

Politicizing Ontology: The Political Theory of William E. Connolly

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Introduction—Why ontology?

The connection between ontology and political theory has been much more discussed in recent works of the discipline.¹ William E. Connolly has been on the leading edge of the debate over the two decades. From his earliest career, Connolly has widened and innovated the scope of political theory. His coherent concern is with radicalizing a democracy, both in theory and in practice.

Why ontology?

One possible answer is that basic ontological presuppositions of a thinker affect his/her views of political life and thereby the manners in which to construct his/ her theory. My research aim is to elucidate an ontology in Connolly's political theory in sharp contrast to other contemporary theorists who try to shun ontological dimensions. Connolly believes that public discourse invariably draws upon contestable ontological themes which impinge upon the treatment of people² and therefore,

affirmation of, and mutual recognition of, one's ontology and another's is necessary.

Etymologically speaking, ontology derives from *onta*, meaning the really existing things, so *ontology* is the study of the fundamental logic of reality apart from appearances. Connolly sees these determinations as too restrictive and too total.³ He then uses the term *ontopolitical*. Every interpretation of political events is *ontopolitical*.⁴ Its fundamental presumptions fix possibilities, distribute explanatory elements, generate parameters within which an ethic is elaborated, and center (or decenter) assessments of identity, legitimacy, and responsibility.⁵

This dimension has been neglected in human sciences. Connolly links this neglect to the rise of secularism.⁶ With the decay of Aristotelian teleology in modern philosophy and of Christian doctrines of creation, human sciences have a stance to explain the world as it is, though the conceptions of the fundamental order of the world are offered by these traditional perspectives. Modern secularism has progressively eliminated the *ontopolitical* dimension. Since the most basic conflicts, problems, and issues facing contemporary life flow from the fundamental presumptions of modernity, it is necessary to make these presumptions explicit objects of reflection.⁷

In addition, Connolly points to the primacy of epistemology as another reason why American social sciences have been able to bypass the debate on ontology.⁸ The primacy of epistemology⁹ is “to think either that you have access to criteria of knowledge that leave

the realm of ontology behind or that your epistemology provides neutral test procedures through which to pose and resolve every ontological question.”¹⁰

The primacy of epistemology is, in itself, a contestable social ontology.¹¹ It is subjected to careful examination and reassessment.

Then, why is Connolly deeply engaged in ontology, when liberal and other thinkers show restraint from ontological or metaphysical dimensions because of their irreducible character?

Clearly, there is a sense of crisis that the forces hostile to pluralist democracy emerge paradoxically from within democracies, driven by populist anxieties and “collective resentments” directed towards foreigners, immigrants, minorities, and the socially and economically marginalized.¹²

He analyzes that contemporary liberalism is an object of public resentment.¹³ Many liberal-welfare programs practiced in the 1960s to redress injustice have been received as new injustices forced upon a variety of constituencies, especially white working-class males. Those programs were regarded as touching their identities rather than rewarding them and worse still, the liberal programs accentuate and at the same time subdue their resentment with the rhetoric that they are responsible for their own successes and failures in life.¹⁴ Liberal individualism helps to dig a well of resentment that then flows into the culture in which it participates.¹⁵

Connolly’s commitment to ontology, therefore, can be interpreted as attempts to break out of the impasse of a liberalism in which such neutralism is the “norm” and to redirect and rework political theory by “politicizing” ontology.

For preceding research on Connolly’s political theory and his ontology, Jeremy Valentine’s “Time, Politics and Contingency” (2010)¹⁶ and Clayton Chin’s “Ontology, Time, and Identity in the Work of Richard Rorty and William E. Connolly” (2010)¹⁷ can be taken as examples.

Both try to abstract the meaning of Connolly’s conception of ontology in comparison with other theorists, but do not sufficiently delineate Connolly’s agenda for “situating democracy within a philosophy of dissonant holism,”¹⁸ an agenda for mobilizing collective action.

