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PRAGMATISM, LIBERALISM AND THE CONDITIONS OF CRITIQUE

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS IN THE WORK OF RICHARD RORTY

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ABSTRACT

In the context of a global crisis, it is necessary to ask what are the philosophical limitations of political critique? This thesis addresses this broad question through a critical reading of the work of Richard Rorty and his theorization of the connection between philosophy and politics. Rorty's philosophy dissociates philosophical questioning and political thinking. Through a critique of foundationalism, Rorty establishes new limits to philosophy which prescribe its involvement in politics. However, the critical literature fails to connect these two aspects. They accept Rorty's position that his philosophical pragmatism is unconnected to his political liberalism. In contrast, this thesis is a critical account of Rorty's theorization of the connection between philosophy and politics that explicitly links his pragmatism to his liberalism. It refutes Rorty's wider philosophical claim from within a reading of his own work.

By situating Rorty within his critique of epistemology and his relation to the philosophy of John Dewey, and confronting him with an alternative, ontological line of thinking that runs from the work of Martin Heidegger to that of Herbert Marcuse, this thesis exposes the mechanisms by which Rorty reduces philosophical and political thinking. It reveals that rather than opening thinking and providing a basis for political criticism, Rorty's political pragmatism restricts thought to the present range of options. What Rorty offers is not a method for cultural change, as he claims, but a self-reinforcing mode of thought for contemporary liberalism.

The implications of this analysis exceed Rorty scholarship. Rorty attempts to theorize the implicit assumptions of the liberal West. While he could never exhaust that culture, he does reveal a real set of pragmatic assumptions and justifications for liberal democracy. As such, he offers a opportunity to critically engage a particular form of liberalism that informs much of the dominant discourse about democracy today.

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WORKS BY RICHARD RORTY

'CIS' – *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*

'CP' – *Consequences of Pragmatism*

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'ORT' – *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*

'PCP' – *Philosophy as Cultural Politics*

'PMN' – *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*

'PSH' – *Philosophy and Social Hope*

'TP' – *Truth and Progress*

Peering, the mind could see nothing sure, nothing in all human experience to be grasped as certain, except uncertainty itself; nothing but obscurity gendered by a thick haze of theories. Man's science was a mere mist of numbers; his philosophy but a fog of words.

Olaf Stapledon, *Starmaker*

> Rorty's anti-epistemological radicalism and belletristic anti-academicism are refreshing and welcome in a discipline deeply entrenched in a debased and debilitating isolation. Yet, ironically, his project, though pregnant with rich possibilities, remains polemical (principally against other professional academics) and hence barren. It refuses to give birth to the offspring it conceives. Rorty leads philosophy to the complex world of politics and culture, but confines his engagement to transformation in the academy and to apologetics for the modern West.[1]

INTRODUCTION: QUESTIONING RORTY

Philosophy is perhaps unique amongst contemporary forms of human enquiry in still having widespread controversy over its role and limits. What is the function of philosophy in our social and political lives? How does it relate to these other areas? What can it think and what is beyond it comprehension? Does it merely reflect (on) the present? Or can it ground or unveil it? Can philosophy prescribe? A plethora of such questions arise in this very basic issue in philosophical thought. While he engaged in discussions of many specific philosophical, the enduring value of Richard Rorty's work is exactly on this meta-level. Rorty thought philosophy as a project on the whole; he considered its general form and function and the historical development therein. Further, he pursued this task in response to a crisis in the foundations of philosophical thought which is still compromising the status of its enquiry.[2] Finally, while the critical object of this thesis, Rorty theorized a novel response to this situation that re-envisioned the philosophical project outside of its traditional boundaries. It is thus without overstatement that he has been referred to as 'the most influential contemporary American philosopher.'[3] His work established a new

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[1] West, Cornel. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism.* London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. p.207

[2] Gutting, Gary. "Rorty's Critique of Epistemology" in *Richard Rorty* (eds. Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. pp.41-3

[3] Klepp, L.S. "Every Man a Philosopher King" in *New York Times Magazine*. Dec 2, 1990. – cited in: Gross, Neil. Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher. London: Chicago University Press, 2008. p.5

understanding of and limits to the philosophical project, one that formalized its existing capacity rather than inventing a new role. As such, it presents both a unique opportunity and a danger. Unopposed, his thought reinforces the existing mode of thinking about philosophy and politics. Critically confronted, it offers an opportunity to (philosophically) engage the present universe of thinking and its limitations. Rorty drastically separates philosophy from politics. In his pragmatic reformulation of the limits of philosophical enquiry, he reconceptualized its public role within the bounds of the present. He formulated an epistemological and political pragmatism designed to maintain the current liberal context. By reading his philosophy explicitly through the relation between philosophy and politics, this thesis confronts this (contemporary) limitation of our intellectual and political lives.

This introduction situates Rorty within a particular philosophical matrix in terms of this question of the roles of and relationship between philosophy and politics. Examining several positions in this field, it clarifies how Rorty's response stands apart from those positions. Building upon this frame, it will illustrate both Rorty's own project with respect to this question and the problematic he develops. It will show the various questions of his work in order to offer an understanding of the unity behind his thought. The question of the relation between philosophy and politics structures his philosophical project. His anti-foundational response to the crisis of philosophical foundations establishes the boundaries of his philosophy. This limitation must be revealed. This thesis argues that an ontological engagement with Rorty's work clarifies the assumptions, mechanisms, and boundaries of his thinking. Where Rorty argues that his philosophy frees thought from the deadweight of philosophical tradition, it reveals how his response to this crisis results in a circumscribed philosophical and political universe. Finally, this introduction will demonstrate the failure of the critical literature on Rorty to explicitly engage his work from this perspective. While his work has been thoroughly confronted by pragmatists, Habermasians, and Analytic philosophers, his Continental critics have failed to engage the relation between his philosophy and politics in any depth. The result is that the only rigorous, critical engagement Rorty has received has been from perspectives that share many of his own problematic assumptions.

THE STATE OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: QUESTIONING THE ROLE OF THOUGHT

Contemporary political philosophy is divided by two questions. What are the role and limits of philosophical thought? And, how does this question affect that discipline's relations to politics? Many different visions structure this field. Most are beyond the

present discussion which narrows its focus to the positions relevant to Rorty. Thus, this section will engage the current matrix of political thought that has attempted to confront, in some manner, this problem of the foundations/grounds/metaphysics of philosophical and political thought. While such groupings are always problematic impositions, three principle clusters can be identified: Pragmatism, (Habermasian) Critical Theory, and post-foundational thought.[4]Rorty either explicitly drew on or implicitly engaged with these positions. In a sense, his position attempts to think beyond this matrix. This section will establish its parameters. Subsequent sections will illustrate Rorty's own problematic and the critical framework for this thesis. In this manner, it will outline the scope of the present study and its significance for the relation between philosophy and politics.

Initially it is important to make a comment on Analytic philosophy and its relevance to this question. While Analytic philosophers often criticized Rorty, this literature is not the focus of this thesis. Quite simply, Analytic philosophers approach Rorty's work, and the problem of philosophical foundations, from a different angle. They seek to reground logical analysis in an analytic method that assures correspondence between thought and the world. They seek to overcome, rather than confront, the problem of foundations.[5] Commenting on the Analytic-Continental divide, Rorty notes that the former have a fundamentally different conception of philosophy's role in culture. They continue to model philosophy on the natural sciences to establish secure foundations for knowledge. Thus, in spite of the divide's weaknesses, for Rorty, some division between Analytic and non-Analytic forms of philosophy is necessary. Consequently he offers a division between Analytic and "conversational" thought; in this methodological, rather than geographical, distinction an opposition to the aforementioned self-image of philosophy defines the latter. This broad group seeks confront the lack of foundations and, as a result, has a different understanding of philosophy and it relation to politics. Rorty is clear that his preference is for, and his work more directed at, this conversational variant.[6]Thus, here, Analytic philosophy will only be encountered insofar as it relates to the development of Rorty's thought.

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[4] These groupings will be clarified below. They represent selective clusters of similarities rather than defined traditions or schools. They are selective in that the similarities emphasized and the differences ignored are useful for the present study. However, they also have reality in that their common dynamics are not imposed but represent similar responses to the aforementioned question of philosophy and politics.

[5] For example, Brandom, Robert. *Rorty and his Critics*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000. – especially the contributions from Daniel Dennett and John McDowell.

[6] Rorty, Richard. "Analytic and Conversational Philosophy" in *PCP.*p.126 -- As will be discussed in Ch. 1, Rorty's early work was firmly rooted in Analytic debates within the philosophy of mind. The point here is that in his larger arguments regarding the relation between philosophy and politics, he was addressing conversational thinkers.

In opposition to Analytic philosophy, pragmatism, critical theory, and post-foundational thought all broadly fit Rorty's conversational model. They have divorced philosophy from science (in some manner), and rejected absolute correspondence between thought and the world. Their fundamental similarity is deeper than Rorty perceives. It is the basic attempt, in some way, to confront the crisis of metaphysics in philosophy. In this, they all attempt to address the problem of *contingency*. However, in order to clarify how they do this, it is necessary to generally define what they oppose. Foundationalism works on the assumption that society and politics are somehow grounded by principles that are 1) undeniable and immune to revision (i.e. universal) and 2) exterior to the realms of society and politics. It aims at providing foundations that transcend the order they ground. These foundations assure stability in the social and political structures built on their principles.[7] Rorty and others[8] problematized this assumption within the Analytic context and attempted (in very diverse ways) to reorient philosophy away from this task and the notion of perennial problems in philosophy. This post-Analytic turn away from foundationalism in the Anglo-American context involved a revival of pragmatism.[9]

Pragmatism was the first distinctly "American" philosophy. Beginning in the late 19th century, it is mainly associated with the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. While these three figures differed greatly, they were united by a focus on enquiry, a reorientation of thought to human action, and a rejection of abstract European idealisms.[10] Falling out of fashion in the 1930s with the rise of Analytic philosophy, both pragmatism in general and the work of classical pragmatist was revived by Rorty and others in the 1960s and 70s. Three basic issues motivated this renaissance. First, the aforementioned crises in the traditional image of philosophy as a transcendental mode of enquiry capable of grounding claims to "Truth, Goodness, and Beauty."[11] Second, this

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[7] Marchart, Oliver. *Post-foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. p.11 -- Analytic philosophy embraced such a position. See; Rajchman, John. "Philosophy in America" in *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (eds. Rajchman, John and Cornel West). New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. p.x

[8] Other key figures include: Hilary Putnam, Thomas Nagel, Arthur C. Danto, Stanley Cavell and Donald Davidson. For an account of both these figures and the post-analytic movement, see: *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, op cit.

[9] The post-Analytical movement is not exhausted by pragmatism. Rather, many would reject the label. It has been only briefly mentioned here because despite it opposition to Analytic thought, it is still centered on epistemological issues and rarely strays into the political or the cultural. Nonetheless, the two are deeply interconnected. See: Bernstein, Richard J. *The Pragmatic Turn*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010. p.13

[10] For an excellent introduction to the history of Pragmatism up to and including the revival currently under discussion, see: Ibid. pp.1-25 – Bernstein notes that pragmatism is a contested tradition. See also his: Bernstein, Richard. "American Pragmatism: The Conflict of Narratives" in *Rorty and Pragmatism: The Philosopher Responds to His Critics* (ed. Herman J. Saatkamp Jr.). London, UK: Vanderbuilt University Press, 1995.

[11] West, *American Evasion of Philosophy*, op cit. p.3

disenchantment led to a concern with the relation between knowledge and power. Pragmatism re-politicized American philosophy. Further, it did this within a lens emphasizing the role of knowledge in our social practices and political organization. Third, these changes returned the focus to human agency. The humanist assumption of an autonomous unencumbered agent is not revived, but neither is the post-structuralist death of the subject assumed. Human desires and values are primary. This balancing act is essential. As Cornel West argues, contemporary pragmatism is defined by two moves. First, the move away from Analytic thought involved opening Anglo-American philosophy to the European traditions of Marxism, structuralism, and post-structuralism (among others). However, this was matched with a turn back to American philosophical thought (i.e. pragmatism). This latter development was the acknowledgment of the inability of these traditions to address the specific American context. While richer for them, they were unable to reinvigorate America's academic, political and cultural life.[12]

The differences between pragmatists and Continentals are most clearly illustrated in West's hint regarding the return to human agency and a distinctly American mode of thought. Pragmatists generally, while receptive to contingency, have attempted to retain some sense of objectivity. While rejecting the notion of foundations, they still envisage philosophy as a way of supporting enquiry. Our knowledge and our norms may be embedded in social practices, but those practices (say for enquiry or democratic society) are oriented towards the world and our engagement and actions in it. For example, regarding truth, Rorty is in the minority of pragmatists in rejecting this notion. For most, truth is a necessary human enquiry within a community.[13]Due to this, pragmatists have often allied themselves more with Critical Theory than Continental philosophy.[14]Critical theory in this context refers to the school dominated by Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas. Along with Hans Joas and Axel Honneth, these thinkers have extensively connected the intersubjective model of communicative action to pragmatist theories of enquiry.[15] As notable in general and for Rorty specifically, it should be emphasized that

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[12] Ibid. p.4

[13] Why this is the case, differs amongst pragmatists. For a selection of articles within this position, see: Misak, Cherly. *New Pragmatists.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007. – Misak notes that the "New Pragmatists" orient themselves against Rorty. (p.2)

[14] This distinction is admittedly problematic as most of the prominent names of this school are in fact Europeans. However, there seems to be a convention that "Continental Philosophy" refers more to the philosophy that works within the broad lineage of Nietzsche and Heidegger. What this thesis means by this term will be clarified below.

[15] Bernstein, *Pragmatic Turn*, pp.23-5; Rehg, William and James Bohman. *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory.* London: MIT Press, 2001; and, Couzens Hoy, David and Thomas McCarthy. *Critical Theory.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. – Most focus on their similar calls for a 'nonfoundational, self-corrective conception of human inquiry' combined with a humanist disposition. -- Bernstein, *Pragmatic Turn*, p.x

Habermas has been especially significant regarding the issue of foundations. Similar to pragmatism, he argues that the proper response to the crisis of foundations is to reground our thinking in a procedural rationality. Metaphysics is a totalizing philosophical idealism. While it depended on an intrinsically rational world, his post-metaphysical thinking constricts rationality to approaches and procedures. Now, 'what counts as rational is solving problems successfully through procedurally suitable dealings with reality.'[16]Importantly, one of the consequences of the proceduralization of reason is the disappearance of the appearance-essence distinction. In the absence of a totality, the question of essence recedes. This response to the issue of philosophical foundations is both key to Rorty's own response and a major position on this nonfoundational matrix of thought.

Post-foundational philosophy[17]has confronted the crisis in philosophical foundations through turning to ontology and explicitly theorizing the concept of contingency. While problematic, it is identified with post-war French philosophy working within Heidegger's legacy[18]; specifically, with a "Heideggerianism of the Left" that has emerged since post-structuralism. It is important to emphasize that this cluster is defined against anti-foundationalism. In totally rejecting the notion of foundations and attempting to reformulate philosophy without them, anti-foundationalism remains within the foundationalist logic. This is the logic of 'either/or,' either there are universal foundations or there are not.[19] Instead, post-foundational thought grapples with the simultaneous necessity and contingency of foundations in political philosophy. Instead of attacking "metaphysics," it subverts the terrain on which foundationalism operates. Foundations cannot simply be negated. Rather, we must understand how foundations are erected and what they authorize.[20]We must question their ontological status. This "quasi-

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[16] Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (trans. William Mark Hohengarten). Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 1992. p.35

[17] While post-foundational thought exceeds any particular account, this discussion is indebted to Oliver Marchart's systematic account of this cluster in *Post-foundational*, op cit.

[18] This tendency among theorists to locate it solely with the Continental tradition is problematic. While this can be attributed to fact that this approach stems mainly from Heidegger, it has gone well beyond that tradition. For examples of theorists who discuss it in these narrow terms, see: Marchart, *Post-foundational*, op cit; and, Silverman, Hugh (Ed.). *Questioning Foundations: Truth/Subjectivity/Culture.* London: Routledge, 1993. For a dissenting discussion, see: White, Stephen K. *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2000). p.5

[19] Bernstein, Richard J. *The New Constellation: Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991. p.8 – see also: Fairlamb, Horace. *Critical Conditions. Postmodernity and the Question of Foundations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. pp.7-13

[20] Butler, Judith. 'Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism', in Judith Butler and J. W. Scott (eds), *Feminists Theorize the Political*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992. p.7

transcendental" move depends upon Heidegger's notion of ontological difference[21] and its incorporation into a distinction between politics and the political.[22] There is an ontological dimension to politics (the political) that necessitates an understanding of contingency. The ultimate impossibility of a final ground makes all political forms necessarily contingent for post-foundational thinkers.[23]Consequently, the task of political philosophy is to think the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of foundations. It must examine the consequences of this contingency for our political thought and world.

It is these three clusters of responses to the problem of foundations that structured and guided Rorty's own response and rethinking the role between philosophy and politics.[24] As argued subsequently, pragmatism sets the intellectual priorities for Rorty's project. From Critical theory, particularly Habermas, Rorty derived a critique of Continental philosophy and a justification of liberal democracy. Finally, from post-foundational thought, Rorty gained an ally in undermining the foundationalist project of Western philosophy.[25] Thus, he selectively drew on elements of these clusters, but only to serve his project of reconstructing pragmatism and rehabilitating American cultural and political life. With this, it is now necessary to turn to the broad shape of that project to clarify how this thesis will critically confront Rorty's philosophy.

RORTY'S PROBLEMATIC: PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS

The questions of the role and status of philosophical thought and its consequent relation to politics structure Rorty's philosophy. He is perhaps unique amongst philosophers in explicitly answering both of these questions *and* in linking his two answers in a common intellectual vision. This is a humbled form of philosophical reflection that responds to the problems and needs of its context, rather than discovering perennial philosophical questions. In an oft-repeated phrase, for Rorty philosophy should be a "good servant, rather than a bad master."By limiting philosophy's capacities and redrawing its role in human life, Rorty developed a form of thought explicitly designed to avoid assumed foundations. In this manner, he sought to avoid the problems he diagnosed

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[21] This concept is discussed in Ch. 3. Here, it is only necessary to understand it as a distinction between the ontological and ontic (i.e. empirical) levels of existence.

[22] Mouffe, Chantal. *On the Political*. London, UK: Routledge, 2005. pp.8-9

[23] Marchart, *Post-foundational*, op cit. pp 15, 25-6

[24] This schema is not exhaustive. Rather, it seeks only to situate Rorty amongst his major sources and critics regarding the question of the relation between philosophy and politics. Hence, the absence of other groups, such as the recent development of "speculative realism," in this discussion. For an account of this group, see: Bryant, Levi; Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (eds.). *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*. Melbourne: re.press, 2011.

[25]Rorty's exact relation to these groups will be clarified throughout this introduction and thesis.

in both Analytic and Continental philosophy.[26]This section will illustrate the basis of Rorty's philosophical project as well as set the frame for the critical reading offered here.

While Rorty began his career in Analytic thought, and thus responded to its questions, his own understanding of his work is meta-philosophical. For him, a particular understanding of the entire philosophical project and its use motivated it. In fact, the attempt to fundamentally divide the philosophical and political projects of contemporary Western culture frames Rorty's understanding of his own philosophical career and its most central thematic threads. In his autobiographical essay, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids," he describes his original philosophical project as an attempt to link these two projects.[27]Here, Rorty both articulates his attempt to theorize the relationship between philosophy and politics and relates this project to the critical reception of his work. This connection is important. Under Rorty's reading, he is rejected by both the political Left and Right, but for contradictory reasons.[28] 'My philosophical views offend the right as much as my political preferences offend the left.'[29] For the Right, Rorty, as post-modern relativist, fails to support the politics of American democracy he advocates. He denies the foundations necessary to sustain Western traditions. Ignoring the details of his political preferences, they criticize how he argues for his political liberalism. The Left's criticism is reversed. Largely supportive of Rorty's critique of epistemology, as they share a critique of the foundationalism of Western philosophy, their rejection of Rorty stems from his politics. For them, Rorty remains within the political discourse of bourgeois elitism. He cannot see how the failure of Western rationalism its project of Modernity compromise its political project.[30] This essay comprises Rorty's unified response to both critical positions. His argument is that these groups assume the philosophical demand to unite philosophy and politics within a single vision. They demand that political form flow from philosophical principles. For Rorty, these two projects, philosophy and politics, must be separate.[31]

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[26] Unique for his time, Rorty worked across this divide drawing on strengths and identifying weaknesses in both of these traditions.

[27] For an insightful, critical account of this essay, see: Habermas, Jürgen. "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in *Rorty and his Critics* (ed. Robert Brandom). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000. And; Voparil, Christopher J. *Richard Rorty: Politics and Vision*. Oxford : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006. pp.20

[28] While there are exceptions to any generalization of a body of critical literature, Rorty's characterization is largely accurate. See the subsequent discussion of Rorty's critical literature in this introduction.

[29] Rorty, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" in *PSH*, p. 5

[30] For an example of this sort of critique, see: Eagleton, Terry. "Culture and Barbarism" in *CommonWeal Magazine*. March 27th, 2009. For a dissenting approach to this specific criticism, see; Mouffe, Chantal (ed.) *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*. London, UK: Routledge, 1996. pp.1-2

[31] Rorty, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" op cit. p. 4

The idea that philosophical originality and political justice are necessarily distinct projects is the central lesson of this narrative. The young Rorty, representing Western philosophy here, wanted to reconcile the project of social justice with his idiosyncratic interests in a single intellectual framework. 'Insofar as I had any project in mind, it was to reconcile Trotsky and the orchids. I wanted to find some intellectual or aesthetic framework which would let me… "hold reality and justice in a single vision".'[32] As discussed in Ch. 1, this is the platonic desire for a single framework, for certainty in knowledge. Rorty's philosophy rejects such a *single* total framework(epistemological or ontological) for resolving all questions. Instead, in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (hereafter: *CIS*) he asked what philosophy would be without this desire. For Rorty, this argument is an argument for finitude; an argument to acknowledge the limitations of human thought. Similar to his strategy in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (hereafter: *PMN*), where he did not argue philosophically against correspondence but sociologically as to how justification occurs within human communities,[33]here Rorty argues that reconciling these two projects, attaining universality, is beyond humanity. Further, this limitation is unproblematic.[34] To attempt more is the desire for certainty, the desire to connect your prescriptions to something larger that guarantees their truth. Consequently, we cannot *argue* for our political perspectives. They are entirely situated and bound to a cultural and historical context. The only sense that objectivity can be given is intersubjective agreement. What this claim amounts to will be clarified in later chapters.

Rorty's reading of the American political context is essential to his understanding of the relation between philosophy and politics.[35]For him, there are two current cultural wars in the US. The first, between progressives and conservatives, is irrelevant here.[36] The second is internal to "the Left." It is important to emphasize that Rorty's critical reading of this group is central to his politics, his theorization of liberalism, and his understanding of the relation between philosophy and politics. Thus, it will be a persistent topic of discussion. For present purposes, the connection between this diagnosis and Rorty's division of the political and philosophical projects is essential. For him, two things divide the Left: first, opposing interpretations of the value of modernity and the necessity of liberalism as piecemeal politics; second, the role of philosophical and theoretical analysis

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[32] Ibid. p. 7

[33] For my account of Rorty's *epistemological behaviourism*, see Ch. 1.

[34] Rorty, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" op cit. pp.13-4

[35] This is further developed in Ch. 5 and will only be introduced here.

[36] This research is concerned with the critical gap in Rorty criticism from the Left. This group is largely complacent about his philosophy and has failed to critically interrogate the philosophical bases of his political positions.

in the understanding of politics. Rorty (problematically)[37] describes this as a conflict between postmodernists and pragmatists.[38] The difference between these groups is political rather than philosophical. Postmodernists reject the political heritage of the Enlightenment. They neither acknowledge its accomplishments nor hope for its future. Past *celebration* and future *hope* are necessary to progressive politics for Rorty. Postmodernists[39] assume the inability to reform the liberal democratic present. Consequently, they desire a revolutionary politics to overturn the present. This longing is the result of their misunderstanding the relationship between philosophy and politics.

Postmodernists (the Continentally inspired Left) assume the need for philosophical analysis to uncovering present society. Essentially, they assume the necessary connection of philosophy and politics. Whether uniting a thinker's philosophical and political work or seeking to understand politics through philosophy, they fail to see, in spite of their anti-foundationalism, that a single vision is not possible.[40] Rorty's does not argue that philosophy is socially useless; it has a social role with respect to our vocabularies. Philosophy can hold our time in thought. It can be a meta-level articulation of our implicit cultural and historical vocabulary. However, he emphasizes that philosophy cannot provide a grounding vision or "deep theoretical analyses."[41] As argued in this thesis, this aversion to a political role for philosophy is part of Rorty's critique of "depth" and "unmasking." The assumption of a hidden reality beneath some obscuring veil (e.g. ideology, phenomena, or beings) relies upon the appearance/reality distinction he rejects.[42] Consequently, the desire for radical analysis, which pierces a veil, is metaphysical. It confuses two projects. When we speak politically (i.e. collectively) we must necessarily speak to our time (i.e. the current vocabulary). Only piecemeal movements from the present can be made. The desire for a radical perspective is the desire for an unveiling, for a new form of thinking beyond our present. While not invalid, this is necessarily non-public (i.e. private). It is an exercise in private autonomy not public solidarity. The attempt to unite these two projects is the central object of critique in

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[37] The failure of Rorty to account for socialists and Marxists in his work has been noted. See, for example: Geras, Norman. *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind: The Ungroundable Liberalism of Richard Rorty*. London, UK: Verso, 1995. p.2

[38] Rorty, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" op cit. p. 17

[39] Rorty's relationship to this term has a long and varied nature. Originally, he embraced the label and its rejection of metanarratives and foundational claims (Especially in *ORT*). While he uses the term here, he also rejects it in this volume (See: "Afterward"). Here, it is problematically used to refer to a disparate group of philosophers on the Left who are unite by an extensive critique of contemporary Western politics, a refusal to base this critique in traditional Western epistemic models, and a desire for dramatic political change.

[40] Rorty, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" op cit. p. 19

[41] Ibid. p.19

[42] The rejection of this distinction was discussed above as a key element of Habermasian thought and its proceduralization of reason. The connection between Rorty and his perspective is discussed in Ch. 4

Rorty's work. Thus, if there is a philosophical difference between postmodernists and pragmatists, it is only within philosophy's political role. In this manner, the role of philosophy and its relation to politics structures both Rorty's relation to philosophy and his reading of contemporary politics.

Rorty's philosophical project presents a unique critical opportunity. For him, philosophy must speak to the present. Given its epistemological constriction to its present social context (i.e. without foundations), it can and should only speak within the current vocabulary. It cannot radically reshape or unveil. Progress can only occur on the pace that social change actually occurs. He thus placed politics over philosophy in what he called a "priority of democracy to philosophy." Postmodernists, for him, misunderstand the relation between philosophy and politics and end up with fallacies in both. Philosophically, they assume the ability to unveil and ignore the consequences of the situatedness of our thought. Politically, they fail to speak to their present. In contrast, Rorty's philosophical and political projects were firmly entrenched within American narratives (pragmatism and the Emersonian individualism respectively).[43] As argued throughout this thesis, the (often intentional) result is that Rorty's philosophy and politics end up formalizing rather than critiquing the present. In revealing the current intellectual and political cultures of the modern West (specifically, America) Rorty's work offers the unique opportunity to critically engage the assumptions that lie beneath those entities. While his work can only represent one strand within these larger cultural constellations, it is nonetheless, a unique opening to critically engage one set of assumptions that structure the present universe of thinking.

ASSUMING THE DIVIDE: RORTY'S CRITICAL RECEPTION

The state of the critical literature around Rorty makes taking this opportunity all the more necessary. While this thesis focuses on connecting Rorty's philosophical pragmatism to his political liberalism, taking Rorty at his word his critics have often failed to do this. Specifically, his post-foundational critics have refrained from tracing the connections between that pragmatism and liberalism. Rorty specifically works across the Analytic-Continental divide and engages thinkers from all of the three aforementioned clusters. Yet, only his Anglo-American and Habermasian critics make any effort to connect his philosophy and politics. His post-foundational critics, finding an unexpected nonfoundational ally, abstain from critically engaging his philosophy in detail. They focus

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[43] West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, pp.199, 203-4 – see also: Gross, *Richard Rorty*, p.23

only on his problematic politics. Consequently, that politics is little understood and Rorty's philosophy is critically engaged only by those clusters that share his politics. He is not philosophically criticized from non-liberal paradigms.[44] The opportunity to undermine the assumptions of the pragmatic and liberal present that Rorty reveals is lost. This section will proceed by briefly addressing the critical literature on Rorty from these three clusters in order to demonstrate this consistent lacking.

In the critical literature around Rorty, he finds few friends. His philosophy has, in recent years often been treated as an opportunity for casual dismissal and polemical attack rather than serious engagement. One commentator has gone as far as to describe him as being the necessary object of dismissal in contemporary academic philosophy.

