implications […]. For the tradition within which Habermas is working, it is as obvious that political philosophy is central to philosophy as, for the analytic tradition, that philosophy of language is central."[7] Many schools of philosophy assume that there is a central function of their discipline; for Habermas and his disciples this function is essentially social. In contrast, Rorty thinks that there is no such thing as the central function of philosophy because we are not able to find a single notion of philosophy that can include such different thinkers as Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Carnap, Heidegger, Rawls and Derrida – all we have are family resemblances in the Wittgensteinian sense. Therefore he suggests that if once we have given up the idea that the function of philosophy is to provide foundations for human knowledge, we had better not to try to substitute it with another central function.

This question becomes important when we make decisions about the merit of certain philosophers. If the ultimate context in which one intends to judge the work of a philosopher is a political one, then many of them will prove to be worthless easily. As Rorty points out, the explanation for Habermas' highly critical attitude towards such philosophers as Heidegger and Derrida is the fact that he treats them as failed public philosophers. In contrast, Rorty suggest that we had better treat them as philosophers whose work is suitable for private purposes – that is, whose work can provide us new self-descriptions or self-images. One of the main reasons for the private-public distinction established by Rorty in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* is the intention to protect idiosyncratic philosophers such as Derrida from one-sided interpretations for which the only criterion is political usefulness. I will not try to decide here the question whether Rorty's "private" reading is consitent with the self-understanding of Derrida, but it is clear that if we abandon the idea of an ultimate context – whether it is politics or language – we will take a huge step towards a more pluralistic picture of philosophy.

[5] Richard Rorty, „Education as Socialization and as Individualization", in *Philosophy and Social Hope,* 119.

[6] Richard Rorty, „Naturalism and Quietism", in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge (Mass.), 2007, 148.

[7] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge (Mass.), 1989, 83.

According to this pluralistic view, there are not only different kinds of philosophers whose work is suitable for different purposes but it is also possible for a philosopher to be committed to different purposes without trying to synthetize them in a single theory or in a single vocabulary. A philosopher can be, to use Rorty's terminology, a liberal – whose aim is to maximize social solidarity – and an ironist – who puts private self-creation in the first place – at the same time. Many philosophers think that the two positions contradict to each other. There are ironists who are unwilling to be liberals, like Foucault and other representative figures of contemporary French thought. And the best example of the liberal who is unwilling to be an ironist, according to Rorty, is Habermas himself.[8] Whether this classification is fair or not, the fact that Rorty picks out Habermas as an influental thinker with whom to contrast his "liberal ironist" position shows that he gives more weight to the differences between their perspectives than to the similarities between them. Habermas reminds Rorty of those philosophers who try to unify all possible human concerns in a single vision of social utility.

2. The ideal of universal validity

According to Rorty, Habermas is not only convinced that political philosophy is the center of philosophy itself but tries to preserve in this field some disputable ideas of foundationalism. As he puts it, "[Habermas'] theory of communicative action is a sort of surrogate for metaphysics and epistemology".[9] Rorty is suspicious of notions such as "undistorted communication" or "ideal speech situation" but the main target of his criticism is not specific to Habermasian theory. Rorty notices that many non-foundationalist philosophers, including Habermas and even pragmatists such as Hilary Putnam, cling to the ideal of universal validity that is characteristic to metaphysical thinking. The reason for this is not purely philosophical but also political. It seems that if we give up the notion of universal validity, then we will not be able to defend liberal democracy against its enemies. If there is no universally valid justification for democratic commitment, then it will be only one opinion among others. Therefore, goes the argument of Habermas and his disciples, we either preserve the notion of universal validity or accept an unrestricted form of relativism that treats every political views as equal and thus opens the gate before authoritarianism.

In contrast to this line of thought, Rorty insists that we had better get rid of the notion of universal validity. As he writes, a universally valid justification would be one that sounds convincing to all possible audiences – including ones in the past or in the future, or ones which consist of people whose beliefs are radically different from ours.[10] Rorty thinks that this is only a philosopher's dream; in reality, we are able to justify our theories or institutions only in a community that already shares a great amount of our values and convictions. Maybe it sounds like relativism but Rorty is certainly not a relativist – he is convinced that democracy is *better* than any other forms of government. What he questions is that there is a common ground for the debate between the admirers of democracy and that of authoritarianism; not because they cannot understand each other or have incommensurable views, but because they rely on significantly different premises. He dubs his own stance as ethnocentrism in order to highlight the fact that the scope of justification is always limited to a discoursive community – an "ethnos" – the members of which will take one's reasons *as reasons*.

While Rorty condemns the ideal of universal validity as a remnant of foundationalist philosophy, he is also aware of that Habermas' insistence on it can be explained by certain historical reasons. As he puts it, "The idea of communal self-creation, of realizing a dream which has no justification in unconditional claims to universal validity, sound suspicious to Habermas and Apel because

[8] Cf. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity,* 61.
[9] Richard Rorty, „Pragmatism and Law: A Response to David Luban", in *Philosophy and Social Hope,* 108.
[10] Cf. Richard Rorty, „Universality and Truth", in *Rorty and His Critics,* 12–14.

they naturally associate it with Hitler. It sounds better to Americans, because they naturally associate it with Jefferson, Whitman and Dewey."[11] Maybe that is why Habermas is looking for ahistorical, neutral, context-independent principles in order to justify liberal democracy. The question is, on what basis can we decide between Hitler and Jefferson. As Rorty argues, the adequate basis for a such a decision are proper historical narratives rather than philosophical theories. That is why he thinks, *pace* Habermas, that even if we the give up the notion of universal validity, we will have effective tools against the enemies of democracy. For Rorty, the defence of democracy consist not in arguments but in socialization, education and the construction of convincing narratives.

3. The theory of democracy

Since Habermas thinks that philosophy has important political implications – or even that its main implications are political – and also believes that theoretical justification of democracy is not only possible but necessary, it is not surprising that he gives much weight to the theory of democracy. On the one hand, he has a general conviction that philosophy as a discipline can make valuable contributions to democratic politics. On the other hand, he practices what he preaches: he has worked out a substantive theory of democracy. In contrast to the received proceduralist and communitarian models of democracy, he has argued for another normative model that is now widely acknowledged as deliberative democracy.[12] Since notions like consensus and conversation appear frequently in Rorty's writings, some interpreters attribute to him a similar conception of democracy than that of Habermas.[13] However, Rorty's views on the relation of theory and practice, and thus on the need for a theory of democracy differ significantly from his views.

Although democracy is obviously an important topic for Rorty, in his work we will not find a detailed – substantive or normative – theory of democracy. According to him, in order to understand democratic politics we do not need a theory of democracy, as well as in order to unmask totalitarian politics we do not need a theory of totalitarianism. Granted, the sort of theory in which Habermas is intrested in is not only descriptive but normative: its aim is to correct the practice of actual democracies. But, unlike Habermas, Rorty thinks that "the rich democracies of the present day already contain the sorts of institutions necessary for their own reform and that the communication among the citizens of those democracies is not 'distorted' by anything more esoteric than greed, fear, ignorance and resentment."[14] As his persistent polemy against the so-called American Cultural Left shows, Rorty is convinced that abstract social theory makes more harm than good. The more normative our theoretical framework is, the more imperfect will our actual democratic practice seem. And, as Rorty argues, this will lead only to impatience and not to the careful reform of that practice.

Elsewhere I argued for in more details that Rorty's relation to deliberative theories of democracy is not necessarily sympathetic at all.[15] He is not only suspicious of highly normative approaches to democracy such as deliberative ones but, as his ethnocentrism indicates, he is also aware of the limits of deliberation and has doubts about that every contested political questions can be resolved by the means of discussion. What is more, his realistic or even pessimistic views presented in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* concerning the formation of the communal "we" – which he treats as

[11] Rorty, „Universality and Truth", 3.
[12] Cf. Jürgen Habermas, „Three Normative Models of Democracy", in *The inclusion of the Other,* The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1998.
[13] See, for example, Chantal Mouffe, „Deconstruction, Pragmatism and the Politics of Democracy", in Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *Deconstruction and Pragmatism,* Routledge, New York, 1996, 4–9.
[14] Rorty, „Habermas, Derrida and the Functions of Philosophy", 326.
[15] See my book published in Hungarian: *Demokrácia filozófiai megalapozás nélkül: Richard Rorty és a politikai filozófia [Democracy Without Philosophical Foundations: Richard Rorty and Political Philosophy],* Ráció, Budapest, 2010, 59–74.

always contrasted to "them" – suggest that he is aware of the limits of political consensus, too.[16] But whether we accept the latter interpretation or not, it is clear that, according to Rorty, once we have given up the idea that the main function of philosophy is to provide foundations to our practices and institutions, then we will not necessarily need a philosophical theory of democracy. That is why he can say without any scruples that "Unlike Habermas, I do not think that disciplines like philosophy, linguistics and developmental psychology can do much for democratic politics."[17]

Given that Rorty explicitly denies (1) that there is a central function of philosophy and it is essentially social, (2) that we are able to justify liberal democracy in an unconditional, universal way, and (3) that in order to understand and to improve democratic politics we need a well articulated philosophical theory of democracy, the main question remains: why does he still insist that Habermas is an exemplary philosopher? I think, the answer lies in the special role that Habermas plays as a public intellectual rather than in his – otherwise very impressive – philosophical work. In his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* Rorty considers Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey as the three most important non-foundationalist philosophers. I think, he also recommends them as role-models for philosophers: the later Wittgenstein represents the philosopher as therapist, Heidegger as creative inventor of new, idiosyncratic vocabularies and Dewey as public intellectual. And we might say that among contemporary philosophers the one who is nearest to the Deweyan ideal is obviously Jürgen Habermas.

If we are looking for an explicit formulation of this consideration, we will find it in one of Rorty's papers: "Habermas, almost alone among eminent philosophers of the present day, manages to work as Dewey did, on two tracks. He produces both a stream of philosophical treatises and a stream of comment on current events. I doubt that any philosophy professor since Dewey has done more day-to-day work in the political arena, or done more for the goals of us social democrats."[18] The careful investigation of Rorty's work testifies to that the stream that made deeper impressions to him is not that of treatises – with the exception of the above mentioned *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* – but that of comments on current political situation of Western democracies. If we think of Habermas as a Dewey of the present day, it will explain why is Rorty eager to count him among that "we" – "we, liberals" – that he often refers to. Even if he is a liberal who is unwilling to be an ironist.

[16] Cf. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity,* 189-198.
[17] Rorty, „Universality and Truth", 14.
[18] Richard Rorty, „Thugs and Theorists: A Reply to Bernstein", *Political Theory* 1987/4., 580, n31.

THE ROOTS OF RORTY'S PHILOSOPHY: CATHARINE A. MACKINNON

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Introduction

Although Rorty's introduction to feminist theory came about purely by happenstance – he claims to have started reading feminist books simply because his wife had dozens of them lying around the house – I will suggest in this paper that his engagement with feminism resulted in an important shift to a more political version of pragmatism in his later works. Indeed, even though Rorty admits to not having "anything special to say about feminism" (Rorty et. al. 2002, 30), a careful reading reveals that feminism seems to have had something special to say to Rorty. And now, with increasing attention being paid to Rorty's unique brand of neopragmatism by feminists, it is becoming apparent that Rorty may have had something special to say to feminism after all.

In this paper, I will explore the role Catharine A. MacKinnon's work played in Rorty's interest in feminism in the early 1990s, and his consequent turn to more explicitly political topics in his later writing. In the first section, I will provide a brief overview of MacKinnon's projects for readers unfamiliar with her work, paying particular attention to her role in the development of the concept of sexual harassment. In the second section, I will investigate the aspects of her work that make it the type of approach that interests Rorty, and in what ways and for what purposes her work appears in and influences his writing. In the third section, I will interrogate how Rorty's use of MacKinnon impacts the reception of his views by other feminist theorists. That is, I will ask whether and how Rorty's use of MacKinnon's perspectives either serves or undermines his attempts to 'sell' pragmatism to feminists. In the fourth section, I will suggest that a slight modification to Rorty's account of MacKinnon's place within feminism can uncover middle ground between Rorty's views and those of his critics; grounds which may prove fertile for future investigations into the relationships to be forged between feminism and pragmatism. I will employ the example of sexual harassment, a concept MacKinnon helped introduce into legal discourse, to elucidate the middle ground I recommend. I will conclude that it is Rorty's exposure to and engagement with MacKinnon's writing that brings him to deal more explicitly with political issues and that, even though feminists have not been quick to adopt Rorty's insights, further investigation into his writing is likely to bring to light the many resources his philosophy has to offer progressive social movements.

1. Catharine A. MacKinnon

MacKinnon is a prominent American feminist legal theorist who is well-known for her participation in a number of important legal projects. She has been engaged in groundbreaking international work on issues of sex equality. For example, she represented Bosnian women survivors of Serbian genocidal sexual atrocities in a successful lawsuit which provided the first recognition that rape is an act of genocide.[1] She is also well-known (and possibly notorious) for what are considered to be her radical views regarding pornography. Along with Andrea Dworkin and other feminist activists, MacKinnon helped to develop the Antipornography Civil Rights Ordinance, a collection of local ordinances intended to be used to protect women from the harms of pornography under civil law.[2] MacKinnon is also well known for the part she played in bringing to public awareness the phenomenon of sexual harassment. Although each of these topics is worthy of lengthy

[1] See Catharine A. MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality* (1988), and *In Harm's Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings* (1997).

[2] See "Kadic v. Karadzic: Opinion of 2nd Circuit re: Subject Matter Jurisdiction," at *Project Diana: Online Human Rights Archive (At Yale Law School).*

investigation, I will limit myself here to exploring the final topic – which serves as an example throughout this paper – before investigating how the methodology she employed in pursuing this and other issues led to the incorporation of her views and approach in Rorty's 1990 Tanner Lecture, "Feminism and Pragmatism."

The phenomenon the term "sexual harassment" identifies was already a concern in the nineteenth century. As Carrie N. Baker points out, social reformers at this time "first conceptualized sexual coercion in the workplace as a social problem, but framed it as a moral issue. Reformers were concerned with the moral degeneration of women in the workplace, so they advocated protective labor laws that limited women's participation in the workplace to shield them from these influences" (Baker 2003, 41). During the so-called second wave of feminism in the 1970s, the problem of sexual harassment was reconceptualized by feminists, Baker suggests, "as a civil rights issue. Concerned with women's equal employment opportunities, feminists argued that sexual harassment was sex discrimination" (41). In *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution*, Susan Brownmiller recounts how a group of feminist activists of which she was a part realized there was no term they could use to identify the experiences many women were having in their workplaces at the hands of their bosses or co-workers. In brainstorming to find a term, many were bandied about until someone came up with "sexual harassment." Brownmiller writes, "We wanted something that embraced the whole range of subtle and unsubtle persistent behaviors. Somebody came up with "harassment." *Sexual harassment!* Instantly we agreed. That's what it was" (Quoted in Fricker 2007, 150). Some of the feminist activists in groups like the one Brownmiller describes went on to form Working Women United (later to become the Working Women's Institute) and the Alliance Against Sexual Coercion, both of which were instrumental in bringing sexual harassment to public attention through the late 1970s. It is largely due to the efforts of the women who worked with these organizations that the issue of sexual harassment gained popular attention.

It was feminist perspectives in popular culture that led, in large part, to popular acceptance of the concept of sexual harassment. The media generally sought women's personal testimonials, as well as feminist perspectives on the issue of sexual harassment, which included the idea that it was an issue of power rather than sexuality. As Baker points out, "These stories raised awareness about the issue, causing more women to speak up about harassment, to name the experience as a violation, and to fight it. Women began to question coercive sexual behavior in the workplace that they would before have accepted as the status quo" (Baker 2003, 42). The first appearances of the concept of sexual harassment appeared in the popular press in the mid-1970s. In 1975, Enid Nemy's article "Women Begin to Speak Out Against Sexual Harassment at Work" appeared in the *New York Times,* and Mary Bralove's "A Cold Shoulder: Career Women Decry Sexual Harassment by Bosses and Clients" appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1976. There were, of course, critical responses to these mainstream treatments of sexual harassment, yet the term had gained enough currency that women across North America were able to employ the concept in describing their own experiences.

In 1979, MacKinnon published the first major book on the topic of sexual harassment, entitled *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination*. In that text, she presents the legal argument that "sexual harassment of women at work is sex discrimination in employment" (4). The strategy MacKinnon employs when presenting sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination is a strategy that had already proven successful in feminist attempts to reconceptualize the problem of rape. More specifically, she suggests that sexual harassment is less about sex than it is about power. She writes, "Rape has recently been conceptualized as a crime of violence, not sex. Sexual harassment, so conceptualized, would be an

abuse of hierarchical economic (or institutional) authority, not sexuality" (217-218). In other words, MacKinnon argues that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination because it is an issue of power; the act of sexual harassment reinforces the social inequality of women to men, and it does this specifically by undermining women's "potential for work equality as a means to social equality" (1979, 216). MacKinnon's efforts and persistence were, of course, rewarded: in 1980, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) employed MacKinnon's framework in adopting guidelines prohibiting sexual harassment by prohibiting both quid pro quo harassment and hostile work environment harassment.

2. Rorty's use of MacKinnon's work

In the interview "Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies," Rorty is asked to respond to the following observation the interviewer had made of his work: "before you started talking about the American left in general, you focused pretty specifically on feminism—you've written a number of articles about feminism—and it seems to be a politics that you're particularly attached to" (Rorty et. al. 2002, 29). Rorty responds:

> One is always struck when one finds oneself guilty of taking things for granted. I was raised phallogocentric, homophobic, all the rest of it, and it took decades of propaganda to make me realize I'd been raised wrong. […] When you have the sense of your eyes being opened, you tend to write about how nice it is to have your eyes open. That's why I wrote about feminism. But it isn't that I think I have anything special to say about feminism (29-30).

