plausible, then Mothersill's conception of beauty needs an adjust-
ment. Even if that is true, the book remains valuable from start to
finish, and I am pleased to recommend it.

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Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity. RICHARD RORTY. New York:
Cambridge University Press, 1989. xvi, 201 p. Cloth $34.50,
paper $10.95.

Each of the words in the title names a major theme of this book. It
begins with accounts of what Richard Rorty calls vocabularies, of
truth and of language in general. Examples of alternative vocabu-
laries—Rorty also calls them language-games—are "the vocabulary
of ancient Athenian politics versus Jefferson's, the moral vocabulary
of Saint Paul versus Freud's, the jargon of Newton versus that of
Aristotle, the idiom of Blake versus that of Dryden." Of these, Rorty
says that they are not made true or false by "the world" (5). Truth is
not a relationship of representation between a set of descriptions in
such a vocabulary and something else—reality, the world, or what-
ever. "To say that Freud's vocabulary gets at the truth about human
nature, or Newton's at the truth about the heavens" is to pay "an
empty compliment" of the kind "traditionally paid to writers whose
novel jargon we have found useful" (8).

Vocabularies are useful sets of metaphors adopted or discarded
insofar as they serve purposes that engage "us." Such changes do not
involve criteria or choice. "Europe did not *decide* to accept the idiom
of Romantic poetry, or of socialist politics, or of Galilean mechanics.
. . . Rather, Europe gradually lost the habits of using certain words
and gradually acquired the habit of using others" (7).

This understanding of vocabularies as useful sets of metaphors is
presented as deriving from a view of language in general attributed
to Ludwig Wittgenstein and Donald Davidson. What we are to learn
from Rorty's Wittgenstein and Rorty's Davidson seems to be: that
"there is no fixed task for language to perform" (13), that alternative
vocabularies are like alternative tools with different uses (11–13),
and that language is the contingent product of blind evolution.

What then is each of us to make of the particular language that he

or she has inherited? We are to remake ourselves, using Harold Bloom's conception of "the strong poet" and Friedrich Nietzsche's of the will to self-overcoming, but these somewhat aristocratic conceptions are to be democratized by invoking Sigmund Freud, a Freud who showed that *everyone* has the same unconscious need as the strong poet, to remake his or her own self by redescribing in his or her own terms that tissue of contingencies that his or her past provided.

The final vocabulary of any person is that in which long-term projects are formulated, deep hopes and fears are expressed, and the story of one's life is told. It is final in that its use cannot be defended against rivals by noncircular arguments. The ideal citizen of a liberal society—and Rorty presents the vocabulary of self-creation as what liberal societies now need—will be what Rorty calls an ironist in respect of his or her final vocabulary. Rorty's ironist uses one particular final vocabulary, but is aware of alternative vocabularies and experiences consequent doubts about his or her own, recognizing both that no rational argument can settle the issues between rival vocabularies or allay his or her doubts, and that his or her own vocabulary is not "closer to reality than others" (73). The ironist takes as moral adviser a type of literary critic who has learned that the importance of G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche is that they helped to "de-cognitivize, de-metaphysicize philosophy" (79) and so enabled us to read philosophical texts as literary texts, reading in illuminating juxtaposition authors hitherto treated as literary with others hitherto treated as philosophical, so that we revise our vocabulary and in so doing revise our own moral identity. "Literary criticism does for ironists what the search for universal moral principles does for metaphysicians" (80).

One central task is to foster not only appreciation of the tasks of self-creation in private life, but also what Rorty takes to be a peculiarly liberal abhorrence of cruelty in public life, particularly by sensitizing to hitherto unnoticed types of cruelty and humiliation. Our obligations are not founded upon rationally defensible universal principles; they express our social solidarities and arise from forms of practice in which we participate. Where in the philosophy of language Rorty had invoked Wittgenstein and Davidson, in moral philosophy he invokes Michael Oakeshott and Wilfrid Sellars. And where, in extending his account of the tasks of self-creation through innovations of vocabulary, he appealed to Marcel Proust, Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida, here he appeals to Vladimir Nabokov and George Orwell.