> 'Conservatives demonize him as a threat to civilization as we know it; Marxists and other political radicals deplore what they see as his complacent and uncritical defence of American capitalism; postmodernists disdain his shallowness compared with the arcane profundities of their European gurus; analytical philosophers shake their heads sadly at a good man gone to the bad; and the leading liberal political theorists for the most part ignore him.'[45]

It is significant that the most negative response to Rorty's work comes from the only group he himself claimed membership in. Pragmatists, with few exceptions,[46] have rejected his work with great invective. Often, these take the reductive form of arguing that Rorty, in rejecting objectivity in human enquiry, is not a genuine pragmatist. Further, his "vulgar pragmatism" compromises the whole project of human enquiry and our ability to make judgments between various beliefs.[47] The emphasis from pragmatists is consistently on the consequences of his philosophy for enquiry and truth.[48] Even those who read his work

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[44] This is not to suggest that there are inherently liberal or non-liberal philosophies. As this thesis will argue, while there is no necessary connection between a philosophy and a particular politics, there are intuitive linkages and predisposed dynamics. This is all part of the larger argument of this thesis that you cannot absolutely divide philosophy and politics. They entail one another. See Ch. 2.

[45] Horton, John. "Irony and Commitment: An Irreconcilable Dualism of Modernity," in *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues* (eds. Matthew Festenstein and Simon Thompson). Cambridge, UK: Politiy Press, 2001. p.15 – The sheer breadth of this criticism has its disadvantages. It requires many choices and exclusions from this discussion. These have been made according to the priorities and questions of this thesis.

[46] These include: Richard J. Bernstein, Cornel West, Robert Brandom, and Stanley Fish.

[47] Haack, Susan. "Vulgar Pragmatism: An Unedifying Prospect" in *Rorty and Pragmatism: The Philosopher Responds to His Critics* (ed. Herman J. Saatkamp Jr.). London, UK: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995. p.139 For further examples of this position, see, Haack, Susan. *Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate: Unfashionable Essays*. London, UK: University of Chicago Press, 1998. p.63; Rescher, Nicholas. *Realistic Pragmatism: An Introduction to Pragmatic Philosophy*. Albany, NY: State University Of New York Press, 2000. p.52, 80; Gouinlock, James, "What is the Legacy of Instrumentalism? Rorty's Interpretation of Dewey." in *Rorty and Pragmatism* (ed. Herman J. Saatkamp,). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995.; Lavine, Thelma Z,"America & the Contestations of Modernity: Bentley, Dewey, Rorty." in *Rorty and Pragmatism* (ed. Herman J. Saatkamp,). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995. Finally, for a series of essays distinguishing Rorty from pragmatism, see: Misak, "Introduction" in *New Pragmatists*, 2007. For a defence of Rorty's pragmatism, see: Bernstein, Richard. "American Pragmatism: The Conflict of Narratives" in *Rorty and Pragmatism: The Philosopher Responds to His Critics* (ed. Herman J. Saatkamp Jr.). London, UK: Vanderbuilt University Press, 1995.

[48] There are some notable exceptions that unify Rorty's work: Bacon, Michael. *Richard Rorty: Pragmatism and Political Liberalism*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2007; Gascoigne, Neil. *Richard Rorty: Liberalism, Irony and*

more sympathetically, repeat this emphasis.[49]Further, communitarians, obvious political opponents to Rorty's liberalism, based their criticisms within what they perceived as Rorty's misunderstanding of the community, the nature of justification therein, and the effect on its members. For example, for Alasdair Macintyre, Rorty ignores how the nature of communities allows for rational progress.[50]Critical theorists have mostly repeated this myopia. Habermas famously lumped Rorty in with other "postmodernists" in a rejection of their common emphasis on the world-disclosive function of language. [51]Thomas McCarthy made a similar criticism of Rorty including him in with those philosophers, mainly poststructuralists, who only see a negative lack in terms of reason. For both of these theorists, it is not contingency but the universality of reason and validity-claims that provides for social critique.[52]However, some critical theorists have attempted to connect Rorty's philosophy to his politics through analyses of the consequences of Rorty's anti-theory. Continuing, McCarthy rightly sought the consequences of Rorty's "depoliticized theory and detheorized politics." However, he failed to develop this connection in any detail.[53]Nancy Fraser repeats this emphasis contending that Rorty builds his public/private divide overtop of a division between theory and politics. The former is relegated to the solely poetic function of self-creation and the latter is confined to the intersubjective sphere where homogenized solidarity is the single goal. This leads to a strict dichotomy in Rorty's philosophy between a romantic, individualized and anti-social private sphere and an almost totalitarian political "we."[54] In both of these examples however, the connection is only nascent. Neither relates these points to substantial

the Ends of Philosophy. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008; Voparil, *Richard Rorty*, op cit. However, these tend to remain solely with Anglo-American traditions and thus do not bring significantly different criticisms to bear.

[49] See, for example: Putnam, Hilary. *Renewing Philosophy*. London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1992. pp.67-71; Putnam, Hilary. "Richard Rorty on Reality and Justification" in *Rorty and His Critics* (ed. Robert B. Brandom). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000. pp.84-6; Williams, Bernard. "Auto-da-Fé: Consequences of Pragmatism" in *Reading Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1990; and, Williams, Bernard. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006. pp.136-8

[50] MacIntyre, Alasdair. "Moral Arguments and Social Contexts: A Response to Richard Rorty" in *Hermeneutics and Praxis* (ed. Robert Hollinger). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985. p.223 – Charles Taylor also makes this point but he focuses on the relation to the epistemological tradition. He argues that its questions will always confront us in some form and thus, ignoring them fails to reflect on how they have already been answered. See: Taylor, Charles. "Rorty and Philosophy" in *Richard Rorty* op cit. pp.175-6; and Taylor, Charles. "Rorty in the Epistemological Tradition." in *Reading Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1990. p.271

[51] Habermas, Jürgen. *The Philosophical Discourses on Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Cambridge, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1987. pp.205-7

[52] McCarthy, Thomas. *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991. p.5

[53] Ibid. pp.25-6

[54] Fraser, Nancy. "Solidarity or Singularity: Richard Rorty between Romanticism and Technocracy." in *Reading Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1990. pp.314-5 – see also, Fraser, Nancy. "From Irony to Prophecy to Politics: A Response to Richard Rorty" in *Pragmatism: A Contemporary Reader* (ed. Russell B. Goodman). London, UK: Routledge, 1995.

analyses of how Rorty connects and dissociates philosophy from politics. They rely on simplistic understandings of his anti-theory that do not explore his replacement and the political consequences therein.

Post-foundational theorists share these deficiencies. However, instead of ignoring politics, like Critical theorists they provide a political critique that ignores a substantial engagement with the details of Rorty's philosophy. Consequently, they ignore the real political effects of his thought. Eager to establish connections across philosophical divides, this has led to casual dismissals of philosophical differences in favour of political ones. Ernesto Laclau is perhaps the archetypal example here. He notes, 'though I certainly agree with most of Rorty's philosophical arguments and positions, his notion of 'liberal utopia' presents a series of shortcomings which can only be superseded if the liberal features of Rorty's utopia are reinscribed in the wider framework of what we have called 'radical democracy'.'[55]While Laclau, elsewhere, correctly identifies Rorty's anti-theory and its stabilizing effect on politics, he, like Critical theorists, fails to develop this in an actual exploration of the contours of that anti-theory.[56] Post-foundational thought's readings of Rorty are compromised by the desire to defend Continental philosophers from Rorty's readings of them.[57] Consequently, they focus more on dissociating themselves from his politics rather than examining, in depth, the relation between his philosophy and that politics. They broadly identify the problems in his thought, but fail to expose its nature and mechanism. Why does Rorty reject theory? How do we counter his argument for a social-practice based understanding of philosophy and politics? In the end, post-foundational theorists repeat the aforementioned tendency to superficial readings. The result is that Rorty's critical literature ignores a whole set of questions regarding the detailed connections between his pragmatism and liberalism.

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[55] Laclau, Ernesto. *Emancipation(s)*. London, UK: Verso, 1996. p.105 – for a similar approach, see also: Mouffe, Chantal. "Deconstruction, Pragmatism, and the Politics of Democracy" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (ed. Chantal Mouffe). London, UK: Routledge, 1996.

[56] Laclau, Ernesto. "Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (ed. Chantal Mouffe). London, UK: Routledge, 1996. pp.63-4 See also, Critchley, Simon. "Metaphysics in the Dark: A Response to Richard Rorty and Ernesto Laclau" in *Political Theory*. Vol. 26, No. 6 (Dec 1998). p.813

[57] See: Derrida, Jacques. "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (ed. Chantal Mouffe). London, UK: Routledge, 1996; Critchley, Simon. "Deconstruction and Pragmatism – is Derrida a Private Ironist or Public Liberal?" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (ed. Chantal Mouffe). London, UK: Routledge, 1996; Norris, Christopher. "Philosophy as *Not* Just a 'Kind of Writing': Derrida and the Claim of Reason" in *Redrawing the Lines: Analytic Philosophy, Deconstruction, and Literary Theory* (ed. Reed Way Dasenbrook). Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. p.199; Norris, Christopher. *The Contest of Faculties: Philosophy and Theory after Deconstruction*. London, UK: Methuen, 1985. pp.162-3; and Dooley, Mark. "Private Irony vs. Social Hope: Derrida, Rorty and the Political" in *Cultural Values*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1999). Caputo, John D. "The Thought of Being and the Conversation of Mankind: The Case of Heidegger and Rorty" in Review of Metaphysics. Vol. 36 (March 1983). pp.667-8; Caputo, John D. *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000.

The essential lesson of the critical failure is the necessity of a unified, critical perspective on his work. Rorty dissociates his philosophy and politics. For him, the latter is not grounded in the former.[58] However, the absence of grounding does not mean there is no connection or relationship as Rorty implies and his critics accept. Rather, there will always be a complex and intuitive connection between these elements that necessitates a back and forth reciprocity in their mutual dynamics. Thus, as this thesis argues, a critical perspective on Rorty (and politics) requires a totalizing perspective that brings unity to his work (or its object of critique). Such a unity could be approached from several angles. This study's approach is ontological; it seeks to expose the hidden dynamics of mastery that limit both Rorty's philosophy and his politics.

While not rejecting the intellectual frameworks of pragmatism and critical theory,[59] this analysis connects significantly with post-foundationalism. They are linked by a shared emphasis on Heidegger and the necessity of an ontological perspective for critical, political thought.[60]Beyond this group, there has been a wider ontological turn in recent political philosophy. Stephen K. White has dubbed this turn "Weak Ontology."[61] Here, ontology is both fundamental and contestable. Its commitments are both unavoidable and ungrounded. As in post-foundationalism, this paradox requires a two-fold approach. Political philosophy must think, simultaneously, from two different perspectives. In confronting radical contingency and the impossibility of a final ground, it must gesture beyond our particular moment in order to think an impossibility and necessity that exceeds particular determinations. However, it must also realize that this external moment can only occur within a particular historical constellation. It must seek also then to engage that constellation; establish its limits and borders.[62]Unlike Rorty, the situated nature of thinking does not necessitate ethnocentrism. Rather, as that thinking gestures further, we must think its assumptions and its relation to other forms of thought. 'The fundamental conceptualizations such an ontology provides can, at most, prefigure practical insight or judgment, in the sense of providing broad cognitive and affective orientation. Practice draws sustenance from an ontology in the sense of both a reflective

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[58] Rorty, Richard. "Response to Ernesto Laclau" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*. p.73

[59] In fact, some positive future pathways for the perspective developed here and these two clusters of thought will be indicated in the conclusion.

[60] This connection does not extend to this cluster's emphasis on the concept of the political. While not rejected here, neither is this concept employed.

[61] White, *Sustaining Affirmation*. Op.cit. p.4-5 – See also, Vattimo, Gianni. *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture* (trans. Jon R. Synder). Baltimore, US: John Hopkins University Press, 1991.

[62] Marchart, *Post-foundational*, op cit. pp.31-2

bearing upon possibilities for action and a mobilizing of motivational force.'[63] Ontology predisposes and limits. It guides and structures. This necessitates a total and historical perspective. This analysis attempts to justify this broad approach against Rorty's aforementioned division and his rejection of ontology. As in his politics, Rorty formalizes many of the implicit reasons with which Anglo-American philosophy rejects the ontological perspective. To expose these, this analysis draws intuitively on some of the ideas of Post-foundational thought and explicitly on those of Weak ontology. However, in opposing Rorty's very dissociation of politics from philosophy, it returns to the origin of both of these forms of thinking. In his ontological mode of questioning, Heidegger inaugurated both of these approaches. This study will return to his articulation of that critical framework. It will examine the consequences of Rorty's division of labour within culture; for these consequences provide the limits within which philosophy operates for him. Essentially, they limit critical political thinking in general.

CONCLUSION: CHARTING THE WAY

The argument will proceed as follows. Ch. 1 situates Rorty within his critique of epistemology and his relation to the philosophy of John Dewey. It argues that this critique and Rorty's reading of Dewey reveal a basic *social instrumentalism* in his philosophy. This analysis is continued, in Chs.2 and 3, through an examination of Rorty's positive pragmatic philosophy. By confronting Rorty with Heidegger's[64] critique of mastery the three main elements of his pragmatism (contingency, naturalism, and historicism) are illustrated. Further, it is through an analysis of these themes that the veiling mechanism of neutrality is revealed in Rorty's work. Through a purported lack of metaphysics, Rorty assumes the pragmatic neutrality of his conceptions and obscures their own partiality. He reduces any particularity to culture and ignores their philosophical significance. Finally, in Chs.4 and 5, this thesis connects Rorty's anti-ontological pragmatism to his procedural liberalism. It argues that the same mechanism of veiling and resulting claim to pragmatic neutrality is operative. After metaphysics, philosophy can only be pragmatic (i.e. concrete, piecemeal problem-solving) and politics can only be procedural and liberal (i.e. without substantive content). In this, liberalism is the political formalization of the acknowledgement of human finitude within pragmatic mastery. It is argued here that this position, and Rorty's resulting public-private divide, serves only to exclude non-pragmatic and non-liberal forms of political thinking (Ch.4). Through a confrontation with the work of Herbert

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[63] White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, op.cit. p.11
[64] William E. Connolly's development of this critique is also key to these chapters.

Marcuse (in Ch. 5), it is clear that Rorty's political pragmatism restricts thought to the present range of options. Rather than providing a basis for political criticism, it extends the present thinking. What Rorty offers in his philosophical pragmatism and political liberalism is not a method for cultural change, as he claims, but a self-reinforcing mode of thought for contemporary liberalism. His attempt to provide for a political framework without philosophical predetermination fails. In his pragmatic elaboration and justification of mastery (philosophy) and liberalism (politics) he obscures the deep connections between his philosophy and his politics. In opposition, this thesis looks to the potential of ontological thought to rethink the role and nature of critical, political questioning.

The premise of this thesis is that Rorty's division between philosophy and politics cannot be made when critically engaging a thinker's work. The problem with the critical field around Rorty is that they take him at his word. They seemingly accept that there is no theoretical connection between his philosophy (pragmatism) and politics (liberalism). While Rorty is correct that his critics all share an implicit demand to connect these two elements, the manner in which these critics actually engage Rorty's work is restricted to the aspect they find particularly problematic. Thus, post-foundationalists take his philosophical positions for granted and only engage his problematic politics. Contrariwise, pragmatists uncritically accept his overall political position (as a liberal) and focus on his problematic philosophy and the equally problematic philosophical aspects of his political position. As discussed, the critical field fails to trace the detailed thematic and argumentative connections between these two aspects. The argument here is that a genuine critical perspective on Rorty's work requires this linkage. This approach allows us to see how Rorty's philosophy and politics are connected by a common philosophical disposition of mastery. It also reveals how Rorty's mastery and the manner in which he frames his project, in terms of this division, obscures these connections. This thesis will trace these linkages into Rorty's philosophy and his politics.

CH1: Philosophy and Authority: Rorty, The Pragmatic Disposition and the Opening of Thought

> American pragmatism has, in the course of a hundred years, swung back and forth between an attempt to raise the rest of culture to the epistemological level of the natural sciences and an attempt to level down the natural sciences to an epistemological par with art, religion, and politics.[65]

Introduction: The Question of Pragmatism and the Task of Instrumentalism

Rorty begins with the question of epistemology (rather than Being), and thus, this enquiry shall begin there. However, as argued below, these two questions are by no means separable. The question of what is and the question of how we know it are inextricably interwoven. There is not a priority between them and yet the modern impulse is to exclude and obscure the ontological question. The epistemological question, perhaps by being the sole remaining question, gains precedence. Thus, the priority of the epistemological question in Rorty is not free of an explicit position on the use of ontology in philosophical reflection. As will be illustrated, Rorty's early work is characterized by an exclusion of ontology that persists in his subsequent philosophy. Further, the aforementioned preeminence of epistemology comes with an oft-unarticulated claim to neutrality, as if a basic ontological understanding is not already operative in and participative with the entire debate on knowledge. Rorty's uniqueness in this debate is found in his anti-metaphysical justification for the exclusion of the question of Being. He pairs a particular critique of and answer to the question of epistemology (not necessarily an anti-epistemological answer but perhaps one that is anti-traditional-epistemology) with this rejection. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate this critique and answer and to establish a preliminary connection between them and the rejection of ontology. By connecting this rejection to his social instrumentalism (his epistemology), we can begin to

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[65] Rorty, Richard. "Pragmatism without Method" in *ORT*, p.63

understand how Rorty justifies and explicitly illustrates the ontology of modernity as mastery (See: Chs.2 and 3).

Pragmatism and the critique of Analytic philosophy set the bounds for this initial discussion.[66] The latter provides the critique of the foundationalism of epistemology and ontology and the reconceptualization of knowledge as social (anti-foundationalism) while the former, via the work of John Dewey, provides a new model of enquiry (pragmatic instrumentalism). The epigraph above summarizes the central tension within pragmatism for Rorty. Should all knowledge be raised to the epistemic standards of the natural sciences or levelled down to the human sciences? Is the anti-authoritarian emphasis of Rorty and pragmatism (developed throughout Chs.1, 2, and 3) better served by the levelling up or down of all forms of enquiry? In order to answer these questions in Rorty's work and clarify the relationship between anti-foundationalism and instrumentalism, several tasks must be completed. First, the anti-ontological basis of Rorty's early work must be established. Rorty's initial concerns in the philosophy of mind and epistemology and his conclusion that anti-foundational philosophy can only make negative epistemological and ontological arguments are essential here. Second, this chapter must critically confront the philosophy and instrumentalism of John Dewey and Rorty's appropriation thereof. Dewey is a major source for Rorty's pragmatism. This argument here is that Dewey's re-conceptualization of the purpose and disposition of enquiry appears in Rorty's work as a basic ontology (of mastery and modernity). Thus, the final section must clarify what enquiry and philosophy become for Rorty in light of these two key moments of anti-foundationalism and pragmatism. Rorty combines these two elements into a social instrumentalism, a de-ontologized, pragmatized, and anti-metaphysical "method" for coping with the world. The consequences of this re-conceptualization, only briefly broached here, are a constriction rather than the freeing of thought.

RORTY, ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE ANTI-ONTOLOGICAL TURN

Analytic philosophy, epistemology and the philosophies of language and mind are the boundaries of Rorty's early work. They are the inaugural context of his philosophy and thus an understanding of his thought with respect to them is necessary. Further, it is

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[66] Where Ch. 1 concerns Rorty's engagement with the pragmatic and analytic, Chs. 2 and 3 address his confrontation with the Continental.

within them that his rejection of ontology and his critique of epistemology originate.[67] While Rorty seemingly began his career as a rising star within the Analytic world, the purpose of this section will be to establish a unity to the progression of this early phase that illustrates its logical connection to his critique of that world and his embrace of a pragmatic form of enquiry.[68] Rorty's early work in the philosophy of mind, his involvement in the mind-body problem, and his work on eliminative materialism illustrate the beginnings of his turn against both ontology and epistemology. Thus, it is only in light of these that his eventual social instrumentalism can be understood.

The Early Rorty: Eliminating Ontology

In this introductory chapter for Rorty's work, it is appropriate to begin with Rorty's own "Introduction" to linguistic philosophy. Editing an influential volume called *The Linguistic Turn*, this introduction establishes his understanding of the basic dynamics of philosophical thought and debate. He begins, 'The history of philosophy is punctuated by revolts against the practices of previous philosophers and by attempts to transform philosophy into a science – a discipline in which universally recognized decision-procedures are available for testing philosophical theses.'[69] These revolts, for Rorty, typically take the form of a new *method* which allows philosophy to break out of whatever stale set of discussions it has stagnated in. In this way, true knowledge will emerge where only mere opinion has been present and philosophy will achieve the secure path of a science; that is, it will be in a relation of correspondence with the world. This issue of method is central to both this chapter and thesis; while Rorty overtly rejects philosophical method, he reintroduces a methodological neutrality within his pragmatism and the implicit ontology of mastery in his social instrumentalism. He falls victim to his own criticism.[70] For Rorty, every such (methodological) revolt has failed because it has claimed to be "presuppositionless." This failure is intuitive as it is difficult to conceive a method

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[67] This reading of Rorty, which locates the fundamental themes of his work within his reaction to Analytic philosophy and the philosophy of mind, does read him against his own self-narrative where he posits Platonism as the fundamental target of his philosophy. While I am not denying this, I believe Rorty ignores the importance of Analytic philosophy and his rejection of ontology in this account. For his account of his work, see; Rorty, Richard. "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" in *PSH* – For a dissenting account that resonates with my position, see; Habermas, Jürgen "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in *Rorty and his Critics* (ed. Robert Brandom) Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000.

[68] Habermas notes that the fundamental themes of Rorty's work can only be understood in the context of the latter's, 'successful career as a young analytic philosopher.' – Ibid, p.31

[69] Rorty, Richard. "Introduction" in *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (ed. Richard Rorty). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967. p.1

[70] Interestingly, this is the dynamic Rorty himself sets up for philosophical history in this text. The claim to have a presuppositionless method is matched by his own claim to be without method/ontology. The central claim of Chs. 1-3 of this thesis is that this claim fails and a particular set of ontological presuppositions enter his philosophy.

that has not already made certain metaphysical and epistemological conclusions.[71] In spite of these reflections, Rorty's own claim to anti-foundationalism and post-metaphysics (i.e. to be ontologically presuppositionless) is based within his explicit rejection of method. Thus, while he critiques the history of philosophy generally, and linguistic philosophy specifically, for presuming to be presuppositionless through correspondence to the world, he repeats their gesture of neutrality through a total rejection of this relation and a corresponding assumption of lacking presuppositions. How he fails and what presuppositions remain within his work is introduced here but only fully explicated throughout this thesis.

Rorty's rejection of ontology and critique of representational epistemology is rooted in his early work in the philosophy of mind. In a series of essays from the 1960s and 70s,[72] Rorty offered a striking materialist response to the traditional mind-body problem that he called eliminative materialism. To contextualize, with the growth of the natural sciences from the seventeenth century, the Western intellectual tradition became increasingly reliant on naturalistic and materialistic explanations in enquiry. However, one area, especially within philosophy, has consistently opposed this trend: the mind. The specifically non-physical aspect of humanity, the part that thinks and has "mental" states, has consistently eluded reduction to physical processes (if not in whole at least in part). It is indicative of its significance that Descartes' work, which some would say inaugurated modern philosophy, begins entirely with the problem of mind-body relations. The problem here is that this leaves philosophy with what Neil Gascoigne calls "a split conception of ourselves and the world." 'We look to science to explain the latter, and regard ourselves as but one more set of objects in that world subject to the same fundamental laws. And yet, as possessors or instantiations of minds (and thus as *knowers*), we seem not only set apart from the world, but *necessarily* so in order *that* the world becomes an object of such scientific knowledge in the first place.'[73] The mind, as the source of the distinctively human capacities for rationality (in some sense), cognition and agency, seems to set us apart from the world while the perspective it develops places us in the world as an object of science. This paradox, and the associated problem of how the mental and physical worlds (usually our bodies in the first instance) interact, is known as the "mind-body problem." In twentieth century Analytic philosophy, which had undergone the

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[71] Rorty, "Introduction," op cit. pp.1-2

[72] See especially: Rorty, Richard. "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories" in *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 19 (1), 1965; Rorty, Richard. "Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental" in *The Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 67 (12), 1970; and – Rorty, Richard. "In Defense of Eliminative Materialism" in *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 24 (1), 1970.

[73] Gascoigne, Neil. *Richard Rorty: Liberalism, Irony and the Ends of Philosophy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008. p.19 – his emphasis

linguistic turn, this problem remained within a distinction between sentences that utilized "mentalistic" or psychological terms and those that deployed physical terms in explanations.

Rorty enters into this debate within this linguistic context. His concern is with the nature of concept change and its relation to the mind-body problem. His theory develops the "identity thesis." This view holds that mental terms do refer to actual states that can explain behaviour and that people can report. These states elude the mind-body problem because they *are* physical states. The mind is the brain on this understanding. 'Sensations are nothing over and above brain processes.'[74] The debate here surrounds the status of mental events like sensations (the common example here is "pain"). Are sensations, in reality, merely physical processes or are they, in some sense, distinct belonging to some category referred to as "the mental"? The conflict here is between materialistic (where the physical is the only element) and dualistic (where mind and body coexist and are related) descriptions. On the identity thesis, which attempts to reconcile the two elements, the identity of sensations and brain processes is both strict and contingent; it is strict in that they refer to the same thing (and thus share all properties) but contingent in that they mean different things. The failure of this view, which has a complex history[75], is found in its dependence on the assumption of a neutral translation-point between these two descriptions. This is the context of Rorty's entrance into the debate.[76] His theory of eliminative materialism is, oddly, more a theory of language and its status than a materialistic understanding of the mind-body issue. This requires some unpacking.

Eliminative materialism begins with two claims. In order to make these plausible, Rorty offers an analogy between *sensations* in contemporary language and *demons* in a hypothetical "primitive" community. Both terms (sensations and demons) serve the functions of *explaining* reality and allowing individuals to *report* certain states (e.g. I am in pain/possessed by demon). Further, both are, for Rorty, in principle eliminable. First, it would do no harm to our understanding of persons if we stopped thinking of them as things having sensations (or demons). Sensations are not a necessary part of our conceptual scheme. Second, getting rid of mental-talk (or demon-talk) would not impair our ability to describe and predict the world. The key point here is that, on this

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[74] Ibid, p.30; originally from, Smart, J.J.C. "Sensations and Brain Processes" in *Materialism and the Mind-Body Problem* (ed. D.M. Rosenthal). Indianapolis, US: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000. p.56

[75] For an account of this development, see: Gascoigne, op cit. pp.30-5. For an overview of materialism in Analytic philosophy, see – Bernstein, Richard J. "The Challenge of Scientific Materialism" in *Richard Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski), Vol. 1. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, 2002.

[76] My concern here is not with whether Rorty is correct in his assessments of the various positions in mind-body debate, but the way in which these issues affect his later work.

argument, the mental form of description is not *reduced* to physical states, rather mental states really are physical states. Mental-talk is merely eliminated in favour of physical description.[77] For Rorty, this means that no actual ontological claim or change has been made. Language and concept change is a process of using different explanatory frameworks through the elimination of a vocabulary, not its reduction. Thus, no ontological claim (no claim about the existence of particular objects in the world) is actually made. Rather, Rorty is opposing the claim made by some that there are, in principle, concepts (e.g. "sensations") that are an ineliminable part of language. However, if sensation-talk is, in principle, eliminable and the future does contain the elimination of that vocabulary, as Rorty claims, why are those who speak of sensations now not guilty of false beliefs? The answer to this question is found in the status of the claim Rorty is making. As David R. Hiley notes, Rorty, in his theory of eliminative materialism, is not arguing for the superiority of the materialist position. The only positive claims here are the in-principle eliminability of all vocabularies and the necessity of alternative vocabularies (materialism being the alternative to dualism).[78] Materialism, as a contextual add-on, is appended by Rorty only in the situation of the mind-body problem. It is his "prediction" that materialism will be the dominant explanatory framework for neuropsychology in the future. However, he is emphatic that this prediction carries no "philosophically interesting" (i.e. ontological) claim. It is merely an extrapolation from current social trends in the discipline. In the absence of a neutral set of criteria, something we will see Rorty firmly rejects, this is the limit of what we can claim.[79] Instead, what emerges is an increasingly *social* understanding of enquiry and the vocabularies within which it occurs.

For Rorty, the temporal dimension of this argument (i.e. the, in principle, future eliminability of sensation-talk) reveals the social origin of our linguistic norms. The idea of temporality assumes that in concept change, and specifically in the future, certain descriptions can become pragmatically needed in certain situations. Suggesting change then involves comparing present language with a hypothetical future. This stands in complete opposition to the dominant (modern) desire to judge our understandings against the antecedently real. Rorty's distinct contribution is to naturalize the mental 'by

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[77] It may be important to note here that this position rests on a distinction Rorty develops between referring and explanatory uses in language. This distinction is unnecessary for our present purposes. For an account of it, see; "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories," op cit. p.28-41 – and; Gascoigne, op cit. pp.53-9

[78] The notion of alternative vocabularies will be further explained in the coming pages. It depends upon a rejection of both the given and the distinction between theoretical and nontheoretical terms; arguments Rorty draws from Sellars and Quine respectively.