Rorty became acquainted with the work of feminists – most notably philosopher Marilyn Frye, poet and essayist Adrienne Rich, and the focus of this paper, legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon – because the books were, quite simply, made available to him. In "Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies," Rorty mentions that he began reading feminist authors because of the influence of his wife. He is quoted as saying, "She began reading more and more feminist books. There were dozens of them lying around the house, so I began reading them. If I'd been single, God knows whether I would ever have read them" (30-31). Marianne Janack, editor of the recent anthology *Feminist Interpretations of Richard Rorty*, recounts a conversation she had with Rorty's wife, Mary Varney Rorty, in which his choice of feminist authors is explained. Janack quotes Mary Rorty:

> they [Frye and Rich] grabbed you by the brain and imagination and rammed you into something you might not have thought about but sure were gonna think about now. […] [T]hat kind of writing – writing that clears a path for ideas, preferably outrageous ones, to wham into your brain – that was Rorty's meat. He aspired to it; he recognized it when he saw it; he absolutely respected it. He was glad of an occasion to acknowledge it (Janack 2008, 30).

It is this engagement with feminist literature, induced simply by its availability, that prompts Rorty's writing of "Feminism and Pragmatism," originally presented in 1990 as the Tanner Lecture on Human Values at the University of Michigan.

In particular, it is MacKinnon's methodology – which involves investigating specific issues in pursuit of or in the context of greater social progress – that draws Rorty to her work. He sees her as a paradigm of the "moral entrepreneur," people who (in Rorty's words) "have a very specific target, call attention to a very specific set of instances of unnecessary suffering" (Rorty et. al. 2002, 47). These moral entrepreneurs, Rorty argues, ultimately do more good than academic moralists who tend to be universalistic moral philosophers and see their job as providing moral principles to guide action. On Rorty's view,

> Univeralistic moral philosophers think that the notion of 'violation of human rights' provides sufficient conceptual resources to explain why some traditional occasions of revulsion really are moral abominations and others only appear to be. They think of moral progress as an increasing ability to see the reality behind the illusions created by superstition, prejudice, and unreflective custom. The typical universalist is a moral realist, someone who thinks that true moral judgments are *made* true by something out there in the world (Rorty 2010, 22).

If we adopt a universalistic account of moral progress, Rorty suggests, we will simply see MacKinnon's approach as "empty hyperbole" rather than as what it really is, and that is "prophecy" (Rorty 2010, 22).

Closer investigation of how MacKinnon understands the context into which the new concept of sexual harassment is introduced reveals still further reasons for why Rorty would be interested in her work. In the preface to *Sexual Harassment of Working Women,* MacKinnon writes, "Sexual harassment has been not only legally allowed; it has been legally unthinkable" (xi). In other words, because the legal concept of sexual harassment had not yet been conceived and introduced, it did not, for all intents and purposes, exist. By presenting sexual harassment as a form of discrimination – an issue of power rather than of sex – MacKinnon presented a new description of a phenomenon that the legal world would ultimately acknowledge. This approach sits very well with Rorty's recommendation to "stop talking about the need to go from distorted to undistorted perception of moral reality, and instead talk about the need to modify our practices so as to take account of new descriptions of what has been going on" (Rorty 2010, 22-23). This, of course, is why Rorty uses MacKinnon as an example of the strategy best suited to attaining social progress. Indeed, given that Rorty appreciates and admires the approach of the moral entrepreneur who provides new descriptions of states of affairs to render visible previously invisible assumptions, MacKinnon's work becomes an exemplar of the pragmatist position he seeks to forward. Her work thus also prompts his theoretical engagement with feminism. In this section I will explore the use Rorty makes of MacKinnon's work and then investigate, in the following section, whether it plays the role he hoped it would in his attempt to 'woo' feminists.

In "Feminism and Pragmatism," Rorty quotes MacKinnon's views on the ascension of women to Minnesota's Supreme Court: "I'm evoking for women a role that we have yet to make, in the name of a voice that, unsilenced, might say something that has never been heard" (MacKinnon in Rorty 2010, 20). MacKinnon's approach here sits well with Rorty's linguistic pragmatism, in which linguistic innovation motivates social progress. According to Rorty, MacKinnon is correct to think that "assumptions become visible *as* assumptions only if we can make the contradictories of those assumptions sound plausible" (Rorty 2010, 21). In other words, only by describing a world in which our assumptions are reversed, and by making that world sound like it could exist, are we able to show that the assumptions currently at work are nothing but assumptions.

This means that somebody must be willing to create and suggest a description of a different world – a redescription of our own. Rorty continues,

> Only if somebody has a dream, and a voice to describe that dream, does what looked like nature begin to look like culture, what looked like fate begin to look like a moral abomination. For until then only the language of the oppressor is available, and most oppressors have had the wit to teach the oppressed a language in which the oppressed will sound crazy – *even to themselves* – if they describe themselves *as* oppressed (Rorty 2010, 21).

Thus, new language must be presented, one which will, as Rorty puts it, "facilitate new reactions" (Rorty 2010, 21). He suggests, "by 'new language' I mean not just new words but also creative misuses of language – familiar words used in ways which initially sound crazy. […] Such popularity [of new descriptions] extends logical space by making descriptions of situations which used to seem crazy seem sane" (Rorty 2010, 21).

Here, a brief reminder of how Rorty thinks social progress occurs might be helpful. Recall that Rorty thinks argumentation on its own is an inadequate tool for seeking and attaining social progress. Only a new vocabulary can displace an existing vocabulary, and he argues in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* that it is the ironist who creates new vocabularies. The method employed by the ironist therefore relies on

> redescription rather than inference. Ironists specialize in redescribing ranges of objects or events in partially neologistic jargon, in the hope of inciting people to adopt and extend that jargon. An ironist hopes that by the time she has finished using old words in new senses, not to mention introducing brand-new words, people will no longer ask questions phrased in the old words (Rorty 1989, 78).

The ironist, which evolves into the prophet of Rorty's later work (more on this shortly), is responsible for instigating social progress, Rorty contends, because there are many situations in which argument will simply fail.[3] For example, he contends that irony or prophecy can be a useful ally in the feminist struggle in that it offers a strategy for feminists to use when argument fails. And, he proposes, "Argument for the rights of the oppressed *will* fail just insofar as the only language in which to state relevant premises is one in which the relevant emancipatory premises sound crazy" (Rorty 2010, 24). In other words, because oppressed groups are required to phrase their arguments in the discourse of the oppressor, or in "commonsensical" language, the idea of emancipating the oppressed will inevitably sound unreasonable. Indeed, Rorty suggests that naming the language used by oppressed groups in their search for equality as "crazy" or "unreasonable" is an explicit tactic, used by the oppressor, to keep other groups in a subordinate position.

Thus, oppressed groups require another strategy to realize their goals of emancipation. This strategy is, of course, persuasion, and more specifically, persuasion designed to arouse sentiments that would lead to greater solidarity; to enable those who populate the dominant discourse to recognize marginalized groups as members of "we" rather than "they." As Janack puts it, Rorty argues

> Feminists should not tie themselves to the old paradigm by playing by its rules of argumentation and evidence, but should take on the challenge of providing a new paradigm, even at the risk of sounding crazy or having their appeals fall on deaf ears. Only by offering a new vision that could replace the old model of patriarchy – a function fulfilled by prophecy, not by philosophy – can feminists make progress (Janack 2008, 33).

3. Rorty and feminism

Pragmatist and feminist projects are often motivated by the same concerns, and these concerns often lead their adherents to the same theoretical and practical conclusions. Thus, an alliance between them seems almost inevitable. Indeed, Veronique Mottier, in "Pragmatism and Feminist Theory," suggests that there can be found

> a natural affinity between key elements of pragmatism and feminist thought. Both privilege social and political practice over abstract theory, they evaluate theory from the point of view of its concrete effects on marginalized groups, including women, and both share a common emphasis upon the development of theory from subjects' grounded experience. Nevertheless, the history of the relations between pragmatism and feminism is largely one of a failed rendezvous (2004, 323).[4]

[3] It seems that ironic redescription is not the *only* means by which social progress can be achieved. In *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth,* Rorty writes "Plain argumentative prose may, depending on circumstances, be equally useful." (169) Interestingly, this is a bit of a throw-away, as Rorty does not seem to pursue it here, or elsewhere, and maintains his position that metaphor is *more* useful than "making predictable moves in currently popular language-games." (169) I assume that, by suggesting "plain argumentative prose" may contribute to social progress, he is thinking of something similar to the type of progress that Kuhn argues is possible *within* normal science.

[4] Mottier chalks this failure up to the lack of a clear political program in neopragmatism, and particularly in Rorty's work. And, the politics that are at work in Rorty's philosophy, she argues, rely too heavily on the distinction between the public and private spheres, and on traditional liberalism, with its emphasis on autonomous, rational subjectivity. She writes: "Rorty's unsophisticated liberalism, which amalgamates a liberalist understanding of the subject as an autonomous individual with a liberal political project, is deeply problematic for feminist theory. Its unreflective *a priori* separation between public and private spheres and between theory and practice, as well as its failure to take into account the relational dimension of human existence, are at odds with current feminist debates on liberalism." (331) Unfortunately, Mottier's piece provides no account of Rorty's actual position. Therefore, I will not take Mottier's criticisms further into account because it is not clear how she understands

While Mottier chalks this failure up to the lack of a clear political program in neopragmatism – an accusation I do not deal with here – I suggest that the lack of meaningful dialogue is more likely both less conscious and more strategic. That is, it is more ignorance of the pragmatists' work and a desire to avoid an alliance with an already much-maligned movement that results in the so-called "failed rendezvous."

In any case, a conversation of sorts has developed among feminists about the value of pragmatism for their goals, and between feminists and pragmatists as well, to determine the value of their work for each others' enterprises. For example, Phyllis Rooney, in "Feminist-Pragmatist Revisionings of Reason, Knowledge, and Philosophy," contends that "a kind of critical dialectical relationship" between pragmatism and feminism can bring out their respective and mutual strengths, which can serve as a starting point for reimagining epistemological concepts (15). Both movements, she claims, developed out of "similar frustrations with what are seen as limiting aspects of "traditional" philosophy" (15). Yet despite these overlapping concerns, interests and projects, few feminists have explicitly taken up the task of pursuing a distinctly pragmatist feminism or a feminist pragmatism. Even fewer still are the feminists who have taken up the project of being "banner-wavers" for Rorty. As Rorty is one of the few contemporary philosophers to explicitly engage with feminist theory, this is perhaps surprising. However, exploring the many possible reasons for the "failed rendezvous" between feminism and pragmatism, or even between feminism and Rorty's work specifically, is surely beyond the scope of this paper. What I will focus on is the conversation that has emerged as a result of Rorty's use of MacKinnon's views and his positing of her as a feminist prophet.

It is Rorty's engagement with feminism, I suggest, that brings to life and clarifies a short but anomalous passage in his 1989 *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.* There, he suggests social progress occurs through linguistic innovation, and it is the ironist who envisions and creates a better society through their innovative uses of language. It is the liberal ironist who creates narratives that can cause a shift in a culture's final vocabulary. However, he briefly notes that the books that are created by the ironist can be divided into two types, those books

> aimed at working out a new *private* vocabulary and those aimed at working out a new *public* vocabulary. The former is a vocabulary deployed to answer questions like "What shall I be?" "What can I become?" "What have I been?" The latter is a vocabulary deployed to answer the question "What sorts of things about what sorts of people do I need to notice? (Rorty 1989, 143).

And although Rorty does not dismiss the possibility that the former type of book can prompt or contribute to social progress, it is the latter type of book that contributes to social progress by enlarging the scope of solidarity. Yet he continues to assert at this point that the ideal citizen of a liberal utopia will therefore see those responsible for creating social change as individuals who prompt the creation of a new public final vocabulary through the creation of their own private final vocabularies.

Interestingly, the distinction that Rorty raises here, between books "aimed at working out a new *private* vocabulary and those aimed at working out a new *public* vocabulary," is not, to my knowledge, mentioned at any other point in his works, although it does seem to be a background assumption in some areas, most notably in his discussion of George Orwell's dystopian novels However, the distinction made in 1989's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* foreshadows the move Rorty makes from irony to prophecy, where the latter type of book is presented by someone Rorty identifies as a prophet rather than an ironist. Indeed, it is Rorty's engagement with feminism that prompts him to recast the liberal ironist of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* as a political actor, and he takes MacKinnon to be just such an actor. That is, it is an understanding of the struggles and

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Rorty's work, and what, therefore, she is actually criticizing.

successes of feminism that prompts him to engage further with these books aimed at public audiences, where "public" can be variously defined to include the larger public of a society or culture – something along the lines of his bourgeois leftist intellectuals – or smaller counterpublic spheres like feminist activist and consciousness-raising groups.

However, the move from irony to prophecy, and the use of MacKinnon as an example of a feminist prophet, has not received the warmest reception from feminist thinkers engaged with Rorty's work. For instance, the concept of the feminist prophet sits uneasily with Nancy Fraser, who responds to Rorty's Tanner Lecture, arguing that a further move to politics is necessary after one has moved from irony to prophecy (Fraser 2010, 54). Fraser is particularly concerned that the picture of the prophet offered by Rorty is too individualistic and does not account for the social nature of knowledge production. She notes moreover that Rorty's view of the feminist prophet is simply inaccurate as a description of progressive movements throughout history. Is it the prophet who alters vocabularies by presenting new metaphors, thereby enabling political transformations, she asks, or is it marginalized communities themselves who are responsible for these changes? Certainly, it has not proven to be the case that individual prophets within feminist circles are solely responsible for social change, Fraser argues. She suggests that important feminist redescriptions have developed through practices of consciousness-raising. In fact, Fraser contends that consciousness-raising presents "a major linguistic innovation not only at the level of the meanings it has generated, but also at the level of the invention and institutionalization of a new language game or discursive practice" (Fraser 1991, 266).

Thus, she argues that the counterpublic sphere better represents the feminist movement than does Rorty's prophetic characterization. She characterizes the feminist counterpublic sphere as "a discursive space where 'semantic authority' is constructed collectively, critically, and democratically, rather than imposed via prophetic pronouncements from mountaintops" (Fraser 1991, 266). Thus, while Fraser and Rorty agree on more than they disagree, as Janack puts it, "The question to which they give different answers is: how does linguistic innovation work to create and sustain political change?" (Janack 2008, 34-35). In other words, while both theorists agree that linguistic innovation motivates social progress, and even though Fraser welcomes Rorty's move from irony to prophecy, she also worries that Rorty's account is too apolitical. Fraser presents a reading under which the development of the term "sexual harassment" did not come about as a result of MacKinnon's prophetic insights, but rather as a process embodied by a counterpublic sphere.

4. Sexual harrasment

Although Rorty himself never employs or addresses it himself, the case of sexual harassment is commonly employed by feminist theorists as an example of the way social movements can be successful and moral progress can be achieved. I will investigate how some feminist theorists have used the development of the concept "sexual harassment" in their work to determine whether and how Rorty's use of MacKinnon's work was accurate and appropriate, and to begin to develop a middle ground between Rorty and his critics.

In *Inclusion and Democracy*, Iris Marion Young seeks to develop a more inclusive version of political communication which makes room for alternate discursive styles and methods. Any properly functioning deliberative democracy, she suggests, must make room for these different communicative styles so as to not unfairly exclude anyone from political discourse. Young outlines how the alternative discursive method of narrative specifically was used to develop the concept of sexual harassment. In other words, this example elucidates how story-telling or narrative can introduce new terms into the prevailing normative discourse. Young writes,

> Before the language and theory of sexual harassment was invented…women usually suffered in silence, without a language or forum in which to make a reasonable complaint. As a result of women telling stories to each other and to wider publics about their treatment by men on the job and the consequences of this treatment, however, a problem that had no name was gradually identified and named (72-73).

In other words, an accumulation of cognitive dissonances or felt anomalies led women to share between themselves their experiences of what has come to be known as a form of sexual discrimination. The new metaphor developed by and among these women to describe their experiences – "sexual harassment" – was meant to highlight the negative aspects of what up to that point had been thought of as harmless workplace interactions between men and women. This new metaphor gradually filled in what feminist epistemologist Miranda Fricker calls a hermeneutical gap.

In *Epistemic Injustice*, Fricker uses the example to clarify her account of hermeneutical injustice, and the way in which a new term can bring to light experiences that were previously ignored or marginalized because they could not be named. Recall that hermeneutical injustice, according to Fricker, illustrates the following idea:

> relations of unequal power can skew shared hermeneutical resources so that the powerful tend to have appropriate understandings of their experiences ready to draw on as they make sense of their social experiences, whereas the powerless are more likely to find themselves having some social experiences through a glass darkly, with at best ill-fitting meanings to draw on in the effort to render them intelligible (148).

In other words, because those in power are able to determine the collection of hermeneutical resources that constitute a social imaginary, they will rarely find themselves without the words and phrases needed to communicate their experiences to others. The powerless, on the other hand, must make do with the social meanings available to them, many of which will be inadequate to the task of interpreting and communicating their own experiences.