The present paper proceeds in the following way. First, we make a comparison between Connolly and those thinkers like John Rawls and Richard Rorty who try to shun ontological discussions. Second, as a concretization of his ontology, the conceptions of contingency and identity are examined, specifically as opposed to Rorty. Liberalism, when faced with a disruptive challenge to its own principles, takes two directions: (1) to locate a place for this disruptive force within the system or (2) to find grounds to exclude that force from the system and then to ignore it.¹⁹ Connolly chooses the former and Rorty the latter. While both share in critical insight into underlying assumptions of social sciences, they diverge on the conceptions on public life against differences in ontological commitment. In the final section, *a world of becoming* as a prospective ontology of Connolly’s is laid out, with a focus on the problem of agency.

1 Contending Approaches to Ontology

1-1 Avoidance of Ontology

There are two distinct groups in respect to ontology: to embrace or to try to eschew it. The representatives of the latter are John Rawls and Richard Rorty. Connolly’s critique of liberalism runs on its exclusion of metaphysics from political thought and practice. The hegemony of Rawl’s postmodern liberalism is the obvious but unidentified target of that critique.²⁰

Indeed, John Rawls avoids the dimension. In his 1985 essay “Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical,” Rawls proclaims his stance.²¹ To

formulate a political conception of justice for constitutional democracy, Rawls asserts that “the public conception of justice should be, so far as possible, independent of controversial philosophical and religious doctrines.”²² He emphasizes again: “Philosophy as the search for truth about an independent metaphysical and moral order, cannot, I believe, provide a workable and shared basis for a political conception of justice in a democratic society.”²³ For Rawls, this method of avoidance, i.e. the application of the principle of toleration to philosophy itself is both necessary and sufficient. Existing differences between contending political views can be moderated, if not entirely removed, by this method to maintain social cooperation on the basis of mutual respect.²⁴ His aim was to provide a justification for excluding apparently rival and incommensurate metaphysical positions from matters of justice so as to avoid irresolvable political conflicts seeking to uphold its position at the expense of the other.²⁵

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls restates his position: “by avoiding comprehensive doctrines we try to bypass religion and philosophy’s profoundest controversies so as to have some hope of uncovering a basis of a stable overlapping consensus.”²⁶ This abstinence from metaphysical and ontological reflection might be inscribed in the western cultural tradition.²⁷ Rawls adopts a position within it, but removes its internal controversies without taking seriously the denial and danger lodged within the tradition.²⁸

Another who refuses to engage metaphysical questions is Richard Rorty. As a neo pragmatist Rorty calls himself a “liberal ironist.” According to Rorty, “liberals” are people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we do. “Ironist” is the sort of person who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires and abandons the idea that those central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance.²⁹ Liberal

ironists are those who include among these ungroundable desires their own hope that suffering will be diminished and the humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease.³⁰

Rorty envisions a liberal utopia which makes human solidarity possible. This utopia is not discovered by reflection but created by increasing sensitivity to the pain and humiliation of others, by imagining them as fellow sufferers.³¹ However, the detailed description of those suffering as “one of us,” not as unfamiliar and strange, requires no theory; it is not a task for theory but for literary works and journalism.³²

For Rorty, to pursue private perfection as a self-created, autonomous human life is one thing and to engage in making our public institutions and practices more just and less cruel is quite another. There is no single comprehensive philosophical outlook in which these apparently opposing attempts, private perfection and human solidarity are included.³³ The aim of a just and free society is to let its citizens be as privatistic, “irrationalist,” and aestheticist as they please as long as they cause no harm to others and use no resources needed by the less advantaged.³⁴ Although there are practical measures to be taken to achieve that goal, there is no theory to bring the two together, because the vocabulary used in the former self-creation and perfection is private, and so inappropriate to argument, and in contrast, that used in the latter discussion of justice is public and shared.³⁵ One who believes in an order beyond time and change which determines the point of human existence and establishes a hierarchy of responsibilities is, in Rorty’s view, a theologian or a metaphysician.³⁶

Now we should pay attention to the “metaphysics” that Rorty conceives of. He contraposes a metaphysician with an ironist. An ironist must fulfill the three conditions: (1) having radical and continuing doubts

about the final vocabulary currently used; (2) realizing that argument phrased in the present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; and (3) insofar as the ironist philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others.³⁷ In contrast, metaphysicians believe that we already possess a lot of the “right” final vocabulary and merely think through its implications. Rorty says that the opposite of irony is common sense.³⁸ The metaphysician is attached to common sense. He does not question the platitude which says there is a single permanent reality to be found behind the many temporary appearances.³⁹ In sum, the ironist seeks for the new; the metaphysician the old; the former for change and the latter for stability. However, this characterization of metaphysics is too shallow and itself represents some sort of metaphysics or ontology. The separation of the private sphere from the public is also a kind of dogmatization, which may set up a blind side into which the forces undermining the culture of liberalism creep, just as the secularism of liberalism does.