[79] Hiley, David R. "Is Eliminative Materialism Materialistic?" in *Richard Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski), Vol. 1. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, 2002. pp.108-9

construing the normativity of the reporting of sensations in terms of social practices.'[80] How he achieves this will be illustrated throughout this chapter and the following two. For present purposes, it is important to emphasize that this is a distinctly anti-ontological move in tension with Rorty's continued endorsement of materialism. Consequently, he came to drop the label of materialism (while still broadly endorsing it) for his position in favour of being ontologically non-committal. What should be emphasized here is that this "turn" grows out of an understanding of concept change, where explanatory frameworks are eliminated rather than reduced, which is already attempting to avoid positive ontological significance; for Rorty, while explanatory frameworks may make ontological claims about the world, his understanding of concept change does not. Rather, it deflates the philosophical and ontological significance of our diverse linguistic practices and of changes therein. In *PMN*, it becomes clear that Rorty's opposition to ontology is based on his reading of it as one more privileged framework philosophy can assume in order to raise itself to the level of arbiter of human culture. Ontology is based upon the assumption of a neutral level of reality and the idea that the mind, as an entity, is capable of mirroring (corresponding to) that reality under proper conditions. However, though he acknowledges it privileges the interests (prediction and control) of the natural sciences, Rorty continues to endorse a qualified materialism (which he calls "physicalism" (see Ch. 3)). It is part of his proposed future alternative to the metaphor of the mind as a great mirror reflecting reality and ensuring knowledge.[81] With this materialism there is a reformulation of epistemology as social instrumentalism. With this though, it becomes necessary to turn to *PMN* and its behaviourist critique of epistemology (and ontology).

Epistemological Behaviourism: A Sociological Critique of Philosophy

Rorty's main focus in *PMN* remains the "mind" as a standard of philosophical knowledge. He begins this work with a (much contested) statement about how philosophy understands itself and its project. It is useful here to quote it at length.

> Philosophers usually think of their discipline as one which discusses perennial, eternal problems -- problems which arise as soon as one reflects. Some of these concern the difference between human beings and other beings, and are crystallized in questions concerning the relation between the mind and the body. Other problems concern the legitimation of claims to know, and are crystallized in questions concerning the "foundations" of knowledge. To discover these foundations is to discover something about the mind, and conversely... Philosophy can be foundational in respect to the rest of culture because culture is the assemblage of claims to knowledge, and philosophy adjudicates such claims... To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind; so to understand the

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[80] Gascoigne, op cit. p.59
[81] Ibid. pp.72-7

possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to construct such representations.[82]

With this statement, Rorty connects his work on the philosophy of mind to a general critique of the foundational epistemological project of Analytic and Modern Western philosophy. For him, the concept of the mind, and the continued dualism between it and the body, have maintained the idea that philosophy, exclusive of other disciplines, has unique access to the foundations of knowledge. It is the continued assumption that the mind alone allows us to "represent" the external world that supports this claim. On this understanding, the mind, and philosophy as our unique access to it, is the (only) Mirror of Nature; the only neutral method for judging the accuracy of our various representations. For Rorty, this image of the mind containing representations which philosophy alone can judge captivates that discipline and incorrectly assumes the possibility of a neutral, permanent framework for all enquiry (and culture). This assumption is the main target of both this work and (perhaps) Rorty's philosophy as a whole. In its place he offers a behavioural and pragmatic account of epistemology. Initially, it is important to engage his critique.

There is a fundamental undercurrent of anti-authoritarianism in Rorty's critique of epistemology. For him, the demand for a theory of knowledge is, in fact, 'the desire for a constraint—a desire to find "foundations" to which one might cling, frameworks beyond which one must not stray, objects which impose themselves, representations which cannot be gainsaid.'[83] This attempt to oppose the epistemic authority of the mind, and of extra-social structures in general, is what unites *PMN* and Rorty's earlier work on eliminative materialism. In both, he is opposing the Cartesian definition of the mind in epistemic terms (and its legacy in Modern philosophy). Here, the mind has a unique epistemic status due to a structure Rorty refers to as "incorrigibility;" the mind has perfect epistemic accessibility as whatever it thinks is occurring in it, is in fact occurring in it. Rorty construed this notion in normative terms as a structure of authority. Further, as aforementioned, it is one based on a particular way of speaking, one he suggested was optional.[84]

In Ch. 3 of *PMN*, Rorty attempts to narrate the development of this authority structure, and the desire for authority in general, in the history of Western philosophy. The central argument of this chapter is that philosophy, as a distinct discipline, arose with the idea that its main task was a "theory of knowledge." Such a theory was intended to

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[82] Rorty, *PMN*, p.3

[83] Ibid. p.315

[84] Brandom, Robert B. "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism" in *Rorty and His Critics* op cit. pp.157-8

provide foundations to the sciences and all other forms of enquiry. As such, philosophy is a recent, modern invention; one that, nevertheless, is a continuation of the Western world's much older quest for certainty. It is important to note that, for Rorty, this transition in philosophy, the creation of it as a *Fach*, was one of a shift from metaphysics to epistemology (as the foundation of philosophical enquiry); a move from a concern with what was highest (metaphysics) to what was lowest (epistemology), to the "underlying." This process, only completed with Kant, made philosophy foundational and epistemological. It made it about the presence of sure knowledge. Further, Rorty's claim here is that this epistemological view of philosophy depends upon seeing knowledge as a problem about which we might have a theory. This, for him, is a product of seeing knowledge as an assemblage of representations.[85] Importantly, this conception (which only culminates in the modern period) is based upon a series of perceptual metaphors about knowledge. These metaphors link the Platonic and modern projects of philosophy (in the quest for certainty) and are the main critical objects of his attack on epistemology.

The first move in the modern development of philosophy-as-epistemology was the creation of the Cartesian mind. The idea of a mental realm distinct from the physical both provided a field of enquiry somehow prior to all previous discourse and created the possibility of certainty. This new inner-outer distinction (a version of the appearance-reality distinction) questioned how we know whether our inner representations match outer reality. 'The idea of a discipline devoted to "the nature, definition, and limits of human knowledge" – the textbook definition of "epistemology" – required a field of study called "the human mind," and that field of study was what Descartes had created.'[86] The Cartesian mind created a problem, the possibility of "veil-of-ideas skepticism," and its solution, a discipline and method for certain knowledge. While subsequent philosophers often rejected Descartes' dualism, they accepted his division between the mental and the physical as between something conscious and unconscious. Furthermore, his general premise, that knowledge of the external world is based on the accuracy of inner representations, dominated subsequent thought. It is one of the main targets of *PMN*. Locke, the second major figure in this modern history, furthered this dynamic through assuming that the accuracy of representation depends upon the manner of its causal production. For Rorty, this is a fundamental confusion of cause with justification. Locke thinks of the justification of knowledge as a relation between a representation and an object (causal) whereas justification, for Rorty, is always a social product of a relation

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85 Rorty, *PMN*, pp.131-2, 136 – see also; Gutting, Gary. "Rorty's Critique of Epistemology" in *Richard Rorty* (Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. p.43
86 Rorty, *PMN,* p.140

between beliefs/representations. For Locke, sense impressions are "knowing" whereas, for Rorty, they are merely the causal antecedent of knowing.[87] Importantly, within this narrative, Kant's transcendentalization of philosophy retains these two assumptions, though it inverts their form. Kant was motivated by the continuing problem of the "veil of ideas," the skepticism that our representations may not match extra-mental reality. For him, our ideas (concepts like space, time, causality, etc.) accurately represent the world not because they are causally produced by it but because they are the necessary conditions of the mind's noncausal production of the world. We can access this production as well as the concepts that provide for it due to Descartes' assumption that the mind has an unproblematic form of access to itself. This account depends upon a division between concepts (ideas) and intuitions (sense data). Philosophy is the unique, foundational discipline because it has access to the former, which structure representation, whereas all others access only the latter and are solely empirical.[88] However, for Rorty, in Kant the problems of Descartes and Locke persist. From the former, Kant retains the assumption of incorrigibility and fails to see it as a normative structure of authority. From the latter, and this is the key part of Rorty's criticism, Kant retains the confusion of cause with justification. In rising above mere mechanism (Locke's experience of sense data) to the transcendental interrogation of the basic concepts of thought, Kant continues to assume, 'that the logical space of giving reasons – of justifying our utterances and our actions – needs to stand in some sort of special relationship to the logical space of causal explanation so as to insure either an accord between the two (Locke) or the inability of the one to interfere with the other (Kant).'[89] For Kant, the basic categories of thought structure our experience of the content of the world. Thus, philosophy-as-epistemology has the task of interrogating and understanding those categories in order to understand when we have true knowledge as representation. As subsequently discussed, Rorty's epistemology of social instrumentalism strictly separates the vocabularies of cause and justification.

Rorty connects this Descartes-Locke-Kant dynamic to the original Platonic project of philosophy and it is here that he indicates the larger object of his criticism. For him, Plato is the source of the "Platonic Principle," the idea that 'differences in *certainty* must correspond to differences in the objects known.'[90] This principle follows from modelling knowledge on perception and attempting to ground that knowledge. It assumes

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[87] Ibid. pp.141-2
[88] Gutting, op cit. pp.42-3
[89] Rorty, *PMN,* pp.160-1
[90] Ibid. p.156 – my emphasis

that we need different faculties to attain certainty with different types of objects (e.g. numbers vs. physical reality). For Rorty, this principle seems to culminate in the necessary-contingent distinction.[91] This distinction assumes that there are foundations to knowledge because there are truths that are certain due to their causes rather than their justifications. This is the product of an analogy between perceiving and knowing which holds that knowing a proposition to be true is the result of being caused to by the object. The object somehow imposes the proposition's truth making it necessary. 'Such a truth is necessary in the sense in which it is sometimes necessary to believe that what is before our eyes looks red – there is a power, not ourselves, which compels us.'[92] When we think knowledge and justification as privileged relations to the objects that propositions are about, we inevitably move behind reasons to causes, from argument to compulsion. For Rorty, this is to reach down to the foundations of knowledge to certainty. While the method for and articulation of this has changed in the Plato-Descartes-Locke dynamic he articulates (Kant retains the logic but inverts it), the metaphors of depth and sight remain the same throughout these thinkers. Whether the foundations of knowledge are found in the "Eye of the Soul," "Eye of the Mind," and "seeing singular presentations to sense" respectively, the desire for certainty and the mechanism of compulsion persist within modern philosophy.[93]

It is important to understand the progression here. On Rorty's understanding, the ocular metaphors of Platonic philosophy arose with the appearance-reality distinction. A unique form of sight was needed to pierce mere appearance and get down to the reality of the Forms. With Descartes, and modernity, that distinction is replaced with a functionally identical (though perhaps actually inverted) inner-outer distinction. Now the imperative is to get out from behind the veil of our ideas to true outer reality. Importantly though, this new distinction served the same use; it 'satisfied the same need to be gripped, grasped, and compelled.'[94] This is the desire for certainty and authority in epistemic structures that Rorty opposes and was discussed above. The problem which motivates this continued desire, the problem of the *veil*[95], continues throughout modern (both Analytic and Continental[96]) philosophy (with the exception of Dewey, Wittgenstein and Heidegger).

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[91] This distinction is the object of Quine's famous attack which will be address in relation to Rorty's work later in this chapter. As such, I will only introduce it here.

[92] Rorty, *PMN*, pp.157-8

[93] Ibid. p.159

[94] Ibid. p.160

[95] The Heideggerian language of veiling and unveiling is a central metaphor of Rorty's work and is key to both his rejection of ontology and my critique thereof. As such, it will persist throughout this chapter and thesis.

[96] It should be noted that, for Rorty, much of recent (post-foundational) Continental (particularly French) thought shares this dynamic of veiling. This is the basis of his philosophical critique of their "unmasking" and

Further, Heidegger's work is especially significant here as he critiques Western epistemology, and the desire for it, as dependent on the assumption that our relation to objects is analogous to visual perception. The logic is as follows. The original dominating metaphor is that of having our beliefs determined by being brought face to face with the object of that belief. The next step is to assume that to understand how to know better is to understand how to improve the activity of this quasi-visual faculty, the Mirror of Nature, and thus see knowledge as an assemblage of accurate representations. From here, one can assume the presence of a privileged class of representations that serve as the foundation of knowledge and culture. 'The theory of knowledge will be the search for that which compels the mind to belief as soon as it is unveiled.'[97] For Rorty, there is a continuing neo-Kantian consensus that philosophy-as-epistemology can only be concerned with these immutable structures within which knowledge, life, and culture are contained and which are set by the privileged representations it studies. This is the end product of the original desire to be constrained by the world rather than engage in conversation with our peers. Before addressing his conversational alternative in full, it is important to consider both Rorty's model of epistemological behaviourism and his relationship to the work of John Dewey.

Epistemological behaviourism is the basis of Rorty's anti-ontological and anti-epistemological understanding of justification as a social practice. He articulates this theory within Ch. 4 of *PMN* in a discussion of the aforementioned Kantian distinction between "intuitions" (sense data) and "concepts" (ideas). For him, this distinction has occurred within modern analytic philosophy under several pairs all of which have participated in sustaining its foundationalist project. Thus, he utilizes Sellars attack on the separation of the "given" and "nongiven" and Quine's on the distinction between the "contingent" and "necessary" respectively. All of these distinctions, while emphasizing different aspects, amount to a division between the empirical reality we confront and the mental/linguistic (depending on your place in Analytic philosophy) realm through which it is filtered, between what is added and what is perennial (in terms of structure).[98] In this manner, Rorty broadly opposes both the empiricist and rationalist methods for establishing the foundations of knowledge. The former begins with everyday experience of

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political critique of their "radicalism." – Interestingly, Martin Jay has argued that much of 20th century French thought has a similar critique of ocular metaphors within philosophy. See: Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth century French Thought*. London, UK: University of Calfornia Press, 1994.

[97] Rorty, *PMN*, p.163

[98] These distinctions are not the same. I liken them here only to emphasize that, for Rorty, they all serve the same function of legitimating the epistemological (Analytic) project of philosophy; See – Ibid. pp.168-9; A third articulation of this critique, Davidson's attack on the division between "scheme and content," also forms an important part of Rorty's work. However, it occurs after PMN and is outside of the present scope of discussion. See ch. 2.

the world (given/contingent) while the latter starts with the universal concepts and structures of mind/language.[99] Importantly, for him, both Sellars' and Quine's critiques are behavioural and when combined they invalidate the project of mainstream philosophy in general. Rorty's epistemological behaviourism is intended as a *therapeutic* counter-theory to epistemology rather than an actual positive viewpoint. It is an anti-foundational cure for a foundationalist epidemic within Modern philosophy, one that stems from the desires for authority and compulsion discussed above.

Epistemological behaviourism is a behavioural critique of the project of epistemology. It is a form of holism that results from the basic assumption that 'justification is not a matter of a special relation between ideas (or words) and objects, but of conversation, of social practice.'[100] The premise of this argument is that human knowledge can be entirely understood when we frame it within the social justification of belief. Consequently, there is no *need* to see it as accuracy of representation. For Rorty, in the absence of representation (the attempt to mirror nature) and the resulting attempt to ground knowledge, the whole premise of a metadiscourse capable of arbitrating the knowledge claims of all human practices falls away. Epistemological behaviourism destroys the quest for certainty. Rorty begins this discussion by arguing that Quine's and Sellars' works[101] raise behaviourist questions about the epistemic privilege that logical empiricism claims for certain "privileged representations." They both, in different ways, suggest that assertions are justified by society rather than by the nature of the inner representations they express. For Rorty, this invalidates the whole project of attempting to identify such privileged representations and, in turn, explains rationality and epistemic authority by reference to the social norms of justification. This holist behaviourism claims, '...that if we understand the rules of a language-game, we understand all that there is to understand about why moves in that language-game are made.'[102] At this point, Rorty acknowledges that there is still a glaring question as to why a behavioural explanation of epistemic norms is desirable. Does the study of the nature of human knowledge not require an ontological explanation that somehow bridges the gap between subject and object? Is "warranted assertability" enough? The real division here is between two fundamentally different approaches to truth as, on the one hand, what is good to believe, and on the other, as contact with reality. Endorsing the former, Rorty is emphatic here about the status of the claim he is making. Epistemological behaviourism is not a claim

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[99] Gutting, op cit. pp.44-7

[100] Rorty, *PMN,* p.170

[101] Quine, W.V.O. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 60, 1951. And; Sellars, Wilfrid. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1997.

[102] Rorty, *PMN,* p.174

about the adequacy of behavioural explanations of knowledge-claims or mental states. Rather, it is a claim about the limits of philosophy in regards to knowledge and truth and it is a refusal to attempt a certain sort of explanation; specifically, one that attempts to judge the absolute reliability of human reports about their environment. Causal reports of the world and its events and conceptual breakdowns of the structure of the mind, neither of which are to be rejected here, are only problematic if they are taken as necessary premises for grounded knowledge. 'Behaviourism in epistemology is a matter not of metaphysical parsimony, but of whether authority can attach to assertions by virtue of relations of "acquaintance" between persons and, for example, thoughts, impressions, universals, and propositions.'[103] Rorty's concern here is mainly with the authority we attach to such knowledge claims. He is claiming that a relation of correspondence between people and reality, mind and world, mental states and sense impressions, is not the source of justification within our social world. In this manner, he extends the claims of eliminative materialism. His argument is not meant to make an actual ontological claim about knowledge, but only a social claim about where the authority of our practices originates.

The power of this critique of epistemology is found in its opposition to the entire project of grounding knowledge. It, in a sense, steps behind specific claims to or about knowledge and correspondence to challenge the very logic of a claim in general. The issue behaviourism raises in epistemology is not, 'the adequacy of explanation of fact, but rather whether a practice of justification can be given a "grounding" in fact.'[104] The pragmatist (i.e. Rorty) does not question whether knowledge has foundations but whether the claim that it does is coherent. In response to the kneejerk charge of relativism to this position and to the idea of the social basis of all epistemology and knowledge-claims, Rorty argues that such a charge only make sense from within the assumption of the existence of a permanent neutral matrix for enquiry. For him, this is the key assumption behind the project of correspondence and the rejection of coherence as the basis of intellectual and practical justification. Without this assumption, the idea of reconciling different explanatory frameworks and methodologies dissolves. Thus, it is the basic assumption of the quest for certainty and the image of the mirror of nature which sustains that quest. Rorty emphasizes that his intent here is not to offer some sort of anti-foundational polemic, but to cultivate a, '…distrust of the Platonic quest for that special sort of certainty associated with visual perception. The image of the Mirror of Nature— a mirror more easily and certainly seen than that which it mirrors— suggests, and is suggested by, the

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[103] Ibid. p.177
[104] Ibid. p.178

image of philosophy as such a quest.'[105] It is an attempt to get away from the project of such an account of human knowledge; of the attempt to *reduce* (which, contra elimination, is an ontological claim) norms to facts. In this, it is specifically anti- or non-ontological (if such a thing is possible).

The necessary question now is how justification is situated within social practice. The language of coherence above betrays the only positive point Rorty has about justification. As it is social, as our beliefs and norms (even for knowing) in society are a dynamic intersubjective body, they relate to one another and must cohere to some degree. Thus, for him, justification must be holistic; '...nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and that there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence.'[106] Knowledge-claims are about the interaction of a belief with a whole host of other knowledge-claims. The primary relation of justification is between assertions rather than between an assertion and the world. For Rorty, this coherentist model of justification necessitates a certain model of and disposition to enquiry. While this will be addressed in much more detail subsequently, it is relevant here to comment that this makes all enquiry reformist and gradual. In the absence of a neutral framework, 'criticism of one's culture can only ever be piecemeal and partial --- never "by reference to eternal standards."'[107] All claims become open to criticism and challenge and yet we lack the resources for revolutionary shifts as we can only ever judge an assertion against those already accepted. In a sense, we must always work from our present network of beliefs. While Rorty is somewhat unclear here, he seems to suggest that this basic approach to enquiry is methodologically superior because it lacks an assumption about the way the world is or the presence of foundations to knowledge. 'If we are not to have a doctrine of "knowledge by acquaintance" which will give us a foundation, and if we do not simply deny that there is such a thing as justification, then we will claim with Sellars that "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."'[108] Here, he comes close to articulating a theory of methodological neutrality; that if we can match in enquiry the manner in which (social) justification actually occurs (i.e. without a preconceived relation to the world, an ontology), we will be guaranteed a progressive development. We will return to this in the discussion of Rorty's use of Dewey.

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[105] Ibid. P.181
[106] Ibid. p.178
[107] Ibid. p.179
[108] Ibid. pp.180-1 – quoted from; Sellars, Wilfred. *Science, Perception, Reality*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1963. p.170

The problem with epistemology is that its aforementioned confusion of cause with justification has prevented it from taking this pragmatic turn. Robert Brandom rightly points out the centrality of the concept of "vocabulary" for understanding Rorty here. For the former, the latter's work is an attempt to get us to adopt the "vocabulary of vocabularies." The fundamental point here is that there is a strict separation for Rorty between causal considerations, which are covered by the basic (Newtonian) vocabulary of causation, and all vocabularies of justification, which are non-causally related to the world. Brandom calls this a, 'strict separation between the foreign and domestic affairs of vocabularies.'[109] All justificatory considerations are internal to a vocabulary. The relations between a vocabulary, even an empirical one, and the world of things can only be understood in causal (non-normative) terms. The world does constrain us, but only causally, never normatively. 'Normative relations are exclusively intravocabulary. Extravocabulary relations are exclusively causal. Representation purports to be *both* a normative relation, supporting assessments of correctness and incorrectness, *and* a relation between representing within a vocabulary and represented outside of that vocabulary.'[110] Further, the language of causes exists within its own vocabulary. Rorty acknowledges that the dominant scientific paradigm of causation is itself a way of speaking. In that sense, it exists within his meta-vocabulary of vocabularies, which, seemingly, does not assume the causal vocabulary's understanding of the world. Like all others, and this will be discussed later on, it is to be instrumentally assessed and is relative to a purpose. Nonetheless, Rorty does assume its sufficiency for philosophy. Thus, he comments in *PMN* that, 'a simple and relaxed physicalism might be the only sort of ontological view needed.'[111] While his understanding of justification and critique of epistemology are specifically non-ontological, Rorty does seem to hint at the contemporary relevance (similar to his support for materialism in the mind-body problem) of a basic scientific materialism for our understanding of the world. This casual commitment is indicative of a basic ontological disposition of mastery in his work that comes to colour much of the rest of his philosophy.

For Rorty, this reconceptualization of justification as behavioural, holistic, and strictly separated from causation leaves epistemology without a project. It invalidates the assumption of a permanent neutral framework for enquiry, one that would stand between all vocabularies, ensuring correspondence with the world. Further, it destroys the hope of a philosophical method of accessing that framework. The issue of whether Rorty actually

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[109] Brandom, op cit. p.160
[110] Ibid. p.161
[111] Rorty, *PMN,* p.165

leaves the assumptions of method behind will be addressed further on. The point of this section has been to establish a basic rejection of ontology within Rorty's early work in the philosophy of mind and in his critique of epistemology in *PMN*. For him, our languages and practices move, shift, and are justified amongst us without contact with the external world. This makes privileging ontology and epistemology pointless. Both are manifestations of our continued desire for authority, compulsion, and certainty. Nonetheless, within this argument, two subterranean currents have emerged. First, there is a basic commitment to materialism in Rorty in spite of this critique. Second, there is the possibility of a new claim of methodological neutrality within his holistic, behavioural understanding of social justification; for if we can match our institutions and language to the actual process of validating knowledge, progress therein would surely be assured. This gradualism and reformism will recur throughout this chapter and its successors as one of the locales of Rorty's implicit mastery. It is now necessary to turn to Rorty's relationship to John Dewey. It is the position of this thesis that it is Rorty's reading of Dewey and his approach to knowing that determines much of the tone and disposition of Rorty's understanding of enquiry and the possibility of ontology. Further, Dewey is the source of the social instrumentalist strain within Rorty's work that opens him up to the charge of mastery. For it is in him that Rorty finds a de-ontologized conception of knowledge that erases the distinction between knowing the world and coping with it.

Dewey and Instrumentalism: The Method of Modernity

The oeuvre of John Dewey is of such breadth that sweeping generalizations of his thought are suspect. However, for present purposes, his philosophy can be characterized as a radical re-visioning of the nature of enquiry in order to overcome a series of dualisms that have prevented the intelligent control of both our means and our ends. This section will engage one of his key texts, *The Quest for Certainty* (hereafter: *QC*),[112] in order to understand the nature of this re-visioning. It is the ideas that Dewey develops here that are key to the development of instrumentalism in Rorty's understanding of enquiry.[113] Dewey offers a reading of the history of Western philosophy that critiques the fundamental prioritization of thought over action, thinking over doing,

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[112] The breadth of Dewey's thought has necessitated significant exclusion here. I have chosen QC as the main text for its particular relevance to this chapter. This should become clear below.

[113] Dewey also emphasized the epistemological primacy of the social. His instrumentalism depends on that primacy. See: Dewey, John. "The Inclusive Philosophical Idea" in *The Essential Dewey: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy*, vol. 1 (eds. Larry Hickman and Thomas Alexander). Indianapolis, US: Indiana University Press, 1998.

therein. Instead, he links these two terms in a unified theory of existential enquiry, where our experience of the world is understood as an active enquiry into its concrete relations done not to understand the world but to control it and provide for our own security therein. Knowing becomes doing here and doing is always a matter of mastering. Dewey, in reconceptualizing our basic experience of the world in this way, instrumentalizes the world. He converts it into a field to dominate. In spite of this, he does oppose and overcome several of the philosophical targets that Rorty (and Heidegger) attack (e.g. the appearance-reality distinction, the spectator theory of knowledge, and the foundationalist project of epistemology). As such his philosophy is characterized as both anti-metaphysical and modern (as mastery). It is this dynamic in Dewey's work that Rorty draws upon. While this will be addressed subsequently, this section illustrates this instrumentalist and anti-metaphysical (as well as anti-ontological) dynamic in Dewey's work. What he offers here is not so much a philosophical method (in the traditional sense) but a philosophical *disposition* toward experience and enquiry. It is a mode, technique or approach rather than a set of procedures or rules. Nonetheless, it harbours a covert set of ontological assumptions, attitudes, and desires which limit it. Specifically, it attempts to replace the *quest for certainty* with the *quest for control*. Rorty, in taking on much of the spirit, if not the letter, of Dewey's work appropriates this basic ontological disposition; this particularly modern form of mastery.

The Quest for Certainty: The Division between Knowledge and Action

Dewey begins *QC* with a characterization of the basic existential concern of humanity. 'Man who lives in a world of hazards is compelled to seek for security.'[114] Security is our fundamental concern and from it, a basic prioritization of thought over action has occurred. For Dewey, this desire for security could be satisfied in two ways. First, humans can manipulate the world through the physical arts in order to secure themselves. Second, we can augment our ideas to conform them to the immutable and certain.[115] These comprise a basic distinction between action and thought (doing and thinking, activity and intellect[116]) respectively. For Dewey, in its original context this division led to a prioritization of the latter over the former. Where action always involves

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[114] Dewey, John. "The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation between Knowledge and Action" in *The Later Works of John Dewey Vol. 4* (ed. Jo Ann Boydston). Carbondale and Edwardsville, US: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984. p.3 --(hereafter: *QC*) – See also; Hickman, Larry A. *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology*. Indianapolis, US: Indiana University Press, 1990. p.37

[115] In Ch.2, Connolly identifies these two strategies within the matrix of contemporary political theory as strategies of mastery and attunement respectively.

[116] Interestingly, Rorty attempts to subvert another version of this division within Analytic philosophy: the division between making (activity) and finding (something to be contemplated). See Chs.2 and 3.

change and is thus uncertain and contingent, thought promises the immutable and the certain. 'Practical activity deals with individualized and unique situations which are never entirely duplicable and about which, accordingly, no complete assurance is possible. All activity, moreover, involves change. The intellect, however, according to the traditional doctrine, may grasp universal Being, and Being which is universal is fixed and immutable.'[117] *QC* centres on the effects of this division upon our understanding of and our methodology for knowledge in modernity. For Dewey, the division between intellect and activity is the source of a quest for certainty (in knowledge). This quest can only be satisfied within the realm of knowing (rather than doing). Importantly, the history of Western philosophy has inherited rather than created this distinction and prioritization. While Dewey is somewhat vague on its precise source, he seems to locate its origin in religious or spiritualistic desires for supernatural security. Opposed to these were the empirical world of everyday objects and skills. Philosophy inherited this religious realm (and shared it temporarily) because of its contrast to the empirical arts and its corresponding search for some form of "higher Being."[118] What is fundamental here is that the quest for certainty is a response to an (structural) existential desire for security. While he opposes that quest, for him (as a naturalist[119]) security is necessary. It is from this basic desire that he theorizes an experimental culture aimed not at certain knowledge but maximum control.

Within Dewey's narrative, this denigration of doing and glorification of knowledge is the source of another problematic dualism for Western philosophy: the appearance-reality distinction. When thought alone can access the permanent and action can only encounter the contingent and mutable, a distinction between a higher reality of such permanence and a conditioned empirical world of the everyday becomes necessary. The apparent world of the everyday becomes the domain of practical action while rational and immutable thought alone accesses the reality that stands behind, beneath or within that appearance. For Dewey, this changes the task of knowledge. 'It [the appearance-reality distinction] bequeathed the notion… that the office of knowledge is to uncover the antecedently real, rather than, as is the case with our practical judgments, to gain the kind of understanding which is necessary to deal with problems as they arise.'[120] This language of "problems as they arise" is fundamental to Dewey's understanding of the role of enquiry in human life. Presently, it is necessary to emphasize that the appearance-reality

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[117] Dewey, *QC*, pp.6-7

[118] Ibid. p.11

[119] For an account of Dewey's naturalism,. see; Gale, Richard M. "The Naturalism of John Dewey" in *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey* (ed. Molly Cochran). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

[120] Dewey, *QC.* p.14

distinction made knowledge the search for "the Real in itself, of Being in and of itself." Knowing becomes split between its true form, which contemplates the antecedently real, and empirical knowledge, which is mere doing. 'To these two realms belong two sorts of knowledge. One of them alone is knowledge in the full sense, *science*. This has a rational, necessary and unchangeable form. It is *certain*. The other, dealing with change, is belief or opinion; empirical and particular; it is contingent, a matter of probability, not of certainty.'[121] Further, for Dewey, this rejection of the concrete nature of existence and the need to confront its conditions was given an ontological justification. Material reality itself was denigrated as the lower of two realms. Everything therein is compromised by the conditioned nature of mere appearance. It is changeable and uncertain while "reality" (some domain of permanence) is certain and unchangeable. Linked to this, practice (action), as occurring within the empirical world of appearance, also loses value compared to rational contemplation. The former is subject to the contingency and uncertainty of the material world while the latter alone is certainty. In this manner, for Dewey, the quest for certainty has determined our basic metaphysics.