The account of the development of the term "sexual harassment" is offered by Fricker as an example of the filling of a hermeneutical gap that threatens the experience and credibility of women. Fricker outlines the example at length, using it to elucidate what it means for there to be a gap in the collective hermeneutical resources available to individuals and groups to communicate their experiences. In developing this term, feminists were able to plug the hermeneutical gap that had been affecting them, and make a whole new range of theoretical and activist resources available. Only in some cases will this gap constitute an injustice, however. In a situation of sexual harassment, Fricker explains, "harasser and harassee alike are cognitively handicapped by the hermeneutical lacuna – neither has a proper understanding of how he is treating her – but the harasser's cognitive disablement is not a significant disadvantage to him. Indeed, there is an obvious sense in which it suits his purpose" (Fricker 2007, 151). And it is this cognitive disablement that renders any specific instance of running up against a hermeneutical gap both harmful and wrongful: an injustice. Fricker continues,

> the harassee's cognitive disablement is seriously disadvantageous to her. The cognitive disablement prevents her from understanding a significant patch of her own experience: that is, a patch of experience which it is strongly in her interests to understand… Her hermeneutical disadvantage renders her unable to make sense of her ongoing mistreatment, and this in turn prevents her from protesting it, let alone securing effective measures to stop it (Fricker 2007, 151).

Fricker also argues that the inability to name such mistreatment is best understood as a hermeneutical injustice because the background social conditions were such that the gap was an effect and instrument of power, specifically patriarchal power, as women were fighting against it in the late 1960s.

What makes the case of sexual harassment noteworthy for commentators like Fraser, who oppose Rorty's account of MacKinnon's prophetic voice, is the fact that this term was not simply presented in literature and thus cannot be traced to its originator. As is the case with

most narrative examples of the development of a term like "sexual harassment," it is difficult to determine who is responsible for its origin and thus, Fraser thinks identifying a "prophet" who provides the impetus for social progress is inaccurate. Instead, she urges a further move, as is evidenced by the title of her response to Rorty, a move not just from irony to prophecy, but from prophecy to politics as well. Yet positing that it was a group of women who were responsible for developing the new concept rather than an individual prophet does not in itself explain how such a term could serve to overcome (or at least mitigate) the hermeneutical injustice that its lack engenders. In order to fully overcome such an injustice, the term has to enter into the collective hermeneutical resources of a society such that it can be called upon by others to explain previously unexplainable experiences.

I suggest that, on a Rortyan account, this can be accomplished via argumentation on the part of an individual or group that could best be described as an advocate. That is, while redescription (also presented as "abnormal discourse" by Rorty) is the method by which we understand possible methods to fill the gap, argumentation (or "normal discourse") facilitates the uptake of such redescriptions. In the case of sexual harassment, what were the means by which the term became a hermeneutical resource upon which others could draw? Surely MacKinnon played a pivotal role here. And although this role may not have been one of prophecy, perhaps identifying MacKinnon as an advocate would be a move to a middle ground that would be welcomed by both Rorty and Fraser.

Conclusion

In the interview "Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies," Rorty suggests that, although some feminists had offered replies to some of his work, there were none who "picked it up and … waved it as a banner" (30) When asked whether or not Catharine MacKinnon had indeed played the role of a banner-waver for Rorty, he replies: **"**No. I just stole her stuff and wrote it up in a slightly different form. She hasn't used me, I've used her. […] She read me before I began writing about feminism, but I don't think it was a big deal for her" (30) However, I contend there are hints suggesting that not only has MacKinnon influenced Rorty's work, but that Rorty's use of MacKinnon influenced MacKinnon as well. Thus, while feminist engagement with Rorty's work has thus far been sparse, and made up of, as he notes, more attacks than support, there is evidence that his views have caught the ears of some feminists – including even MacKinnon herself.

In her 1999 essay "Are Women Human?" republished in the 2006 collection *Are Women Human? And Other International Dialogues,* MacKinnon frames her approach in the terms provided by Rorty in "Feminism and Pragmatism." Specifically, she writes, "Being a woman is 'not yet a name for a way of being human,' not even in this most visionary of human rights documents [the Universal Declaration of Human Rights]" (1999, 43). She takes up this specific quote again in her 2007 book *Women's Lives; Men's Laws* to invoke the social and material conditions that create "woman." She admonishes us to not "invoke any abstract essence or homogeneous generic or ideal type, not to posit anything, far less anything universal, but to refer to this diverse and pervasive concrete material reality of social meanings and practices" (2007, 25).

Certainly, the claim could be made that MacKinnon's rejection of essentialism and universalism is more a result of her feminism than it is a result of her engagement with Rorty's work and, in particular, his Tanner Lecture. Yet it would certainly be fair, I think, to suggest that Rorty's characterization of her views in "Feminism and Pragmatism" captured MacKinnon's imagination, to the point that she employed the concept in her own later works. In "Feminism and Pragmatism," Rorty employs MacKinnon's work to make the important move from irony to prophecy. Fraser argues that Rorty needs to make the further move from prophecy to

politics. I suggest that, understanding MacKinnon's role as one of advocacy rather than prophecy finds the middle ground between Rorty's and Fraser's views, highlighting the implicit political nature of Rorty's views that were prompted by his engagement with feminist theorists and activists like MacKinnon.

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RORTY AND BRANDOM: PRAGMATISM AND THE ONTOLOGICAL PRIORITY OF THE SOCIAL[1]

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In this essay I examine the respective positions of Richard Rorty and Robert Brandom on the ontological priority of the social. While Rorty's writings since *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* have been peppered with allusions to the work of his gifted student, Brandom's thought – specifically, his claims about the ontological primacy of the social – play a central role in Rorty's discussion of "philosophy as cultural politics" in his final collection of philosophical papers. Taking a cue from *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* where Rorty calls on philosophers to see "intervening in cultural politics" as "their principal assignment," my approach to examining their respective positions heeds his advice that "we look at the relatively specialized and technical debates between contemporary philosophers in light of our hopes for cultural change." As he describes it,

> Philosophers should choose sides in those debates with an eye to the possibility of changing the course of the conversation. They should ask themselves whether taking one side rather than another will make any difference to social hopes, programs of action, prophecies of a better future. If it will not, it may not be worth doing. If it will, they should spell out what that difference amounts to.[2]

Rorty's move to locate philosophy within the frame of what he calls "cultural politics" has key implications for how we understand philosophy and its role in social and political change: it is not only an attempt to make philosophy more relevant to democratic politics, but an effort to democratize philosophy itself by expanding who counts as competent audience and conversation partner in "the conversation of mankind" to include previously excluded groups.[3]

Interpreting the appeals of both Brandom and Rorty to the ontological priority of the social in this light, I argue that while for Rorty recognition of this social dimension is a way of eliminating the epistemological and ontological barriers to expanding the conversation to include previously excluded groups, for Brandom it is a way to solve a philosophical puzzle to yield a "rationalism that is not objectively Cartesian" that makes possible "continuing and extending the classical twentieth-century project of philosophical analysis" in a manner that retains the very barriers Rorty seeks to dismantle.[4] For his part, Rorty tended to read Brandom in a way that downplays these differences, assimilating Brandom to his own Deweyan project – misleadingly, in my view – in order to draw distinctions between their shared recognitions of the ontological primacy of the social and the analytic philosophers who resist this move.

After examining their respective views of the ontological priority of the social more closely to tease out differences obscured by Rorty's reading of Brandom, in the second section I take a step back to establish the larger interpretive frame Rorty offers for adjudicating philosophical differences, which as a shorthand we might call, putting democratic politics first. In the final

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the workshop on "Neo-Pragmatism, Language, and Culture" held at the University of Oslo in October 2010. My thanks to Arild Pedersen, Henrik Rydenfeld, Bjørn Ramberg, and other participants for their insightful comments.

[2] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 4* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. ix-x.

[3] See, for example, Rorty, "Universality and Truth," in Robert Brandom (ed.), *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 1-30. For a more in-depth treatment of this topic, see Christopher J. Voparil, "Rortyan Intercultural Conversation and the Problem of Speaking for Others," *Contemporary Pragmatism* (forthcoming).

[4] Robert B. Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 1; *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism* (New York: Oxford, 2008), p. 232.

section, I take up Brandom's own attempt to evaluate classical pragmatism from the perspective of politics in "When Philosophy Paints Its Blue on Gray." Despite Rorty's affirmative use of Brandom, I argue that there are key differences between their respective turns to the social that pragmatists should consider.

I. Cultural Politics and the Ontological Priority of the Social

Rorty left us preciously few accounts of the notion of philosophy as cultural politics that is the signal theme of his final collection of papers. This idea is discussed only in a handful of Rorty's essays and could easily have been overlooked had he not chosen it as the title and addressed it explicitly in the two-page preface. What is striking about the few discussions we have is not only that Brandom is central to them all but that Rorty treats Brandom affirmatively in all of them.[5] Nevertheless, I argue that this apparent agreement is the result of Rorty's strategy of reading Brandom into his own Deweyan project to claim him as an ally against analytic philosophers less congenial toward his approach, like John McDowell, Michael Dummett, Michael Williams, and others.[6] While Rorty sees Brandom, along with Donald Davidson, as opening up "wonderful new philosophical prospects,"[7] my claim is that Rorty's own sense of these new prospects cannot be reconciled with Brandom's understanding of Brandom, as opposed to Rorty's understanding of Brandom. A key difference here is Brandom's unwillingness to see his own turn to social ontology as just another move in the game of cultural politics.

In his earliest references to the work of his talented student, which appear in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty calls attention to Brandom's approach to truth from the perspective of a social-practice account of language use.[8] Then in essays of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as more recent work in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* as Rorty turns more explicitly to making discussion of proposals for sociopolitical change a central topic of philosophical concern, the primary focus of his appeal to Brandom is the idea of "the ontological priority of the social."[9]

The claim I want to make here about Rorty and Brandom is twofold. Not only is Brandom's thinking around the ontological priority of the social central to the understanding of "cultural politics" that emerges in Rorty's final volume of papers, but this use of Brandom is generated through a Deweyan reading of Brandom's project that ultimately conceals important areas of disagreement between Rorty and Brandom that I will argue amount to differences that make a difference if interpreted from the vantage of Rorty's attention to spurring sociopolitical change.

[5] Apart from the Preface and lead essay of *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* "Cultural Politics and the Question of the Existence of God," the idea only receives a few paragraphs of attention in the entire volume. "Some American Uses of Hegel," from the same period as "Cultural Politics and the Question of the Existence of God" – roughly 2001-2003, marks the only other extended treatment. Although cultural politics is not mentioned explicitly, a precursor essay, especially for its focus on Brandom, is "What Do You Do When They Call You a 'Relativist'," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 17, no. 1 (1997): 173-177. Also important is "Universality and Truth," in *Rorty and His Critics.* While Rorty does not use the term 'cultural politics' here, referring instead to "democratic politics," all of the relevant themes and concerns are present.

[6] See Rorty, "The Very Idea of Human Answerability to the World" and "Antiskeptical Weapons" in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 3* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[7] Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* p. 142.

[8] The early paper of Brandom's that Rorty cites most frequently in this period is "Truth and Assertibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 73, no. 6 (1976): 137-149.

[9] See for example "Representation, Social Practise, and Truth" in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); "Robert Brandom on Social Practices and Representations" in *Truth and Progress;* and "Cultural Politics and the Existence of God" in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics.* Prior to the publication of Brandom's *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), the essay Rorty draws on is Brandom, "Heidegger's Categories in *Being and Time,*" *The Monist* 66, no. 3 (1983): 387-409.

On Rorty's reading, the use underscored by Brandom that Heidegger makes of Hegel's category of the social results in a tripartite view of culture. He glosses Brandom as distinguishing a realm where the individual's authority is supreme (first-person reports of subjective states), a second realm where the non-human realm is supreme (the results of science), and a third realm where the social predominates. In this third realm, as Brandom puts it, "all matters of authority or privilege, in particular *epistemic* authority, are matters of social practice, and not objective matters of fact."[10]

Central to the interest of both Brandom and Rorty in the ontological priority of the social, then, is the issue of epistemic authority. For Rorty, Brandom's third realm can be understood as "the arena of cultural politics." By this Rorty means a sphere in which no authority other than that of society over itself, including "God, or Truth, or Reality," can trump the fruits of democratic consensus.[11] Brandom's understanding of our inferentially articulated normative commitments making us responsible to others offers what Rorty takes to be a sociological account of authority that locates authority firmly within the human, social realm. On Rorty's view, Brandom is "articulating a cultural-political stance by pointing to the social advantages of his account of authority." For Rorty, any attempts "to name an authority which is superior to that of society are disguised moves in the game of cultural politics." Even though Rorty himself argues that "cultural politics should replace ontology," he understands this very move itself to be "a matter of cultural politics."[12]

The problem with this reading is that it is not evident that Brandom takes himself to be offering an account of the advantages of his social practice approach to linguistic communities. Rorty has conceded elsewhere that Brandom has not attempted to answer questions about whether his approach makes a difference practically speaking over non-pragmatic accounts.[13] Yet Rorty tends to read Brandom through Dewey and assimilate him to a pragmatist political project justified by its ability to make us responsible to "larger and more diverse communities of human beings."[14]

My aim here is to examine whether there is a difference that makes a difference between their respective accounts of the ontological priority of the social. For his part, Brandom takes himself, as he explains in *Between Saying and Doing,* to be engaged in the work of "continuing and extending the classical twentieth-century project of philosophical analysis" and, for reasons we shall see, wants nothing to do with Rorty's attempt to put philosophical pragmatism in the service of democratic politics.[15] The easiest way to see this is to get beyond Brandom's initial turn to the social to examine the nature of his systematic account of it.

Briefly stated, Brandom uses the ontological primary of the social to retain some of the very philosophical categories that Rorty seeks to jettison to pave the way for cultural politics. From Hegel Brandom gets the idea that "normative statuses," which include being committed and being responsible, must be understood as "*social* achievements." As he explains in a key essay on Hegel, "the core idea structuring Hegel's social understanding of selves is that they are synthesized by *mutual recognition.*" Inherent in this process is a kind of

[10] Brandom, "Heidegger's Categories," pp. 389-90; qtd. in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* p. 7.
[11] For more on this topic see Rorty, "Pragmatism as Anti-authoritarianism," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 53, no. 207 (1999): 7-20; and "Analytic and Conversational Philosophy" and "A Pragmatist View of Contemporary Analytic Philosophy" in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics*.
[12] Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* pp. 8, 5.
[13] See Rorty, "Some American Uses of Hegel," p. 45.
[14] Ibid, p. 46. This essay marks Rorty's most obvious effort to assimilate Brandom to a Deweyan project.
[15] Brandom, *Between Saying and Doing*, p. 231. Brandom notes in the Afterword that upon reading the lectures published in this book, Rorty asked, "Why in the world would you want to extend the death throes of analytic philosophy by another decade or two?," p. 202. Brandom's most explicit treatment of the relation of pragmatism and democratic politics comes in "When Philosophy Paints Its Blue on Gray: Irony and the Pragmatist Enlightenment," *boundary 2* 29, no. 2 (2002): 1-28.

authority: as Brandom puts it, "the authority to constitute a community by recognizing individuals as members of it."[16]

While the ontological origins of this authority are indeed social, in the sense that there are no transcendental appeals to anything outside of the community, for Brandom this fact does not mean an embrace of cultural politics, in Rorty's full sense. That is, even though it may be the case, as Rorty puts it, that "to say that cultural politics has the last word on these matters" means there can be "no court of appeal other than our descendants," Brandom does not seek to replace ontology with cultural politics. Nor does he seek to make the communities we constitute more inclusive. The pragmatist account of the social nature of authority he derives from Heidegger is self-adjudicating, which means not only that it entails fundamental ontology, something Rorty counsels us to abandon, but that it contains an implicit normative standard of correctness that carries objective status.[17] Providing an account of this status is one of Brandom's great achievements.

The contrast that exists between Rorty and Brandom can be illustrated through their accounts of the idea of answerability. As John McDowell has pointed out, Rorty draws a distinction between "making ourselves answerable to the world, as opposed to being answerable to our fellows."[18] While Rorty sides squarely with the latter and suggests that Brandom's "construal of assertions as the assumption of responsibilities to other members of society"[19] is consistent with this, Brandom's account of objectivity grants the structure, though not the content, of our inferentially articulated commitments the status of a non-human constraint on us. Brandom wants to retain this distinction, but only as a matter of "perspectival *form,* rather than in a nonperspectival or cross-perspectival *content.*" He continues, "What is shared by all discursive perspectives is *that* there is a difference between what is objectively correct in the way of concept application and what is merely taken to be so, not *what* it is—the structure, not the content."[20]

When considered more closely, Brandom's novel account of this objective status in *Making It Explicit* undermines Rorty's attempt to assimilate Brandom to a Deweyan – or better, a Rortyan – project of "interpreting increasing rationality as responsibility to larger and more diverse communities of human beings."[21] For Brandom, "Part of playing the game of giving and asking for reasons is keeping track of the commitments and entitlements of the other players, by *attributing* commitments and entitlements."[22] This keeping track of commitments is the process Brandom calls "deontic scorekeeping," which is fundamentally a *social* process since the content of any utterance is intersubjectively determined – not through an "I-we" dynamic, which threatens to allow communal perspectives to trump individual ones, but an "I-thou" relation. Thus, "the broadly inferential content that *A* associates with *B*'s claim determines the significance *B*'s assertional speech act has from the point of view of *A*'s scorekeeping."[23] Importantly, for Brandom this "social metaphysics of claim-making" "does not settle which claims *are* true—that is, *correctly* taken to be true." "There is no bird's eye view," Brandom tells us, "above the fray of competing claims from which those that deserve to prevail can be identified."[24]

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[16] Brandom, "Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms," *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (1999): 164-189. This essay appears as chapter 7 of Brandom's *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 210-234.