1-2 Affirmation of Ontology

Connolly strives to “expose the contestable character of opposing ontological projections by working against them from the inside” to advance a social ontology “challenging those that have implicitly governed the matrix within which much contemporary political reflection occurs.”⁴⁰ To idealize politics, it is necessary to recognize that fundamental presumptions are unavoidable and that it is unlikely to secure knowledge of their truth, and on that recognition an ideal of political discourse should be based.⁴¹

By “social ontology,” he means “a set of fundamental understandings about the relations of humans to themselves, to others, and to the world”⁴²; it is neither an Aristotelian ontology in which the world is understood to be a place where human beings can, when their common

life is properly constituted, realize the telos appropriate to them, nor a Christian view of the world in which the issues of life are defined by the proper relations of creatures to their creator.⁴³ Ontology ought not to be singular; it is plural and contestable.

“Contestation” is one of the defining features of Connolly’s political theory.⁴⁴ He argues that the language of politics is not a neutral medium but an institutionalized structure of meanings channeled into political thought and action. His interest is not in universal properties of language but in culturally configured linguistic meanings, the way in which meaning comes to fill out our concepts and is shaped by the politics that constitute the rules governing conceptual application.⁴⁵ Conceptual meaning has several dimensions, or plurality. All concepts are formed as “clusters” of other concepts; concepts are relational. In addition, the multiple criteria of cluster concepts reflect the theory in which they are embedded, and a change in the criteria of any of these concepts is likely to involve a change in the theory itself.⁴⁶

Another is “agonistic respect.” Agonistic respect is a civic virtue that allows people to honor different final sources, to cultivate reciprocal respect across difference, and to negotiate larger assemblages to set general policies. It is a reciprocal virtue appropriate to a world in which partisans find themselves in intensive relations of political interdependence.⁴⁷ It affirms the indispensability and unavoidability of fundamental presumptions and conceptions but disturbs their dogmatization and folds care for the protean diversity and plurality of being into political life.⁴⁸ Democratic agonism does not exhaust political space but leaves room for modes of attachment and detachment. To cultivate agonistic respect between interdependent and contending constituencies is significant to support human dignity.⁴⁹ Through agonism, each party maintains a pathos of distance from others with whom it is engaged.

Through respect, setting limits is acknowledged and connections across lines of difference are established.⁵⁰ Your own faith is contestable and to treat it as such in your own eye's, not just to affirm that it is contestable in the eye of others.⁵¹

These two characteristics of Connolly's are closely linked to his metaphysical or ontological commitment to pluralism. His pluralism is not "a fact of reasonable pluralism" or "value pluralism," which reduces pluralism to values and cultural traditions and tries to reconcile a plurality of cultural values within a singular political order. Value pluralism is "neither a philosophical idea nor a political position; rather it is merely a description of the late modern world in which we live."⁵² Connolly's pluralism is one which stretches over an ontology which seeps into one's perception of and sensibility of the world, and from which one's presumptions spring and on which to forge a political theory. It also supports an active pluralization of ethical sources in public life. It is to propel another source into public and political life without claiming that everyone must affirm it, thus breaking with a secularism that seeks to confine faith to the private realm and also with a theocentric vision that seeks to unite people behind one true faith.⁵³

This faith-woven philosophy seems inspired by William James, an architect of pragmatism as a branch of American philosophy.⁵⁴