The quest and its necessary theory-practice divide engender two philosophical assumptions. First, certain knowledge, as that which is in correspondence reality, becomes the sole arbiter of the real. What is true in cognition must be real in Being (in reality rather than appearance). Thus, the objects of knowledge become the standards of measure for all objects of experience. There is a clear hierarchy (structure of *authority*) here: only the fixed and unchanging can be real. In this manner, the quest and its division between thought and action have determined our basic ontological and metaphysical understanding of the world. Second, as aforementioned, knowledge is solely concerned with the antecedently real, with what precedes knowing. As such, it is assumed that the object of knowledge is a fixed and complete reality. We can only know that which is unchangeable rather than what we participate in producing. On the traditional understanding, action cannot entail knowing because knowing is aimed at what precedes rather than succeeds itself. For Dewey, the quest for certainty and the division between thought and action are so engrained that we do not perceive how it structures our understandings of the mind, consciousness, and enquiry. All theories of knowledge assume that the operation of enquiry excludes (or aims to) all elements of practical activity that may enter into the construction of the known object. Here, '[the] "mind" constructs the known object not in any observable way, or by means of practical overt acts having a

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[121] Ibid. p.17

temporal quality, but by some occult internal operation.'[122] Dewey's argument is highly reminiscent of Rorty's. Their common target is the (traditional) conception of knowledge as a process internal to the mind that excludes the external world of objects (and social groups). This understanding assumes that what is known must be antecedent to the mental act of knowing if it is to be unaffected by these acts; otherwise, it would not be certain. Enquiry, must not interact with its object. Again, like Rorty (who implicitly draws on Dewey in *PMN*), for Dewey, knowledge on the traditional understanding is modeled on vision. The object of knowledge is received but not affected by the act of seeing. It remains aloof from the realm of mere material reality. For Dewey this is the "spectator theory of knowledge," where knowing is an event wholly uninvolved with what it knows. This understanding of knowledge results from the quest for certainty and the consequent division between thought and action.[123]

For Dewey, this spectator theory of knowledge, and its basis in the quest for certainty and the knowledge-action divide, affects the Western philosophical tradition's understanding of philosophy. Accepting this knowledge-action division, traditional philosophy has aimed at accessing the certainty of the former (though the methodologies have varied). Consequently, when discussing and supporting human *values*, philosophy has understood them as separate from practical life. Values can only be investigated, understood, and justified, if they are made certain; if we can, 'give intellectual or cognitive certification to the ontological reality of the highest values.'[124] The contingency surrounding action makes it too insecure for the study of the values that should inform our purposes. Once again, Dewey makes an assertion regarding humanity's basic existential condition. We are fundamentally concerned with achieving the greatest possible security for our values in concrete existence. While the knowledge-action distinction, by promising certainty, has comforted by suggesting that there is a higher realm that we can access where values are secure, this illusion has obscured the real task of philosophy. 'The chief consideration in achieving concrete security of values lies in the perfecting of *methods* of action.'[125] The division between thought and action, and the consequent assumption that only pure thought can secure our values, has not contributed to the development of intelligent methods of regulation in our values. However, if the division is to be overcome and methods of action made essential to the consideration of values what remains for the task of philosophy without the problem of reality and

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[122] Ibid. p.19
[123] Ibid. pp.19-20
[124] Ibid. p.27
[125] Ibid. p.29

knowledge?[126] For Dewey, 'its function would be to facilitate the fruitful interaction of our cognitive beliefs, our beliefs resting upon the most dependable methods of enquiry, with our practical beliefs about the values, the ends and purposes, that should control human action.'[127] This project rejects the traditional hierarchy of the knowledge-action distinction and the preference for the certain over the contingent and holds that security through active control is to be prized over theoretical certainty. However, Dewey insists that this is not about placing action over knowledge. Rather, knowledge and action must interact where action, directed by knowledge, is a means, not an end in itself. The goal is a more secure and widely shared (social) embodiment of values by means of the active control of objects through knowledge. Thus, the task of philosophy now concerns the *interaction* of our judgments about which ends to seek with the knowledge of the means for achieving them. The main problem to be addressed in this new conceptualization of philosophy is, 'the gap in kind which exists between the fundamental principles of the natural world and the reality of the values according to which mankind is to regulate its life.' This is the question, 'how is science to be accepted and yet the realm of values to be conserved?'[128]

Modern philosophy assumes that science and values are fundamentally separate (if not opposed).[129] For Dewey, this assumption is based upon the quest for certainty, its distinction between knowledge and action, and its consequent definition of the former as the antecedently real. However, when science is seen as intelligent enquiry into the structure of actually existing conditions, why is it useless for considering ends and the means for their realization? If the validity of values depends on the consequences of action, then the problem of a conflict between science and values disappears.[130] Thus, a fictitious theoretical tension is replaced with practical problems. 'How shall we employ what we know to direct the formation of our beliefs about value and how shall we direct our practical behaviour so as to test these beliefs and make possible better ones?'[131] In this manner, the questions shift from a concern with fundamental Being and knowledge in themselves, and the relation of our values therein, to specific plans that address present problems and means. For Dewey, there is a gap in the "humane arts." These disciplines have failed to utilize the anti-metaphysical (and anti-ontological) success science has enjoyed (in practice if not totally in theory). Further, science has created the means (a

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[126] This is the concern of the last third of PMN. It will be addressed subsequently.

[127] Dewey, *QC,* p.29

[128] Ibid. p.33 – See also; Putnam, Ruth Anna. "Dewey's Epistemology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey* op cit. p.34 – For Putnam, the problem of reconciling science and our values is the main task of QC.

[129] Dewey devotes an entire chapter of QC to an account of the various ways in which philosophy, throughout its historical development, has attempted to negotiate this tension. See Ch.3 "The Conflict of Authorities."

[130] Putnam, op cit. p.35

[131] Dewey, *QC,* pp.34-5

methodological disposition) to better judge our values and the instruments to allow us to manifest them. The clash between science and other disciplines is a genuine cultural crisis for Dewey and yet it is based on a false distinction and unachievable quest. The task then is practical and social. We must change the methods and aims of our institutions to allow for this new approach to science and values. This very way of articulating the mission of philosophy reinforces this practical social emphasis. The point is to shift the debate away from correspondence and Being to our values and their 'public, objective and shared consequences.'[132] Presently though, it is necessary to further explore this new disposition to enquiry to understand its effects in Rorty's work.

Dewey's Social Instrumentalism: Method and Experience

The remainder of *QC* draws on the scientific method to articulate a radical methodological *disposition* (rather than a set of rules) for enquiry. Dewey attempts to stand behind the scientific method, utilizing its strengths, to derive a basic approach to the world. This experimental instrumentalism focuses not on understanding reality but controlling its relations. Rather than searching for a rational foundation to all human knowledge, Dewey looks for a critical intelligence for engaging the world and understanding it through the production of consequences. In this manner, it is an instrumentalization and technologicization of reality. Though meant to be an anti-metaphysical rejection of an ontological approach (in favour of a pragmatic alternative), this methodological disposition harbours a particular attitude toward reality which filters into Rorty's philosophy and politics. This posture is mastery, a dominating approach to the world which assumes its coherence and understands it as a passive resource. At present, it is important to understand that Dewey attempts here, in light of his critique of the quest for certainty and the knowledge-action distinction, to offer a non-essentialist, instrumentalist form of enquiry. Here, he shifts the focus away from discovering the real to putting it at the service of human purposes. Further, those purposes themselves will not be free from this method but will be subject to its critical, pragmatic interrogation. It is in this that his method comes to colonize his values.

Dewey's resulting project in *QC* is to offer a new method for philosophy that is derived from the actual 'procedure and results of knowing, as this is exemplified in physical enquiry.'[133] The latter is assumed to be the paradigm of knowing because it is the most successful of all branches of intellectual enquiry. Consequently, Dewey attempts an

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[132] Ibid. p.38
[133] Ibid. p.58

articulation of the basic principles already contained within that method in order to apply them further. In fact, his claim goes beyond this. For Dewey, the scientific, experimental method from which he draws his instrumentalist methodological disposition is a formalization of our basic mode of encountering experience. Thus, once again, he makes an existential claim. In the place of a fundamental reality, whether it is the mind or the causal influence of sense data (or one of many other options), he offers "experience" as his most basic existential (and epistemic) category.[134]

Dewey offered an "empirical naturalism or naturalistic empiricism" that bases its understanding of the world, humans, and enquiry in experience. To avoid the flaws of previous empiricisms, he attempted a naturalistic reconstruction of that concept. For him, experience is the interaction of organisms with their environment. 'Original objects of experience are produced by the natural interactions of organism and environment, and in themselves are neither sensible, conceptual nor a mixture of the two. They are precisely the qualitative material of all our ordinary untested experiences.'[135] Dewey's naturalism intended to overcome the dualistic division of humanity from the world established by Descartes and assumed by subsequent philosophy. His situating of humanity and enquiry within experience was fundamental to this. Consequently, experience is not a one-way process of the physical world acting on humans, but an *interaction* between an organism and its environment. This,

> interaction may be usefully compared to the activity that results in the ingestion and digestion of the food that sustains an animal's life. A plant passively receives energy from a source of radiant energy… An animal must actively seek and assimilate stores of energy; to identify stores that it can assimilate the animal has behavior routines, which allow it to respond selectively to stimuli in its environment. To the extent that the physical interactions that an animal undergoes result in the reinforcement or the adaptive modification of its routines, these interactions constitute its experience.[136]

Thus, organism and environment exist in a reciprocity between the latter, which affects organisms, and the former who adapt their behaviour within experience. There crosses over with Rorty's critique of epistemology. Both Rorty and Dewey begin with behavioural and naturalistic assumptions. In the case of the former, the social aspect of knowledge was emphasized; for the latter, the naturalistic basis of experience. However, this connection is

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[134] There is significant debate on whether his concept of experience reinserts an unsustainable metaphysical ground into Dewey's philosophy. For Dewey's longest engagement with this concept, see; Dewey, John. "Experience and Nature" in *The Later Works of John Dewey* (ed. Jo Ann Boydston), Vol 1. Carbondale and Edwardsville, US: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989. – For Rorty's thoughts on this topic, see; "Dewey's Metaphysics" in *CP*

[135] Dewey, *QC,* p.138

[136] Tiles, J.E. "The Primacy of Practice in Dewey's Experimental Empiricism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey* op cit. pp.102-3

deeper. For Rorty and Dewey, language and experience should be understood *both* socially and naturalistically.

In experience both the environment and the organism are fundamentally active. Further, while it may not always be conscious, even in human situations, it is selective. Like Rorty, Dewey wants to avoid the category of the "given" (that which precedes human engagement with the world and hence is "given"). For Dewey, we are always already active in experience adapting ourselves to objects that structure our activity. 'The subject of experience is not a passive recipient of information; it is an active creature adapting its routines, modifying its habits, reconfiguring its dispositions, and it is the effect on its routines, habits, or dispositions that determines what parts of the given the animal has taken (deliberately or otherwise) to constitute its experience.'[137] Dewey's naturalized empiricism understands experience as accumulated modifications to habitual responses. It is an active modification of habits that responds to a situation. The "situation" is a key piece of terminology. In Dewey's conception, every situation is a combination of determinate and indeterminate elements in experience. 'Every situation has vagueness attending to it, as it shades off from a sharper focus into what is indefinite.'[138] Due to this vagueness, situations are often experienced as problematic because of the obscurity, conflict, confusion and doubt they present. The necessary reaction to this indeterminacy is enquiry into a resolution of that situation; indeterminacy initiates enquiry and a situation can only be resolved when coherence has been brought to that problematic situation through action. Success is determined by whether that situation is no longer experienced as a problem. This understanding of experience as interaction and the situation as indefinite changes our understanding of knowledge for Dewey. 'Anything that may be called knowledge, or a known object, marks a question answered, a difficulty disposed of, a confusion cleared up, an inconsistency reduced to coherence, a perplexity mastered... Thinking is objectively discoverable as that mode of serial responsive behaviour to a problematic situation in which transition to the relatively settled and clear is effected.'[139] Knowledge becomes about a transition within a problematic situation; one that resolves that situation through action. It is about change, rather than permanence, which is reflected in Dewey's understanding of the scientific and experimental method. However, before addressing this, it is necessary to further examine experience.

For Dewey, experience, as interactive and inherently problematic, is developmental (and self -corrective). 'We use our past experiences to construct new and

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[137] Ibid. p.103
[138] Dewey, *QC,* p.187
[139] Ibid, p.181 – my emphasis

better ones in the future. The very fact of experience thus includes the process by which it directs itself in its own betterment.'[140] Experience, as a problematic interaction, creates the possibility of using the past to better the future. It is the possibility of conscious engagement (and control) of experience that makes humanity (and modernity) distinctive. In this manner, experience itself yields both the method (for knowledge as the resolution of a situation) and the disposition to that method. It contains within it the dynamic of interaction between organism and environment which constitutes enquiry. Enquiry (i.e. science) flows from experience.[141] This necessary relation inserts a covert metaphysical unity within Dewey's work. For Richard M. Gale, this metaphysics follows from Dewey's naturalization of enquiry. For him, we experience everything in terms of how it pertains to enquiry. This, 'can best be understood as a transcendental deduction argument for what nature must be like if it is to be possible for enquiry to take place in it, and this results in an anthropomorphic metaphysics that ensures the world will be a fit place for our Promethean endeavours to control nature through enquiry.'[142] This anthropomorphic metaphysics implicitly assumes a background unity. This unity, which is the source of and method for Dewey's attack on philosophical dualism (e.g. the organism-environment divide), is a relic from Dewey's earlier flirtation with Hegelian absolute idealism. While it changed form, from "universal consciousness" to "experience," it remained throughout his work. In its latter manifestation, it assumes that behind all philosophical dualisms (e.g. subject-object, organism-environment, and appearance-reality) there is one experiential field of enquiry. Experience, 'is "double-barrelled" in that it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzable totality.'[143] For Gale, this metaphysics of experience[144] in Dewey explains the persistent lack of clarity in this term. It is a "mystical doctrine," a quest for unity that assumes that all human activity is enquiry into experience. Further, experience, as this unity, contains within itself the dynamic of interaction between organism and environment Dewey emphasizes and the need for control he sees in science and enquiry. Consequently, this Hegelian view of enquiry sees all experience (and its necessary

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[140] Dewey, John. "Reconstruction in Philosophy" in *The Middle Works of John Dewey* (ed. Jo Ann Boydston). Vol. 12. Carbondale and Edwardsville, US: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. p.134 – See also; Michael Eldridge's, *Transforming Experience: John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998.

[141] Larry A. Hickman has suggested that technology and production, and their methodological bases in the sciences, provide the models for Dewey's entire analysis of human experience. See; Hickman, op cit. Ch.2

[142] Gale, op cit. p.57

[143] Dewey, "Experience And Nature" op cit. p.18-19

[144] Rorty also lamented the metaphysical overtones of both experience as a concept and *Experience and Nature* as a work. See, "Dewey's Metaphysics," op cit. -- Nonetheless, this drive for unity and coherence persists in Rorty's work within his own particular social instrumentalism. See Ch.2 and 3.

enquiry) as specifically aimed at resolution and coherence; as a means to ending a previously mentioned problematic and indeterminate situation.[145] As such, it is appropriate to turn now to this method and its consequences.

Dewey draws his instrumentalism from the scientific method of enquiry. For him, it is the highest example of the aforementioned process of directing experience, by means of experience, to its own betterment. While he emphasized that different concrete methods were necessary for different contexts of enquiry[146], he believed that the general model of experimental thinking he identified was the only (non-metaphysical) understanding of knowing. Once again, Dewey articulates this method from within his narrative in Western philosophy. Due to the continued division of knowing from doing, we live in a "state of divided allegiance," both unable to secure our values within the immutable realm of true knowledge and unwilling to attempt it in the world of everyday experience. Consequently, the 'conditions and forces that dominate in actual fact the modern world have not attained any coherent intellectual expression of themselves.'[147] For Dewey, choosing this field of enquiry (science) for the attempt to secure those values is both theoretically and practically justified. If it is established that the actual procedures of knowing operative in the world, which yield the most reliable results, have fully surrendered the distinction between knowing and doing, then that distinction will have no justification. Practically, science is the final "controlling and characteristic fact of modern life." Its method of knowledge, through the medium of technology, has pervaded every aspect of our social being. Utilizing this superior and non-metaphysical method for knowledge promises to secure our values.[148]

The essential difference within the scientific method, the key change from pre-modern to modern knowing, is the role of observation and experience in knowing. Though previously excluded from knowledge, now they are fundamental by both providing materials to work on and testing the hypotheses of theory. In science, changing events within the empirical world cannot be ignored as they previously were. Rather, those changes are explicitly the focus. Specifically, how they are connected to one another sets the problems for science. It is essential to understand the relations between those changes because this allows enquirers to bring them under directed forms of control. For Dewey, 'there is a difference between two kinds of experience; one which is occupied with uncontrolled change and one concerned with directed and regulated change... Changes of

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[145] Lavine, Thelma Z. "America and the Contestations of Modernity: Bentley, Dewey, Rorty" in *Rorty and Pragmatism* (ed. Herman J. Saatkamp). Vanderbilt University Press, 1995. p.42

[146] Dewey, *QC,* p.172

[147] Ibid. p.62

[148] Ibid. pp.63-4

the first type are something *to be brought under control* by means of action directed by understanding of relationships.'[149] Where formerly knowledge turned away from change, now it is explicitly concerned with both observing and producing changes. The experimental method is explicitly built around the introduction of a change in order to measure the results in other factors. Through various operations, correlations in changes are established and relationships understood. Thus, in the history of knowledge science reverses the previous hierarchical division between knowledge and action by adopting the 'instruments and doings of directed practice.'[150] Consequently, for Dewey, the very nature of knowing changes. Knowledge is established through action and involvement in the world. It is no longer something we have but something we do.

Knowledge and experiment as doing is a formalization of our basic existential mode for encountering the world. The previous language of relations is essential here. They are the "proper objects of science." Science is uninterested, for Dewey, in direct experience. Rather, it is concerned with the '*happening* of those experienced things. For its purpose, therefore, they *are* happenings, events. Its aim is to discover the conditions and consequences of their happening. And this discovery can take place only by modifying the given qualities in such ways that *relations* become manifest.'[151] Through the procedures of experiment science modifies the world to reveal its relations. Further, the prototype for experimental science is found in the everyday world of "ordinary procedures."

> 'When we are trying to make out the nature of a confused and unfamiliar object, we perform various acts with a view to establishing a new relationship to it, such as will bring to light qualities which will aid in understanding it. We turn it over, bring it into a better light, rattle and shake it, thump, push and press it, and so on… the intent of these acts is to make changes which will elicit some previously unperceived qualities.'[152]

However, these ordinary procedures, while informative, are limited. The key event in the history of modern knowing is the formalization and instrumentalization of this process. This reinforced these "active doings" by providing instruments devised for the purpose of disclosing relations not otherwise apparent. Further, it made possible the introduction of a far greater range of systematic variation which allowed the relations produced to have far greater detail. Enquiry is still thinking for Dewey, but it is a form of thought that exceeds the mind. Thinking as experimental enquiry is *directed activity*, purposeful action which varies the conditions of something in order to establish new arrangements. The obvious question arises: what determines which operations we enact? For Dewey, it is explicitly

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[149] Ibid. p.67
[150] Ibid. p.69
[151] Ibid. p.84
[152] Ibid. p.70

the nature of the problem (and situation) to be dealt with. Objects in the world "suggest" responses. These operations have been built upon in human history and the formalization of it in modernity is a fundamental step in the development of controlled thinking. They are the fundamental mode in which humanity adds relations and understanding to the world of gross experience it confronts.[153] Thus, in a sense, knowledge becomes about solving problems given in experience.

In Dewey's account, there is little about the conceptual system within which this active knowing occurs. How is our knowledge organized and reflected upon? Fundamental to Dewey's re-conceptualization of knowledge as directed activity is a homogenization of reality. The experimental approach, where variations are introduced in order to understand relationships, requires the introduction of a 'permanent register of what is observed and instrumentalities of exact measurement by means of which changes are correlated with one another.'[154] Classification and ordering are necessary. Part of identifying the problem of a given situation (of gross experience) is reducing its objects to data. Data allows comparison by providing a common field through the elimination of qualities. Generalized measurements (e.g. of space, time, quantity, etc) are instruments by which relations can be established, measured, and compared. They allow diverse things with no qualitative similarity to be brought within the same system. Such a process, for Dewey, adds relations to experience; these relations are experienced just as the qualitatively diverse and irreducible objects of original experiences. Nonetheless, this process involves the removal of some qualities in order to provide for a common field. Physical science is paradigmatic as it disregards the qualitative heterogeneity of experienced objects to include them in one comprehensive homogeneous scheme. This allows for their translation and conversion. It is this forced homogenization which is the strength of modern science and technology. The homogeneity of scientific objects... is precisely the device which makes this indefinitely broad and flexible scheme of transitions possible.[155] Such homogeneity recalls the aforementioned metaphysical unity within Dewey's philosophy. It is the formalization of that absolute totality for the purposes of enquiry. As illustrated throughout this thesis, this philosophical and pragmatic unity has dangerous effects on Rorty's philosophy. Presently however, it is important to emphasize that this homogeneity is essential for the ethic of control in Dewey's project. He is emphatic that the test for any system of measurement (any schematization of

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[153] Ibid. pp.99-101
[154] Ibid. pp.70-1
[155] Ibid. p.107

homogeneity) is functional; it is about whether it allows us to control elements therein to a greater degree.[156]

The scientific method is the best approach for providing the needed homogeneity for control. At this point it may be useful to allow Dewey to summarize his theory.

> If we frame our conception of knowledge on the experimental model, we find that it is a way of operating upon and with the things of ordinary experience so that we can frame our ideas of them in terms of their interactions with one another, instead of in terms of the qualities they directly present, and that thereby our control of them, our ability to change them and direct their changes as we desire, is indefinitely increased. Knowing is itself a mode of practical action and is *the* way of interaction by which other natural interactions become subject to direction.[157]

The experimental method is an instantiation of Dewey's reformulation of knowledge in terms of doing. It replaces the quest for certainty with a new *quest for control*. As previously discussed, this approach, for Dewey, derives from our basic existential situation and our necessary desire for security. In this manner, he naturalizes control.[158] It becomes the basic goal of human enquiry and existence (which are analogous). The question now is what this basic approach assumes. What is implicit ontological posture of Dewey's work? It is important to clarify that he understood it, like Rorty, as non-ontological. For him, his philosophy is rooted in the pragmatic rather than ontological; he was interested not it what things are (the Real) but what is to be done with them. Ontological considerations only detract from effective control.[159]

The quest for control involves a different set of assumptions and demands than the quest for certainty. Dewey contrasts these two pursuits through comparing Greek and Modern science and their radically different approaches. Whereas Greek science treated the world as containing *objects*, modern science understands it as *data*. Objects are finalities. As complete, finished and discreet, we only need to classify and order them for understanding. They are confronted passively. In contrast, modern science, which substitutes data for objects, is open. Data requires further interpretation. It serves more as indications and evidence than as meaningful in itself. Data is "intermediate, not ultimate; means, not finalities." For modern science, the objects previously taken as knowledge (e.g. second-order qualities like temperature) are problems for science. They are something to be investigated rather than something given. For Dewey, in this, ancient and modern science had fundamentally different approaches to knowledge. 'Greek and medieval science formed an art of accepting things as they are enjoyed and suffered. Modern

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[156] Ibid. p.104
[157] Ibid. p.86
[158] Hickman, op cit. pp.40-1
[159] Ibid. pp.118,124

experimental science is an art of control.'[160] For Dewey, this changeover is beyond method. It is a 'revolution in the whole spirit of life, in the entire attitude taken toward whatever is found in existence.'[161] It is an entire refocusing of humanity's posture towards existence. This difference is between an aesthetic attitude that approaches knowing as a divine art to one that approaches knowing as secular control. The former is directed to what is already in existence, to what is finished and discreet. Before the experimental method, for Dewey, change was viewed as an inevitable evil and the realm of change and mutability was always cast as inferior to another "changeless" realm. However, the experimental method purposefully introduces changes to alter the course of events. Nature becomes something to act on rather than something complete. Introducing such changes becomes an "instrument of control."

Such a perspective is oriented to problems. New material is always a source of new questions, relations and opportunities to direct change. It sets new problems to overcome; new material to be interrogated. There is an implicit posture towards existence here. 'It is now something to be modified, to be intentionally controlled. It is material to act upon so as to transform it into new objects which better answer our needs. Nature as it exists at any particular time is a challenge, rather than a completion; it provides possible starting points and opportunities rather than final ends.'[162] Nature is a challenge (to modernity). Previously, goods were a welcome fortune. The insight of modernity, for Dewey, is to understand that goods can only be secured in existence through regulating processes of change. This regulation is dependent upon knowledge of relations. Further, while this involves a "despiritualization" of nature mourned by some, it is a necessary feature of intentional action. Only objects without fixed forms and ends can serve as "plastic" means for human desires. It is obvious here that in spite of Dewey's anti-ontological pretentions, he has a distinct ontological posture towards existence. Rather than acceptance, he advocates an attitude of challenge. In contrast to the understanding of existence as purposeful, he understands it as plastic. Finally, in contrast to a strict subject-object divide, he offers a view of interpenetrated relations susceptible to human manipulation. For Dewey, this transition frees us from a fundamental orientation to the past (in the fixed, the complete, and the given) and orients us to the *future*, to production and creation. Like Rorty, the impetus here is to shift our epistemic authority, or "seat of

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[160] Dewey, *QC,* pp.80
[161] Ibid. p.80
[162] Ibid. pp.80-1

authority," away from attuning ourselves to the Real to a new arrangement more conducive to our purposes.[163]

The authority of the future changes how Dewey thinks about the conflict between science and values.[164] In articulating his instrumentalism, he was clear that this was a generalizable method he offered to all enquiry. In this manner, he raised the rest of culture (as in the epigraph above) up to the level of the natural sciences. To summarize, in *QC* Dewey offered a rereading of the history of philosophy that critiques its quest for certainty and its division between knowledge and action. Instead, he offers an instrumentalist posture derived from the experimental method (which is derived from experience). This posture is an active approach to the world which dominates existence through an understanding of its internal relations. The ethic here is a quest for control. Existence itself is a challenge for humanity; a passive material to be turned to human purposes. Importantly, this posture is matched with a basic ontological assumption (and formalization) of a hidden unity behind appearance. Dewey's anti-metaphysical approach ultimately fails due to this homogenization. In spite of Rorty's emphatic support of Dewey's philosophy, he distanced himself from this element. Nonetheless, this assumption of a fundamental unity behind appearance insinuates itself into Rorty's pragmatic philosophy and its appropriation of Dewey's instrumentalism.

METHOD AND DISPOSITION: RORTY'S (MIS)APPROPRIATION OF DEWEY

Rorty's relationship with Dewey is controversial. Is the former's interpretation a radical revisioning that updates Dewey in the pragmatist spirit? Or is he Dewey's "oedipal son,"[165] reading his philosophical father to destroy his vision? This section clarifies what Rorty takes from Dewey. How, as suggested, he interprets and appropriates Dewey's the dynamic of mastery. Dewey is an enigmatic influence on Rorty's philosophy, a pervasive yet elusive presence that Rorty preferred to ambiguously draw on rather than dedicate lengthy works to. Nonetheless, a relationship can be discerned. This section proceeds through an account of Rorty's major essays on Dewey, the critical reaction to them, Rorty's responses and how the theme (and conflict) of method is negotiated by Rorty in his appropriation of Dewey. It argues that Rorty is aware of his selective (and perhaps violent) reading of Dewey and that, for him, this approach is consistent with

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[163] Ibid. p.231-2

[164] As discussed in Chs.3 and 5, the normative authority of the future is key to Rorty's philosophy.

[165] Lavine, op cit. p.42

Dewey's own thought. Finally, it suggests that it is in Rorty's reformulation of method in Dewey's work that the covert mastery of instrumentalism passes from father to son.

A Divided Dewey: Rorty's Two Readings

Rorty identified two opposing currents within Dewey's thought, an essential tension surrounding his relation to metaphysics. On the one hand, Dewey is an iconoclastic critic of the history of Western philosophy. He undermines its oldest dualisms and radically re-visions its project. On the other hand, Dewey succumbs to a desire for metaphysical grounds in his use of science, method and "experience." Understanding these two sides to Rorty's interpretation illuminates how he draws on the Dewey's work. Specifically, Rorty largely accepts Dewey's positive philosophy only rejecting its absolutist justification. Due to his myopic obsession with the claim of authority in philosophy rather than its substantive claims, Rorty fails to see metaphysical elements built into that philosophy and the manner in which they colour Dewey's (and his own) philosophy and politics.