[17] Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* pp. 14, 17; Brandom, "Heidegger's Categories," pp. 389-90.

[18] John McDowell, "Towards Rehabilitating Objectivity," in Brandom (ed.), *Rorty and His Critics,* pp. 110; Rorty, "Response to McDowell," op. cit., p. 125.

[19] Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* p. 7.

[20] Brandom, *Making It Explicit,* p. 600.

[21] Rorty, "Some American Uses of Hegel," p. 46.

[22] Brandom, *Making It Explicit,* p. 185.

[23] Ibid, pp. 601, 191.

[24] Ibid, p. 601.

Nevertheless, always implicit in this scorekeeping process is the difference between "what is correct and what is merely taken to be correct."[25] This distinction is precisely what Rorty takes issue with. As he puts it, "If A can explain what she is doing and why she is doing it in her own terms, what right has B got to keep on saying 'No, what A is *really* doing is. . .' ?"[26] As always, the basis for Rorty's objection here is not solely epistemological or ontological, but political. In his response to Brandom in *Rorty and His Critics,* Rorty explicitly reminds us of the "evil consequences" of "attempts to divide culture into […] the 'objective knowledge' part and the other part." Attempting to retain this distinction, on Rorty's view, runs the risk of providing greater weapons for "the bad guys" – namely, those who do not agree that "increased freedom and richness of the Conversation is the aim of inquiry, but instead think that there is the further aim of getting Reality right" – whom Rorty calls "authoritarians."[27]

Rorty identifies a second problem with Brandom's model of deontic scorekeeping as a mechanism for ensuring we always have recourse to the distinction between "what is (objectively) true and what is merely (subjectively) held true."[28] Because, as Brandom holds, "Treating someone as a reliable reporter is taking the reporter's *commitment* (to this content under these circumstances) to be sufficient for the reporter's *entitlement* to that commitment," for Rorty "everything depends upon what constitutes a competent audience."[29] As Rorty explains, "Not any language-user who comes down the road will be treated as a member of a competent audience. On the contrary, human beings usually divide up into mutually suspicious (*not* mutually intelligible) communities of justification – mutually exclusive groups – depending upon the presence or absence of sufficient overlap in belief and desire." In other words, if you are not "one of us," then "I have no reason to justify my beliefs to you, and none in finding out what alternative beliefs you may have." Put another way, in our talk of justification and entitlement there always is, at least implicitly, a category of "people whose requests for justification we are entitled to reject."[30]

II. Putting Democratic Politics First

For his part, Brandom does not take up worries about whether practices of deontic scorekeeping may result in exclusion of particular groups or seem interested in examining the consequences of his philosophical perspective from the vantage of democratic politics at all. In the final section I will consider the one place where he does do this. Yet it is not clear that he necessarily should either. In this section I take a step back to articulate what I take to be the fundamental challenge presented by Rorty's thought and suggest that this challenge, which has to do with how we understand the relation of philosophy and politics. Despite the fact that this challenge is more explicit in Rorty's engagements with analytic philosophers than anywhere else, it is they who have most often failed to appreciate the brunt of his challenge, though they certainly are not along in this.[31] Attending to this challenge more closely will help bring the differences between Rorty and Brandom into view.

One way to get purchase on this challenge is suggested by Brandom in his insightful introduction to *Rorty and His Critics.* Brandom offers a useful distinction between, on the one hand, the "metaphilosophical issues of grand strategy and world historical significance" that constitute the "larger frame in which Rorty has put the questions

[25] Ibid.
[26] Rorty, "Universality and Truth," in *Rorty and His Critics,* p. 10. Rorty makes this statement with both "metaphysicians" and "fellow Peircians" in mind, but it could apply to Brandom equally well.
[27] Rorty, "Response to Brandom," pp. 186-7.
[28] Brandom, *Making It Explicit,* p. 598.
[29] Brandom, *Making It Explicit,* p. 189; Rorty, "Universality and Truth," p. 9.
[30] Rorty, "Universality and Truth," pp. 15, 27n24.
[31] For a good account of how often Rorty's philosophical critics use concepts and assumptions that he has explicitly abandoned against him, see Alan Malachowski, *Richard Rorty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), esp. chapter 6.

that he asks and the claims that he makes," and, on the other, what is of greater interest to more analytically minded philosophers: the "argumentative core of his systematic philosophical vision" – that is, his treatment of truth, objectivity, and reality.[32] Indeed, many of the disagreements and debates that play out in the pages of the volume involve a subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, interplay between these two dimensions, with contributors evaluating dimensions of Rorty's systematic philosophical vision, usually finding them wanting, and Rorty trying in his responses, often unsuccessfully, to bring the focus back to this larger frame.

The problem is that focusing solely on the systematic content of Rorty's philosophical positions, in isolation from his larger "world historical" frame, as Brandom calls it, runs the risk of missing his point in a fundamental way. That is, to evaluate Rorty's philosophical stances from within the discourse of analytic philosophy as simply one systematic theory among others to be judged on the basis of standard categories fails to come to terms with the basic challenge generated by his thought. In his earliest work, Rorty articulated this challenge via a set of metaphilosophical stances: the lack of presuppositionless starting points; the absence of mutually agreed upon, neutral criteria to resolve disagreements; and the role of what he refers to in his early essays as "redefinition" and later terms "redescription" – namely, the way "each system can and does create its own private metaphilosophical criteria, designed to authenticate itself and disallow its competitors." [33] In his later work, he transfers these metaphilosophical insights to a political context, culminating in his idea of "philosophy as cultural politics." Simply put, his challenge is that there is no way to get outside of "cultural politics." Absent privileged contexts and mutually-accepted criteria, all we can do is redescribe things and compare one redescription to another, and evaluate "alternative […] proposals for political change" not in terms of "categories and principles" but in terms of "concrete advantages and disadvantages."[34] Rorty's starkest statement of the broader orientation that results comes, fittingly, in "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy": "putting politics first and tailoring a philosophy to suit."[35]

So "how do we tell when, if ever," Rorty asks, "an issue about what exists should be discussed without reference to our sociopolitical goals?" Well, William James, for one, Rorty believed, often comes close to saying that "*all* questions, including questions about what exists, boil down to questions about what will help create a better world."[36] On this view, when we approach philosophical questions about truth and reality, "arguments about relative dangers and benefits are the only ones that matter." For Rorty, in a stance he attributes to James, "truth and reality exist for the sake of social practices, rather than vice versa." The fundamental insight that shapes his understanding of philosophy as cultural politics is the fact that cultural politics "is the only game in town." That is, there is no getting outside of this cultural-political realm to some non-social space. Recourses to metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, etc. that attempt "to name an authority which is superior to that of society," he holds, are nothing more than "disguised moves in the game of cultural politics."[37]

[32] Brandom (ed.), *Rorty and His Critics,* p. xix.
[33] Rorty, "The Limits of Reductionism," in I.C. Lieb (ed.), *Experience, Existence, and the Good* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), p. 110. See also Rorty (ed.), *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 1-39; and early essays like, "Recent Metaphilosophy," *Review of Metaphysics* 15, no. 2 (1961): 299-318; and "Realism, Categories, and the 'Linguistic Turn'," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1962): 307-322. For a more in-depth account of this challenge, see Christopher J. Voparil and Richard J. Bernstein (eds.), *The Rorty Reader* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 1-52.
[34] Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays, 1972-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 161, 168.
[35] Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth,* p. 178.
[36] Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* pp. 4-5.
[37] Ibid,, pp. 6-7, 9.

Rather than attempt to beat cultural politics, Rorty in his later work counsels philosophers to join the game and use philosophy to spur social change and advance particular "sociopolitical goals."[38] Obviously, this tack is what most gives analytic philosophers pause. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that it is within his exchanges with analytic philosophers that Rorty makes the strongest case for the problem of trading "cultural significance for professional rigor."[39] By this he means not only the problem of preoccupation with questions only of interest to professional philosophers, but also writing about philosophical issues as if we can do so in a way that transcends politics. Indeed, he went as far as to claim that the "only serious philosophical questions are about how human beings can find descriptions of both nature and culture that will facilitate various social projects."[40]

III. The Political Consequences of Fallibilism

In this final section I want to affirm Rorty's approach to the ontological priority of the social by identifying three particular advantages of his account.[41] Because he locates this idea in the context of his attempt to put democratic politics first and tailor a philosophy to suit, it becomes an opportunity to reflect on and address the social and political implications of our concepts and assumptions, including an opportunity to be more inclusive of previously marginalized groups. If Rorty's stance seems too reductionist in its approach to philosophical questions as political questions, consider that Brandom takes this tack himself in his essay "When Philosophy Paints Its Blue on Gray." In a rare extended engagement with issues grounded in a specific social and historical context, Brandom provides an account of how to "assess the *political* consequences of pragmatist political thought." Citing the failure of the classical pragmatists to provide a "public critical assessment" of racial prejudice in the post-Civil War period in America, he offers a damning critique of the pragmatist philosophical orientation on the basis of the undesirable politics that results.[42]

What I want to argue is that it is precisely Rorty's attention to such excluded groups – his posing of the question, "*Whose* justificatory context?" – that makes his account of the ontological priority of the social, despite Brandom's critique, more useful to pragmatists committed to democratic politics.[43] By contrast, Brandom uses this episode as a way to reiterate his commitment to the 20th century project of philosophical analysis as means to save us from the shortcomings of classical pragmatism. Here it is less that Brandom's commitment to democratic politics is lacking, than his unwillingness to see philosophy as already embedded within the game of cultural politics keeps him from fully realizing that commitment.

The first advantage of Rorty's account is that it attends more directly to challenges or contestations of the implicit normative dimension of our practices by recognizing the existence of those who fall outside of this discursive space – namely, those whom we fail to consider "conversation partners." Indeed, a principal dimension of Rorty's political project over the last two decades of his life was expanding the range of people we regard as "possible conversation partners."[44] How to recognize and do justice to marginalized groups is a key dimension of Rorty's political project; as we have seen, the aim of cultural politics is changing the conversation

[38] Ibid,, p. 3.
[39] Rorty, *Truth and Progress,* p. 151. See also Rorty's various responses in *Rorty and His Critics.*
[40] Rorty, "Some American Uses of Hegel," p. 41.
[41] Although I can't develop this claim here, the implications are that Rorty's understanding has more in common with Hegel's category of the social than Brandom's.
[42] Brandom, "When Philosophy Paints Its Blue on Gray," pp. 27-28.
[43] Rorty, "Response to Jurgen Habermas," in *Rorty and His Critics,* p. 58.
[44] Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 203. See also in the same volume "Solidarity or Objectivity?" where he establishes that "For pragmatists, the desire for objectivity is not the desire to escape the limitations of one's community, but simply the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, the desire to extend the reference of 'us' as far as we can," p. 23.

to make it more inclusive. By "practicing cultural politics," which involves "suggesting changes in the uses of words" and "putting new words in circulation" so as to "break through impasses and to make conversation more fruitful," we can enlarge "our repertoire of individual and cultural self-descriptions" to make them as inclusive as possible.[45] For Rorty, it is important that we "stay on the lookout for marginalized people – people whom we still instinctively think of as 'they' rather than 'us'."[46]

Rorty's point here – that "None of us take all audiences seriously; we all reject requests for justification from some audiences as a waste of time"[47] – raises the question of how it is possible on Brandom's account to challenge the results of scorekeeping practices. Although I cannot adequately engage Brandom's nuanced and insightful reading of Hegel here, Robert Pippin has argued compellingly that there is a sense of contestation or challenge in Hegel's account that is absent in Brandom's. On Pippin's view, Brandom's perspective "does not yet explain how either an external interpreter or internal participant can properly challenge the authority of the norms on the basis of which the attributions and assessments are made, or how those norms can fail to meet those challenges."[48] More specifically, Brandom's notion of ongoing negotiations between individuals and scorekeepers falls short of the more robust contestation affirmed by Hegel. Like Rorty, Pippin identifies as problematic the assumption that there is a "neutral" conception of negotiation to which both parties would accede. In keeping with Rorty's understanding of cultural politics, for Pippin, most of the time "the nature of normative authority is itself up for grabs." Any attempt to fix that authority, including Brandom's scorekeeping of normative entitlements, should "count as an episode in that contestation, and could not count as the general form of any such contestation."[49] Or, to put it in Rorty's terms, attempts "to name an authority which is superior to that of society" are nothing more than "disguised moves in the game of cultural politics."[50]

On one level, Brandom's embrace of the ontological priority of the social does not seek to name an authority superior to that of society itself. Brandom makes important moves that get analytic pragmatism beyond representationalism, universal validity, and what he has called the "pretensions" concerning the "authoritativeness" of certain forms of theorizing.[51] As we have seen, Brandom's account is designed quite explicitly to preclude the possibility of the content of any one perspective being privileged in advance.

Yet because this stance is a response to a philosophical problem, rather than to a politics of justice that demands greater inclusion of marginalized groups, there remain too many issues relevant to the social itself in which Brandom seems uninterested.[52] What makes this significant is the explicit turn to "politico-moral virtues" that Rorty believes is required to make the logical space for moral deliberation more inclusive of those perspectives we may feel justified in rejecting.[53] This appeal to moral virtues, like that of curiosity and an embrace of fallibilism, is the second advantage I wish to underscore. Again, for Rorty "everything depends on what constitutes a competent audience." He reminds us of "the sad fact that many previous communities have betrayed their own interests by being too sure of themselves, and so failing to attend to objections raised by outsiders." Drawing a link between democratic politics and fallibilism, he highlights the importance of

[45] Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* p. 124.
[46] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 196.
[47] Rorty, "Universality and Truth," p. 27n24.
[48] Robert Pippin, "Brandom's Hegel," *European Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (2005), pp. 392, 398.
[49] Ibid, p. 401.
[50] Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* p. 9.
[51] See Italo Testa, "Hegelian Pragmatism and Social Emancipation: Interview with Robert Brandom," *Constellations* 10, no. 4 (2003), p. 561.
[52] Pippin identifies such a gap or lacuna "that Brandom obviously feels comfortable leaving unfilled." See "Brandom's Hegel," p. 394 and *passim.*
[53] Rorty, "What Do You Do When They Call You a Relativist?," p. 176.

"People who are brought up to bethink themselves that they might be mistaken: that there are people out there who might disagree with them, and whose disagreements need to be taken into account." As a result, in Rorty's view philosophy should concern itself most fundamentally with the question of "how to persuade people to broaden the size of the audience they take to be competent, to increase the size of the relevant community of justification."[54]

One of the ways Rorty illustrates the difference that makes a difference here is via the distinction between the view "You cannot use language without invoking a consensus within a community of other language-users" and "You cannot use language consistently without enlarging that community to include all users of language." With respect to Brandom, an ontology of deontic scorekeeping, even if social, cannot get us from the former to the latter. Rather, what is needed on Rorty's view is a moral virtue like curiosity.[55] Things like "curiosity," "the urge to expand one's horizons of inquiry," and "being interested in what people believe, not because we want to measure their beliefs against what they purport to represent, but because we want to deal with these people," for Rorty are necessary to move the conversation beyond the West and make it a conversation that engages excluded voices. Philosophical categories alone cannot accomplish this.[56]

The way in which Rorty's affirmation of the priority of the social expands the discursive space beyond the West has not gone unnoticed. Nigerian philosopher Amaechi Udefi has argued that "Rorty's anti-foundationalist, anti-essentialist and pragmatist view of justification, knowledge, truth, and rationality" makes possible "an escalation of horizons for other discourses to sprout." One such discourse, according to Udefi, is African epistemology.[57] If we accept, in Brandom's words, that "all matters of authority or privilege, in particular *epistemic* authority, are matters of social practice, and not matters of objective fact," then, to take just one example, we must consider Udefi's point that "if the community is the source of epistemic authority and rationality, as Rorty has submitted, then, it makes sense to talk of African epistemology because Africans have their own way of conceptualizing events or reality."[58] Judged from the perspective of democratic politics, using appeals to ontology to undermine this vantage in favor of what ought to be believed or what they really mean, seems problematic.