James criticizes that scientists rarely understand their own commitments or the limited scope of scientific objectivity and that they are often tempted to make unwarranted pronouncements on non-scientific issues.⁵⁵ Science "can tell us what exists; but to compare the *worths*, both of what exists and of what does not exist, we must consult not science, but what Pascal calls our heart."⁵⁶ One's faith acts on the powers above us as a claim and creates its own verification.⁵⁷ James attacks the scientific absolutists who say definitely that faith running

ahead of scientific evidence is the "lowest kind of immorality" *where faith in a fact can help create the fact*.⁵⁸ His strategy is to defend the legitimacy of religious faith against the idols or hubris of science, and not to place religion as opposed to science.⁵⁹

Like James, Connolly tries to expose the ontology which has implicitly governed the framework within which contemporary political reflection occurs.⁶⁰ Working with and against it is open to another ontological reflection, eventually seeding a field of political theory.

2 Anatomy of Ontology in Political Theory

2-1 Conceptions of Contingency and Identity

Connolly and Rorty cast a critical eye on positivism and draw upon linguistic philosophy, but according to Connolly, Rorty has a different vision of politics clothed in the same language contingency.⁶¹

Like Connolly, Rorty rejects the view of language as a representational, neutral medium.⁶² He partly has recourse to the work by Donald Davidson in philosophy of language, trying to drop the idea of intrinsic property of language and instead to face up to the contingency of the language we use.⁶³ Rorty sees the history of language as the history of metaphor.⁶⁴ It is a non-teleological view of language, something as a consequence of contingency. Our language and our culture are "as much a result of thousands of small mutations finding niches as are the orchids and the anthropoids."⁶⁵ Rorty thinks of the constellations of causal forces which produced talk of DNA or of the Big Bang as of a piece with the causal forces which produced talk of "secularization" or of "late capitalism." These various constellations are random; some things are made the subjects of conversation and others not; some projects are made possible and important and others not.⁶⁶

This recognition of the contingency of language leads to a recognition of the contingency of conscience, of selfhood, and of community.

Rorty sees the moral consciousness as historically conditioned, a product of time and change as of political or aesthetic consciousness.⁶⁷ This is also the case with one's sense of self-identity: "Anything from the sound of a word through the color of a leaf to the feel of a piece of skin can, as Freud showed us, serve to dramatize and crystallize a human being's sense of self-identity." Any seemingly random constellation of such things can set the tone of a life.⁶⁸

How about Connolly?

He also asserts the contingent character of identity. Identity is contingent in five meanings: (1) specific traits and dispositions installed in a self are socially mediated, and so contingent; (2) the specific set of defining you is contingent because the entire complex is formed through a complex history of parental relations, events, experiences, and contingent biological endowments; (3) some elements are crucial to the constitution of your identity while others are more likely dispensable attributes you can either maintain or drop; (4) identity has a political dimension of contingency in its constitution. To what degree one's contingent dispositions are treated as part of one's identity and in what way these dispositions are constituted through socially established standards are a powerful element; and (5) some elements entering into your identity are susceptible to reconstruction and others remain highly resistant to it even if you desire to transform them. This is a branded contingency, something that cannot be changed through will or decision.⁶⁹ So your identity is contingent and deep. Connolly says:

Identity without capitalization: my identity is entrenched, as well as particular in the sense that no set of universal statements about humanity or reason or rights or the necessity

of death can exhaust it; but it is neither chosen in its fullest sense nor grounded in a harmonious direction in *being*. It is deep in its contingency. It is contingent in the sense that happenstances of genetics, family life, historically specific traditions, personal anxieties, demands, and aspirations, surprising events (the death of a parent, the intrusion of a war) all enter into its composition and give shape to the porous universals that mark me as human. It is deep in the sense that some of these elements become impressed into me as second nature, bonded to my first nature and not readily detachable from it ... This recognition may enable me to live more of the elements in my identity as contingent formations that do not reflect the truth of *being* as such.⁷⁰

A more modest, contingent view of your own identity is necessary, because the quest for true identity seeds existential resentment that tries to locate an appropriate object that it is directed against.⁷¹

To accept the contingency of identity, at the same time, requires considerable work on the self; it is "to take a significant step toward increasing tolerance for a range of antinomies in oneself, countering the demand to treat close internal unity as the model toward which all selves naturally tend when they are in touch with themselves, shifting part of the primacy currently attached to the will when the question of self-modification arises."⁷² It is "to strive to convert an antagonism of identity into an agonism of difference."⁷³ For Connolly, contingency is of ethical character.