In "Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey" Rorty provides a reading of the first Dewey. There, he (along with Heidegger[166]) is one of the most insightful critics of the history of Western philosophy. He asks the question of whether philosophy, given its weaknesses, still has a role in the world; whether there should be a discipline that retains its name. Yet, Dewey is no mere "mystic or belletrist" in this task because he pairs it with a deep analysis of that history. For Rorty, it is a philosopher's view of and relation to the history of philosophy that defines them. One of Dewey's readings of that history was addressed above in the section on *QC*. Importantly, this account (and Dewey's in general) shares four key criticisms of the philosophical tradition with Heidegger. Both critically assess: 1) the distinction, established in ancient philosophy, between contemplation and action; 2) the Cartesian problems regarding epistemological skepticism; 3) the distinction between philosophy and science; and 4) the further distinction between these two and "the aesthetic."[167] Their essential link is their *historicism* in approaching these critiques. 'Both men are trying to encapsulate the whole sequence which runs from Plato and Aristotle to Nietzsche and Carnap, set it aside, and offer something new – or at least the hope of something new.'[168] Essentially, they are both trying to step outside the Plato to Nietzsche progression, to "overcome the tradition." In this manner, both of these thinkers

[166] The following only addresses Rorty's comparison of Heidegger with Dewey. For a detailed treatment, as well as references to criticisms of it, see Ch.2.

[167] For Rorty's account of their similarities here, see: Rorty, Richard. "Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey" in *CP*. pp.42-6

[168] Ibid. p.46

are descendents of Hegel. However, how they use Hegel and historicism defines their difference and it is here that Dewey's is unique for Rorty. Dewey wants Hegel without Spirit.[169] He wants history without the grand metaphysics of a teleological movement. Heidegger, for Rorty, retains the desire for spirit and lionizes the necessary role of philosophy in this quest. The difference can be restated as follows. Both Heidegger and Dewey expose the metaphysical assumptions of the history of philosophy, how that history has failed to speak Being and only ever spoken beings (i.e. failed to grasp the perennial in Rorty's language). For Dewey, the result of this critique must be an increased appreciation of the concrete problems in the relations between beings and with the world. Heidegger, in contrast, wants to retain the question of Being and the task of philosophy without clearly being able to say what these entail. He leaves us with a 'vacant place,' with 'facing beings-without-Being, with no hint about what [genuine] Thought might be of.'[170] The difference is between their roles for philosophy following this critical history. Rorty sides with this Deweyean hope over Heideggerian nostalgia, democracy over poetry. It is Dewey's willingness to redefine philosophy (in this way) that makes him unique.

In "Dewey's Metaphysics" Rorty's offers his second reading of Dewey. Here, he argues that there is a tension in Dewey's work[171] between his critique of the history of philosophical dualisms and his search for the "generic traits of existence" in experience and the method he derives from this. In another place, Rorty articulates this tension as between the images of the philosopher as a social activist and politically neutral theoretician. For Rorty, the latter signals a continued commitment to objective truth.[172] In "Dewey's Metaphysics" he argues that Dewey was never satisfied with this role of cultural critic. This desire for more led to the claim to methodological neutrality in Dewey's work through the category of experience.[173] It led to 'his habit of announcing a bold new positive program when all he offers, and all he needs offer, is criticism of the tradition.'[174] While Dewey moved from a philosophy of "psychology as method" to his concept of experience, he never stopped assuming that his description of experience described its reality. In a sense, Dewey assumed that a critique of dualisms allowed him to offer a non-dualistic account of experience. He assumed that, 'there must be a standpoint from which

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[169] A phrasing Rorty continues to use for his own appropriation of Hegel. See Ch.3

[170] Rorty, Richard. "Overcoming the Tradition" in *CP*, p.49

[171] My concern is with how this reading of Dewey affects Rorty's use of him and not its accuracy. However, I will note that critical commentators on Rorty's use of Dewey rarely address his argument here. Rather, they simply bemoan his use of him and not the analysis that leads to it.

[172] Rorty, Richard. "Introduction" in *The Later Works of John Dewey Vol. 8* (ed. Jo Ann Boydston). Carbondale and Edwardsville, US: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986. p.x

[173] Rorty, Richard. "Dewey's Metaphysics" in *CP*, p.72

[174] Ibid. p.78 – Rorty assumes the possibility of a purely negative position. Chs.2 and 3 will illustrate how such a pure negativity fails.

experience can be seen in terms of some "generic traits"' and that this standpoint, 'would resemble traditional metaphysics in providing *a permanent neutral matrix for further enquiry*.'[175] With this matrix, Dewey has rejected the social nature of enquiry and claimed a foundational form of knowledge. He has rejected his own historicist critique of philosophy and assumed an "integrated unity" behind philosophical thought. Further, he has betrayed his own insight that the vocabulary of the causal antecedents of knowledge should not be conflated with the (social) justifications of our claims to knowledge. 'To say, as Dewey wants to, that to gain knowledge is to solve problems, one does not need to find "continuities" between nervous systems and people, or between "experience" and "nature."'[176] For Rorty, Dewey confuses two ways of opposing philosophical dualisms. The first is to indicate that the dualism was imposed by a tradition for specific cultural reasons, but is now useless.[177] The second is to describe the phenomenon in a non-dualistic way which emphasizes "continuity between higher and lower processes." This confuses cause with justification by attempting to justify within a causal vocabulary rather than a social one. The result is a metaphysical commitment to the reality of concepts. Dewey 'blew up notions like "transaction" and "situation" until they sounded as mysterious as "prime matter" or "thing-in-itself."'[178] He mistakenly believed that cultural criticism requires metaphysics. For Rorty, it is and can only be a form of purely negative (anti-foundational) social critique.

This tension surrounding the status of cultural criticism and the necessity of metaphysics leads to an ambiguity within Dewey's view of method.[179] At times he treated his method and its social conclusions as contingent formulations, while at others he assumed their neutrality. Dewey struggled to find a, 'middle ground between a well-defined procedure— a method in the sense of a set of directions for what to do next, something like a recipe— and a mere recommendation to be open-minded, undogmatic, critical, and experimental.'[180] Is this method universally valid or merely better for modern secular cultures? Does it describe or reform? For Rorty, Dewey struggled with this tension throughout his philosophy. His comments on method, "critical intelligence," and "reflective

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[175] Ibid. p.80 – my emphasis

[176] Ibid. p.82

[177] This is the sociological circumvention of Rorty's epistemological behaviourism discussed above.

[178] Ibid. p.84

[179] In my own account of Dewey's work above I have not emphasized this ambiguity in the way Rorty does. This is not because I disagree but because I wanted to emphasize the metaphysical aspects in order to illustrate how they carry over into Rorty's work.

[180] Rorty, "Introduction" *Later Works*, op cit. p.xiii

thinking"[181] never achieve the methodological neutrality he sometimes assumed. This led Rorty to a very particular use of Dewey's thought.

Rorty's Perversion of Dewey: Critical Readings

Criticisms of Rorty's use of Dewey tend to a similar form. Rorty, incorrectly and without rigour, subsumes Dewey within his own brand of neo-pragmatism. He ignores key elements of Dewey's philosophy and fails to understand the status of his metaphysics. Further, he fails to see how method is central to Dewey's entire philosophy. His philosophy is integrated and holistic; it stands or falls together. James Gouinlock argues that Rorty introduces a false division into Dewey's work between his "good" and "bad" (anti-foundational and metaphysical) sides. For him, Dewey's critiques of philosophy are based upon his metaphysics.[182] R.W. Sleeper continues this noting that those works that Rorty rejects (*Logic: The Theory of Enquiry* and *Experience and Nature*) are most central to Dewey's philosophy. Consequently, for Sleeper, he misunderstands the fundamental nature of Deweyan (and pragmatist) metaphysics.[183] Finally, James Campbell argues that Rorty fails to see the centrality of method for Dewey's project of social reconstruction. For Dewey, we can only critique and reformulate our social values with the aid of a critical methodology. For Campbell, and all of these critics, Dewey would never leave this task up to mere "conversation."[184]

Thelma Z. Lavine represents the polemical side of this reception. For her, Rorty undermines 'the philosophy of John Dewey, even while proclaiming himself a Deweyan.'[185] Rorty re-reads Dewey through the linguistic philosophy that followed his work. In this way, 'he can strike from a source unavailable to Dewey.'[186] This is the understanding of vocabularies mentioned above. Here, languages are tools for coping. They are contextual,

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[181] For explanations of these concepts, see: Eldridge, op cit. Ch.2 – Eldridge argues that Dewey's central project is the transformation of practice through critical intelligence and reflective thinking.

[182] Gouinlock, James. "What is the legacy of Instrumentalism? Rorty's Interpretation of Dewey" in *Richard Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski). Op cit. pp.175-6

[183] Sleeper, R.W. "Rorty's Pragmatism: Afloat in Neuraths's Boat, But Why Adrift?" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. Vol. 21 (1), 1985. pp.15-6

[184] Campbell, James. "Rorty's Use of Dewey" in *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 22 (2), 1984. pp.182-6 – See also: Margolis, Joseph. "Dewey's and Rorty's Opposed Pragmatisms" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. Vol. 38 (1/2), 2002; Brodsky, Garry. "Rorty's Interpretation of Pragmatism" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. Vol. 18 (4), 1982. p.317; Edel, Abraham. "A Missing Dimension in Rorty's Use of Pragmatism" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. Vol. 21 (1), 1985; Kolenda, Konstantin. "Rorty's Dewey" in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 20 (1), 1986. p.58. – For a notable exception, see; Conway, Daniel W. "Of Depth and Loss: The Peritropaic Legacy of Dewey's Pragmatism" in *Richard Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski), op cit. p.195. Conway argues that Dewey and Rorty are connected by the common attempt to build a new intellectual culture. For him, there is a narrative bridge that connects these two. I am arguing that this bridge involves a common ontological disposition.

[185] Lavine, op cit. 42

[186] Ibid. p.43 – this is a noticeably odd point as it seems to invalidate all future criticism.

contingent and have normative relations within them rather than representative with the world. Importantly, there is no neutral method to decide amongst this plurality. 'By delegitimating, levelling-down scientific method, knowledge, and technology as one of the many vocabularies coping with specific contingent situations without representing anything other than this contingency, Rorty has now delivered a fatal blow to the philosopher-father: scientific method is Dewey's central concept.'[187] In spite of her hyperbole, Lavine identifies a key difference between Rorty and Dewey. Dewey levels-up all enquiry to the standard of the natural sciences, while Rorty levels it down to our anti-foundational, social-practices. Fundamental to this difference is the nature and status of method.

The Living and the Dead: Rorty's Defence

These critics fail to understand the intention of Rorty's reading of Dewey. Some of these failures are due to opposing philosophies. Others are due to some misplaced desire to retain a "true Dewey" and malign any selective reading of him. In response to this hostile reception, Rorty, in a series of articles, clarified his treatment of Dewey. In "Dewey between Hegel and Darwin" he illustrates the major themes of both pragmatism and Dewey and how he seeks to develop their strengths while eliding their faults. Rorty notes how both William James and Dewey were influenced by both idealism and panpsychism (a view regarding the unity of experience in a mental aspect). In fact, Dewey draws his language of experience and the unity it assumes from these two sources. In contrast, Rorty situates Dewey between Hegel and Darwin in a way that ignores the idealism and panpsychism in each.

> I want to suggest an account of this relation that emphasizes Hegel's historicism rather than his idealism, and Darwin's affinities with positivism rather than vitalism. So I shall be describing what Dewey might have and, in my view, should have said, rather than what he did say. I shall be constructing a hypothetical Dewey who was a pragmatist without being a radical empiricist, and a naturalist without being a panpsychist. The point in constructing such a Dewey is to separate what I think is living and what I think is dead in Dewey's thought, and thereby to clarify the difference between the state of philosophical play around 1900 and at the present time.[188]

This is one of Rorty's clearest statements on his reading of Dewey. He attempts to isolate the elements of Dewey's philosophy that speak to contemporary problems. He utilizes Dewey as a tool for his own "situation." As Rorty himself notes, he is much more interested in the philosophical question than the exegetical one regarding Dewey;[189] in the wider

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[187] Ibid. p.44

[188] Rorty, Richard. "Dewey between Hegel and Darwin" in *Rorty and Pragmatism*, op cit. p.3

[189] Rorty, Richard, "Response to Lavine" in *Rorty and Pragmatism,* op cit. p.52

spirit of Dewey's work, and its continued relevance. It is for this reason that Rorty often seemed confused by the hostile reaction to his use of Dewey. For him, his updating and utilizing of Dewey for the contemporary context was utterly Deweyean.[190]

The question now is how Rorty appropriates Dewey's work on method. Is there anything living there? What spirit does he discern over/against the flawed letter? Rorty is emphatic that, in opposition to both Dewey and his commentators, Dewey did not provide a method. This is due to the status of what he offers. By attempting to abstract from the scientific method, in a manner applicable to all enquiry, Dewey hit an ambiguous middle ground between actual techniques and virtuous habits. For Rorty, there is no generalizable method in this liminal space. Consequently, he purposefully (mis)reads Dewey as "beyond method." '"Critical intelligence" is as good a name as any for being experimental, nondogmatic, inventive, and imaginative, and for ceasing to expect, or try for, certainty.'[191] For Rorty, critical intelligence, Dewey's name for the mode of thought operative within his method, is a set of anti-metaphysical virtues rather than a pathway. Further, *QC* is not elaborating a new method of enquiry, but a critique of anti-metaphysical dualisms informed by certain values; imperatives to be, 'reflective but determined, open yet disciplined, tolerant but discriminating, bold but not too bold, imaginative yet not wild.'[192]For Rorty, Dewey could have advocated these virtues[193] without the language of method. Consequently, Rorty prefers to think of Dewey as offering *social practices*. The dispositions that inform our enquiry and our approach to the world are social and behavioural. They stretch beyond specific disciplines, like the physical sciences, and affect whole cultures. Further, they are, as Dewey hoped, open to critical confrontation in practice. The connection between this reading of Dewey and Rorty's critique of Analytic epistemology is obvious. Rorty utilizes the same behavioural circumvention to de-ontologize Dewey, to substitute 'linguistic behaviour for "experience."'[194]Rorty's selective reading of Dewey illuminates his understanding of enquiry. What Rorty desires is the right ethical disposition (orientation) to enquiry, which he draws from Dewey, backed up with a non-metaphysical social-practice understanding of enquiry. This, he argues, will allow a progressive and reformist (rather than revolutionary) form of enquiry into human culture. Thus, in Rorty's work, this disposition originates in Dewey. However, it affects his entire

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[190] Rorty, Richard. "Response to Gouinlock" in *Rorty and Pragmatism*, op cit. p.99

[191] Ibid. p.92

[192] Rorty, "Response to Gouinlock," op cit. p.94

[193] For Rorty, these dispositions do not have an implicit ontological position whereas, as I argued previously, they are attended by a covert metaphysical disposition of mastery. How this infects Rorty's view of enquiry is addressed subsequently.

[194] Rorty, "Response to Gouinlock," op cit. p.97

reformulation of the project of enquiry and philosophy. Rorty's view of enquiry does in some manner rely upon Dewey's account of experience.[195] As a result, the same unity and ontology (of mastery) persists.

PRAGMATISM AND HERMENEUTICS: THE ATTITUDE OF METHOD

In *PMN* Rorty elaborates an alternative approach to enquiry he dubs, "Hermeneutics."[196] Expanding his epistemological behaviourism, he offers a social and anti-essentialist image of philosophy. Drawing on Thomas Kuhn, Rorty utilizes an understanding of the dynamics of scientific communities in order to understand language and culture in general. Here, he finds confirmation of both his behavioural approach and the attitudes toward science and the world that he draws from Dewey. He uses these elements to re-conceive the task of philosophy and the nature of enquiry; finally, he frames both of these projects within a pragmatized methodological disposition "beyond method." This section argues that Rorty reformulates enquiry to overturn a series of dualisms that support the metaphor of the mind (and epistemology) as a mirror of nature. This reformulation understands disciplines and paradigms as essentially social-linguistic. They are unified behavioural islands where justification is always internal and normative rather than representational or ontological. Within this reformulation, which he refers to as both "Hermeneutics" and "edifying," Rorty (implicitly) assumes a basic metaphysical unity behind reality and (explicitly) affirms the values of Dewey's mastery and assume its neutrality. Consequently, his hermeneutic freeing of thought only constrains questioning. These claims will only be broached here. They will be elaborated upon throughout this thesis.

Rorty situates his re-visioning of enquiry within the aforementioned critiques of epistemology as the desire for authority and the requisite assumption of a neutral framework for enquiry. Hermeneutics is designed to oppose this desire and assumption. He is quick to qualify that it is *not* a name for another method. It is not another, grounded, manner of philosophizing. 'On the contrary, hermeneutics is an expression of hope that the cultural space left by the demise of epistemology will not be filled—that our culture

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[195] Campbell, op cit. p.185

[196] This section does not attempt to judge the appropriateness of Rorty's use of this term or the strengths of the reading of Gadamer upon which it is based. It is only focuses on what hermeneutics means for Rorty in order to critique his wider reformulation of philosophy. For critiques of Rorty's use of Gadamer and hermeneutics, see: Rockmore, Tom. "Gadamer, Rorty, and Epistemology as Hermeneutics" in *Laval théologique et philosophique*, vol. 53 (1), 1997; Guignon, Charles. "Saving the Differences: Gadamer and Rorty" in *PSA: Proceedings of the Biannual Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association.* Vol. 2, 1982; Bouma-Prediger, Steve. "Rorty's Pragmatism an Gadamer's Hermeneutics" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 57 (2), 1989.

should become one in which the demand for constraint and confrontation is no longer felt.'[197] Hermeneutics is an anti-metaphysical *disposition* (of hope). Further, it is the struggle against the assumption of a neutral framework. For Rorty, this idea depends upon the supposition of commensurability, the idea that there is a set of rules for achieving rational agreement amongst various discourses and statements. Epistemology (which stands opposed to hermeneutics), as grounded philosophy, depends upon a neutral framework and such universal commensurability. This is the assumption that, in principle, all humans can be brought to agree on something. Though this "common ground" has taken different forms throughout the history of philosophy, they all assume a neutral framework and the requirement of commensurability. In contrast, hermeneutics 'sees the relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers.'[198] The language of conversation, which has caused much ire among critics, is purposely behavioural and sociological. He is suggesting that we see enquiry and claims to knowledge from the perspective of one examining the social interactions of a community. Enquiry is a social practice that must be interpreted hermeneutically and holistically. We must move back and forth in a "hermeneutic circle" encountering as many aspects of the community as possible while weaving them into a greater unity.

Rorty's appropriation of Thomas Kuhn clarifies this understanding of enquiry. The former utilizes the latter to undermine a series of distinctions that divide science from the humanities (*Natur-* and *Geisteswissenschaften*), and to recast those divisions within enquiry as merely the result of different moments therein. Thus, where epistemology and hermeneutics are usually distinguished by discipline, Rorty matches them to Kuhn's division between normal and revolutionary science. '"Normal" science is the practice of solving problems against the background of a consensus about what counts as a good explanation of the phenomena and about what it would take for a problem to be solved. "Revolutionary" science is the introduction of a new "paradigm" of explanation, and thus of a new set of problems.'[199] Epistemology and hermeneutics correspond to normal and revolutionary discourse respectively. Rorty's point here to remove the epistemology-hermeneutics divide from the familiar dualisms linked to it (fact-value, objective-subjective, nature-spirit, sciences of nature-sciences of man). These dualisms are hierarchical distinctions of certainty. The former epistemological term is superior to the

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[197] Rorty, *PMN*, p.315

[198] Ibid, p.318

[199] Ibid, p.320; see also – Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd Ed. London, UK: University of Chicago Press, 1962. pp.10-12

latter hermeneutic one. In contrast, the normal-abnormal distinction concerns the state of enquiry in a given community. In normal (epistemological) periods the standards regarding defining and solving problems are established. Revolutionary (hermeneutic) or abnormal enquiry does not conform to a normal period. It exists outside the dominant rules of a community and can potentially destabilize that matrix. Kuhn's value, for Rorty, was to end the pendulum swing of theories of enquiry between realism and idealism through a behavioural approach to the question of knowledge. He did this through a historical account of the development of scientific paradigms. By illustrating the dramatic shifts in basic science, Kuhn demonstrated the enclosed nature of theoretical paradigms. He showed how there were no neutral criteria in these movements and invalidated the idea of an algorithm for theory-choice.[200] Essentially, his analysis was rejeceted traditional epistemology.

Rorty's purpose in adopting Kuhn's distinction and rethinking the nature of philosophy is not to destroy scientific values or their place in modern Western culture. Rather, like Dewey, he wants to preserve those values without their metaphysical baggage, to disconnect them from the mirror of nature.[201] For him, the idea that science can only be justified if it is not a value-based enterprise, stands upon those aforementioned distinctions which divide enquiry into hard and soft varieties. These distinctions only function with the grounding assumption of a neutral framework or language that assures correspondence with the world. For Rorty, assuming such a neutral language "blocks the road of enquiry." By assuming the neutrality of the present, normal discourse, it prevents hermeneutically inspired developments. It blocks new paradigms. Rorty is sanguine about the continued rise in the levels of prediction and control of the basic physicalism that dominates Western scientific thought. Further, he acknowledges the need of it as a formational "background story" or narrative, a posited progressive unity, to the development of Modernity in general. His concern is with the attempt to give this basic understanding epistemological and metaphysical grounding. For him, it requires none. The infinite control promised by physical determinism may tell us much but it cannot determine the nature of our communities or how we give meaning to our practices (science included). This task is specifically non-ontological (like justification). Hermeneutics acknowledges this by eschewing claims to knowledge and offering itself only as a means to cope with each other and the world.[202]

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[200] Ibid. pp.322-5
[201] Ibid. pp.335-6
[202] Ibid. pp.344-5, 354-6

Rorty develops a new task for philosophy in light of this understanding of enquiry. Drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer, he offers a vision of thinking that replaces knowledge, as the archetypal human activity, with edification. Edification is the task of finding new ways of speaking. Hermeneutics is the disposition best suited to this task. Further, it is inherently pragmatic. It is, 'an attitude interested not so much in what is out there in the world, or in what happened in history, as in what we can get out of nature and history for our own uses.'[203] The task is to find new and "more interesting" ways of speaking to cope with the world. With this emphasis, Rorty offers an anti-essentialist approach to enquiry which levels down the various vocabularies within which enquiry occurs. This is another manifestation of Rorty's anti-authoritarianism. For him, a hierarchy among disciplines and vocabularies is a claim to the possibility of a neutral one. All vocabularies have implicit values and thus cannot pretend to neutrality. Further, as aforementioned, such a claim closes off enquiry (creating new vocabularies). Consequently, Rorty offers a new distinction between *systematic* and *edifying* philosophy. This distinction corresponds more to the distinction between epistemology and hermeneutics and should not be confused with the normal-abnormal distinction, which can occur within either type of philosophy. Systematic philosophy, which can be periodically abnormal, attempts to establish a new hierarchy. It conforms to the basic thesis of correspondence and the presence of a neutral way of approaching the world. It seeks to reshape all philosophy on its lines and close off enquiry as a result. Edifying philosophy, in contrast, is always destructive and parasitic. It is permanently on the periphery and refuses to offer a new standard of authority. It is always pure negativity on the "meta-level." 'Edifying philosophers have to decry the very notion of having a view… We might just be *saying something*—participating in a conversation rather than contributing to an enquiry. Perhaps saying things is not always saying how things are. Perhaps saying *that* is itself not a case of saying how things are.'[204] Edifying philosophy is specifically anti-ontological. Rorty here seems to equate ontology with representative epistemology; that the question of "what is" is always a claim to know it with certainty. As a result, edifying philosophy must be negative.[205] It must critique and contest but must never construct because that act, in itself, closes off enquiry.

Rorty's opposition to ontology is rooted in his distinction between *cause* and *justification*. Within epistemology it is assumed that a philosophy of correspondence is

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[203] Ibid. p.359
[204] Ibid. p.371 – Rorty notes that to attempt to have an anti-essentialist ontology still falls into the same trap of systematic philosophy. Enquiry is still blocked. See: Ibid. p.378
[205] See also: Rorty, Richard. "Solidarity or Objectivity" in *ORT*.

necessary to justify physical enquiry because it literally "shoves us around." For Rorty, this confuses, '*contact* with reality (a causal, non-intentional, non-description-relative relation) with *dealing* with reality (describing, explaining, predicting, and modifying it—all of which are things we do under descriptions).'[206] Coping with reality is always linguistically mediated and socially justified. Confusing these two elements, for Rorty, stands behind demands for truth and a single way of describing reality. This is the demand for authority. It is the desire to have the world "unveiled." Drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre, Rorty argues that this desire is derivative of the desire for a god (or for humans to be a god in truth). In opposition, abandoning the hope for a single way of speaking accepts human finitude. Thus, the purpose of Rorty's edifying philosophy is to suggest the proliferation of this conversation, not its restriction. He wants more abnormal discourse, not the static dominance of one set of rules in one paradigm.[207] Edifying philosophy is intended to have a freeing function. For Rorty, the epistemological and ontological projects are inherently oppressive. They 'reduce freedom to nature, choice to knowledge.'[208] In turn, he seeks to block a series of distinctions (fact-value, objective-subjective, nature-spirit) because they divide science and non-science. His way of conceptualizing enquiry, between abnormal and normal discourse, allows us to see enquiry as only divided by two moments. This allows the perpetual "questioning[209]" out of which all new enquiry (and thought) emerges. Normal epistemology blocks enquiry by universalizing the rules and standards of the moment. It ignores that continued conversation is the ultimate context of knowledge.

If all norms of justification are socially specific, we can only improve them through what Rorty calls "cultural anthropology." Its "empirical-cum-hermeneutic" methods engage with the social practices of justification in a given community, the empirical facts about their beliefs, desires and processes. Rorty is noticeably brief on the details of this in *PMN*.[210] However, in "Pragmatism Without Method" Rorty elaborates a version of pragmatic enquiry drawn from his anti-essentialist reading of Dewey and indicative of this intentionally destabilizing form of questioning. To return to the epigraph of this chapter, Rorty discerns two sides to pragmatism. While both are anti-metaphysical,

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[206] Rorty, *PMN*, p.375

[207] Ibid. p.377

[208] Ibid. p.384

[209] This language of openness and questioning is Rorty at his most Heideggerian. One of the arguments of this thesis is that Rorty either misunderstands (or reformulates) Heidegger's point here. Without specifically ontological questioning, Rorty fails to provide for the openness he desires. By privileging the empirical and pragmatic level of action-oriented decisions, Rorty circumscribes the debate.

[210] Even Rorty's most sympathetic critics have noted the contrast in PMN between the power of his critique and the impoverishment of his hermeneutic alternative. Bernstein Richard J. "Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind" in *Philosophical Profiles: Essays in a Pragmatic Mode.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1986. p.77—For more critical account of Rorty's alternative from the Analytic perspective, see; Pettit, Philip."Philosophy after Rorty" in *Richard Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski), op cit. p.56.

they are distinguished by their audiences. When pragmatism has been public, its concern has been 'to break through the crust of convention, to favour receptivity to the new rather than attachment to the old.'[211] Here, it offered the "experimental attitude" as an alternative to custom and offered the natural scientist as its model for human culture (and hence was given to scientism). Alternatively, for Rorty, pragmatism has different tendencies within philosophical communities. Here, they reject scientism and emphasize the holism, behaviouralism, and naturalism addressed above (albeit in different forms). The issue between these two approaches is the status of method. Rorty clearly supports the latter holist pragmatism that wants naturalism without scientism. It retains materialism (i.e. Rorty's physicalism) while rejecting that this necessitates certain methods. For Rorty, rejecting representationalism and thinking of beliefs as "rules for action" only requires an experimentalist, fallibalist *attitude*, not a method. The desire for method in pragmatism is one more manifestation of the desire for (argumentative) authority. In lieu of correspondence, a method for "rational" decision-making provides another ground to establish that authority. The only thing that distinguishes vocabularies is their success solving problems. Thus, this position wants naturalism, science, and experimental instrumentalism without the claim to a unique method. The only elements that can be isolated in such an approach are its attitude. For Rorty, this is a willingness to "muddle through," "be contritely fallibilist," and reweave one's ideas with the hope of both establishing something new and reaching a consensus. It is a process of piecemeal "useful adjustments," rather than large revolutionary shifts, which would require something like a method (or ground). This is a disposition, orientation, or posture rather than a set of procedures.[212] While this position is characterized by a "means-ends rationality," it is one employed towards the reweaving of our beliefs[213] in order to better solve our problems. In this focus, the orientation towards the problem, Rorty embraces Dewey's instrumentalist language and attitude.

This holistic version of pragmatism deflates the traditional (epistemological) conception of philosophy. It is anti-metaphysical without replacing the space vacated by metaphysics with a new source of authority.[214] Rather, in contrast to both scientistic

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[211] Rorty, "Pragmatism Without Method" op cit. p.63

[212] Ibid. pp.66-8

[213] This process of reweaving networks of beliefs characterizes Rorty's view of enquiry in general. See: Rorty, Richard. "Inquiry as Recontextualization" in *ORT*.