The third advantage I want to underscore is Rorty's understanding of the need to give up the hope that philosophy can somehow stand above politics. On his view, when it comes to concepts like truth, rationality, and maturity, "The only thing that matters is which way of reshaping them will, in the long run, make them more useful for democratic politics."[59] Brandom accounts for what he identifies as the failure of the classical pragmatists to challenge biological justifications of

[54] Rorty, "Universality and Truth," pp. 4-5, 9.
[55] As Rorty continues, "The more curiosity you have, the more interest you will have in talking to foreigners, infidels, and anybody else who claims to know something you do not know, to have some ideas you have not yet had," ibid, p. 17.
[56] Rorty, "Robert Brandom on Social Practices and Representations," in *Truth and Progress,* p. 129. In his response to Habermas in *Rorty* and *His Critics,* he puts this in terms of "fallibility" – "our sense of the desirability of comparing one's habits of actions with those of others in order to see whether one might develop some new habits," p. 57. Rorty is especially attuned to the way in which community is constituted through exclusion, and to what he calls the "borderline cases" – individuals or groups that we exclude from "true humanity." In "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" he treats what he calls "enemies of liberal democracy," like Nietzsche and Loyola, who are deemed "crazy" or "mad" because "the limits of sanity are set by what *we* can take seriously," *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth,* pp. 187-8. "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality" deals with victims of ethnic cleansing and "Feminism and Pragmatism" takes up marginalized and oppressed groups (both essays are in *Truth and Progress*).
[57] Amaechi Udefi, "Rorty's Neopragmatism and the Imperative of the Discourse of African Epistemology," *Human Affairs* 19 (2009), p. 84.
[58] For his part, Rorty has stated: "I think that the rhetoric we Westerners use in trying to get everyone to be more like us would be improved if we were more frankly ethnocentric, and less professedly universalist," *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* p. 55.
[59] Rorty, "Universality and Truth," pp. 23, 25.

racism and the resulting softening of their principled opposition to slavery as a case where "politics may have trumped philosophy."[60] In other words, fallibilism and their embrace of democratic politics over abstract philosophical commitments did them in. So the very philosophical orientation that Udefi affirms as opening the door to a more just, more inclusive, and more tolerant set of practices is for Brandom the cause of pragmatism's failure to promote justice. The idea that "flexibility and experimentation are the essence of rationality, not the discovery of truths or principles one can hold on to," in Brandom's view, deprives us of a basis for judging what views "we *ought* to endorse." As a result, lacking philosophical warrant that would justify appeal to "abstract principles of justice" rather than just "discussion among citizens of differing opinions" as "the only way to settle disputes" – basically what Rorty calls "cultural politics" – Brandom holds, the pragmatists' opposition to racism was traded in for a weak accommodationist meliorism.[61] Brandom's remedy for this shortcoming is an appeal to more recent work in philosophical semantics, which he takes to have yielded with greater clarity "criteria of adequacy" that would help us identify the weaknesses of the classical pragmatists' philosophical assumptions, as well as to redouble the "appropriate application of abstract principles of justice" to countermand their political failings.[62]

Leaving aside other weaknesses of this account, one might observe here that Brandom seems to cling to what over three decades ago Rorty called the hope of the Enlightenment.[63] What he meant by this is "the hope that by forming the *right* conceptions of reason, of science, of thought, of knowledge, of morality […] we shall have a shield against irrationalist resentment and hatred."[64] What Rorty's account calls attention to, on the contrary, is how philosophical guarantees of objectivity and correctness have functioned more to perpetuate injustice and exclusion than to counteract it. Politics will always trump philosophy. Unless we follow Rorty's advice and become willing to trade in "professional rigor" for cultural and political significance, and to intervene in cultural politics by "look[ing] at relatively specialized and technical debates between contemporary philosophers in light of our hopes for cultural change," "choos[ing] sides in those debates with an eye to the possibility of changing the course of the conversation," philosophy will be irrelevant to, and have no role in, cultural change.

While we might want to agree that the classical pragmatists could have done more to challenge the discursive constellations marshaled to justify racial hierarchies, the notion that greater clarity in our philosophical concepts would have saved them or will save us from such shortcomings seems wrongheaded, especially given our awareness of the kinds of "evil consequences" to which Rorty has called attention. Rather than reading their efforts as a failure to "apply their theories of the contents of concepts to offer a public critical assessment," we might instead work to better their attempt to abandon a dichotomy of theory and practice to engage the norms inherent in our democratic practices that, in Brandom's terms, tended toward fanaticism rather than fallibilism, and enter the fray of cultural politics ourselves.[65]

In conclusion, for Brandom, the ontological priority of the social is just that: an ontology. By contrast, for Rorty it marks an opportunity to reconceive philosophy so that its priority becomes improving our social

[60] Brandom, "When Philosophy Paints Its Blue on Gray," p. 27
[61] Ibid, pp. 27-28.
[62] Ibid, pp. 19, 27.
[63] For example, Brandom concedes that Dewey was the sole exception to this critique and builds his case against classical pragmatism on the positions of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. See ibid, pp. 27-28.
[64] Rorty, "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 171.
[65] Brandom, "When Philosophy Paints Its Blue on Gray," pp. 27, 14. For a rich account of Hegel's arguments as the means by which "philosophy burst out of the confines of academic theory and became a commentary on the history of the world," see Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 821-865.

practices to make them more tolerant, more open, and more just. Undoubtedly, there will be failures in this endeavor, from which we must learn, rather than convince ourselves in advance we shall avoid. As we have seen, Rorty's account of the ontological priority of the social amounts to a replacement of ontology by "cultural politics." On this view, the implication of recognizing the ontological priority of the social is to replace ontology altogether; for Rorty this is the only way to ensure that no perspectives or conversation partners will be ruled out for reasons other than pragmatic considerations about how far they advance our sociopolitical goals. Whether Brandom will make this a priority remains to be seen.

At the end of the day, how we judge the differences between Rorty's and Brandom's accounts of the ontological priority of the social is itself a question of cultural politics. There are no philosophical moves that are not moves in the game of cultural politics. If one believes that the point of reading and writing philosophy is to create a better future, then this seems like all the ontology one needs.[66]

[66] Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* p. 169.

WHITE PHILOSOPHY IN/OF AMERICA

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> Philosophy occupies an important place in culture only when things seem to be falling apart—when long-held and widely cherished beliefs are threatened. At such periods, intellectuals reinterpret the past in terms of an imagined future.
> --Richard Rorty, 'Grandeur, profundity, and finitude', *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* 2007, p.73

> Keep in mind that I come from that part of the world for which the question of old and new—call it the question of a human future—is, or was, logically speaking, a matter of life and death: if the new world is not new then American does not exist, it is merely one more outpost of old oppressions.
> --Stanley Cavell, 'The Future of Possibility', In *Philosophical Romanticism,* edited by Nikolas Kompridis, 2006, p. 21

> There is a widespread disenchantment with the traditional image of philosophy as a transcendental mode of inquiry … mindful of the dead ends of analytical modes of philosophizing it is yet unwilling to move into the frightening wilderness of pragmatism and historicism with their concomitant concerns in social theory, cultural criticism, and historiography.
> --Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, 1989, p. 3

Introduction

The argument of this paper is that Richard Rorty and Stanley Cavell, between them--though in different and sometimes opposing ways--define American philosophy 'after Wittgenstein' and taken together they assert something distinctive of the tradition of American philosophy[1]. Rorty and Cavell, now among the elder statesmen of American philosophy—Rorty died in 2007 and Cavell is now in his early 80s—from the point of view of the majority of their colleagues were considered rebels or renegades—Rorty perhaps more overtly than Cavell. Each of them spent their careers framing questions about the nature of philosophy and the 'directions' it should take after Wittgenstein. Each has continued to ask or elaborate broad metaphilosophical questions about the relation of analytic philosophy both to Continental philosophy and to culture more generally. Each consciously sought to reference their work in relation to the idea and contemporary experience of 'America'. Rorty (1979) in his ground-breaking *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* positioned himself in close proximity to Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey as he sought to rework and to redefine the tradition of American pragmatism. Dewey came to eclipse both Wittgenstein and Heidegger in his thought as he developed social and political themes in his reflections on America. Cavell (1969), by contrast, first explored the significance of Wittgenstein thought in *Must We Mean What We Say?* before returning to the transcendentalists, to Emerson and Thoreau, to reinvent the origins of American philosophy and explore their contemporary relevance while also exploring the nuances of ordinary language philosophy after Wittgenstein and Austin. Each initiated and refined a distinctive style of *writing* philosophy that took seriously the linguistic and cultural turns of the twentieth century that Wittgenstein helped to shape. Each of them took seriously and defined themselves in terms of Wittgenstein's anti-cartesianism—his rejection of foundationalism and representationalism. Similarly, they embraced the historicism of the later Wittgenstein, aided by readings of Heidegger and Hegel, on the historical nature of language, culture and philosophy.

[1] This essay is written in honor of Kenneth Wain at the University of Malta who was a strong commentator on postmodernism/poststructuralism which is the also the title of a chapter (Chapter 3) that we co-authored for the *Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Education*, Blake, N., Smeyers, P., Smith, R. & Standish, P., Oxford, Blackwell, 2003. Ken Wain has written extensively on postmodernism, Foucault and Rorty. The essay emerges out of a series of conversations with Melvin Armstrong, an African American PhD student in the Department of Educational Studies who is completing his doctorate on black philosophy and black philosophy of education. My thanks to Melvin who has taken to trouble to discuss his ideas with me and introduce me to canonical texts.

Yet even given their distinctive contributions and their bold reworkings of the idea of America and American philosophy, I will argue that neither took their historicism far enough to recognize the central fact of the birth of America —the form of racism that originated with colonization of America and black slavery. This absence is in part a reflection that the notion of power is not central in their philosophy. It is not until Cornel West appeared on the scene in the 1990s that questions of race made it into mainstream American philosophy and black philosophy at last became part of the canon and a legitimate object of philosophical study. This observation should be surprising because it bespeaks something of the serious lack of historical reflexivity in American philosophy even among its most original and enterprising philosophers--a lack that symbolizes both the privilege and power of America as well as its unexamined and assumed global centrality as a place and time to philosophize. There is little in either Rorty or Cavell that systematically draws attention to America in any negative sense—the ruthlessness of its colonizing beginnings, its early black slave economy, or indeed its consistent foreign policy, defined in a series of wars since the end of WWII: Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Rorty and Cavell are good American patriots and their philosophies are patriotic. This essay explores Rorty and Cavell as two leading and distinguished philosophers and Wittgensteinian scholars who explore the question of philosophy in the post-philosophical culture of America, after the end of analytic philosophy.

This lack is not just an excusable occluding of the social or ignorance of the political but rather reflects a consistent and continuing failure of American philosophy in its own self-understanding and in its social and political awareness of itself. Such an interpretation is consistent with the historical approach to the rise of Black consciousness, culture and philosophy, the rediscovery of the racist nature of much Western philosophy, and the recovery of early Black philosophy in the figure of DuBois among others, the reconstruction of the Black canon and its anthologizations. It is also an interpretation open to challenge on grounds of the development of liberal political theory by Rawls, Nussbaum, and others, and even sits uneasily with critical legal studies and critical race theory which arises out of the philosophical engagement with the cultural history of America. I christen this kind of color-blind philosophy, that which is unaware of its own philosophical historicity, 'white philosophy', a concept which I explore below in conjunction with the idea of America philosophy.

The Idea of American Philosophy

It is surprising that few scholars have written about Rorty and Cavell in the same breath or in relation to redefining the contours of American philosophy, a project that to me seems intuitively obvious given their intellectual affinities and differences and in particular they way in which they work their philosophy as a set of reflections on philosophy and the idea of America. The treatment of American philosophy normally focuses on pragmatism. Armen Marsoobian and John Ryder (2004), editors of *The Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy* basically follow this route elaborating sources of idealism, pragmatism and naturalism before identifying major figures in American philosophy (Peirce, James, Royce, Santayana, Dewey, Mead, Adams, DuBois, Whitehead, Lewis, Langer, Quine, Locke, Buchler) and major themes (community and democracy, knowledge and action, religion, education, art and the aesthetic. What is surprising about this selection is that Dubois but neither Rorty nor Cavell make it into the collection. Dubois' selection is curious as he has no other company in Black philosophy. David Boersema (2005) writing an entry for *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* concludes 'Despite having no core of defining features, American Philosophy can nevertheless be seen as both reflecting and shaping collective American identity over the history of the nation'. Boersema's (2005) entry then goes on to explicate American philosophy standardly in relation to Peirce, James and Dewey. In the twentieth

century Boersema focuses on idealism, naturalism, process philosophy, analytic philosophy, Rawls' political philosophy, Rorty and feminism but no mention of Cavell and no mention of race consciousness as a philosophical theme..

The most successful attempt to define contemporary (white) American philosophy in my view is Giovanna Barradori's (1994) *The American Philosopher: Conversation with Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Nozick, Danto, Rorty, Cavell, MacIntyre, and Kuhn.* There is no Cornel West or Yancy or recognition of black philosophy but at least there is the attempt to map a new cartography of postwar American philosophical culture in its 'distinctively scientific self-representation' and its post-analytic formulations, bestriding two models or interpretations: 'the analytic fracture' that cuts off roots to American pragmatism and early concerns in social or political philosophy and 'the post-analytical recomposition' led by Rorty and Cavell. Barradori's (1994) conversations are very helpful in sketching a range of questions although it does not go far enough in its historicist approach to historicize American philosophy in relation to the idea of America, the cultural history of America, and the rise of American power (and perhaps its decline). For this interpretive project the best sources are Rorty and Cavell themselves.

Writing of 'Philosophy in America Today' in the *American Scholar* Rorty (1982) formulated a version of C.P. Snow's two cultures analysis to describe the split between a scientific motivated analytic philosophy and a historically oriented Continental philosophy. He describes his story in five acts: analytic philosophy moves from speculation to science centered around 'logical analysis' (1) which turns in on itself committing suicide in ordinary language (2) leaving itself without a metaphilosophy or genealogy (3) and hardening the split between analytic and Continental philosophy and jettisoning Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger (4), thus leaving American philosophy departments stranded between the humanities as their ancestral home and science where they were never accepted. Rorty tells this story as one about academic politics and a split between two kinds of intellectuals: one who believes the best hope for human freedom is to be found in the application of scientific method, the other who sees faith in scientific method as an illusion that masks a nihilistic age. Rorty embraces pragmatism as a form of tolerance.

In his *Richard Rorty: the Making of an American Philosopher* Neil Gross (2008) begins his conclusion with the observation of how Rorty almost single-handedly had rescued pragmatism as an American philosophy from its vanishing point. He documents the decline of American pragmatism first described by David Hollinger in his 1980 paper 'The problem of pragmatism in American history' and goes on to note its rise and flourishing only sixteen years later, described by James Kloppenberg as 'alive, well …and ubiquitous' (*Journal of American History*). Gross in his neo-marxist reproductionist sociology of philosophy goes on to explain the pragmatist revival with reference to leading scholars and also Rorty's ambiguous position in relation to the new community of pragmatist scholars who turned out to criticize Rorty's interpretations that had provoked a kind of fury against him. Gross recounts the way in which Rorty developed an attack on the paradigm of analytic philosophy as a whole, calling into question philosophy's self-image, while rediscovering the pragmatic elements in the thought of the later Wittgenstein and its overlaps with Peirce, James and Dewey to institute nothing less than an American pragmatist reading of the humanities.

Richard Wolin (2010) describes Rorty's political project in retrospect as it develops late in his career and involving a break from his 'posmodern' friends. Wolin's characterization of postmodernism is woefully inadequate and not one that Rorty would accept in any measure even though there is an attempt by Rorty to distinguish his own project as distinctively different.

Despite this background, Rorty's own political interests crystallized relatively late in life, with the 1998 publication of *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in the Twentieth Century*. It was in this work that Rorty sought to combine his philosophical interest in American pragmatism—John Dewey, a family friend whom Rorty had known as a boy, was one of his intellectual heroes—with a commitment to enlightened social reform, whose high water marks had been the Progressive Era and the New Deal. For Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* also signified a political break with his erstwhile philosophical allies, the so-called postmodernists. He had come to realize that it was impossible to reconcile postmodernism's glib philosophical anarchism with the social democratic credo he had imbibed as a youth and which, in his sixties, he belatedly sought to reactivate.

In *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (1998), Rorty differentiates between two sides of the Left: the cultural Left exemplified by postmodernists and a progressive Left, characterized by Dewey and American pragmatism. He criticizes the cultural Left for offering critiques of society, but no alternatives. I have argued that Rorty must be viewed in his native context as someone who engages the philosophical tradition from the perspective of an American living at the end of the millennium—one who views Nietzsche as a European pragmatist, as "the most eminent disciple of Emerson" (1991: 61) (Peters, 2000). Like Nietzsche, he wants to drop the cognitivism that has dominated western Intellectual life since Plato, but, unlike Nietzsche and under the Utopian influence of Dewey, he wishes "to do so in the interests of an egalitarian society rather than in the interests of a defiant and lonely individualism" (ibid.). This is the difference between the last philosophy of the old (European) world, bespeaking "the end of metaphysics" that focuses upon the question of European nihilism and imminent cultural disintegration, and the confident, self-assured, Utopian philosophy of the New World, which, in its youthful confidence, has never experienced itself as a culture in an organic sense nor felt the crushing import of Nietzsche's question.

It is a New World pragmatist, Utopian philosophy that is able, like European Nietzscheanism, to reject the Enlightenment's metaphysical baggage of foundationalism and representationalism, and yet unlike its European older cousin, it does not jettison the promise of the Enlightenment's political project. It does, however, substitute a local, historical and contingent sense of self for the transhistorical metaphysical subject of philosophical liberalism. Indeed, Rorty sees no connection between the philosophical and political strands of the Enlightenment. The success of the "American experiment of self-creation" (Rorty, 1998: 23), unlike its European counterparts, does not depend upon or require any philosophical assurance or justification; philosophy, like poetry, is to be regarded simply as another means of self-expression. On this view, it is up to intellectuals and artists to tell inspiring stories and to create symbols of greatness about the nation's past as the means of competing for political leadership. Narratives of national self-creation ought to be oriented to what the nation can try to become, rather than how it has come to be. And, perhaps, this is the crucial difference of culture and style between Rorty and the European post-Nietzscheans: he believes in the narrative celebration of his nation's past as the best means to inspire hope about its future, rather than a 'working through' of its troublesome or shameful episodes.

Yet America has shameful episodes in its history which is has barely begun to acknowledge—the Ameri-Indian genocides connected with colonization and the history of broken treaties, the Black slave plantation capitalism, the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the nampalm ecoside of Vietnam to mention some prominent examples. The problem is that Rorty narrative depends upon a situated epistemology: historically verifiable stories are dependent on the place and time of the story-teller and their subjective experience. The

problem is that white philosophers have some difficulty telling the story of Black philosophy or the rise of Black consciousness.