This contingent character of identity is, moreover, inseparably connected with freedom and mortality. Recognition of mortality "encourages the self to contribute to the crystallization of its own individuality."⁷⁴ The relation of individuality to this recognition is ambiguous for the exercise of freedom.

You cannot pursue every valued option at the same time and in series in the finitude of time. Making a choice means ruling out alternative possibilities. Time weighs on freedom because implicit prevision of death inches your every decision in some fundamental way.⁷⁵ Foreknowledge of death, on the other hand, connects you, the individualized self to a larger world, both in enabling and disabling ways. The fear of death and gratitude for life play a significant role in connecting you to the larger world. Your life efforts do not only pay to yourself. Your current contribution may connect you to others and a future that continues after your death. Your specific, daily performances implicate yourself in the destiny of the order to which you belong.⁷⁶ Connolly calls this ambiguity of freedom the unconscious phenomenology of life and death.⁷⁷

In his diagnosis, however, this phenomenology, which presupposes a relatively stable and serene context of self-identity, social practice, state and interstate relations, and temporal projection, is disturbed and unsettled by three characteristics of contemporary life: (1) an intensification of the experience of owing one's life and destiny to world-historical, national and local-bureaucratic forces; (2) a decline in the confidence many constituencies have in the probable future to which they find themselves contributing in daily life; and (3) an even more ominous set of future possibilities that weigh upon life in the present.⁷⁸ Late modernity as he calls it finds each of them distinctive enough in its newness, its intensity, and the degree of inscription to life experience. The problem is, Connolly thinks, that the standards of identity and responsibility remain the same, while the institution in which they are situated are far more highly and pervasively organized and as a result, one must program one's life in so careful ways as to meet such institutionalized standards of the "normal" and entitlement.⁷⁹ Facing the demands of life with increasing uncertainty, and

struggling to meet the demands, why do we have to give these "others" the right to complain?⁸⁰

Different conceptions conceal different ontologies. Rorty "straddles the individualist/collectivist divide, celebrating irony and creativity in the private sphere and a non-ironic version of liberalism in the public."⁸¹ In addition, he has little attention to the issue of the resentment of contingency and "no exploration of possible connection between the globalization of contingency and the role played by the project of world mastery in modern politics."⁸² Rorty disavows a world of *telos*, but at the same time he does not dispose of a mechanical description of the relation between human beings and the rest of the universe; genuine novelty can occur in a world of blind, contingent, mechanical forces.⁸³ His conception of contingency works in a linear, law-like formula.⁸⁴ Is a self or a society, after all, a consequence of historical inevitability? Rorty says:

Christianity did not know that its purpose was the alleviation of cruelty, Newton did not know that his purpose was modern technology, the Romantic poets did not know that their purpose was to contribute to the development of an ethical consciousness suitable for the culture of political liberalism. But *we* now know these things, for we latecomers can tell the kind of story of progress which those who are actually making progress cannot.⁸⁵

In his view, the historical developments which lead up to our time are the means to the end to be achieved. One historical moment continues on to the fixed goal. There is little room for doubt that what the world is might be otherwise.

2-2 The Problem of Agency and A World of Becoming

A linear, law-like formula conceals some tacit assumptions of agency. Connolly raises

a question of agency because he thinks that traditional images of human agency in the monotheistic traditions are bound up with the idea of free will and replete with ambiguity and paradox.⁸⁶ The human will was presented by Augustine to separate human beings categorically from both unfree nature and an absolutely free God. Human free will, in the idea of Augustine, has a triad: nature without evolutionary possibility, a human estate with severe limits, and a God. Before the Fall, the perfectly free act of human will was a perverse act of rebellion. After the Fall, human freedom becomes confounded: we can will evil by ourselves but cannot will the good unaided.⁸⁷ In Augustine's scheme free will and original sin bind together to locate the ultimate responsibility for evil within humanity.⁸⁸ His solution to the problem of evil is connected with a strong doctrine of responsibility: every discernible evil must be caused by some agency, and so blameworthy as to be treated as the embodiment of an evil will.⁸⁹ After Augustine, philosophies of a mechanical universe either tend to drop the idea of will from human life or to introduce an "anthropic exception," which allows us to explain and control nature.⁹⁰