[214] This is well-represented in Rorty's claim that his version of enquiry is ethical, in that it is an attitude oriented to human purposes, rather than ontological, which is oriented toward representing the Real. See: Ibid. p.110

pragmatism and Continental claims to "depth,"[215] it purposefully leaves the cultural role of metaphysics open. It allows enquiry to proceed without hierarchies. 'We would thus fulfill the mission of the syncretic and holistic side of pragmatism—the side that tries to see human beings doing much the same sort of problem-solving across the whole spectrum of their activities.'[216] Thus, Rorty socially naturalizes instrumentalism.[217] Through a reading of Dewey and a reformulation of enquiry along linguistic lines, Rorty makes all activity about the instrumental solving of problems and all standards for this social. To avoid the metaphysics of representationalist epistemologies, pragmatist scientism, Continental claims to depth, and consequent hierarchies in enquiry, Rorty levels down thought to a single epistemological level, the pragmatic. Further, for him, a *pragmatic disposition of mastery* that utilizes this insight is best equipped to tackle our contemporary problems. While it is discussed in Chs. 4 and 5, it should be understood that this version of pragmatism is the best resource to justify the West's "anti-ideological liberalism" precisely because it lacks a foundational claim to authority. For Rorty, contemporary Western political theory demands grounding and certainty. In both the claims to scientific grounding of Anglo-American philosophy and the unveiling of reality in Continental claims to depth, the hope that sustains democracy has been lost.[218] The relationship between Rorty's pragmatic philosophy of mastery and his political liberalism is central to this thesis which argues that Rorty's political liberalism and pragmatic mastery mutually justify each other. This pragmatism beyond method, this cautious linguistic reformism, is the only non-metaphysical justification of liberalism. In turn, liberalism is a political formalization of this pragmatic attitude. The pragmatic disposition of mastery that denies ontology is linked to a liberalism that denies ideology by a naturalization of social instrumentalism. They both deny a set of implicit assumptions and constrain their respective spheres of debate in spite of Rorty's language of hermeneutics and openness.

There is a deep flaw within Rorty's reformulation of philosophical enquiry. Hermeneutics, as an attitude without method and a philosophy without ontological and epistemological assumptions, naturalizes Rorty's social instrumentalism. A new claim to authority, priority and neutrality reflexively re-enters. While Rorty attempts to

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[215] This critical interpretation of Continental philosophy will be addressed in Ch.2 in a discussion of Rorty's critique of unmasking. This is Rorty's central critique of Continental thought and is thus central to this thesis.

[216] Rorty, Richard. "Pragmatism Without Method," op cit, p.76

[217] William E. Connolly claims that Rorty institutes a social foundationalism in place of representational epistemology. However, Connolly fails to connect this to Rorty's instrumentalism. See: ""Mirror of America" in Politics and Ambiguity. London, UK: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. p.122

[218] Rorty, Richard. "Pragmatism Without Method," op cit. p.76-7 – For a thorough connection of Rorty's hermeneutics to his democratic ethos, see; Warnke, Georgia. "Rorty's Democratic Hermeneutics" in *Richard Rorty*, op cit. pp.114-22

hermeneutically open the field of questioning to perpetual abnormality, his circumscription to the pragmatic closes off as much enquiry as it opens. He fails to understand that claims to authority and the resulting closure of discourse can occur on multiple levels.[219] Circumscribing the ontological naturalizes assumptions and structures the field of discourse. Further, Rorty's claim to be successfully anti-ontological fails here. Edifying philosophy is clearly a different way of approaching philosophy. Hermeneutics, while it may not have specific rules or methods, is a disposition with real consequences. The distinction between systematic and edifying philosophy, as two different moments within abnormality, fails because there are no purely negative moments. There is no attitude without ontology. Rather, there is the ontological disposition of mastery here. Though we only get hints, it is clear that this approach is characterized by a piecemeal reformism based upon the assumptions of scientific materialism (for the physical world) and behavioural sociology (for human communities).[220] The resulting instrumentalism assumes the plasticity of the physical and the unity of the social worlds. By focusing exclusively on the issue of the status of claims of method rather than the ontological assumptions or the attitude it carries with it, Rorty ignores the effects of the structures he advocates. Consequently, he ends up establishing his social instrumentalism as the necessary way of (non-metaphysically) approaching the world. He gives it a pragmatic authority instead of an epistemic or ontological one. He reinserts a claim to neutrality and closes off the very thought and questioning he seeks to open up.

Conclusion:

Rorty's early work is characterized by an anti-ontological approach to the philosophy of mind that undermined the epistemic authority of that structure. His critique of epistemology in *PMN* expands these themes. There, the desire for certainty and the assumptions of a neutral framework for epistemology were opposed through a critical reading of the history of Western epistemology and a behavioural view of social justification. Dewey's work, which contains a similar critique of the history of philosophy, is a pragmatic instrumentalism explicitly oriented toward mastery of the world instead of correspondence to or certain knowledge of it. Moreover, his philosophy is plagued by the threat of a covert metaphysical unity (of experience) behind that instrumentalism that threatens its assumption of the world's susceptibility to human control and direction. Consequently, Rorty's reading of Dewey was admittedly selective and focused on utilizing

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[219] Warnke, "Rorty's Democratic Hermeneutics" op cit. p.117
[220] These will prove particularly problematic in the discussion of Herbert Marcuse in Ch.5

its disposition, rather than its metaphysical justification. This influence is clearly evident in the final section of *PMN* and later essays where Rorty rethought philosophy as a community of enquiry. Its linguistic and instrumentalist project is meant to open up philosophy, culture and enquiry to an anti-authoritarian attitude of openness to the creation of new thought with which to manage our lives and communities. If the assumption of a neutral framework for philosophy, philosophical dualisms of rank, and claims to (epistemic) authority are the targets of Rorty's critiques, hermeneutics is the alternative ethical attitude, instrumentalism the alternative habit of action and social justification the alternative epistemology he offers. The flaws of this portion of Rorty's work are located in his anti-ontological approach to philosophy and his disproportionate concern with claims to philosophical authority. He fails to see the impossibility of a purely negative philosophy and opens himself to the dangers of the metaphysical unity behind Dewey's work in his appropriation of the latter's disposition of mastery (developed in Chs.2 and 3). Further, he blocks the interrogation of those assumptions in circumscribing enquiry to the pragmatic management of vocabularies through the hermeneutic confrontation of social and cultural forms of justification. Thus, Rorty assumes and then delegitimizes interrogating those assumptions. He inserts mastery and covers it over.[221] He circumvents questioning and gelds philosophy.

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[221] The following chapters will clarify how these two movements are necessarily connected in a common mechanism of veiling.

> The most persistent issue facing critical interpretation today is the ironic relation it assumes to its own ontopolitical projections. We must convert this paradoxical condition… into spurs to productive thinking. For this condition/limit of reflection is unlikely to be eliminated. The sense that this ambiguous condition sets the terms within which thought necessarily proceeds today constitutes our reverence and spur simultaneously.[222]

INTRODUCTION:

In the absence of a neutral framework for engaging the world that assures one's representations of it, enquiry, indeed the limits of our thought, must be understood as social. Humanity can no longer pretend to represent the world in its essence. Further, philosophy can no longer claim privileged access to reality and the consequent duty of epistemological arbitration of the rest of human culture. With the loss of this project, philosophy, for Rorty, must reconceptualize the limits of its practice and the aims of its reflections. It must turn away from the essential, the neutral and the timeless and toward the contingent, the naturalistic and the historical. This, for Rorty, is fundamentally a turn away from reality and toward language (as contingent). As discussed in Ch. 1, the thematic unity of Rorty's early work (his philosophy up to and including *PMN*) is fundamentally anti-ontological. In the place of tradition epistemology and metaphysics it offers a social understanding of language paired with an instrumentalist disposition to enquiry. This linguistic prioritization of the social argues that our vocabularies, our frameworks for conceptualizing of the world, are inevitably cut off from material reality. Consequently, we can only approach the latter instrumentally. This separation, between language and reality, persists in Rorty's work and will be explored throughout this chapter and the rest of this thesis. The effect is a radical cut between language and the world, culture and reality, philosophy and politics.

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[222] Connolly, William E. *The Ethos of Pluralization*. London, UK: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. p.38

Building on this account, this chapter confronts Rorty's "mature" philosophy (post-*PMN*[223]). where he continued the theorization of his alternative project for philosophy following this negative critique of Analytic philosophy. It continues to argue that Rorty's anti-foundational attack on any connection to reality (essentially, a rejection of ontology) is the central thematic of his philosophy, and begins to elaborate and critique the essential themes of this positive conception of philosophy. Essentially, to establish what philosophy, for him, can achieve in the in the absence of grounds. To accomplish this, three key themes will be engaged within Rorty's work: contingency (and the priority of language), naturalism, and historicism.[224] These encapsulate both Rorty's alternative conception of the world (a kind of ontology) and his understanding of the limits of philosophy after the fall of the foundational project. Further, it is from within these three themes, each of which were discussed in some form in Ch 1, that Rorty conceptualizes the relationship between philosophy and politics.

Framed within his opposition to ontology, it is Rorty's particular formulation of contingency, naturalism, and historicism that leads to his central flaw: that in spite of his emphasis on contingency there is a reappearance of stability, control, and mastery in his thought. In order to critically confront this weakness, this thesis will turn to the work of the political theorist William E. Connolly.[225] Connolly's thought has important connections with Rorty's. Both are strong epistemological and methodological critics of their respective disciplines. Both criticized the foundationalism of their fields and sought a deeper understanding of contingency. Both crossed major academic divides utilizing Continental philosophy and work from the humanities. Finally, both affirmed that, in the absence of foundations, we must rethink the relation between philosophy and politics. Nonetheless, amidst these similarities there are important differences. Where Rorty rejects ontology both as a philosophical project and a manner of thinking politics, Connolly posits the irreducibility of basic ontological commitments and the interdependency and mutual necessity of those commitments and politics. Thus, the latter's role in this critique is to reveal both the manner in which Rorty's anti-foundational rejection of ontology fails,

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[223] The division within Rorty's work established here is merely heuristic for the present analysis. Before, during, and after *PMN* Rorty engages in both negative attacks on Analytic philosophy and positive articulations of an alternative path. The present division merely indicates that Rorty's concern up to *PMN* was more primarily negative attack while following that work it was with an alternative, positive, pathway for philosophy.

[224] Williams, Michael. "Introduction to the Thirtieth Anniversary Edition" in *PMN*. pp.xvi-xvii

[225] Connolly's work is only being drawn upon because of the specific dynamics it illuminates in Rorty. Connolly theorizes the necessity of ontology to political thought. Further, he connects this to a reading of contingency, an alternative use of Heidegger (from Rorty's) that emphasises the mastery dynamic, and an understanding of the instability of language. In this manner, he serves as an ideal introduction to the critical analytic of mastery developed in this thesis. However, his later work on pluralism is not drawn as its concerns are beyond the scope of the present discussion.

in that ontological assumptions re-enter his philosophy, and the consequences of those surreptitious assumptions.

The argument of Chs. 2 and 3 are as follows. Due to his re-conceptualization of enquiry as both social and historical and his understanding of truth as social justification (introduced in Ch. 1 and elaborated here), Rorty rejects the ontological project as a foundational attempt to recreate an external authority to constrain our thought. Pragmatism, within his particular history of philosophy, assumes a revolutionary role breaking with the epistemological and ontological projects central to the history of Western philosophy. Consequently, Rorty develops three anti-foundational and anti-essentialist themes within his alternative philosophical model: the *pragmatist-historical method*. First, he theorizes the simultaneous contingency and priority of language. Here he offers a utility-based/mastery-oriented approach to language change and social evolution. Unfortunately, this understanding results in an assumption of the unity and coherence of languages and an uncritical approach to the notion of human control over social and linguistic development. Second, while attempting to naturalize this understanding through the language of evolution and an account of the material, Rorty, as previously mentioned, reinstitutes a firm nature/culture divide. He continues to assume the flat priority of language and the social and implicitly assumes the neutrality of naturalism. Finally, as a consequence of these two themes, Rorty concludes that philosophy now can only and must be historical. This conclusion, in itself, is unproblematic; however, the histories he provides and the model of development he theorizes assume a particular model of history that proceeds through a linear, albeit contingent, process of alternating revolutions and stabilizations. This assumes a fundamental unity of the moment and the ability to master human reality before the next contingent historical shift. In contrast, I argue that Connolly's philosophy of ambiguity illustrates how ontological assumptions are irreducible and how Rorty's attempt at ontological minimalism results in flawed assumptions about the nature of language and its susceptibility to human control, the connection between the material and the linguistic (nature and culture), and the movement of history. Furthermore, Connolly's critique of the ontology mastery and its mechanism of veiling reveals that Rorty, in assuming such mastery through the stability and priority of language and culture, enacts a "social foundationalism" where an epistemological one had reigned. This foundationalism, or "mastery of the moment", ignores the fundamental ambiguity of being and constricts our intellectual and political thought through a mechanism of veiling implicit within the mastery of Rorty's thought. In this manner, the rejection of ontology is politicized. This argument will be developed

across this chapter and the subsequent one. This chapter will address the approach to ontology and the theorization of language. It contrasts Rorty and Connolly's understandings of ontology, the consequences of this for language and their readings of Heidegger,[226] to argue that Rorty's rejection of ontology and resulting social foundationalism domesticate contingency and enact a mechanism of veiling. This asserts the neutrality of his pragmatism while excluding non-pragmatic perspectives.[227] Ch. 3 will continue these arguments into discussions of naturalism and history.

THE APPROACH (TO ONTOLOGY)

In Ch. 1 it was clear that an anti-ontological turn occurred early within Rorty's work that formed the basis of his subsequent critique of epistemology and foundationalism. The nature of this critique and his subsequent re-working of the project of philosophy in general led him to rethink enquiry and the nature of concept change. The purpose of this section is to illustrate and critique how this opposition to ontology both persists within his work and connects to those re-conceptualizations. In his theorizations of enquiry, social justification, and language (the first two of which were introduced in Ch. 1 and the last of which will be addressed subsequently) Rorty asserts the ontological priority of the social. Essentially, that it is the social practices we have, the languages we speak, and the communities that exist determine our ontological reality. In contrast, Connolly posits the irreducibility of ontological presuppositions and the necessity of critically engaging with ontology in order to assess and understand the implicit assumptions of both one's own and others' positions. He illustrates that, contra Rorty, it is not possible to eschew a discussion of ontology and proceed with an entirely post-metaphysical philosophy. While highlighting the importance of the social to our understanding of the world, Rorty goes too far in reducing the issue of ontology to social practices and the vicissitudes of cultural politics. In this, he assumes you can exclude the issue of ontology in his subsequent philosophical and political discussions. In contrast, Connolly, acknowledging both the ambiguity of ontology and its necessity, formulates an orientation to philosophy that accounts for this fundamental uncertainty. This section will merely establish these

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[226] If Dewey is the key figure for Ch. 1, Heidegger is the key figure for Chs. 2 and 3. Heidegger is Rorty's main Continental source; the impetus of his engagement with that philosophy. Further, it is in Rorty's use of Heidegger that we can see the real effects of his pragmatism. He reads Heidegger without ontology and domesticates the significance of his work to mere emphasis on historicism. Further, Heidegger is central to this (continentally-minded) critique. Here, this will be introduced through Connolly's contrasting use of Heidegger. Ch. 3 will turn to his work in detail.

[227] This aspect, as illustrated below, is the return to methodological neutrality discussed in Ch. 1

orientations to the idea of ontology with the hope that they will be both clarified and their consequences drawn out throughout the rest of this chapter and the thesis as a whole.

Rorty, the Critique of Epistemology and the Ontological Priority of the Social

Rorty's context is of paramount importance to understanding his position on ontology. Coming out of Analytic philosophy, his fundamental concerns are with the status of enquiry and the role of epistemology in philosophy. He begins *PMN* explicitly contradicting the basic assumption of Analytic philosophy: that philosophy serves a foundational role in the search for knowledge by establishing the possibilities, limits and nature of accurate representations of the world.[228] For him, this "representationalism" is based upon a series of mistaken metaphors where the mind (or language) is taken as a "mirror of nature." The purpose of much of Rorty's subsequent project is to rethink enquiry and philosophy along anti-representationalist lines that do not include some notion of matching or representing reality.

The single concern of much of Rorty's philosophy is to thoroughly debunk the idea of a neutral or privileged framework for enquiry. This Archimedean point is the fundamental assumption of those positing the commensurability of all discourses. If all discourses are, in principle, commensurable, then they are all subject to the same rules of enquiry which must, as a result, be stable. This primary concern within Rorty's work forms the basis of his opposition to ontology. Rorty rejects the use of ontology for philosophical and political reflection precisely because of his opposition to a neutral framework for enquiry and the representationalism of classical epistemology. For him, ontology is inevitably the search for the one correct view of reality, the neutral viewpoint against which all assertions are to be measured.

The reason why quarrels among metaphysicians about the nature of Reality seem so ludicrous is that each of them feels free to pick a few of her favourite things and to claim ontological privilege for them. Ontology remains popular because we are still reluctant to yield to the Romantic's argument that the imagination sets the bounds of thought.'[229]
For Rorty, ontology inevitably assumes the existence of a correct view of reality from which to build a self-assured moral or epistemological program. However, he emphasizes that he is not concerned with providing irrefutable arguments against the sufficiency of ontology for doing so would force him into the role of the epistemological sceptic. Rather, he is concerned only with providing a way of speaking and thinking that does not assume

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[228] Rorty, Richard. *PMN*. p.3
[229] Rorty, Richard. "Pragmatism and Romanticism" in *PCP*. p.106

that reality is the proper subject of theory. This is the crux of Rorty's anti-foundationalism. He attempts only to *re-describe* our most basic conceptual categories without assuming there is anything to ground such descriptions or that they uniquely make contact with the world.[230] However, Rorty assumes that he can get beyond assumptions about the world is in formulating these descriptions.

This post-metaphysical assumption is based on Rorty's view of the ontological priority of the social. This concept, while nascent in his early work and periodically referred to throughout his career,[231] had its fullest discussion in one of Rorty's later essays, "Cultural Politics and the Existence of God." Here, he illustrates both his approach to the subject of ontology, specifically in terms of his understanding of social justification, and his understanding of its relevance to contemporary ethical-political life. "Cultural politics," a term Rorty initially used pejoratively,[232] here refers to discourses within a society about what vocabularies, terms, and topics it is useful to employ. The problem, for him, within this process, is the argument that some things, because they simply *do* exist or are fundamental to our experience, must be discussed.[233] The paradigm example is the insistence by religious believers that religion must be part of public discussion because God does exist. For Rorty this argument assumes that, 'ontology precedes cultural politics.'[234] Essentially, that reality trumps cultural consensus in determining what language a community uses and what objects they discuss through this vocabulary.

Rorty flatly opposes both the necessity of what he calls "God-talk" and the priority of the ontological. Instead, he wants 'to argue that cultural politics should replace ontology, and that whether it should or should not is *itself* a matter of cultural politics.'[235] He is concerned not with disproving the existence of God but with arguing for the social priority of cultural politics over ontology or what he, drawing on the work of Robert Brandom, refers to as, 'the ontological priority of the social.' When one accepts this primacy, all cultural discussions, as cultural politics, become about the *use* of one vocabulary over another. Even discussions that appeal to ontologies and realities are moves within the game of cultural politics. By referring to the presence of an authority (e.g. God, empirical reality, etc) one attempts to take a privileged stance. However, as long as there is dispute

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[230] Rorty, Richard. *CIS*. p.8

[231] See, for example -- Rorty, Richard. "Philosophy as Science, Metaphor, and as Politics" in *EHO*. p.11--

[232] Rorty, Richard. *Truth, Politics, and 'Post-Modernism'*. Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1997. p.35

[233] Rorty understands ontology in the Analytic sense as the study of the existence of particular things in the world. This differs from the Heideggerian sense of the general revelation of Being (discussed in Ch. 3). However, Rorty does extend this rejection to the Heideggerian usage as well. See, for example; Mouffe, Chantal (ed.). *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*. London, UK: Routledge, 1996. – In Rorty's articles here he rejects the question of Being as a basis for political thinking.

[234] Rorty, Richard. "Cultural Politics and the Question of the Existence of God" in *PCP*, pp.3-5

[235] Ibid. p.5 – his prioritization of his own framework is dramatically clear here.

about what a purported authority actually holds, the very idea of authority is out of place. Rather, it is only through social discourse and the consensus of some community that the very notion of authority has any operative value.[236] For Rorty, this holds even when discussing the existence of specific objects and the reliability of experience.

> Experience gives us no way to drive a wedge between the cultural-political question of what we should talk about…and what really exists. For what counts as an accurate report of experience is a matter of what a community will let you get away with. Empiricism's appeal to experience is as inefficacious as appeals to the Word of God unless backed up with a predisposition on the part of a community to take such appeals seriously. So experience cannot, by itself, adjudicate disputes between warring cultural politicians.[237]

Once again, Rorty's concern here is the disposition to justification, not its source. This argument draws both on his previously discussed views on truth as social justification (addressed in Chapter 1) and on his understanding of language as thoroughly contingent (next section). The terms and categories we employ do not map onto reality and are only ever one of many ways to think about the issue at hand. Cultural politics is exactly the socio-political process of justification where we decide which languages to use, categories to employ, and objects to speak about. Experience (or existing things within reality) cannot determine what we talk about because there is no neutral language through which to discuss it. Consequently, and this seems to be Rorty's point, there are no natural questions or concepts; no topics we really must discuss on the field of cultural politics.[238]

Instead, cultural politics concerns the *utility* of any one vocabulary over-against another, in the first instance, and the *coherence* of any particular language in the second. Thus, in the sphere of cultural politics, which takes place between and above various vocabularies, use is the only (neutral) criterion. This emphasis on use and coherence is only reinforced in Rorty's discussion of "logical spaces."[239] For him, there exists within every culture a plurality of logical spaces. All of these have their own criteria, or "canonical designators," for the existence of objects. That is, they have their own rules and lists for what objects are treated as in existence and which are treated as nonexistent within the given logical space. Accordingly, these worlds, even the physical world of the natural

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[236] Rorty consistently inveighs against the assumption of a non-human authority which determines the status of enquiry and discourse. For him, the imperative is to get out from under such gods and see human agreement as the sole determinant of our thought and politics. See; Rorty, *Truth, Politics...*, op cit., p.36

[237] Rorty, "Cultural Politics" op cit. p.11

[238] Ibid. pp.13-4 – Rorty does acknowledge the presence of limits on cultural politics. However, while these limits do exist and are in some sense drawn from the brute facticity of life, they exist within our language because it determines our ability to cope through the social practices we have to speak about them. There is no necessity that is not drawn from the social. – see, p.15

[239] Rorty derives this concept from Gilbert Ryle. For him, such spaces were normative spaces of meaning. See his; *Plato's Progress,* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1966. p.24. – For an explanation of Rorty's use of this concept, see; Gascoigne, Neil. *Richard Rorty: Liberalism, Irony and the Ends of Philosophy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008. p.26

sciences, are closed off from each other and only have the criteria that have resulted from their respective cultural politics to employ in any debates about the existence of a given object. They exist with different purposes in mind and can have only contingent, that is temporary, lives. Thus, without such a neutral criteria between these spaces, existence is not a matter for ontology but cultural politics.[240] There is no way to affirm existence outside one of these logical spaces and thus no way to affirm existence absolutely. Nonetheless, it is not Rorty's intention to give these logical spaces (or language games) a deterministic edge. Changes in what a group discusses and the terms it employs can never be made on the basis of agreed-upon criteria. Rather, cultural politics, he emphasizes, is 'the site of generational revolt, and thus the growing point of culture – the place where traditions and norms are all up for grabs at once.'[241] For Rorty, we should be content with these limits to philosophical reflection. We can do no more than understand our current practices and engage in the act of cultural politics where those practices are contrasted critically with alternative past and proposed future ones. Thus, we should stop trying to use ontology to ascertain that unique neutral set of canonical designators that could settle the question of existence absolutely. ' "Ontology" is not the name of an expert culture, and we should stop imagining that such a culture would be desirable.'[242] Ontology, like epistemology for Rorty, is an impoverished pursuit of foundations for knowledge; one that is equally pointless in the post-metaphysical context that follows the failure of philosophical foundationalism.

Rorty frames his opposition to ontology here within a claim about the priority of the social in determining our linguistic practices. In this, he repeats his strategy outlined in the discussion of eliminative materialism in Ch.1. By arguing for the priority of the social over particular ontological frameworks, Rorty circumvents the philosophical level of discussion in favour of a sociological reduction of the argument. He veils the philosophical level of discussion through implicit claim to the neutrality of the social. On his understanding, languages are separate from the world and each other, only capable of discussing their use and consequences within the social sphere of cultural politics. Why language is so isolated will become clear in the subsequent section on contingency. The purpose of this discussion has been to highlight that Rorty's opposition to ontology is framed within his opposition to the idea of a neutral framework for encountering reality, that it posits utility[243] as the only

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[240] Rorty, "Cultural Politics" op cit. p.19

[241] Ibid. p.21

[242] Ibid. p.24

[243] Rorty's discussion here implicitly situates utility between vocabularies as a means of arguing amongst them. This is another version of his claim to instrumental neutrality. The importance is clarified in the discussions of language (Ch. 2) and naturalism (Ch. 3).

point of discussion between various vocabularies and coherence the only point within them, and that it isolates languages from the world and each other. However, by establishing the priority of the social and the criterion of utility within the (neutral) sphere of cultural politics (which is between vocabularies), Rorty reinserts a foundational claim of neutrality; one veiled by a claim to linguistic contingency and ontological minimalism.

Connolly and the Inevitability of Ontology

Connolly's theorization of ontology as fundamental to the nature of philosophical and political reflection flows from different concerns. Situated much more centrally within the field of political theory, his work attempts to excavate the implicit ontological presuppositions of both of these spheres. Beginning with *The Terms of Political Discourse* and continuing throughout much of his work, he has criticized their anti-ontological assumptions and attempted to offer a re-invigorated elaboration of methodological, philosophical, and political thought. His "New Pluralism," as Morton Schoolman and David Campbell have dubbed it, is primarily an ontological approach to thinking politics.[244] Connolly has attempted to provide a pluralistic ethos of contestation within both of these areas of enquiry (and beyond). It is important to understand that for him, ethics, ontology, and politics are not categories between which firm lines can be drawn. Rather, each is always infiltrated by the others in a manner that colours enquiry within all of them. Thus, enquiry into politics is inevitably infused with both ontological presuppositions and ethical dispositions which affect its conclusions and its relations with other onto-ethical-political positions within the field of contestation. For the present study, Connolly provides both a similar perspective to Rorty's, rejecting much of the project of classical epistemology, and a radically critical perspective on Rorty's rejection of ontology. In contrast to that rejection, where Rorty holds that the priority of the social makes ontological reflection useless for cultural politics, for Connolly, ontological assumptions are inevitable and thus a perspective that accounts for and interrogates these assumptions is necessary. Further, ignoring this level of analysis risks reinforcing our current assumptions and their limitations.

There is much within Rorty's attack on the foundationalism of Analytic philosophy that Connolly agrees with. Citing *PMN* as a powerful deconstruction of that tradition's project and the primacy of epistemology therein, he compares Rorty's attack to Hegel's

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[244] Schoolman, Morton and David Campbell. "Introduction: Pluralism 'Old' and 'New'" in *The New Pluralism: William Connolly and the Contemporary Global Condition*. London, UK: Duke University Press, 2008.

articulation of the "dilemma of epistemology." Connolly articulates this criticism as follows:

> ...every criterion of knowledge is itself a claim to knowledge and thus must itself be proven; but any attempt at validation must appeal either to the criterion itself or to a new criterion which is, in turn, in need of validation. The first strategy is circular while the second fosters an infinite regress. Each attempt to prove a theory of knowledge is doomed to disappear into one of these holes.[245]

The primacy of epistemology fosters this dilemma. For Connolly, Rorty's critique of foundationalism has a similar structure. It focuses on the unintelligibility of a neutral framework separable from and prior to enquiry. Proceeding internally, this attack illustrates how Analytic philosophy's own epistemic pretensions were ultimately undermined by its investigations. There are two key movements here. First, philosophers following the work of Wilfrid Sellars[246] have dissolved the distinction between the necessary and the contingent in favour of the thesis that criteria of rationality are established by social authority and not by the nature of some "inner representations." This notion is clearly still present in Rorty's later work on cultural politics. Second, another line of thought, inaugurated by W.V.O. Quine[247] dissolved the distinction between language as a system of reference and facts recorded within that system. Instead, they hold to a holistic view where nature and society are always accessed with linguistic mediation without possible appeal to neutral facts against which to test that mediation. Together, these two theses dislodge the correspondence model and illustrate how epistemic systems are always isolated from a neutral framework and determined by social life. Furthermore, for Connolly, Rorty's social analysis of the continued dominance of the epistemological project in Analytic philosophy exposes that discipline's assumption, shared by wider society, that the cultural authority relinquished by religion during the Enlightenment must now be vested elsewhere. In the Analytic tradition's view, philosophy, through the epistemological project, assumes this role of master discourse arbitrating over the knowledge claims of wider society. In spite of the weakness of this project, the institutional matrix of that tradition maintains it.[248]

Connolly's later work bears striking similarities to Rorty's critique. In his own methodological criticisms of the social sciences, Connolly emphasizes the social nature of enquiry and the absence of a neutral framework for it. For Connolly, this fact indicates that there is no higher court to which social scientists can appeal when clashes between rival

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[245] Connolly, William E. *Politics and Ambiguity*. London, UK: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. p.116

[246] Sellars, Wilfrid. "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" in *Science, Perception, and Reality*. London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.

[247] Quine, W.V. "Main Trends in Recent Philosophy: Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in *The Philosophical Review*. Vol. 60(1), 1951.