Thus summarized, Rorty's impressive themes plainly need long and detailed spelling out. They do not receive it in this book, written as it is in intellectual shorthand whose compressions, allusions, and flag-waving, signposting rhetorical style make it too easy a victim for any initially unsympathetic reader. Far too much work is left to the reader: there are argumentative gaps to be filled, places where everything turns on the detail, but detail is absent, incoherences to be resolved. Three questions stand out.

The first concerns the true place of justificatory philosophical argument in Rorty's constructions. On the one hand, he abjures it: philosophers should not be asked for arguments against the views that Rorty rejects, for such arguments are bound to be question-begging (8–9); ''I am not going to offer arguments against the vocabulary I want to replace'' (9); ''the ironist thinks that such arguments are . . . useful as expository devices, but in the end not much more than ways of getting people to change their practices without admitting that they have done so'' (78). On the other hand, at key points Rorty uses what he elsewhere abjures. He quotes and extends an argument of Davidson about what *must* be involved in any substantial change in our views or values (49); he treats Freud's views as well-founded (31–2); and he argues sporadically against the thesis that it is possible to identify conditions of possibility for types of judgment or experience (e.g., 125).

Secondly, it is not clear how we should understand Rorty's account of the ironist's final vocabulary. What is it about such vocabularies that deprives them of the possibility of noncircular justification and of rational defeat at the hands of their rivals? On this Rorty is silent. Yet rival incommensurable schemes of thought and practice have sometimes developed in ways that made it rational by the standards of either to discard one and adopt the other. And there are well-known arguments supporting the conclusion that beliefs that cannot be defeated somehow or other fail the test of rationality. Rorty doubtless takes these considerations to be irrelevant. But we need to learn why.

Finally, Rorty's ambivalence about philosophical argument renders quite unclear the point of his appeals to Wittgenstein, Davidson, and others. He cannot, it seems, be offering us grounds drawn from their theories; but if he is offering us their conclusions detached from any rational grounds, why should we be interested? This difficulty is aggravated by the way he rewrites his culture heroes in the course of invoking them: Rorty's Wittgenstein means by 'language-games' something notably different from what Wittgenstein

meant; Rorty's Freud is a perspectivalist, unlike Freud himself; and Rorty admits to having reinvented Hegel. This multiplication of fictions suggests that Rorty's present attitudes will find adequate expression only in some genre more remote from those of both traditional and contemporary philosophy than he is here prepared to recognize. Inside these didactic expositions there is perhaps a novel pleading to be let out.

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Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences. NELSON GOODMAN and CATHERINE Z. ELGIN. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988. xiv, 174 p. Cloth $21.50.*

This welcome book consists of ten chapters, five by Nelson Goodman, three by Catherine Z. Elgin, and the rest, jointly authored. Both in substance and in elegance of style, the work is clearly the result of extensive collaboration. Although the chapters can stand on their own—and indeed, each of them, save one, is eventually to be published elsewhere—together they display a rich thematic and argumentative unity.

The seven chapters in "Part Two: Exploration" apply and advance Goodman's theory of symbolism as first offered in *Languages of Art*.[1] They range over a wide variety of topics, including meaning and reference in architecture, the identity of works, the concept of variation in the arts, imagery in psychology, comparisons between linguistic and pictorial competence, the conditions for representation, and distinctions between facts and conventions, analog and digital systems, and the pictorial and verbal.

Where there is a notational system permitting works of art to be identified syntactically or semantically, the works are "*allographic*." In particular, texts are allographic, so that, in chapter III, Goodman and Elgin argue that many interpretations of a text are multiple interpretations of the *same* work. For the text can be precisely identified independently of an interpretation or version.