In Connolly's view, no fully adequate conception of human agency is available today with every conception of agency contestable,⁹¹ but a shift from Augustine triad is necessary: to a heterogeneous world composed of interacting spatio-temporal systems with different degrees of agency.⁹² It is to appreciate multiple degrees and sites of agency, flowing from simple natural processes, through higher processes, to human beings and collective social assemblage.⁹³ It is a conception of distributed agency. This conception of agency does not presuppose a conception of linear progress of time; time is irreversible, but irreversibility does not automatically mean progress.⁹⁴

Agency is never consummate;⁹⁵ it is not always human. In a world of *becoming*, a world

beyond human subjects is composed of multiple forces of different degrees of agency that interpret, crudely or subtly as the case may be, the environment upon which they act.⁹⁶ This process operates in nonhuman nature as well as human.⁹⁷ This is what Connolly reads into the Jamesian philosophy of *A Pluralistic Universe*.⁹⁸

James contends that the universe itself is marked by a plurality of forces, with "litter" as one of its components while rejecting a block universe, a classical, elegant picture in which everything is entirely reduced to some law-like formulas partly because "a consistently thought-out monistic universe suffers from as from a species of auto-intoxication—the mystery of the 'fall' namely, of reality lapsing into appearance, truth into error, perfection into imperfection; of evil, in short; the mystery of universal determinism, of the block-universe eternal and without a history, etc."⁹⁹

This philosophy of pluralistic universe identifies with a world of becoming, in which changes in some systems periodically make a difference to the efficacy and direction of others.¹⁰⁰ There are "litter," vibrations, bits of noise in each system that do not fit perfectly into it, so new things can come into being, ruffling an established set of connections or throwing them into crisis. Multiple force-fields in a world of becoming periodically impinge upon a specific force-field, sometimes activating the litter in it in a new way.¹⁰¹

This view of the world includes cares for the diversity of being. Connolly says in connection with James:

According to the feeling-imbued philosophy of a pluralistic universe, to care about the diversity of humanity writ large is to take a step toward caring about the larger world that courses through and around us. It is to care about litter in motion in the creativity of a cockroach, the fecundity of rainforests, lava flows, swimming DNA, the sonority of the

human voice, turbulent water flows, and the human body-brain-culture network. Above all, it is to care about that delicate balance between creativity and stability that enables nature and civilizations to change while maintaining themselves. To appreciate the element of energetic uncertainty circulating through the world is to cultivate cautious solicitude for the world.¹⁰²

So construed, the world we live in cannot be designed for us alone, nor can we master it entirely; we cannot insulate ourselves from the rest of the world; our civilization might not have happened.¹⁰³ The affirmation of a world of becoming can refine our sensibility to, cultivate our ethical dispositions for the world, and “act resolutely in it world without existential resentment.”¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

In the present paper, we have tried to clarify the link between ontology and political theory in Connolly's work in comparison with other contemporary thinkers. Liberalism has its own metaphysical assumptions, essentially contestable. The separation of the private sphere from the public in the liberal doctrine intensifies existential resentment instead of soothing it. The paradoxical relations between agency and responsibility inscribed in the doctrine are in play. To affirm the contingency of one's identity and the world, and on this basis, to cultivate agonistic respect for difference is absolutely necessary today. A world of becoming is an alternative ontology through which to see political life and within which to conceive political theory.

There are criticisms of Connolly's political theory, in particular, by those who question the relations between theory and political action.