[248] Ibid. pp.117-9

methodologies occur.[249] Furthermore, he opposes the logic of "representationalism" within that same sphere. For Connolly, representation, if such a thing occurs, always takes place within a context that fixes the things to be represented and the terms in which that occurs. Further, 'Representation always involves the representation of prior representations. This duality, or doubling, eventually confounds representation, not as an indispensible social practice, but as a detached, neutral method of accumulating knowledge.'[250] In spite of these similarities, Rorty and Connolly differ in the alternative paths they chart for philosophy. While we have only broached the "positive" side of Rorty's philosophy, we have indicated its anti-ontological focus. In contrast, I will now argue that Connolly's work emphasizes the necessity of ontological reflections and the irreducibility of ontological assumptions in all positions. Furthermore, it illustrates that in the absence of overt reflection on ontology, Rorty's philosophy enacts a "social foundationalism" in the place of the fallen epistemological one. While Connolly's argument occurs mainly within the context of political interpretation, it is applicable to Rorty and to the inevitability of ontology in all sectors of society.

In contrast to both *onta*, the study of existing things, and classical ontology, the study of a fundamental logic to being apart from appearances, Connolly offers "ontopolitical interpretation" or "ont*a*logy." This qualified endorsement of ontology acknowledges that it is not a fundamental and incontestable understanding of reality that he offers but an understanding of the inevitability of ontological presuppositions and thus the need of active engagement and affirmative declaration. For him, every political interpretation invokes a set of fundaments about the necessities and possibilities of human being, about the nature of the world and our relation to it. These assumptions then structure the sphere of politics and the nature of political activity therein; they fix the parameters and generate the necessarily circumscribed list of possibilities. Ontology establishes boundaries to politics. In spite of this, the majority of Anglo-American political theory and science, Rorty included, marginalizes ontological reflection as insufficient or irrelevant to politics. For Connolly, this occurs through several strategies. For our present purposes, it is his identification of the tradition of ontological minimalism that is key. This group, composed of a diverse constituency of multiple and contending theoretical and political positions, share the assumption with Rorty that ontological reflection into the nature of reality is simply unnecessary in the post-metaphysical context. They assume that modernity is defined by its ability, in contrast to the premodern, to subsist on the ontologically

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[249] Connolly, William E. "Method, Problem, Faith" in *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (ed. Ian Shapiro, Rogers M. Smith, and Tarek E. Masoud). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004. p.339
[250] Connolly, *Ethos,* op cit. p.9

"minimal" understanding of a pliable world susceptible to technological control. The problems and tensions of modern life do not flow from some deep-seated ontological differences between groups. They never reach that deep.Thus, even if they exist, they do not affect the ethical-political relations and actions of individuals and groups.[251] This chapter will illustrate how Rorty in fact does belong to this position and how he participates in the inevitable ontological assumptions it chooses not to interrogate.

For Connolly, a question necessarily arises here: by what standard are the ontological assumptions of the modern period minimal? What if those standards only appear minimal in opposition to the religious and teleological traditions against which modernity continually sets itself? For him, it is precisely the ontopolitical matrix of late-modernity that needs critical reassessment and positive alternatives. One of the prevalent strategies to remove ontological issues is, to return to the above discussion, the primacy of epistemology in the social sciences. Connolly's analysis here is particularly interesting because it suggests a manner in which Rorty is still complicit in this project. Epistemology claims to circumscribe ontology by either accessing criteria for knowledge that make ontology redundant or by providing neutral tests through which to resolve ontological issues. Rorty, in order to avoid ontology entirely, attempts to be neither optimistic nor pessimistic, neither an epistemologist nor a sceptic, on this issue. Nonetheless, he must still connect languages and their changes to humans and their communities. Thus, we see the inauguration of the post-metaphysical and pragmatist emphases on use and coherence as the only means by which we judge languages and choose to move from one to another. While this element of Rorty's philosophy will be developed and critiqued further throughout this chapter and the next, It is important to note here that this reinserts the demand that truth, even if only as social justification, be unified and one.[252] It thus repeats a certain contestable social ontology of neutralism. 'The primacy of epistemology short-circuits ontological issues by assuming once the right procedure for attaining truth as correspondence or coherence or consensus is reached, any remaining issues will either be resolved through that method or shown to be irrelevant.'[253]

It is important to emphasize that Connolly is not arguing for the primacy of ontology to replace the epistemological project. Rorty would be correct in criticizing that as merely replacing one foundation with another. Rather, Connolly is merely indicating that the

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[251] Ibid. p.1-3

[252] This demand is a consequence of the metaphysical unity behind reality and consequent intentional homogenization of reality in Dewey's thought. As argued in Ch. 1, these infect Rorty's thought through his appropriation of the disposition of pragmatic mastery. It will subsequently be illustrated how these covert assumptions and the demand that truth be one lead to a repetition of the logic of neutralism with respect to the category of utility. All of these points, however, are explored in the subsequent section and in Chapter 3.

[253] Ibid. p.6

"dilemma of epistemology" does not equally refute the use of ontology in political reflection. He charts another course away from that dilemma that, contra Rorty, does not invalidate interrogating our assumptions about the world in order to affirm a particular set of ontological dispositions. Fundamental to this disposition, both ontological and political, is the conviction that there is no way to decisively arbitrate between contending ontological positions. Thus, there is no way for Connolly to prove that the notion of a pliable world or that of world with an intrinsic purpose to being, are in fact incorrect. Equally, his own position, regarding the irreducibility of ontological assumptions and his positive ontology of ambiguity (addressed below), is a valid one that cannot be ruled out of the field of contestation. It should be noted that this irreducibility of ontological assumptions is, like his ontology of ambiguity, not a reading that Connolly believes is capable of definitive proof. However, why they are necessary for a genuine critical position for political thought will be addressed in Chs. 3 and 5. For now, it should be understood as an axiomatic part of his philosophy from which much of his other work flows; one that he acknowledges as contestable.[254]

The question for Connolly at this point in his account is whether there is some discernable pattern to the contemporary shape of onto-political assumptions in contemporary Anglo-American discourse. He suggests that from his perspective, there is. This "onto-political matrix" is a relative approximation of the field and should be understood mainly as a heuristic principle through which he establishes the position of his own perspective and his unique critique of the dominant positions of Anglo-American political discourse. The matrix occurs along two axes. The categories across the horizontal are *mastery* and *attunement*. The former refers to the drive to subject nature to human control and the corresponding assumption about the susceptibility of nature to this project. The latter, assumes a higher purpose or telos in being and the ability of humans to enter into a harmonious relationship with it. The vertical axis oscillates between an emphasis on the *individual* as primary in ethical and political action or the *community*.[255] While these positions are, in theory, inimical to one another, Connolly notes that most of mainstream political discourse occurs within some combination of their precepts. His question then is whether they share some similar ontological disposition from which he can gain critical access. His answer is that both offer *compensatory ontologies*. They share the implicit demand that there be some compensation in modernity for the loss of enchanted understandings of the world following the loss of faith in religion. They insist

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[254] Ibid. p.16

[255] Ibid. p.17 – see here for an image of the matrix and also n. 15 (p.205) for which thinkers are included within this matrix, and which contest its sufficiency.

on the compensation of a world that is predisposed to us in some way, either as a pliable medium susceptible to our mastery or a higher order through which we can gain communion. For Connolly, one of these assumptions, which it will illustrated in Rorty's position, structures every member of the field; and yet, they are assumptions without basis. Why does the world owe us so much that it must be predisposed to us in one of these ways? Does it not betray some demand for existential reassurance? Are there, perhaps, not dangerous hidden assumptions and positions in such a demand?[256]

Thus, we come to the main purpose and method of Connolly's work. His philosophy attempts to destabilize both of these positions by opposing the assumption of a world predisposed to humanity and intelligibility. To this purpose, he posits the necessity of strategies of both ontological detachment and attachment.[257] Critical deconstructive and genealogical strategies of detachment are necessarily equally matched by strategies of attachment to alternative ontological commitments. The latter, which Connolly refers to as "positive onto-political interpretation," involves projecting explicit presumptions into one's interpretations of actuality while simultaneously acknowledging that one's presumptions exceed both one's intentions and ability to demonstrate their truth. Essentially, one posits them as contestable. This challenges closure in the field by both critically assessing other strategies and refusing to set up another theory within an absolute space. For Connolly, this dual movement requires a "double-entry orientation" to politics. Critical detachments and affirmative attachments are treated as incontestable in their first instance, but are then withdrawn in an acknowledgement of contestability. For him, enquiry must explicitly take place in the median space between these gestures.[258] Thus, the affirmations are not merely a strategic gesture but comprise ontological assumptions built into and constitutive of both the critiques and the alternatives they present. Connolly emphasizes this when he refers to these viewpoints as "vague essentialisms" and "happy posit-ivisms." The key point then is that these projections are neither merely provisional nor prediscursive realities beyond question.[259] Rather, they are both affirmative (like prediscursive ontologies) and contestable (like a merely provisional

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[256] Ibid. p.20

[257] While some discussion of his ontology of ambiguity will occur, the projection of alternative frameworks of attachment (e.g. pluralism for Connolly) is not the focus of this thesis. Rather, the question is how to establish a framework of detachment. What allows for critical forms of political questioning on the present?

[258] Connolly, "Method, Problem" op cit. p.344 – I will return to the importance of this broad framework of orientation in Ch. 3, 5 and the conclusion to this thesis. See also; Howarth, David. "Pluralizing Methods: Contingency, Ethics, and Critical Explanation" in *Democracy and Pluralism: The Political Thought of William E. Connolly*. Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2010.

[259] For a criticism that Connolly does shift between these two incompatible options, see, Digeser, Peter. *Our Politics, Our Selves: Liberalism, Identity and Harm*. Chichester, UK: Princeton University Press, 1995. p.134 ; for a dissenting view, see – White, Stephen K. *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory*. Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2000. p.114

ontology would be). As noted in the epitaph to this chapter, for Connolly, this paradoxical pairing of opposites characterizes interpretation in general.[260] The double-entry orientation to interpretation attempts to do justice to the inadequacy and contestability of ontology, the inevitability of ontological presuppositions, and the ambiguous nature of human enquiry that results from these conditions. It attempts to provide for critique within the situation of the necessity of contingency.

This difference in the approach to ontology reveals the key difference between Rorty and Connolly. For Rorty, the critique of foundationalism and the failure of the epistemological model necessitate the abandonment of the idea of a level of reality other than the everyday contingent human reality.[261] Any notion of *unmasking*, of getting beyond the merely ontic to some deeper level, whether in texts or reality, is necessarily metaphysical. It is based upon a continuation of the appearance-reality distinction which Rorty, as a Nietzschean (of sorts)[262], refuses to endorse. In fact, much of Rorty's rhetoric regarding the weakness of ontology and the Continental tradition in general is that it repeats the Platonic logic of a deeper reality which can be unmasked[263] by some privileged means. The language of unmasking here is especially significant. In contrast to Rorty's understanding of ontology, Connolly's paradoxical construction of positive onto-political interpretation avoids this logic of unmasking while accounting for the irreducibility of ontological presuppositions. Consider the following, 'When an unfamiliar competitor [Connolly perhaps?] challenges these terms of discourse, the ensuing debates condense some of this fog into a new series of beliefs and counter beliefs. Of course, only one layer of fog is lifted by such an intervention, and new layers roll in.'[264] *New masks/fogs roll in*. For Connolly, there is no unaccompanied unveiling as every strategy of detachment is, simultaneously, an implicit attachment to another set of ontological presuppositions. There is no detachment as such, only re-attachments.

It is useful here to recall a distinction discussed in the introduction to this thesis between anti-foundationalism and weak ontology. Anti-foundationalism remains in the logic of either/or, either there are firm philosophical foundations or there are not. Its purpose is to negatively attack the very notion of foundations and attempt a philosophy that does not have recourse to some inevitably metaphysical grounds. Weak ontology, on

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[260] Connolly, *Ethos,* op cit. p.38

[261] Rorty, *CIS,* p 45

[262] For a discussion of Rorty's work as Nietzschean, see his; "Introduction: Pragmatism and Post-Nietzschean Philosophy" in *EHO* op cit. pp.2-5. There he links Nietzsche to Dewey's (and his own) pragmatism.

[263] Rorty, Richard. "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (ed. Chantal Mouffe). London, UK: Routledge, 1996. p.14

[264] Connolly, *Ethos,* op cit. p.37; see also – Digeser, op cit. p.47

the other hand, seeks to be both negative and positive. It follows anti-foundationalism in negatively deconstructing strong ontologies and purported philosophical foundations. However, realizing the inevitability of ontological presuppositions requires the affirmative and explicit account of one's ontological perspective while attempting, in light of the negative attack, to weave the limits and contestability of these accounts into their very presuppositions.[265] It argues that without an ontological analysis of that present to be negated, and a correlate analysis of the implicit ontology of the critique itself, the manner in which thought is structured and limited will remain obscured.

Rorty and Connolly illustrate the anti-Foundationalism and weak ontology distinction respectively. Rorty, in placing the issue of social justification solely within the realms of the use and coherence of languages to human communities, excludes the ontological. For him, reality cannot be a criterion for our languages because that merely serves to bring one more candidate for a neutral epistemological framework into play. Instead, as illustrated below, Rorty attempts to construct a philosophy without epistemological or ontological assumptions. For him, the critique of metaphysics has forever destroyed the possibility of using reality as a marker against which to judge our philosophical and political programs. 'For without the traditional concepts of metaphysics one cannot make sense of the appearance-reality distinction, and without that distinction one cannot make sense of the notion of "what is really going on." No more metaphysics, no more unmasking.'[266] In contrast, Connolly, illustrating the weak ontological method, asserts the simultaneous inadequacy and necessity of ontological presuppositions. For him, claims to ontological minimalism or anti-foundationalism, while purporting to be post-metaphysical philosophies, in fact repeat and ingrain hidden ontological presuppositions of attunement and/or mastery. It is my argument that this basic difference in orientation to ontology characterizes the relationship between Rorty and Connolly's work. Further, in my analysis, it is from this basic difference that their subsequent philosophical and political differences flow. Rorty, in theorizing a post-metaphysical method, repeats mastery's assumption of a world susceptible to human control. In contrast, Connolly's double-entry orientation to politics creates the possibility of a critical perspective on politics that Rorty obscures. Ultimately, as illustrated in the confrontation with Connolly, the assumption of mastery and the failure of a critical perspective stem from Rorty's re-enactment of a social foundationalism of isolated human communities whose only means to social change and development is in debates about the use and coherence of their vocabularies. Further, this

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[265] See the Introduction to this thesis
[266] Rorty, "Remarks", op cit, p.14

neutralization of the pragmatic indicates a mechanism of ontological veiling within Rorty's work that obscures this assumption of neutrality and claims a critical posture to the present. In the end, Connolly, contra Rorty, indicates the *use* of ontology as a resource that functions not as a blueprint but as means for productive, negative and affirmative, critical thinking.

Contingency vs. Contestability: Mastering a Tool and the Ambiguity of Being

Central to Rorty's positive conception of philosophy is a fundamental rethinking of the nature of language within the human context. This rethinking both stems from his anti-ontological premise and is at its root. It both illustrates how language can be understood in the post-metaphysical context and is a basis for the idea that ontology is unnecessary to an understanding of language. Specifically, through the work of Donald Davidson, Rorty approaches language as a social practice without an inherent structure that can be discerned. He theorizes it as contingent and as having priority, over reality and the ontological, in deciding, though not determining, the social "conversation" of a given community. In this analysis, the crux of Rorty's theorization is his postulation of language as a tool, one that can be used and guided for the purposes of human social change. It is here that we begin to see the dynamic of mastery entering Rorty's logic. If language is a tool to be controlled, then its effects must be subject to human aims and mastery. Further, through an encounter with Rorty's work on Heidegger, I will illustrate how the former ties contingency to mastery and refuses the latter's critique of technological reasoning and anthropocentrism. The presence of mastery and its connection to Rorty's aforementioned social foundationalism will only be introduced in this section as I will shift to Connolly's notion of the contestability of political terms, and I argue, of language in general. For Connolly, there is a fundamental ambiguity within language that precludes the type of control Rorty desires. Connolly's identification of this ambiguity will then be further elaborated through a brief introduction to his positive social ontology (of ambiguity). While contestability and ontology as ambiguity will only be broached here, this will nonetheless clarify how Connolly's contrasting approach to language results in an entirely different approach to the question of mastery in contemporary philosophy. Rorty, in positing both the priority and contingency of language, and wedding this to a pragmatic disposition centered on controlling language for human social development, re-inserts ontological assumptions and a veiled claim to neutrality into his philosophy. In attempting

to escape the demand for a non-human authority, he subjugates us to a pernicious set of assumptions in the mastery dynamic.

Language as Medium and as Tool: Rorty on Davidson

Rorty's positive conception of language stems from his metaphilosophical opposition to the basic assumptions of the Analytic philosophy of language. While he praises the linguistic turn in that tradition for highlighting the importance of language, he regrets its attempt to discover an inherent structure within it through which the "correct" criteria for correspondence to reality could be discerned. It is important to note that what Rorty opposes is this particular attempt to judge language by the physical world through the addition of some neutral framework or medium which would guarantee that our language accurately represents reality. Part of what he is opposing, and this will become clearer in the discussion of his understanding of intellectual history, is the idea of placing our languages and practices under a non-human authority. As discussed in Chapter 1, Rorty emphasizes the social nature of enquiry and how such human projects should always pursue self-consciously human ends. In opposing this dynamic within the Analytic tradition, Rorty assumes that languages are unified and pliable objects subject to total human control.

Rorty frames his discussion of the priority and contingency of language in *CIS* within a distinction between two claims: that the truth is out there and that the world is out there. He does this to emphasize that his philosophy is neither an idealism that attributes reality to our conceptual schemes nor a positivism that holds that reality determines the veracity of our language. Rather, Rorty believes that there is a fundamental division between the world *causing* us to hold a belief and an entire worldview being validated by correspondence, or a relationship of "making true," to reality. The former is obvious and intuitive while the latter assumes that the world is designed to confirm or deny language. He opposes the very idea that vocabularies/languages, interchangeable terms he uses for whole worldviews and frameworks for understanding, are subject to confirmation or denial through the application of criteria. As discussed in Ch. 1, this assumes a neutral framework for enquiry through which an intrinsic nature or essence of language can be discerned. Instead, Rorty wants to drop truth for justification and theorize the latter as internal to every vocabulary/language. A belief, for him, can only be overridden by another belief, never by reference to something outside of the vocabulary. Consequently,

the world, or a view of it, cannot be the source of either norms or of a method for adjudicating between them.[267]

Rorty's elaborates this understanding of language within a detailed engagement with the work of Donald Davidson.[268] For Rorty, Davidson provides a unique exit from the impasse within Analytic philosophy caused by the realism-antirealism debate. This debate, which for Rorty seems to be a mere rehashing of the 19th century idealism-realism debates, is based upon the representationalist logic that Rorty has opposed throughout his work and which has been the subject of Ch. 1 and much of Ch. 2 so far. Davidson's key move is to provide an understanding of language that breaks with the idea that it is something that must be proved adequate to either the world or the self. He manages to keep the focus on language and its importance (or priority) while dropping it as an epistemological standard. Essentially, he theorizes the priority of language and opens the door for Rorty to add its contingency.[269]

For Rorty, Davidson achieves this by rejecting the assumption that language exists as a representational medium between the self and the world. Language as medium merely replaced the earlier emphasis on the mind or consciousness and failed to resolve the subject-object issues which plagued idealism-realism and led to epistemological scepticism. The shift to language, for Rorty, merely continued this seesaw. Instead of language as medium, Rorty interprets Davidson as supporting the Wittgensteinian[270] account of language where vocabularies are conceived of as tools rather than as pieces of a representational puzzle. Treating languages as tools rather than pieces within that puzzle changes the questions we ask. Rather than asking about the relation or adequacy of language to the world, we now focus on its efficiency as a tool. Further, languages on this account are now not matters of discovery but invention where new tools are created to surpass old ones. The point of these tools is that they allow us to cope with our environment and each other. For Davidson, the only possible perspective available to the philosophy of language is that of the *field linguist*. This external position is the simple

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[267] Brandom, Robert B. "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism" in *Rorty and his Critics* (ed. Robert B Brandom). Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2000. p 159 – see also, Rorty, *CIS*, pp.5-8

[268] Rorty was aware that reading of Davidson was both idiosyncratic and contentious. See; Rorty, Richard. "Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth" in *ORT*; For Davidson's response,. "Truth Rehabilitated" in *Rorty and his Critics*. op cit.

[269] Rorty, *CIS,* p.10; Rorty, "Pragmatism, Davidson...", op cit. p.150

[270] It may be wondered why this account of Rorty's philosophy of language and this thesis in general has been silent about the influence of Wittgenstein. While Rorty often emphasized the important of Wittgenstein, going as far in *PMN* (p.5) as to include him with Heidegger and Dewey as one of the three most important philosophers of the 20th century, he devoted far less discussion in his work to him. Even in his overt discussions of language, Rorty prefers to discuss philosophers like Donald Davidson rather than Wittgenstein. As such, he has been left out of this discussion. Instead this thesis casts Rorty's work as primarily structured by the projects of Dewey and Heidegger.

anthropological one of an observer attempting to link up a "native's" utterances with their surroundings. In this process, the linguist must assume that the native is in touch with reality and is mostly correct in their assertions about it.[271] The point of this perspective for Davidson, and the reason why Rorty endorses it, is to portray language as a largely ad hoc and piecemeal process of interpretation. On an individual level, it can be described as a process of constructing "passing theories" about the noises/inscriptions of another human. Understanding is a process of learning to predict what will come next. These theories are passing in the sense that they are constantly revised in order to account for things that are not explained by the current theory.[272] It is in this sense that vocabularies allow us to cope through shared understandings with each other and with our environment.

This understanding of language removes the idea of language as a process of achieving more adequate "picturings" of the world. Instead, Rorty emphasizes that language be approached behaviourally as a social practice. This repeats his above emphasis on the unity, coherence and social nature of languages. Vocabularies must be interpreted as closed off spheres that allow people to cope and which can only be approached through a piecemeal behavioural method. They do not uniquely link up with the world or some other neutral framework that allows for commensurability. Rather, such a relation to the world must cease to be assumed. Thus, Rorty follows Davidson in rejecting the scheme-content distinction; the distinction between determinate realities and conceptual systems that may or may not be adequate to them.[273] It must be emphasized that Rorty, in adopting Davidson's position here, is rejecting the relation between scheme and content not the ideas of scheme and content. This seems obvious since his notion of vocabulary, as a framework for understanding the world, resembles a scheme or ontology. It is not that Rorty believes people do not have conceptual systems for understanding the world, rather these systems should not be posited as actually contacting the world. Unfortunately, he seems to have outstripped his own conclusion here by rejecting ontology in general and positing the possibility of an entirely post-metaphysical philosophy rather than merely holding the anti-epistemological idea that ontologies cannot represent or access the fundamental nature of being (which is much closer to Connolly).

It is important to understand that vocabularies are not connected to the world in a relationship of confirmation. However, there are causal connections between vocabularies

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[271] Rorty, "Pragmatism, Davidson...". op cit. p.132

[272] Rorty, *CIS,* p.14

[273] Rorty, Richard. "Introduction: Antirepresentationalism, Ethnocentrism and Liberalism" in *ORT*. p.9

and the world and between successive vocabularies. While the causal relation to the world will be addressed in detail in the subsequent chapter on Rorty's naturalism and physicalism, the causal relation between vocabularies is pertinent to this discussion. As discussed in Ch. 1, Rorty's work is fundamentally concerned with the nature of concept change in language. Following this re-visioning of language and what can be said about it in its philosophical study, Rorty offers a view of intellectual history that accords with this account; one that emphases both language's priority and its contingency. To do this, he offers a Nietzschean/Davidsonian understanding of metaphor as the prime agent in vocabulary shifts. For Rorty, the purpose of placing metaphor at the centre of the history of human languages is to emphasize its necessarily non-teleological and non-purposive nature. In contrast, he wants to portray it as a *contingent* process of tool change. New vocabularies are created and either gradually socially accepted or rejected according to the needs and values of the time.[274] Returning to the philosophy of science, Rorty endorses Mary Hesse in thinking of scientific revolutions as "metaphoric redescriptions" of nature. As we saw in Chapter 1, science is not a gradual process toward correspondence, but a series of descriptive frameworks not wholly separated from more humanistic disciplines except by their emphasis and proclivity for prediction and control. 'We need to see 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 "secularism."'[275] Rorty is fairly vague on the nature of these causal forces. While they are surely contingent, it is a failing of his theory that he leaves them under-theorized. Nonetheless, he does emphasize their causal nature in that the question, on this view, is not about the approximation of a new vocabulary to some standard but how and why a group changed from one language to another.

This view of intellectual history feeds into Rorty's theorization of the priority and contingency of language. Shifts in what human communities talk about, shifts that are contingent and unpredictable, are due to the production of new languages. Their contingency is seen in how these shifts occur: metaphor. Rorty's Davidsonian account of metaphor opposes the usual distinction between the metaphorical and literal as two distinct types of meaning or interpretation. Instead, this distinction is merely the difference between familiar and unfamiliar (normal and abnormal) noises. Metaphors are sentences that have no place within a given language. Essentially, they have no meaning. It is in this sense that they are "unparaphraseable." For Rorty, they are more like pure

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[274] Rorty emphasizes that the one drawback of the tool analogy is that it suggests a predetermined teleological purpose. In contrast, he clarifies that vocabularies, though tools for coping, are not formulated with explicit purposes in mind. New sets of descriptions take hold and allow for the 'formulation of its own purpose.' See -- Rorty, *CIS*, p.13

[275] Ibid. pp.16-7

possibilities. They are unfamiliar events that must be understood as causes rather than attempted representations. They are causes in that they are analogous to new phenomena within the natural sciences. All we can do is grapple with them and revise those theories in response. It is in this sense that Rorty compares encountering a metaphor to taste. One can savour the new experience or reject it. If a metaphor is taken up, if it is used to the point where it becomes habitual and regularized, it is killed and only then given a meaning within a vocabulary. Language and concept change occurs through this process of the literalization and death of metaphors. It is in this sense that it is contingent; metaphors have no meaning and thus no necessary place within language. The way a language changes depends on which metaphors are taken up, how they are used, and the community where they are integrated into regular social practice.[276]

Rorty's point in this model is to emphasize the contingency, priority and isolation of language. Languages, as tools, allow us to cope through structuring our world. The history of the world is the history of one language replacing another through the adoption of some new metaphor or descriptive schema. With each change, our purposes and ends so too change. Furthermore, there are no neutral criteria against which to compare alternative languages. Rather, languages are irrevocably separated from the world and thus cannot draw on it for epistemological criteria or norms. We can only compare one language with another in pragmatic terms of their purposes and ends. For Rorty, this realization of contingency necessitates that we remove non-human bases for authority in our language. Neither reality, god, or the nature of the self, can determine which language we should speak, nor can we anticipate that which our descendents might use.[277] Yet, Rorty's account of the contingency and stability of language has two effects. First, in making use the only criteria between languages, Rorty repeats the above assumption of the neutrality of the pragmatic perspective. Second, in emphasizing that nothing external to a language validates it, he closes languages off from the world and makes them stable, regular entities (outside of metaphorical moments). In utilizing Davidson's external perspective of the field linguist, Rorty commits himself to the view that languages must contain internal behavioural regularities for meaning to be possible. Metaphors are specifically the moments of breakage within these established systems, which are otherwise stable.[278] While this argument is not yet fully developed, I will comment now that this constitutes an assumption of what I call the "mastery of the moment." This is a social foundationalism

[276] Rorty, Richard. "Unfamiliar Noises: Hesse and Davidson on Metaphor" in *ORT,* pp.163-5. See also: Rorty, *CIS,* p.17-9 ; Rorty, Richard. "Philosophy as Science, as Metaphor, and as Politics" *EHO*. pp.12-3

[277] Rorty, *CIS,* p.22

[278] Rorty, "Unfamiliar Noises," *ORT,* pp.164-6

within Rorty's work that assumes that outside of temporal shifts, language is a stable entity susceptible to human control. Subsequent sections further demonstrate how this is present in Rorty's philosophy. Later chapters examine its potentially dangerous political effects and its limitations on critical, political thought. Presently, it is necessary to further indicate Rorty's connection of contingency and mastery through an account of his reading of Heidegger.

Rorty on Heidegger: Pragmatism and Power

Rorty engages Heidegger on the specific questions of the place of pragmatism within the latter's history of Being and the connection between a recognition of contingency with a pragmatic, mastery-oriented approach to the world. His concern is to vindicate Heidegger's account of contingency while exonerating pragmatism from the latter's criticisms.[279] In "Heidegger, Contingency, and Pragmatism" he focuses this account on Heidegger's claim that the Platonic project, when it has run through its process of development, necessarily results in the pragmatic approach to the world. Platonism here is defined as the view that enquiry must attempt to access something absolute and eternal while pragmatism is defined as the view that enquiry must be aimed at improving the human condition by, 'enabling us to cope more successfully with the physical environment and with each other.'[280] For Heidegger, the connection between these two modes of thinking is found in what he calls the "technical interpretation of thinking." This mode of thought stems from the original Platonic "quest for certainty."[281] This cultural demand, which Plato inaugurated in the Western tradition, requires that the object of enquiry be evident, clear, and distinct to the mind in order to achieve the certainty desired. The history of philosophy, under this reading, is a process of continual redescription in order to make this possible. Thus, the development from Plato to pragmatism, for Heidegger, is a series of failures to achieve this goal. In the end, the only thing we can have clarity (certainty) about is our own desires. 'The only cosmology we can affirm with the certainty Plato recommended is our own (communal and individual) world picture, our own way of

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[279] Rorty is aware of the idiosyncrasy of his reading of Heidegger. See; Rorty, Richard "Heidegger, Contingency, Pragmatism" in *EHO* p.49; Rorty, Richard. "Wittgenstein, Heidegger and the Reification of Language" in *EHO*; and, Rorty, Richard. "Heidegger, Kundera and Dickens" in *EHO*. p.68 – For criticisms of Rorty's readings of Heidegger, see; Guignon, Charles B. "On Saving Heidegger from Rorty" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 46 (3), 1986. – and; Caputo, John D. "The Thought of Being and the Conversation of Mankind: The Case of Heidegger and Rorty" in *Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 36, 1983. I am not contesting Rorty's actual interpretation of Heidegger here, but the conclusions he draws from this analysis in general. Thus, all views attributed to Heidegger here, are in fact Rorty's readings of him. For my own reading of Heidegger, see Ch. 3.