While the end of metaphysics is "the final stage in the secularisation of culture," (Rorty in Borradori, 1994: 106) and philosophy, radically detranscendentized and deprofessionalized, becomes just one form of "cultural criticism" among others which deprived of any privileged status or definitive vocabulary, must operate with historical and socially contextual criteria in the same way as the humanities and the social sciences, it is still the case that consciousness, experience and subjectivity are situated and radically context and person-dependent. Rorty's hope at the beginning of this decade was that "English-speaking philosophy in the twenty-first century will have put the representational problematic behind it, as most French-or German-speaking philosophy already has" (1991: 12). This should have put Rorty in the position of the other able to tell the story of philosophy from the position of the exclusion of Black thought. His only concern is that the academic left no longer participates in the "American experiment of self-creation" (p. 23): it has "no vision of a country to be achieved by building a consensus on the need for specific reforms" (p. 15), and it has no program that can deal effectively with the immiseration produced by the globalization of the labor market. In short, the cultural left, by focusing upon issues of race, ethnicity, and gender has steered towards identity politics and away from economic politics, thus fragmenting the left and destroying the possibility of a progressive alliance. But then he repeats the mistakes on the trasditional Left by ignoring the question of race in America and the fact that it cannot be explained simply in terms of class even in the Obama era.

Cavell also has sought to wean philosophy off the search for essences in a way that emphasizes a kind of Wittgensteinian therapy which can no longer be seen as foundational in any sense. Cavell certainly recognizes this critical project and believes that by turning to the history of philosophy we can learn something important about ourselves (Cavell, 1969, p. xviii). Mathieu Duplay (2004) is one of the few who recognizes that Cavell and Rorty use similar strategies to resituate philosophy as cultural history or criticism after Wittgenstein.

In *The Senses of Walden*, Stanley Cavell provocatively states that “America [has] never expressed itself philosophically,” save “in the metaphysical riot of its greatest literature”. A similar insight has prompted Richard Rorty to proclaim that philosophy can no longer sustain its old territorial claims, and that its sole remaining purpose is to supervise the “conversation” between non-philosophical discourses and forms of knowledge. Cavell counters this argument by pointing out that philosophy actually comes into its own when it loses its traditional privileges: if the mission of philosophical conversation is to question the legitimacy of territorial appropriation in the name of a common quest for justice, as it has been since Plato’s Republic, then American literature may be better equipped to carry it out than academic philosophy, with its recognized “field” and carefully guarded boundaries.

Rorty (1981), in one of the few pieces that directly engages with Cavell takes him to task for treating ‘our’ cultural history in a cavalier manner:

> Cavell switches with insouciance from the narrow and professional identification of “philosophy” with epistemology to a large sense in which one cannot escape philosophy by criticizing it, simply because any criticism of culture is to be called “philosophy.” To resolve this ambiguity, Cavell would have to convince us that skepticism in the narrow sense, the sense used in ritual interchanges between philosophy professors (Green and Bain, Bradley and Moore, Austin and Ayer), is important for an understanding of skepticism in some deep and romantic sense. He would have to show us that “skepticism” is a good name for the impulse which leads grownups to try to educate themselves, cultures to try to criticize themselves. Then he would have to connect this broad sense with the narrow “technical” sense. My main complaint about his book is that Cavell doesn’t argue for such a connection, but takes it for granted. He doesn’t help us see people like Moore and Austin as important thinkers. Rather,

> he answers the transcendental *quaestio juris*-how *could* they, appearances perhaps to the contrary, be important?-while begging the *quaestio facti* (pp. 762-3)

The question does not concern whose response to our cultural history is more real, but rather how cultural history as philosophy, or philosophy as cultural history, turns on the positionality, race and gender of the narrator. Neither Rorty nor Cavell provide a recognition of the very obvious exclusion of histories and philosophies based on race and on the status of 'white philosophy' in America.

The judgment of Steve Fuller (2008) that Rorty in some ways also supports this view. He argues that Rorty articulated a distinctive voice of American philosophy by repositioning the pragmatists and did what Hegel and Heidegger did for Germany, making America the final resting place for philosophy but sublimating America's world-historic self-understanding as a place suspicious of foreigners unless they are willing to blend into the 'melting pot'. Fuller argues that Rorty's thought reflects wider cultural shifts that analytic philosophers are hard pressed to admit and that Rorty successfully and single=handedly turned America into the world's dominant philosophical power. He distinguishes between Cavell and Rorty in the following terms:

> To understand Rorty's significance, it is worth distinguishing *American Exceptionalism*, which can be found in the original pragmatists and in our time has been best exemplified in the work of Stanley Cavell, from *American Triumphalism*, which was Rorty's unique contribution.

Rorty's capacity to create narratives in the history of philosophy enabled him to recast both James and Dewey as public philosophers of the American inheritance while also repositioning the leaders of American philosophers in the analytic tradition--W.V.O. Quine, Wilfred Sellars, and Donald Davidson—redefining their relation to him, to pragmatism and to the future of American philosophy in ways that worried his fellow American philosophers deeply. Attempts to unseat his work by taking issues with the details of his interpretations of thinks like Wittgenstein, Dewey and Heidegger did not faze him and even risked misunderstanding his method as Rorty began to generate a list of alternative vocabularies that provided different and more inclusive description aligning him with a host of figures in the history of philosophy and privileging the American canon at the same time. In *Philosophy and Social Hope* Rorty (1999) describes the philosopher (and himself) as one who 'remaps culture', who 'suggests a new and promising way for us to think about the relation among large areas of human activity'.

Narratives of 'White Philosophy'

I use the term 'white philosophy' to designate the notion of color-blind philosophy which has special application to American philosophy for its extraordinary capacity to ignore questions of race and for its incapacity to recognize the centrality of the empirical fact of blackness and whiteness in American society and as part of the American deep unconscious structuring politics, economics and education. The term that I have neologized for the purpose of this essay comes from critical race studies and is a direct application of whiteness studies.

One of the strongest attacks on 'white philosophy' comes George Yancy, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Duquesne University, who in terms of his own self-description describes himself as working:

> primarily in the areas of critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and philosophy and the Black experience. He is particularly interested in the formation of African-American philosophical thought as articulated within the social context and historical space of anti-Black racism, African-American agency, and identity formation. His current philosophical project explores the theme of racial embodiment, particularly in terms of how white bodies live their whiteness unreflectively vis-à-vis the interpellation and deformation not only of the black body, but the white body, the philosophical identity formation of whites, and questions of white privilege and power formation. http://www.duq.edu/philosophy/faculty-and-staff/george-yancy.cfm

Yancy (1998) edited *African-American Philosophers: 17 Conversations*, and critical readers on Cornel West (2001) and bell hooks, (2010) as well as *The Center Must Not Hold: White Women Philosophers on the Whiteness of Philosophy* (2010) and *What White Looks Like: African American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question* (2004). In 'Fragments of a Social Ontology of Whiteness' his introduction to *What White Looks Like*, he begins:

> Whites have a way of speaking from a center that they often appear to forget forms the white ideological fulcrum upon which what they say (or do not say) and see (or do not see) hinges. In short, whites frequently lie to themselves (p. 1)

He goes to say:

> Philosophy is always performed by bodies that are sexed, gendered, and cultural coded in some fashion, and is already always shaped by prior assumptions, interests, concerns, and goals that are historically bounded and pragmatically contextual (p. 1).

Without specific naming 'white philosophy' he names its source and hidden normativity: 'The only real philosophy is done by *white men*; the only real wisdom is *white male wisdom*'. He goes on to argue that whiteness 'fails to see itself as alien'. To see itself whiteness would have to 'deny its own imperial epistemological and ontological base'. By refusing the risk of finding itself in exile 'it denies its own potential to be Other… to see through the web of white meaning it has spun' (p. 13). In 'Whiting Up and Blacking Out' with Tracey Ann Ryser he addresses the question of 'Naming Whiteness' extending this line of thought:

> Under the influence of European travelogues and colonial films, white philosophers, ethnographers, and fiction writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the West came to understand nonwhites as inferior Others. More specifically, the construction of the concept of race functioned epistemologically and ontologically as a prism through which the Other was constructed and render subhuman. The Other was deemed as inferior in virtually every way—intellectually, morally and culturally. The Other was constructed as savage, barbaric, evil, lustful, *different* and *deviant*, in comparison to whites. Whiteness, on this score, served as a metanarrative in terms of which nonwhites functioned as 'things' to be exploited and used in the service of white people (Yancy & Ryser, 2008: 1).

In 'Situated Black Women's Voices in/on the Profession of Philosophy' the introduction to a special issue of *Hypatia* devoted to the issue Yancy (2008) come closest to defining the essence of 'white philosophy' as an escape from its own historicism.

Doing philosophy is an activity. Like all activities, philosophy is situated. As a situated activity, philosophy is shaped according to various norms, assumptions, intuitions, and ways of thinking and feeling about the world. Fundamentally, philosophy is a form of engagement; it is always already a process in medias res. Despite their pretensions to the contrary, philosophers are unable to brush off the dust of history and begin doing philosophy ex nihilo. Hence, to do philosophy is to be ensconced in history. More specifically, philosophizing is an embodied activity that begins within and grows out of diverse *lived* contexts; philosophizing takes place within the fray of the everyday. On this score, philosophizing is a plural and diverse form of activity. In their attempt to escape the social, to defy history, and to reject the body, many philosophers have pretensions of being godlike. They attempt to defy the confluent social forces that shape their historicity and particularity. They see themselves as detached from the often inchoate, existential traffic of life and the background assumptions that are constitutive of a particular horizon of understanding. It is then that philosophy becomes a site of bad faith, presuming to reside in the realm of the static and the disembodied. Having "departed" from life, having rejected the force of "effective history," philosophy is just as well dead, devoid of relevance, devoid of particularity, and escapist.

In this Yancy follow the contours of argument prvided by feminist thinkers and also seeks an alliance with them. For instance, Alison Bailey and Jacquelin N. Zita (2007) writing for the same journal provide a set of reflections on whiteness in the United States shwing that it has been a long-standing practice in slave folklore and in

Mexican resistance to colonialism, Asian American struggles against exploitation and containment, and Native American stories of contact with European colonizers. They chart the emergence of 'critical whiteness' scholarship in the past two decades among a small number of philosophers, critical race theorists, postcolonial theorists, social historians, and cultural studies scholars who now 'focus on historical studies of racial formation and the deconstruction of whiteness as an unmarked privilege-granting category and system of dominance' (p. vii). Bailey and Zita (2007) argues that this body of scholarship identifies 'whiteness as a cultural disposition and ideology held in place by specific political, social, moral, aesthetic, epistemic, metaphysical, economic, legal, and historical conditions, crafted to preserve white identity and relations of white supremacy' (p. vii).

The Hope of American Pragmatism

As a New Zealander of European descent who has worked with Maori (especially Ngapui), the indigenous inhabitants of Aotearoa (New Zealand), over many years, I came to work in an American mid-west university with some sensitivity to issues of race of a person of mixed English-Italian ancestry living in a post-white settler British society[2]. I was surprised that philosophy courses I took as a student in New Zealand had nothing to say about race and in fact Maori studies had great difficulty asserting itself against the white professoriat to establish itself (Walker, 1999). The philosophy courses seemed to reflect a curriculum that was not historicist or reflexively sensitive to the local, with some exceptions (e.g., Oddie & Perret, 1993). But nothing prepared me for the situation I faced in the US or in Illinois even though I had been present for some years before the election of Barack Obama as the first black US president-- not only the deep structural racism that exists in US society despite Obama's talk of 'post-racial politics' or the thinly disguised racism of the tea-party movement but also the way identity politics in universities prevents constructive dialogue across theory lines.

I became interested in the philosophy of race while in New Zealand and began rereading the pragmatist canon in terms of the absence of race, learning for instance, that John Dewey (1985) avoided race except for one polite essay on 'race relations' to the NAACP. It is also reported that some of his letters are anti-Semitic. I mentioned this fact about Dewey some years ago in passing to my HOD, James Anderson, the distinguished black historian of education, who said to me: 'Be careful they don't shoot the messenger'.[3]

Paul C. Taylor (2004) comments on Dewey's 'silence' in his introductory response to Claude McKay's[4] *Selected Poems.* As he comments: 'whiteness consists in occupying a social location of structural privilege in the right kind of racialized society (p. 229). Given Dewey's contextualism, Taylor reads Dewey's silence as a refusal reflecting the moral psychology of race that helps explains lacunae in his career and in particular, no references to the Dyer Bill which made lynching a federal crime in the US. Clearly Dewey was unaware of his own whiteness that colored his views of education,

[2] Working with Professor James Marshall of Auckland University I collaborated on a series of project located in the north of New Zealand (*Tai Tokerau*) to examine questions around the maintenance and control of Maori language (*te reo*) in school exam practices and the drop out problem of Maori children. This work is perhaps best illustrated in Peters & Marshall (1988) but see also Peters & Marshall (1990).

[3] See Dewey (1985 orig. 1932) and for commentary see Sullivan (2004), Stack (2009) and Fallace (2010).

[4] McKay was a Jamaican poet who traveled to the US in 1917 and used the sonnet form to record his responses to the injustices of black life in America. His poem 'Enslaved' gives a flavor of his style: Oh when I think of my long-suffering race,/For weary centuries despised, oppressed,/Enslaved and lynched, denied a human place/In the great life line of the Christian West;/And in the Black Land disinherited,/Robbed in the ancient country of its birth,/My heart grows sick with hate, becomes as lead,/For this my race that has no home on earth./Then from the dark depths of my soul I cry/To the avenging angel to consume/The white man's world of wonders utterly:/Let it be swallowed up in earth's vast womb,/Or upward roll as sacrificial smoke/To liberate my people from its yoke!

philosophy and America. It is almost as though nothing has been learnt by American mainstream philosophy since Dewey although two recent collections on pragmatism and race, *Pragmatism and the Problem of Race* (2004) and *Pragmatism Nation, and Race: Community in the Age of Empire* (2009), though standing in the long shadow of Cornel West's (1989) *The American Evasion of Philosophy* go some way towards addressing these concerns. Both books indicate that pragmatism in its classical phase and thereafter has made important contributions to the study of race and racism—its social construction was central to Alain L. Locke's 1915-16 lectures on *Race Contacts*, James, Dewey and Addams railed against metaphysics and promoted the view of the ontological integrity of social groups. West himself names Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey as those philosophers who set us free from the confines of a spurious universalism based on a European projection of its own self-image.

My major operating presumption that became a position I adopted with students was based on an affirmative response to the question 'Does Euro-American modernity, the Western tradition in philosophy, have the intellectual resources to overcome its own institutional racism?' Today I would add 'and whiteness'. My answer is an optimistic 'yes' even if imperfectly and over the long haul. If I had the space I would argue, for instance, that while contemporary western philosophy in its analytic suit of armor reduced ethics and politics to nonsense and rubble, the Continental driven Hegelian-inspired phenomenology first informed Fanon's existential psychiatry (even though it was marginalized in the Left tradition) and Du Bois' pragmatism (even if he was only recently included as part of a reconstructed canon), and then what West names as the historicist moment in philosophy—Wittgenstein's 'cultural turn', Heidegger's *destruction* of western metaphysics, Derrida's *deconstruction*, Rorty's *demythologization*, Foucault's *genealogy* that all provided 'resources for how we understand, analyze and enact our representational practices' (West, 1993: 21). What impresses me greatly is just how recent the rise of black philosophical consciousness is and its contradictory sources of inspiration in the black liberation church, phenomenology and black existentialism, often first registered in forms of poetic and narrative resistance. West's thought really only began to crystallize in the late 1980s with *The Evasion of American Philosophy* (1989) to mature in the 1990s with works such as *Race Matters* (1993) and *Keeping Faith* (1994), to become accepted and anthologized in the 2000s (*The Corel West Reader*, 2001).

In charting the birth, decline and resurgence of American pragmatism West views it as 'a specific historical and cultural product of American civilization, a particular set of social practices that articulate certain American desires, values, and responses that are elaborated in institutional apparatuses principally controlled by a significant slice of the American middle class' (pp. 4-5). He pictures American pragmatism as distinctive philosophy based on its 'anticolonial heritage' and rebelliousness -- 'a future-oriented instrumentalism that deploys thought as a weapon to enable more effective action—that is more akin to a form of 'cultural criticism in which the meaning of America is put forward by intellectuals in response to distinct social and cultural crises' (p. 5).

I think West is too kind to American pragmatism and too quick to see it exclusively as an American philosophy—he like Rorty and Cavell is too much of an American patriot. West's black American pragmatism needs to get outside itself to explore its affinities with Africa, not only the tradition of Négritude initiated by Césaire, Fanon and Senghor in the French tradition (as well as its inspiration in the Harlem renaissance) that inaugurates the tradition of post-colonial criticism but to investigate the traditions of African indigenous thought, the African diaspora, and the expanding and encyclopedic expansions of Africana philosophy as 'as a metaphilosophical organizing concept of intellectual praxes' to makes sense of *philosophizing* persons and

peoples African and of African descent (Outlaw, 2010). By doing so it would help academic philosophy understand its own cultural and historical trajectory and shape a more democratic approach to the contingencies of 'race' and the role it has played in the construction of modernity and the modern state system. The emergence of Africana consciousness first in the Afro-Arabic world in the Middle Ages, its hybridization in the conflicts between Islam and Christianity, its historical ties to racism, enslavement, and colonialism, and its emergence to reason and liberation (Gordon, 2008) is the basis for a recognition of its potential for becoming a truly global philosophy by coming to terms with specific forms of contemporary black racism in Brazil, China and India, as the west declines and the 'rest' rises.

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BOOK REVIEW:

FILIPE CARREIRA DA SILVA.

G. H. MEAD: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

(Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007. 156 pp.)