Although Connolly insists that a pluralist ethos contains all the features necessary to ground and defend political actions, he has provided few details about what exactly these features might entail.¹⁰⁵

This type of criticism is directed toward the “leftist” thinkers in general. Rorty writes: “The Left, the party of hope, sees our country's moral identity as still to be achieved, rather than as needing to be preserved,” in contrast to the Right, who hopes to keep that identity intact.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, he takes a harsh stance of a “cultural left” within the academy; he says that the cultural Left will have to shed its semi-conscious anti-Americanism to form alliances with people outside the academy.¹⁰⁷ He goes so far as to say:

To take pride in being black or gay is an entirely reasonable response to the sadistic humiliation to which one has been subjected. But insofar as this pride prevents someone from also taking pride in being an American citizen, from thinking of his or her country as capable of reform, or from being able to join with straights or whites in reformist initiatives, it is a political disaster.¹⁰⁸

Rorty, who has inspired reflections about identity/difference relations and ethics, nonetheless retains a flat conception of the relations, contributing to the contempt for the academic left he seeks to protect.¹⁰⁹

Connolly has attacked those on the Left who have too close a view of the systems they criticize; they tend eventually to lapse into resignation or to slide toward the authoritarian practices of the Right.¹¹⁰ How to counter the “thick” network of the Right? For this purpose, any “thin” conception of politics without ontology is not enough. He says: “Liberal images of the procedural nation are not only *insufficient* in themselves, they tend to collapse under pressure from rightist orientations to the nation

that are more thick and dense.”¹¹

In closing, some important issues are yet to be examined in the current article, especially his vision of *the politics of becoming* as related to a world of becoming, which I would like to investigate a next time.

[Notes]

- 1 Clayton Chin, “Ontology, Time, and Identity in the Work of Richard Rorty and William E. Connolly,” *PSA*, 2010.1. (http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2010/1640_1498.pdf#search=Ontology%2C+time+and+identity 2012/09/14 accessed)
- 2 Comment by William E. Connolly in “Review Symposium: Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.” *History of the Human Sciences*. 3: 101–122. 1990. 105.
- 3 William E. Connolly. *The Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1995. 1.
- 4 Ibid. 2.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid. 3.
- 8 Ibid. 5.
- 9 Connolly discusses the primacy of epistemology in *Politics and Ambiguity* (1987). He appreciates how Richard Rorty contributes a lot to making a powerful attack on the primacy of epistemology. See William E. Connolly. *Politics and Ambiguity*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1987. 116–126.
- 10 *The Ethos of Pluralization*. 5.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Saul Newman, “Connolly’s Democratic Pluralism and the Question of State Sovereignty,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 10. 2008. 228.
- 13 William E. Connolly, *Identity \ Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Expanded edition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1991. 77. [ウィリアム・E. コノリー著、杉田敦・齋藤純一・権左武志訳『アイデンティティ \ 差異—他者性の政治』東京：岩波書店、1998年、142頁].
- 14 Ibid. 77. [同上、143頁]
- 15 Ibid. 78. [同上、144頁]
- 16 Jeremy Valentine, “Time, Politics and Contingency,” *Democracy and Pluralism: The Political Thought of William E. Connolly*, Alan Finlayson ed. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- 17 Clayton Chin, “Ontology, Time, and Identity.”
- 18 *Politics and Ambiguity*. 16.
- 19 Samuel A. Chambers and Alan Finlayson, “Ann Coulter and the Problem of Pluralism: From Values to Politics,” *Borderlands E-Journal*. 7(1): 1 (http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol7no1_2008/chambersfinlay_pluralism.htm 2009/6/30 accessed).
- 20 Jeremy Valentine, “Time, Politics and Contingency,” 214.
- 21 John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. 114: 3. 1985. 223–251.
- 22 Ibid. 223.
- 23 Ibid. 230.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Jeremy Valentine, “Time, Politics and Contingency,” 214.
- 26 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. Expanded edition. New York: Columbia University Press. 2005. 151–152.
- 27 *Identity \ Difference*. 73. [『アイデンティティ \ 差異』、135頁]
- 28 Ibid. [同上]
- 29 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989. xv. [リチャード・ローティ著、齋藤純一・山岡龍一・大川正彦訳『偶然性・アイロニー・連帯—リベラル・ユートピアの可能性—』東京：岩波書店、2000年、5頁]
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid. xvi. [同上、7頁]
- 32 Ibid. [同上、7–8頁]
- 33 Ibid. xiv. [同上、3頁]
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid. [同上、3–4頁]
- 36 Ibid. xv. [同上、6頁]
- 37 Ibid. 73. [同上、154頁]
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