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In one of his numerous letters François-Marie Arouet, more widely known by his pen name Voltaire, wrote: „Dear friend, I apologize for having written such a long letter but I did not have enough time to write a short one." I would like to elaborate a little bit on the words of this great figure of political liberalism because its message is closely connected to the way Filipe Carreira da Silva treated his topic in the book *G. H. Mead: A Critical Introduction*. First, as Voltaire seems to point out, we are generally more attracted to things and texts we can conceive in relatively short period of time. It may not be like this every time, but generally people tend to prefer rather short letters and books than otherwise. The reason is quite simple and especially holds for book reading: namely, until we manage to familiarize ourselves with a subject we can never be certain whether this endeavor of ours is actually worth it or not. Thus, if we happen to be totally ignorant about certain matters, we usually take the shortest credible way out. The second interesting matter to the aforementioned quotation is the realization, that it is actually more challenging and difficult to write a short pregnant text on a subject than an extensive treatise. In other words, the better our understanding of a particular subject, the shorter amount of time it takes us to present it coherently to somebody else. All of what has been said so far counts for Filipe Carreira da Silva's notable monograph *G. H. Mead: A Critical Introduction*.

In his work, Da Silva (by training a sociologist) not only has come up with an insightful treatment of almost all crucial ideas of George Herbert Mead but also has been able to put Mead's thinking into proper philosophical contexts – mainly the pragmatist one. However, not only this is the case – speaking of putting ideas into various contexts, da Silva seems to have found a strong typological connection between the social issues Mead addressed a century ago and the problems we are facing at present. At first glance, the aim of da Silva's book looks surely manifold – from factual examination of Mead's intellectual heritage, through placing it into various perspectives, up to an attempt to find a place for Mead in contemporary social debates. How do the outcomes of da Silva's efforts meet the needs of general academic public on the one hand, and to what extent they are able to satisfy the demands of professional Mead researchers on the other, these are the issues I would like to deal with in this paper.

Although the systematization of the book presented by the author on its very first pages is a little bit different, we could say that da Silva's book basically falls into two major parts. The first part addresses Mead's fundamental social and philosophical concepts, whereas the second one familiarizes the reader with the reception of these ideas by various intellectual schools of thought in the 20th and 21st century. Right at the outset of this review, it should be noted that one of the most exceptional characteristics of the book *G. H. Mead: A Critical Introduction* is its great balance when treating philosophical and sociological aspects of Mead's work. From philosophical point of view, it comes as a true surprise that a professional sociologist is actually able to present such an authentic and dependable picture of philosophical pragmatism, which has been the most abused and misrepresented current of thought of the last century. In fact, the transdisciplinarity of research is a crucial aspect in contemporary Meadian studies and da Silva executes this task very well. Mead himself was an eclectic thinker who was able to link philosophical currents in his work as disparate as idealism, naturalism, French vitalism, behavioral psychology and many others. There is absolutely no doubt about the necessity of putting forth some amount of philosophy when discussing Mead's work. Since da Silva's book main goal

is to present Mead to social sciences' students, the level of its philosophical accomplishment is adequate and does not slip into any extremes on either side.

As mentioned before, we could divide da Silva's book to two parts. The first one (chapters 1 to 5) provides for readers without prior knowledge of Mead an intellectual map of his basic philosophical concepts as well as a portrait of his biography. In the case of including biography into da Silva's research, I consider this historical proceeding to be a correct one for the following reasons: 1) When talking about pragmatist philosophy of Mead, and also of Dewey or James for instance, it is highly appropriate to point out to significant moments of their lives because they are quite reflective of what they wanted their philosophy to become – and that is – a philosophy-put-to-work. In other words, philosophy should actually make a difference to the individual (James) as well as to the society (Mead, Dewey). Mead remained faithful to this idea for all his life not only theoretically but also through getting practically involved in strivings for social reforms. 2) The second reason why we should not omit Mead's personal history is the incompleteness of his work, which I propose (as well as da Silva does, after all) to be taken rather as an advantage than otherwise. Knowing Mead's historical background enables us to develop some of his ideas in new and fruitful directions.[1]

As for the rest of the first half of his book (chapters 3 to 5), da Silva presents clear although sometimes a little too compendious treatment of Mead's fundamental social and psychological concepts. For those readers, who are not familiar with Mead's thought, it is absolutely necessary to go through the first part of the book to get at least a basic grip on his key concepts such as „taking the role of the other", „conversation of gestures", „significant symbol" etc.

On the other hand, the more advanced readers of Mead can skip to the second half (chapters 6 to 8) of the book right away. Whilst the first part only [sic] offers a systematic depiction of Meadian conceptual basics, in the second part one can find several portions of refreshing ideas concerning the way Mead's work has been interpreted by different schools of sociology and philosophy. What needs to be especially appreciated in the second half of da Silva's book is the rare attempt to put Mead into real discussion with contemporary thinkers in the way far from trivial. Therefore, in the text below, I am going to go through the individual chapters and examine them not so much from the perspective of its „objective accuracy" (there is no such need) but I will rather try to discuss with its particular fragments or eke them out with some supplemental ideas that have not been made explicit.

As mentioned above, there are several good reasons for including Mead's personal and intellectual portrait to monographs that have the ambition to deal with the work of this thinker in its complexity. In this respect, da Silva takes up the approach of the leading Meadian authorities such as Gary Cook and Hans Joas. In the case of da Silva's treatment of Mead's work, however, there is at least one more reason for doing this. By depicting the historical background of the evolution of Mead's ideas da Silva tries to point out to the condition of *fin de siècle* that Mead (being a citizen of one of the most dynamically developing cities of that times, Chicago) experienced firsthand. As da Silva thoughtfully asserts, the times of Mead and our time bear surprisingly many commonalities indicating that the problems addressed by Mead are very likely be of the same nature that we are facing today.[2] Our present, exactly like the turn of 20th century, can be characterized as culturally and socially vibrant period combined with a shared prospect of unavoidable radical change in society or some

[1] For instance, the fact that Mead studied and wrote his doctoral dissertation under Wilhelm Dilthey may rise some interesting questions concerning the influence of modern hermeneutics on the development of certain aspects of American pragmatism.

[2] Da Silva rigorously examines this problem in his book: Da Silva, F. C.*: Mead and Modernity: Science, Selfhood, and Democratic Politics*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008.

approaching „end". Right from the start da Silva also calls attention to the way Dewey influenced Mead's thinking. However, from the historical and systematic point of view it can be claimed that the author slightly overestimates Dewey's influence on Mead. Whereas it is true, that Mead's own conceptual and philosophical points of departure began to crystalize to its mature form not until he worked with Dewey in Ann Arbor and later in Chicago, it can be doubted that for instance Dewey's neo-hegelianism could have had any significant influence upon Mead (pp. 24-25).[3] On the other hand, the author seems to neglect the impact[4] of Mead's ideas upon Dewey's own thinking. Except for these two slight inaccuracies the Mead's short intellectual biography put forth by da Silva is fully sufficient for the purposes of his treatise and introduces the whole subject very well.

At the outset of chapter three da Silva decided to examine arguably the most important notion of Mead's thought – taking the role of the other. In brief manner da Silva explains basic concepts like gestures, symbols, significant symbols etc. All of these are defined quite clearly, although it is my impression that they deserve a little more space to being dealt with really profoundly. What can be considered the biggest problem of this chapter, however, is the author's understanding of Mead's concept of *social object* which represents one of very few factual mistakes in the whole book. Da Silva writes: „For Mead, human beings live in a world made of objects. Most objects around us are physical: a pen or a mobile phone are possible examples of what Mead calls ‚objects of immediate experience.' We can grab them, feel them, use them. Moreover, Mead suggests that human beings are also to be considered as objects, only of a different sort: the reflective self of the human self makes it a social object. Social objects (i.e. human beings) are distinguished from physical ones through their ability to reflect upon surrounding environment, including other social objects." These words of the author imply at least two things that actually are not faithful to what Mead seems to present in his writings. The first problematic moment of the passage cited above is the implication that according to Mead, all objects can be basically classified into two categories: physical and social. Physical objects are those we can touch, see, smell, grab (to put it simply) etc. and the social ones are selves. As long as Mead's ontology is concerned, da Silva is right about the first category, but apparently fails to understand the second one. In Mead's ontological texts we can really see him operating extensively with the notion of physical object, but social objects are something quite different. They have a lot more to do with Mead's theory of meaning than ontology. Social objects are not primarily selves as da Silva seems to suggest. By contrast, they can be defined as whatever that has a common meaning for each participant in the social act.[5] Thus, it is conceivable that social objects can be some selves as well as physical objects but also some other „objects." This brings us to the second possible objection concerning the author's treatment of objects. According to Silva, in Mead, the world only consists of physical and social objects, in other words – material things and selves, nothing more. Well, cannot we think of many other objects? What about political parties, bank accounts, language or various kinds of social institutions? They are neither physical objects, nor are they selves. Also in the light of this objection we can see that the author's account of

[3] There are at least two reasons for this: 1) Mead met Dewey in 1891, i.e. at the time when Dewey was already in the process of moving away from neo-hegelianism [Cf. Dewey's articles: *Is Logic a Dualistic Science?* (1890), *Logic of Verification* (1890) and *The Present Position of Logical Theory* (1891)]. 2) There was basically no need for Dewey to inspire Mead in the neo-hegelian way, because Mead at that time was already well aware of it – he studied under Josiah Royce at Harvard and then spent three years in Germany.

[4] We have quite strong historical evidence, that some of key philosophical premises of Dewey's thinking have actually their source in Mead. Cf. Dewey, J. M.: The Biography of John Dewey in: Schipp, P.A. (ed.): *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, New York: Tudor Publishing Co. 1939, pp. 25-26.; Morris, Ch. W. in: Mead, G. H.: *Mind, Self, and Society*, Morris, Ch.W. (ed.), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1967, pp. xi.

[5] Cf. Mead, G. H.: *Mind, Self, and Society*, Morris, Ch.W. (ed.), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 277-280.

social object is a little problematic. I am aware of no Mead's paper providing us with an enumerative account of what is to be counted as an object and what is not. By contrast, Mead seems to claim that an object should be counted as such if we are able to act toward it. To put it a little differently, the criterion of something being an object is the possibility of taking action toward it.[6]

The rest of the chapter presents logical and sophisticated explanation of Mead's account of the emergence of symbolic processes and the mechanism of social organization resting upon it. What is particularly useful and at the same time helpful for beginning researchers are the distinctions within particular Mead's concepts (subjective and intersubjective reflectivity etc.). In describing the conceptual starting points of Mead's theory of communication and sociality it is very neccesary to explain the diferences between gestures, conversation of gestures and significant symbols – it is on the background of these that we should get a proper picture of what Mead actually meant by taking the role of the other. Da Silva, being aware of this fact, did this work very well. There is also another important thing that the author pointed out to, namely the existence of Mead's taxonomy of language moods (pp. 38-39), that we actually know (obviously in much more elaborated form) from the Oxford ordinary language philosophers. Although the existence of Mead's distinction between language moods is probably more important for philosophers than sociologists, it displays how far ahead of his times Mead actually got in his analyses of language and communication.

Chapter four revolves around Mead's treatment of the emergence of self through individual's participating in communicative processes. Again, probably the greatest value of this chapter does not lie in presenting a systematic treatment of the subject (as presented in many other books on Mead before) but in introducing careful distinctions into sometimes a little messy Mead's texts. What needs to be especially appreciated is the distinction between various „stages" of consciousness, i. e. consciousness as awareness, consciousness as reflective intelligence and mind. These very closely related concepts cause a lot of misunderstandings in dealing with Mead's social psychology. While consciousness as awareness should be understood as a subjective experience of objects or feelings to the individual, consciousness as reflective intelligence has to do with our dealings with the social world as reflective intelligent beings. This is where language and symbolization start to play an absolutely crucial role. Using symbols and language seems to considerably enhance our capability of selective thinking because it portions the continuum of experience into functional parts helping us cope with broad scope of problems within it. If Mead says, that „intelligence is largely a matter of selectivity"[7], this is what he has in mind. Moreover, reflexivity is the ability to test various available options of conduct mentally, so we actually do not have to try every alternative course of action. Reflexivity is also a necessary condition for the emergence of mind. We can call an individual as minded if it is able to become an object to itself in the presentation of different lines of conduct. We see, then, that reflective intelligence and mind are closely connected but not coextensive terms. Mind, the way Mead uses it, has a lot to do with the social dimension of conduct, in other words, it is something that arises from a social matrix of interactions among individuals. Reflexivity, on the other hand, is basically a function of our cortex that enables this kind of social interaction, but still can not be called mindedness because mind, according to Mead, is not something that can be localized[8] in any part of our body.[9] Da Silva, being well

[6] Cf. Mead, G. H.: *The Philosophy of the Act*, Dunham, A. M.; Miller, D. L.; Morris, Ch. W. (eds.), Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1938, pp. 430.

[7] Mead, G. H.: *Mind, Self, and Society*, Morris, Ch. W. (ed.), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 99.

[8] For instance, Cornelis de Waal goes as far as to place mind wholly in the space of social discourse. Cf. de Waal, C.: *On Mead*, Belmont: Wadsworth 2002, p. 66.

aware of this, presented the reader with the useful distinction between what we can call „stages of consciousness" but probably could have gone a little bit further when discussing the difference between reflexivity and mind.

As a kind of recapitulation of previous findings we can read chapter five called „Society, Mind, and Self." Da Silva deliberately mingled the words' order in the title of Mead's most famous book *Mind, Self, and Society* and used it in his own favour. According to da Silva, Charles W. Morris (who was the actual collectioner of this Mead's text) did not choose the proper order of words when he decided to put mind in the first place, and self and society in second and third place respectively. Is it not the case that according to Mead it is society that logically comes first, and only after that do we have mind and self? It is an interesting question. Da Silva's argument seems to be sound but only to a certain extent. If we read *Mind, Self and Society* what we can actually see is Mead's attempt to put forth a genetic interpretation of how society possibly could evolve out of gestural interactions between human beings. In this respect it is appropriate to read Mead's theories of society as Israel Scheffler[10] proposes, namely as being of similar kind as for instance social contract theory. Although (with most probability) there was no such moment in the human history when social contract was actually made, it still provides us with very deep insights that can hardly be doubted. These insights immensely have helped us understand the existence and functioning of political and legal systems. The same counts for Mead's theories of communication and society. Even though we will never able to trace the origins of human language, the explanations and interpretations of it in Mead's texts show us where to look for it's logical (not historical) roots, because they hardly ever took place in the form Mead writes. To get back to da Silva's above mentioned proposal of reversing the order of words – in the condition of individuals being born to already existing social groups – obviously, it would be more appropriate to start off with society, nevertheless this is not Mead's point. Arguably, from Mead's pragmatist evolutionary perspective such an approach would be clearly anachronistic. We do not need society (a large social group – in the ordinary sense of the word) to become selves, all we need is a second individual.[11]

Owing to application of his social-philosophical ideas even to interactions between nations Mead shows how remarkably coherent and encompassing his philosophy really is. The issues of foreign policy were at the center of Mead's attention mainly in the times of World War I. The author accurately points out to some of Mead's opinions of how international relations should be structured and managed. It is also on the background of these that we can see (unfortunately) that not much has changed since then. In this part of the book we can also notice one more aspect, making Mead's thought up-to-date and inspiring, especially when we take Mead into an imaginary discussion with some European thinkers such as Foucault. As well as Foucault, Mead thoroughly examined the relation of individual and society in terms of social control. What is interesting though, Mead's conclusions differ enormously from those of Foucault even though they both can be identified as social determinists of some sort. As we know, the picture of the relation between society and an individual we are presented by Foucault is rather a pessimistic one. He can not see any possibility for an individual how to set free from certain social forces, not to speak about her potential of *changing* society. However, even if we take the historical point of view, what Foucault says, is apparently not true; and Mead is well aware of that. For Mead, the fact that an individual is able to change

[9] Cf. Mead, G. H.: *Mind, Self, and Society*, Morris, Ch. W. (ed.), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 53.

[10] Cf. Scheffler, I.: *Four Pragmatists: A Critical Introduction to Peirce, James, Mead, and Dewey*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, p. 175-176.

[11] Of course, the scope of social relations in the case of „society" consisting of only two individuals would be considerably limited, yet in the most basic sense, we logically have all we need to become „selves."

(sometimes quite radically) the course of society's life comes very naturally. In fact, in his writings he does not devote too much space for justification of this idea, which indicates that the clash between radical social determinists and those who advocated more liberal position was not the true reason why he wrote on this topic. In this respect da Silva convincingly shows, how Mead's individual psychology (I-me distinction) is in accordance with the relation of self and society. Since the self is an internalization of social practices *(me)* it mirrors in itself the moral order of this society; on the other hand the creative and dynamic side of our personality *(I)* puts this order repeatedly to test in the course of social life of the individual. Very rarely are both sides of our selves in total balance. Most of our personalities are dominated by one of these sides. Those selves that are dominated by the "I" tend to put the social order more often to question and creatively reconstruct not primarily the moral order of the society, but first – themselves. Thus, Mead displays how social criticism is but a form of self-criticism. If the person is able to address and reconstruct in herself the problems of the broader scope of members of the society, she can bring about a radical change in it. This is also the main message of Mead's pragmatist ethics; if we are able to build a society that will always preserve free discussion, exchange of ideas and individual's creative potential we actually make sure, that it is going to move toward greater common good of the whole.

With chapter six the reader enters the second part of the book. As mentioned above, through presentation of all the crucial aspects of Mead's social theory da Silva had prepared the conceptual background for an imaginary discussion between Mead and the continuators of his work. The main value of da Silva's treatment of this subject can be found in thorough examination of the influence of the tradition of American pragmatism not only on Mead but also on the „Chicago school" of sociology as a whole. In this respect he mentions Dmitri Shalin's important work „Pragmatism and Social Interactionism" (1986) that summarizes the main areas in which pragmatism has been most influential in the process of formulating the conceptual and methodological background of symbolic interactionism. Da Silva convincingly shows that pragmatism's main goal, which was nothing less than overcoming the Cartesian rationalism by means of a naturalistic philosophy of action is at the same time one of the most important conceptual resources of the whole new tradition of symbolic interactionism. Speaking of the relation of Mead and the Chicago school of sociology, one more issue should be noted; it is highly probable that the unproblematic fusion between Mead's philosophy and social psychology on the one hand, and the newly emerging current of sociology on the other, was made possible by Mead's great programmatic openness toward empirical research. For all his life, Mead strived to find appropriate means of putting his theories into practice and evaluating them. Although he himself did not fully succeed during his lifetime, his students pushed these efforts much further and also succeeded remarkably. In this respect, the person of Herbert Blumer should be mentioned. Blumer was one of Mead's most devoted students (beside Ellsworth Faris, for instance), who remained faithful to the main route of research, set by his teacher, for all his life. It was also him, who in 1937 coined the term „symbolic interactionism." Blumer's role in spreading Mead's ideas in the world of social sciences can hardly be overemphasized; it was actually owing to him, that symbolic interactionism became the leading current of sociological research in 60s and 70s of the last century. Apart from this, as da Silva contends, in many aspects of his work, Blumer drags his teacher to directions Mead would himself probably never have gone.

According to da Silva, probably the most serious problem in Blumer's reception of Mead is his alleged nominalism. Blumer seems to argue, that Mead understood symbolic interaction as involving interpretation, or ascertaining of meaning of the actions or the remarks of the other person, and definition, or conveying indications to another person as to how she is to act. Da Silva, on the

other hand, claims that in Mead nothing like this is possible because meaning is something that lies in the social act even prior to the emergence of consciousness (p. 79). Da Silva is right, according to Mead, the meaning of a social act is present in it before the awareness of meaning occurs. This is after all why some animals can act in meaningful way without being aware of it. But does it necessarily mean that we get to this meaning in any other way than interpretation? Da Silva writes: „…Blumer's Mead is said to conceive of symbolic interaction as a formative process through which meaning is created." Does the term interpretation mean creating the meaning out of nothing as da Silva maintains? Certainly not. What he apparently fails to understand is the fact that interpretation and prior existence of meaning are not contradictory notions. If we are involved in a social act the nature of which is not yet clear to us, we have to figure it out. And how do we figure it out but through interpretation? Let me give an example: say, I go across a crowded center of town, smoking my cigarette and out of the sudden I can see a person in the distance waving her hand in my direction. Since I am a little short-sighted I cannot recognize her face. There is definitely a purpose (representing the meaning of the social act) in her waving hand but at that moment I am not aware of it. What I have to do is to *interpret* it; say, by looking around me I make sure she is not waving at somebody else or by recalling the local law I make sure I am allowed to smoke in public places, I can also go closer to ask her etc. In other words, although the meaning of the act as a whole is present in the situation from the very beginning, in order to follow it, sometimes we have to take some action, in the pragmatist words – we have to do inquiry. The only difference is that in social dealings with other human beings we do not call these research activities inquiry but interpretation. Since moving in the world of human communication is not moving primarily among physical objects but meanings, we do not inquire, we interpret. Coming back to Blumer, it is probably a little too harsh from da Silva to contend that Blumer misrepresents Mead in this aspect of his work.

In the rest of the chapter the author carefully maps the development of Mead's ideas in for instance in the „Iowa School", and also in the work of renowned sociologists like Anselm Strauss, Erving Goffman and Howard S. Becker. The positions of the aforementioned sociologists are examined by da Silva from strictly Meadian perspective which gives us a very good outlook on how divergent currents of thought Mead's texts provoked. The way da Silva has treated his subject in this chapter makes it attractive and comprehensible even for those students of humanities who have not undergone any thorough sociological training.

The main value of chapter seven lies in relating Mead's thinking to several outstanding European intellectuals such as Arnold Gehlen, Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, Hans Joas and also to head representatives of conflict theory (Randall Collins) and neofunctionalism (Jeffrey Alexander). In this chapter da Silva excellently explains why it was in post-war Germany where Mead's work anchored so strongly. In short, the changed social and political conditions of this country paved the way for Mead's thinking in two ways: 1) Through Mead, and American pragmatism in general, Germany was able to return to it's intellectual roots – idealism; 2) Since Mead's social theory can be seen as a democratic alternative to the work of Marx, Mead's ideas were immediately embraced and further developed within the second generation of Frankfurt school.

In the last chapter da Silva sums up the conclusions of his book trying to answer the question „Why read Mead today?" Throughout his book da Silva not only has shown that Mead was one of the founding fathers of modern sociology, social psychology and pragmatism, but also presented how his work continuously provokes new and fruitful ways of thinking about society. Yet, there is one more idea the author deliberately has not fully developed in this particular book[12] – Mead's work is to a great extent an answer to problems, that are

[12] See footnote no. 2.

actually very similar to our own. As well as we do, Mead lived in a historical period when the social structure was deeply shaken by the upcoming uncertainties of the new era. His early liberal modernity was a subject to similar historical contingency, uncertainty and pluralism as our late post-industrial modernity. Having said all the above we must admit that George Herbert Mead is the kind of thinker, who will long remain a great source of original ideas in various disciplines of social sciences. In the book *G. H. Mead: A Critical Introduction* the author has done an impressive work in presenting some key aspects of Mead's thinking and also the reasons why he is still worth reading. This work on Mead places Filipe Carreira da Silva among the leading scholars in the field.

MICHAEL LINN ELDRIDGE
(1941-2010)

Michael Eldridge was born in Oklahoma City, OK, on 13 October 1941. He died unexpectedly at home in Charlotte, NC, on 18 September 2010 from a pulmonary embolism that developed after he broke his leg in an accident in his yard.

He began his higher education at Harding College in Searcy, AR, from which he graduated in 1964 with a BA in biblical languages. After further study at Abilene Christian College, he received a BD degree from the Yale Divinity School in 1969. Upon ordination in the Disciples of Christ, Mike spent the next five years in the ministry in Baltimore, MD, working in tandem for two churches, one belonging to the Disciples and the other to the United Church of Christ. Eventually, he drifted from the church into community organizing work for the city of Baltimore. Mike then taught ethics at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in the Bronx from 1975 to 1978.

Mike returned to higher education in 1978, taking his first philosophy course ever and eventually receiving an MA in philosophy from Columbia University in 1980. He was awarded a PhD from the University of Florida at the age of 43 in 1985 with a dissertation entitled: "Philosophy as Religion: A Study in Critical Devotion."

After a further year as an instructor at Florida, Mike entered a tough job market; and, in an attempt to maximize his assets in Greek and Latin, he offered himself as an expert in ancient philosophy. I first met Mike at this point, when he spent a few days in Toledo on an ill-fated job interview at my university. Based on that brief encounter, I have no doubt that he would have become a very effective teacher of ancient philosophy had he continued in that direction; but all of us would have suffered a great loss.

In 1986, Mike was hired to teach philosophy at Spring Hill College in Mobile, AL, and he taught there until 1989. He then moved to Queens College in Charlotte, where he taught with seeming success — he was approaching tenure with a record as an effective chair and the 1993 recipient of the 'Teacher of the Year' award — until 1994, when theological differences with the Presbyterian administration led to his dismissal. Mike landed across town at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte as a long-term lecturer, a position that he held until his official retirement in 2008. Far more than a place-holder in that role, he was deeply involved in the life of the department and in undergraduate education. He served, for example, for a number of years as the undergraduate philosophy coordinator.

During his years in Charlotte, Mike was also a very active scholar. His publications include: Transforming Experience: John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism (Vanderbilt University Press, 1998); the "Introduction" to the second volume of The Correspondence of John Dewey (InteLex, 2001); and numerous articles and encyclopedia entries on various aspects of American philosophy and the situation in American higher education. Mike also managed the website: www.obamaspragmatism.info.

On the international philosophical scene, Mike served as a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Szeged, Hungary (2004). He also was a welcome participant in numerous international conferences. Among the countries he visited as an ambassador of American philosophy were: Cuba, Brazil, Finland, Slovakia, Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Turkey, China, and South Korea.

Some of the memories I have of our joint travels — in addition, of course, to the real philosophical work — include a panel at a world congress in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where Mike greatly enjoyed having his visage displayed on a dictator-sized screen above his head as he spoke; a bus trip in a downpour near Shanghai, when Mike got soaked as he sat by a faulty window; a quiet meal of reindeer meat in the late-night sun in Helsinki, and the quest for ever-better ice cream in Cadiz.

For many years, Mike was very active on the programs of the annual meetings of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy. He was eventually elected to the position of Secretary, a position he filled with great enthusiasm and care, from 2006-2010. When he stepped down last year, he was honored by the Society with its Josiah Royce Award for Loyalty for his many years of service.

Unlike some philosophers whose lives and work seem separate projects, Mike revealed a great deal about himself in his writings. His topics were his own, not drawn from what was 'in the air'; his style was personal, slow and thorough. What I would like to do in my remaining time is to develop a partial portrait of Mike by sketching out some of his philosophical ideas on the topics of higher education, political change, and religious renewal.

Beginning with higher education, Mike wrote a detailed review of my volume on the early years of the American Philosophical Association.[1] His review begins, unpromisingly, as follows: "This is not a book that everyone should read"; but Mike saves himself when he continues that it is a book that "anyone who cares about our profession" and how it reached its present situation "should study carefully."[2] We can consider, for example, his careful summary of the nature and workings of the old-time college:

> academic philosophy in the United States in the nineteenth century was found most often in small colleges and was confined to a single course taught by the Protestant minister-president. And by 'small' I mean really small. The faculty oftentimes was no more than a half dozen or so college-educated — not university-trained — teachers. They understood themselves to be transmitters of knowledge rather than original producers of it. The philosophy that was taught had its origins in Europe and was an ultimately unstable synthesis of empiricism, Christianity, and the metaphysics of a reality that lies beyond experience. It was above all anti-skeptical and practical in orientation. This Scottish common sense realism, as it was known, was considered safe and necessary for the education of a Christian gentleman, which it was the aim of the college to produce. Philosophy was not done for its own sake; it was fully a part of the community, that is, the educated, professional, economically advantaged segment of society. It supported the evangelical orientation of this community, while enabling its teachers and students to embrace fully the scientific and technological developments of the day.[3]

This academic world was being upset by Darwinism, the 'higher' biblical criticism, and the many industrial and social changes that followed the Civil War.

For a Deweyan like Mike, this moment represented a great possibility for fashioning a system of higher education — with philosophy at its core — to advance an alternate conception of the social good. We know, of course, that things turned out differently; that the leaders (and perhaps the membership) of the Western Philosophical Association and the American Philosophical Association were far more interested in narrow philosophical research and advancing 'original work.' As Mike writes:

> Attention to teaching, the production of textbooks, the transmitting of past philosophical achievements — all within a conventional cultural understanding — was what they were attempting to go beyond. These had been the emphases of the colleges. These newly professional philosophers were developing a support group that would enable them to be fully a part of the new scientific, rigorous education that was emerging at the end of the nineteenth century . . . this transformed profession would value 'original investigation' over edification either in the classroom or in public forums. What philosophy became in the twentieth century was no accident; it was truly a thoughtful profession even if some of us now question the wisdom of this thoughtful action.[4]

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[1] James Campbell, *A Thoughtful Profession: The Early Years of the American Philosophical Association* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006).

[2] "When Philosophy Became What It Is Today," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XLIII/2 (Spring 2007), pp. 375-381. This passage appears on page 376.

[3] Ibid., pp. 376-377.

[4] Ibid., pp. 378, 380.

This abdication of a public role by the philosophical profession bothered Mike, both because it cut philosophy out of a major social task, and because it deprived those who were so engaged from any philosophical help.

Turning now to Mike's work in political philosophy, we all know that he found in Dewey help for addressing the problems of social change. (I doubt that he would have found similar help in Plato or Aristotle, had he continued in ancient philosophy).

One of the themes to which Mike returned again and again was Dewey's comment that he had not been attempting to "practicalize intelligence" but rather to "intellectualize practice."[5] Mike's take on this distinction was that social practice was our primary interest, although too often our practice was unthinking and myopic. "We act in habitual ways, but sometimes our customary ways of acting cease to be effective ways of meeting our needs." In these instances, when there is "a discrepancy between our interests and our satisfactions," we need to examine our practices and find a better fit "between ends and means." When we decide that the gap between the two has become too great, we should "rethink what we are doing," following Dewey's suggestions for "deliberation and experimentation."[6]

The theme of the complexity of intelligent change was another important aspect of Mike's social thought. He notes repeatedly that we have the power to modify our future: "we do not have to just take what comes." We can advance our interests by using "some activities to bring about others," and "[t]his employment of indirect action is intelligence."[7] Mike realized, however, that intelligent change did not necessarily mean peaceful change:

> I grew up in a segregated society. I can recall separate schools for blacks and whites, separate public restrooms and drinking fountains, and violent racial confrontations. I do not think that the civil rights movement of the fifties and sixties could have had the success it did in transforming the deplorable, desperate situation without something more than discussion, communication, and good will. We needed the sometimes painful confrontations that were often occasioned by the aggressive tactics of the civil rights movement.

Mike continues, however, that "education, whether we are talking about schooling or that which occurs through public deliberation, is preferable to sudden, violent change, particularly if that violence is allowed to overwhelm and displace the deliberative efforts."[8] Intelligent change also means change that does not create more problems.

A third central theme is Mike's focus on the long-term. As he writes, "[t]he aim of a democratic political technology is to create a social order that liberates individuals; it is not mere political victory." The goal in democratic politics is "the widespread distribution of power, not its concentration." For Mike, the best means available for distributing power was to "intelligize political practice" by adopting such strategic guidelines as:

> (1) Be wary of both idealists and political operatives, for both separate ideals and methods . . .
> (2) realize that neither the existing situation nor some supposed alternative is absolute. The present situation was constructed by human activity; therefore, it can be reconstructed . . .
> (3) employ social inquiry to identify both the practice to be changed (including its conditions

[5] *Transforming Experience: John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998), p. 5. Eldridge is drawing here from Charles Frankel, "John Dewey's Social Philosophy," *New Studies in the Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. Steven M. Cahn (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1977), pp. 3-44.

[6] "Dewey on Race and Social Change," *Pragmatism and the Problem of Race*, ed. Bill E. Lawson and Donald F. Koch, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 11-21. This passage appears on page 16.

[7] *Transforming Experience*, p. 200.

[8] "Thick Democracy Too Much? Try Pragmatism Lite," *Education for a Democratic Society*, ed. John Ryder and Gert-Rüdiger Wegmarshaus, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 121-129. This passage appears on p. 127.

> and consequences) and the end-in-view to be realized . . .
> (4) use social inquiry to create a public . . . Publics are neither given nor found; they are created through informed, open communication and self-identification in reference to common needs and purposes. Publics are made, not born, and they are made through inquiry. . .
> (5) look for middle ground — that is commonalities . .
> (6) employ democratic means to realize democratic ends.[9]

Mike also writes about the place of philosophy in this process of intelligent social change: "the task of the social philosopher is to encourage the development of the method of social intelligence; it is not to work out the solutions."[10] Here we have what is an apparent — but only an apparent — break with Dewey. Mike writes that "[w]e should not take his suggestions as suggestions for us." What we need to do instead is to approach "the problems of his time and learn from the method he employed." We thus face two distinct commitments. "It is the task of philosophy to cultivate methods for dealing with human problems; it is the task of everyone to work on our common problems." To confuse these two tasks and to seek programmatic answers in Dewey is to misunderstand his method. "He spoke to particular situations, using his philosophically cultivated methods."[11] These situations are not ours — although his approach remains valuable.

A third topic that played a large role in Mike's philosophic perspective was religion, and here too he found help in Dewey's work. Perhaps drawing upon his own personal experience, Mike wrote of Dewey's concern "for those who had abandoned traditional beliefs and were not in the churches, yet still considered themselves — or wished to be — religious." He saw an important role for the religious in the ongoing self-definition of the community. What Dewey advocated, and what Mike attempted, was "the emancipation of the religious elements within ordinary experience,"[12] the cultivation of a sense of a larger whole that is often submerged in the moments of living. This emancipation has been the task of naturalism — which Mike describes as "opposition to supernaturalism, association with science, and humanity as fully a part of nature"[13] — for at least a century.

Mike writes that Dewey "was trying to find a middle way between his secular sensibility and the conventional religious heritage of his reading public."[14] For those of a religious attitude — among whom I would classify Mike — this search continues. Mike was a pragmatist who came late to philosophy; but he became a philosopher who helped us on this search.

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[9] *Transforming Experience*, pp. 113-114.
[10] "Dewey on Race and Social Change," p. 19.
[11] "Dewey's Limited Shelf Life: A Consumer Warning," *In Dewey's Wake: Unfinished Work of Pragmatic Reconstruction*, ed. William J. Gavin, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 25-39. This passage appears on page 37.

[12] *Transforming Experience*, pp. 147-148,
[13] "Naturalism," *Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy*, ed. Armen T. Marsoobian and John Ryder (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 52-71. This passage appears on page 52.
[14] *Transforming Experience*, p. 168.

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