[280] Rorty, "Heidegger, Contingency" *EHO,* p.27

[281] As noted in Ch.1, this is Dewey's language. While Rorty uses it in *PMN*, here, juxtaposing Heidegger to Dewey, he embraces much more.

setting things up for manipulation, the way dictated by our desires.'[282] Rorty has no qualms with the idea that the desire for certainty engendered the skeptical response and that the only means out of this impasse is a coherence theory of truth where coherence is sought not only among beliefs but beliefs and desires. This point, which should sound familiar from Ch. 1, allows us to see the structures in which we think and the nature of our enquiries as malleable. They change as the dominant vocabulary changes, 'whenever such a change enables us better to fulfil our desires by making things more readily manipulable.'[283] Once human desires are admitted in this way, nonhuman authority is removed and the pragmatic logic of mastery reigns. It is in this sense that pragmatism, as an overt form of means-end logic, is the ultimate form of Platonism.

For Rorty, Heidegger believes that he has identified the common assumption of this Platonism to pragmatism sequence. It assumes that truth is about a unique access that gives one the possession of a deep and penetrating *power*. The West has been on this "power trip" since Plato and has found its fullest expression in technocratic pragmatism. The desire for truth, on this account, is the desire for an extra-human authority; it is the desire to share in a power that overwhelms and yet which you participate in. For Heidegger, this assumption that truth is a process of overcoming, that it is a relation of power, is fundamental to the onto-theological tradition. Pragmatism is simply the most overt and obvious form of this technocratic interpretation of thinking as it places instrumental rationality entirely at the service of human desires which are not subject to that very rationality. Further, it is, in fact, the only way of thinking in this tradition that allows one to address the risk of epistemological scepticism inherent to Plato's project. It is in this sense that Rorty believes Heidegger would find pragmatism to be the most acceptable philosophy within this tradition.[284] This affinity, for Rorty, stems from pragmatism and Heidegger's mutual embrace of contingency. They both see the history of philosophy as the attempt to escape this contingency and achieve certainty.[285] The quest for certainty is the attempt to escape from time, to divide off *Sein* from *Zeit*. For Rorty, Heidegger is attempting to recapture contingency and a sense of the fragility of the human condition. This fragility has been obscured by the Platonic tradition and its identification of the contingent with the apparent. Contrasted with a powerful and enduring reality, that which changes has been ignored in this tradition. Rorty's point here is that while

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[282] Rorty, "Heidegger, Contingency" *EHO,* p.29

[283] Ibid. p.30

[284] For the Similarities and affinities between Heidegger and pragmatism. See: Okrent, Mark. *Heidegger's Pragmatism: Understanding, Being, and the Critique of Metaphysics*. London, UK: Cornell University Press, 1988; Brandom, Robert. "Heidegger's Categories in Being and Time" in *Monist* Vol. 60, 1983.

[285] Rorty, "Heidegger, Contingency" *EHO,* pp.33-4

pragmatism embraced contingency on the level of desires, for Heidegger, it is still within the assumption of truth as power that is fundamental to the technocratic mode of thought.

It is for this reason that Heidegger describes this tradition as a downward escalator pulling the West further away from the pre-Platonic period where contingency and fragility were not ignored. It is a process, once started, that cannot be stopped. It was by no means a necessary progression, but one that cannot be interrupted halfway. Heidegger is nostalgic for this period before the quest for certainty, which he believes to have been more in touch with contingency and fragility and free of the stain of the technocratic interpretation of thinking. Thus, Rorty comes to the central question of his treatment of Heidegger: does Heidegger have a right to his implicitly anti-pragmatic nostalgia? And, as his account seems to be about both the contingency of languages and the impoverishment of the modern age, are these two aspects (contingency and belatedness) compatible?[286] Rorty's answer is a definitive "no." In his reading of Heidegger, he posits an essential ambiguity within the latter's work on this question. Heidegger seems to oscillate between an understanding of Being as historically contingent and a sense that there is an ahistorical reality from which the various epochs in the history of Being, and their respective ontological understandings, can be judged.

> 'Heidegger has two quite different things to say about the way the West is now: that it is contingent and that it is belated. To say that it is contingent it is enough to show how self-deceptive it is to think things *had* to be as they are, how provincial it is to think that the final vocabulary of the present day is "obvious" and "inescapable." But to say that this vocabulary is belated, to contrast it with something more primordial, one has to give "primordial" some kind of normative sense, so that it means something more that just "earlier."[287]

The only normative sense Rorty can or wants to give to "primordial," is an awareness of contingency. On this conception, an understanding of Being is more authentic and primordial if it is aware of its own historical contingency; of the fragility of its condition. The modern self-confidence in our ability to manipulate beings in order to satisfy our desires stands in pale comparison to the Greek sense of mystery. What is operative here is the ability to question one's social practices, suspend verificationism in encountering the world, and attend to the "openedness of beings." To think of beings as such is to see that no language is necessary and thus there is always the possibility of alternative languages and beings.[288]

The question now for Rorty is whether Heidegger is justified in thinking the Greeks to be more in tune with the contingency and openedness of beings. For Rorty, the answer

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[286] Ibid. p.39
[287] Ibid. p.43
[288] Ibid. p.45-6

must be "no," or at least, "not necessarily." For him, the diversity and complexity of the modern world suggests that it is perhaps we who are more apt to recognize contingency rather than the insular society of ancient Greece. Beyond this question though, Rorty is asking whether Heidegger's account of the history of Being, of the dialectic necessity of the Platonism to pragmatism progression, and the necessity of recognizing contingency, can be divorced from his nostalgia. Essentially, is his work on contingency compatible with the idea that modernity is in a good position to recognize that very contingency? 'Can pragmatism do justice to poetry [contingency] as well as to inquiry [power]?'[289] Rorty's optimistic answer is that it can. He sees no reason why a Deweyan culture, where technology is a means to making certain social practices possible, cannot be constructed. Here, technocratic manipulation is the servant, not the master, of the community. Yet he provides no real discussion of why this might be the case.[290] Let us unravel this problem further.

There are several ethical and cultural reasons why Rorty thinks such a relationship between contingency and technocratic manipulation possible. However, as political and cultural they are properly the subject of the later chapters of this thesis. The pertinent point now is to emphasize that Rorty believes that there are no philosophical (or ontological) reasons why these two themes are incompatible or problematic. Rather, Rorty seems to agree with Heidegger that pragmatism is ultimately an anti-metaphysical[291] version of the technocratic tradition. This allows it to follow its own ends and put the technical, instrumental approach to the world at the service of those human ends. Thus, contingency and mastery are compatible.[292] Contingency, by illustrating that our languages and values are not perennial or permanent, allows technocratic thinking to pursue not its own ends but those human communities set out for it. There is an obvious uncritical optimism in this account. In rejecting ontology and establishing the compatibility of mastery and contingency, Rorty assumes that such a mode of thought does not carry with it hidden assumptions about the world that could limit the ends we hold or the means we prescribe to achieve them. He assumes he can remove the cultural demand for certainty from the West without replacing the assumptions about the world of that model with an alternative. Yet, new fogs roll in. There is no ontologically minimal

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[289] Ibid. p.47

[290] As will be illustrated throughout this thesis, Rorty never adequately supports this position.

[291] Rorty means this in his sense of not assuming the presence of foundations or an appearance-reality divide. The question of whether Heidegger does assume such a divide and the significance of that for a criticism of Rorty will be addressed in Ch. 3.

[292] The account of Heidegger's critique of technology in Ch. 3 shows the interdependence of metaphysics, technology and contingency.

viewpoint or anti-foundational perspective. However, before illustrating this in Rorty's constructions of naturalism and historicism, it is necessary now to briefly engage Connolly on language for an alternative viewpoint. One that offers a positive ontology of ambiguity to counter Rorty's impoverished assumption of the isolation of language and the compatibility of contingency and mastery.

Connolly and Contestability: Mastery and the Production of Global Contingencies

While the central operative term of Rorty's understanding of language, and arguably of his implicit ontology as well, is "contingency," Connolly's is the related yet distinct concept of "contestability." This concept, like Rorty's contingency, is one Connolly initially articulated within a theory of language and concept change but eventually represented an entire ontological-ethical-political orientation. As a theory of concepts, an ethical disposition towards others, and a self-consciously partial viewpoint on the nature of the political sphere, it is both the most unifying theme of Connolly's philosophy and the link between his pluralistic ontology and his particular brand of ethical-political pluralism.[293] The purpose of this section will be to illustrate Connolly's understanding of contestability, his alternative account of contingency, and (introduce) his positive ontology of ambiguity and abundance. For Connolly, language is not only contingent but inherently relational. Consequently, languages (and communities) cannot be separated out into the neat divisions Rorty offers. Further, contingency, while being a generalized condition, also has a particular form (or set of effects) in late modernity. The *globalization of contingency*, for Connolly, is not so much compatible with the logic of mastery as the latter has engendered a dangerous form of the former. Finally, in light of this persistent condition, Connolly offers an equally contestable positive ontology of ambiguity and abundance as a resource for both opposing the logic of mastery and the pernicious effects of Rorty's social foundationalism. Connolly's thought here will stand in stark contrast to Rorty's portrayal of the isolation of language and the compatibility of contingency and mastery. Hopefully, it will begin to illustrate how the critique of mastery will furnish this enquiry with the resources to expose the limitations of Rorty's post-metaphysical pragmatism and liberalism.

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[293] Morton Schoolman also makes this point in his, "A Pluralist Mind: Agonistic Respect and the Problem of Violence Toward Difference" in *The New Pluralism: William Connolly and the Contemporary Global Condition* (ed. David Campbell and Morton Schoolman). London, UK: Duke University Press, 2008. p.20. See Also, Howarth, "Pluralizing Methods: Contingency, Ethics, and Critical Explanation" op cit. – Also Connolly confirms this centrality, see. "An Interview with William Connolly" *The New Pluralism*, op cit. pp.311-13

In *The Terms of Political Discourse* Connolly argues that the basic concepts of politics are "essentially contestable."[294] Like Rorty, Connolly frames his theory as a rejection of the understanding of language as a neutral medium through which objective analysis is conducted. Rather, those who choose not to reflect on the terms of political discourse are inevitably predisposed to established practices.[295] As will become apparent, conceptual change and agon are essential elements of politics and the only means of political change for Connolly. In opposition to the dominant modes of analysis in political science, he offers contestability as a means of thinking pluralistically about language and concept-use. Furthering an argument made by the philosopher W.B. Gallie, Connolly portrays conceptual meaning as multiple and relational.[296] Concepts never exist in isolation but in complex relations of interdependency he calls "clusters." A concept can never be defined without recourse to other concepts that are themselves related to more concepts. Connolly complicates this image by adding that there are very common and wide-ranging concepts that most views will refer to in some way (e.g. agency or responsibility). The way people understand these concepts, which are of course related to other concepts, and how they prioritize and weigh them in the definition of the concept at hand leads to an almost infinite level of variation in any one term. 'Commonly accepted criteria of its [the concept's] application are weighted differently by opposing parties, and certain criteria viewed as central by one party are rejected as inappropriate or marginal by others.'[297] Thus, meaning is always underdetermined and multiple in this view of concepts as they always exist within complex and differential clusters.

This understanding leads Connolly to articulate three essential features of concepts. First, they are *complex*. Internally and externally, if such a division can be made, all concepts are composed of and refer to a multiplicity of other concepts. Those concepts themselves are also related to a multiplicity of other concepts which affect their own meanings in often subtle and nuanced ways. Thus, relations both inside and outside of a concept are intricate. They exist on multiple levels whose relations cannot be reliably tracked. Second, this high level of complexity leads concepts to be essentially *open*. With such complex inner and outer relations, and the fact that a multiplicity of meanings for any concept is thus possible, there can be no final definitions. New understandings of even the

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[294] This emphasis on concepts, and their status as an opposition to mastery, will return in Ch. 5's discussion of Marcuse. There, it is the domestication of concepts which leads to the constriction of political thought within the mastery dynamic.

[295] Connolly, William E. *The Terms of Political Discourse*. 3rd Edition. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1993. pp.1-2

[296] Specifically, his paper; "Essentially Contested Concepts" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 56, 1956.

[297] Connolly, *Terms*, op cit. p.10

oldest concepts are always possible. Finally, concepts are *appraisive.* They are never simply descriptive but are also normative, 'in that to call something "a work of art" or a "democracy" is both to describe it and to ascribe a value to it or express a commitment with respect to it'[298] Thus, to use a concept is to use the associated value-judgment you have of that concept based on the particular prioritization of elements, out of the aforementioned multiplicity, you have settled on. The way you prioritize those elements and consequently define a concept is never free from values.

These three characteristics lead concepts to be "essentially contestable." If all concepts are highly complex, open, and appraisive, then conceptual debates are always normative debates. It is by insisting on the contestability of all concepts at the normative level that Connolly pluralizes thinking in general; contested concepts become the locus of political interaction. It is not that such debates precede politics but that politics itself is contestation over a multiplicity of interdependent and differential concepts that we all imperfectly share. 'Central to politics, as I understand it, is the ambiguous and relatively open-ended interaction of persons and groups who share a range of concepts, but share them imperfectly and incompletely.'[299] This language of imperfectly shared concepts allows us to understand Connolly's view of political development. Political change emerges out of competing interpretations of (necessarily) imperfectly shared concepts that are themselves rooted in different normative views. As imperfectly shared, they are both a common resource for discussion *and* they remain open to contestation. Thus, multiple ways of viewing any situation or concept will always be available as a new set of relations among concepts is always possible. In this understanding, unity and stability in language, culture and politics becomes impossible. Instead, there is ambiguous open-ended interaction. This is not meant to suggest that Connolly's thesis of essentially contestable concepts results in a chaotic and relativistic processes of conceptual development and change. Rather, as Morton Schoolman points out, the close connection between concepts and the culture in which they exist is "axiomatic" for Connolly.[300] Political discourse is rooted in a society's beliefs; they fill out and imbue the concepts we use. Thus, meaning is always culturally configured. However, the consequence of this view for culture in general would be an equal level of pluralization. If the concepts through which we engage in cultural and political discourse are always open to contestation, then culture, in addition to language, is not only contingent (which still allows it to be stable for Rorty) but plural and relational.

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[298] Ibid. p.22
[299] Ibid. p.6
[300] Schoolman, Morton. "A Pluralist Mind," op cit. p.25

This understanding of concepts and languages posits both the relational nature of languages and vocabularies, in that they are always participating in ideas and concepts shared with other groups, and the fundamental contestability of each perspective from the viewpoint of the other contenders. As normative, conceptual clusters constitute *forms of life*.[301] They constitute our actions and practices in the same manner that Rorty believes vocabularies determine social practice. Yet, if politics is always a process of normative conceptual debates occurring within complex relational networks of imperfectly shared concepts, then political debates always involve a wider matrix of our beliefs and assumptions. They are thus, already, contra Rorty, ontological. The difference between Rorty and Connolly's accounts is that, while the former ignores the ontological by establishing both the priority and isolation of communities and languages, the latter does not close off these groups from one another or from the world. As vague clusters, languages imperfectly share elements and meanings that allow for conceptual and political agon. Communities are not closed off epistemological islands but dynamic and interdependent networks of multiple and multi-tiered connections. While it will be discussed in Ch. 3, it is pertinent to note now that this difference between Rorty and Connolly is the consequence of their contrasting methods. As aforementioned, while contestable, Connolly argues for a double-entry orientation to politics that includes both a general recognition of contestability and an incontestable critical gesture. This allows him to add a spatial dimension to contingency, which contrasts with Rorty's solely temporal conception of contingency. Where Rorty only wants to characterize language (without ontological claims), and so separates them from the world and each other, Connolly adds a positive ontological moment within his work that asserts the necessity of contingency as a condition.[302] Thus, the contestability of language means it is both open (temporal) and complex (spatial). It is without stability over time and in the relational moment. As relational, it can make critical gestures towards other frameworks which, as aforementioned, share partial aspects. In this manner, Connolly reconnects our languages with the world. He gives them a critical dimension.[303] In contrast, Rorty's pragmatist-historical method assumes the stability of languages and communities in spite of acknowledging contingency. Further, this contingency isolates language from the world. His connection of mastery and contingency only exacerbates this by advocating a "mastery

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[301] Ibid. p.25

[302] This necessity divides Weak ontological and post-foundational approaches from anti-foundational ones as discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

[303] The importance of a critical dimension and Rorty's exclusion of it will be discussed throughout this thesis. Importantly, Ch. 3 will argue that without an appearance-reality divide, which Rorty rejects, a critical political posture is not possible.

of the moment" before the next metaphorical shift. The two-dimensional notion of contestability in Connolly's philosophy results in a very different social ontology critical methodology. However, before introducing this, it is necessary to briefly divert and address Connolly's treatment of contingency and its possible compatibility with the logic of mastery.

Connolly defines contingency in different terms. Rather than a relationship between successive vocabularies, contingency for Connolly is multifaceted.

> 'By contrast to the necessary and the universal, it means that which is changeable and particular; by contrast to the certain and the constant, it means that which is uncertain and variable; by contrast to the self-subsistent and the causal, it means that which is dependent and effect; by contrast to the expected and the regular, it means that which is unexpected and irregular; and by contrast to the safe and reassuring, it means that which is dangerous, unruly, and obdurate in its danger.'[304]

It is the latter three descriptions here that highlight the difference. While Connolly would agree that contingency precludes neutral frameworks for enquiry and any teleological sense for human knowledge and communities (i.e. changeable and uncertain), the contingent for him is also necessary relational (dependent), surprising (unexpected), and beyond control (unruly). We have already seen how the relational aspect is involved in Connolly's theory of concepts as essentially contestable, the other two themes are related to Connolly's identification of a particular late-modern condition through which he gives shape to his thoughts on contingency and its relation to mastery (and implicitly, philosophy and its relation to politics).

While contingency, for Connolly, can be described as a general condition, he also focuses on a particular form or manifestation of it he identifies as a "defining mark of late-modernity:" the *globalization of contingency*. This condition describes a very different relation between mastery and contingency. Rather than being compatible notions, where a pragmatic approach of mastery stems from an acknowledgement of the contingent nature of human development, for Connolly, mastery exacerbates contingency. 'The globalization of contingency refers to a perverse correlation between the drive of dominant states to master contingency in their internal and external environments and the corollary production of dangerous global possibilities that outstrip the capacity of any single state or the interstate system to control them.'[305] As this logic of mastery is extended, as overt control is attempted in more areas of human, social, biological, and environmental development, contingencies proliferate. For Connolly, mastery is specifically the project of

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[304] Connolly, William E. *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. London, UK: Cornell University Press, 1991. p.28
[305] Connolly, *Ethos,* op cit. p.22

ending contingency; of turning human development to satisfy "human desires and ends" to use Rorty's language. This relationship is obscured by particular developments in late-modern politics. However, what is important to note here is that, philosophically, Connolly postulates that the attempt to master the contingent nature of reality only results in the production of new, larger contingency dynamics. Mastery and control, on this view, *necessarily fail*.[306] Further, they obscure the very production of contingencies, and their involvement therein, through its domestication.

For Connolly, as discussed above, the mastery assumption of a pliable world susceptible to human control is a *compensatory ontology*. As in the Anglo-American matrix of political thought, it theorizes the world as pliable in order to compensate for the loss of the enchanted world of religion. These ontologies, the mastery dynamic among them, domesticate (veil) contingency through a variety of means, but most occur through a two-step process. First, they select one or two elements of contingency, as noted above, and treat them as the defining nature of contingency. Second, they theorize a social ontology that domesticates the selected elements while ignoring the rest.[307] It is my contention that Rorty's theorization of contingency perfectly fits this model.[308] First, he identifies contingency solely as the historically changeable and teleologically uncertain. Second, he dismisses contingency as an ontology, refusing to postulate it as a general condition due to his anti-ontological philosophy. His concern throughout his work is to, 'avoid hinting that this suggestion [contingency] gets something right, that my sort of philosophy corresponds to the way things really are.'[309] Instead, he confines contingency to an anti-metaphysical, behavioural theory of metaphor as the agent of movement in historically contingent language shifts. Languages and communities, on this understanding, remain stable outside of these moments of change. Further, contingency has no relation to the world. Thus, he domesticates contingency by limiting its experience and, as we have seen in his discussion of Heidegger, covertly reinserts a demand and presumption of the pliability of the world through the mastery dynamic. For Connolly, this demand is a form of ontological narcissism. As a compensatory ideology, it is a religious relic demanding that the world must be predisposed to us as compensation for the loss of a world that was

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[306]Connolly, *Identity\Difference* op cit, pp.24-7. Rorty also discusses the changing global context and its uncertain nature. However, he fails to connect it to contingency. See his, *Achieving our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America*. London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1998. Part 3. This is discussed in Ch. 5.

[307] Ibid. p.28 – see also; Connolly, *Ethos,* op cit. pp.21-2

[308] Connolly himself notes Rorty's domestication of contingency. See: Connolly, William E. "Review Symposium on Richard Rorty" in *History of the Human Sciences*. Vol. 3 (1), Feb 1990. p.107; Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, op cit. p.226 n. 11

[309] Rorty, *CIS,* p 8

under religion.[310] In this sense, Connolly illustrates how Rorty retains a nonhuman authority in the form of a logic and demand of the susceptibility of the world to human desires.

Instead, Connolly offers a very different social ontology. This aspect of his theory will only be briefly addressed here to contrast Rorty's theory as I have presented it thus far. A much fuller contrast will be provided throughout the course of this thesis. Connolly establishes a distinction between his own social ontology and those of the dominant positions of the matrix of Anglo-American political thought. For him, the latter are characterized by "ontologies of concord." Such ontologies assume, 'that when properly constituted and situated the individual or collective subject achieves harmony with itself and with the other elements of social life.'[311] Such a unity, or demand that truth be one, which I have and will continue to identify in Rorty, results in a conversion of difference to and excluded otherness; that anything that does not conform to that unity is somehow defective.[312] While this will be developed further in later chapters, the important point to understand now is that Connolly juxtaposes this to an "ontology of discordance." This view holds that some form of otherness, something which does not fit or somehow imperils the unity and stability of the entity, is inevitable.[313] It is for this reason that the drive to master a group or situation will only cause the proliferation of these deviations, not their resolution.

This social ontology extends to Connolly's understanding of contingency and his view of the irreducibility of ontology. Contingencies, which proliferate under the drive for mastery, are not merely linguistic. Contingency has a general reality. Consequently, it is not only that contingency precludes a neutral framework for enquiry (as uncertain and changeable) but that there are necessarily relational, unexpected, and uncontrollable elements therein as well.

> Suppose internal and external nature contains, because it is neither designed by a god nor neatly susceptible to organization by human design, elements of stubborn opacity to human knowledge, recalcitrance to human projects, resistance to any model of normal individuality and harmonious community. Suppose these elements of dissonance enter into the unities and concordances established creating disturbances in the designs we pursue… Each design engenders new contingencies while subduing old ones.[314]

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[310] Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, op cit. pp.30, 72-3

[311] Connolly, *Politics and Ambiguity*, op cit. p.10

[312] This manifests in Rorty's politics as an exclusion of non-public thought. This is discussed in Chs. 4 and 5.

[313] Ibid. pp.10-11 – Beyond Heidegger, Connolly is clearly drawing on the language of post-structuralism; particularly, Derrida and Foucault.

[314] Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, op cit. p.31

This ontology of ambiguity acknowledges that our drive to understand and control is always matched by the proliferation of the unexpected and uncontrollable. It is not that there are no relations within this process but that relations exceed our capacity to control them. As in contestability, complex clusters of relational contingencies disrupt every established unity or community. As argued Ch. 3, every revelation of Being also conceals. There is always a veil. Thus, every view is partial, necessarily capturing some aspects of something and obscuring others. Discussing Heidegger's notion of modern enframing[315] and its opposite, freedom, Connolly notes that he defines the latter as what "lets the veil appear as what veils." For Connolly, freedom, as opposed to the enframing that draws things into a pattern of knowledge for the purpose of (pragmatic?) use, does not reveal what is beneath this veil. There is no exposure of Being or harmonious relationship with nature beneath enframing. Enframing veils the very procedure of veiling; it conceals the partiality of its mode of explanation. For Connolly,

> 'Every revealing conceals. And a veil must always be in a world neither designed to correspond to our capacities for cognition nor comprised of plastic material perfectly susceptible (even in the final instance) to human organization. The phrase ["…lets the veil appear as what veils"] then, calls us to appreciate the difference between our ideals and the world we draw upon to realize them without purporting to elevate that difference itself to a higher standard or metaknowledge.'[316]

New fogs roll in. The consequence of the irreducibility of ontology due to the partial (contingent) nature of our languages and understandings means that contingency, contra Rorty, becomes ontologically necessary for Connolly. It is an irreducible part of reality which makes all of our understandings partial and the presence of unjustifiable ontological assumptions inevitable. Further, freedom is not the absence of a veil, or its (sociological) circumvention as in Rorty, but the revelation of the presence and necessity of that veil. In this manner, Connolly illustrates both the connection between mastery and a dynamic of veiling (elaborated on in Ch.3) and the capacities of his own ontological method. His work does not unveil. Yet, nor does it elide veiling through a sociological and pragmatic circumvention. It reveals the necessity of the veil and the contours of the present one.

Thus, Connolly's ontology is one of inherent ambiguity. The world never matches our conceptual systems nor is it susceptible to a means-ends calculation through which we can master it. Rather, contra Rorty, such an approach produces a globalization of contingency: the production of contingency on a new level to match such attempts at control. This analysis stems from Connolly's early work on contestability. Terms here are appraisive (normative), open (temporal), and complex (spatial). Due to this complexity, languages,

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[315] This notion and will be addressed in detail in Ch.3 through a reading of Heidegger.
[316] Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, op cit. p.32

which share terms imperfectly, are relational. They are never isolated or restricted to internal discussions of use and coherence. Further, as relational, it is not only that our languages are never adequate to the world, which Rorty accepts, but that they are never adequate to themselves. There is persistent ambiguity in their incompletion. They fill in what is not explicitly articulated with assumptions which structure their understandings as much as their overt elements. There is no unveiled reality; yet, nor is there a veiless post-metaphysical pragmatic disposition. However, at the same time, there is a connection with the world. Seeing the veil as what veils asserts the necessity and inevitability of the partiality of existence. It asserts the necessity of contingency. [317] Closing his reading of Heidegger, Rorty suggests that Heidegger succumbs to the same criticism the latter makes of Nietzsche. Metaphysics re-emerges within Heidegger's philosophy through the nostalgia he has for a pure time before the Platonic quest for certainty. This unjustifiable claim to the primordial re-inserts what Rorty calls an "unexplained explainer:" a transcendental criteria beyond language. It constitutes Heidegger's attempt to escape from time and contingency.[318] However, Rorty, repeats the mistake he accuses Heidegger of in his own attempt to be free of such transcendence. In his move toward the anti-foundational, the non-ontological, Rorty attempts to escape ontological assumptions into the pragmatic; albeit, the temporally contingent pragmatism of the modern West.

CONCLUSION:

This chapter has connected Rorty's anti-foundational rejection of ontology to his understanding of the contingency of language to demonstrate how the implicit claim to methodological neutrality (established in Ch. 1) manifests in the first theme of Rorty's pragmatist-historical method. In rejecting ontology and theorizing the priority of the social, Rorty focuses discussions of linguistic development on internal debates about the use and coherence of vocabularies. Consequently, when he turns to a positive theory of language and contingency, he redescribes the former solely within the terms of a behavioural (tool) account of social practices and confines the latter to an understanding of metaphor as the agent of contingent development. This pragmatic, anti-metaphysical view (where language is neither reified nor treated as medium), for Rorty, then necessitates a positive revaluation of pragmatism's mastery logic within the history of philosophy. Reading Heidegger, Rorty argues for mastery as the only available post-metaphysical response to contingency. It is in this sense that I argue that Rorty's embrace

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[317] This connection will be discussed further in Ch.3. Its connection to politics will be elaborated in Ch. 5.
[318] Rorty, Richard. "Heidegger, Kundera, Dickens" in *EHO.* pp.69-70, 77

of the logic of mastery ultimately stems from both his opposition to ontology and his philosophy of language. Further, this results in an understanding that isolates languages in their priority, closing them off from the world and one another. With the mastery dynamic, vocabularies are now controllable islands susceptible only to the internal debates about use and coherence within the community and to the vicissitudes of metaphorical contingency. This amounts to an argument that since languages and thought are entirely cut off from the world, the only possible disposition to it is mastery. In contrast, Connolly illustrates how languages and concepts are never isolated. Holding to the irreducibility of ontological assumptions, Connolly theorizes a double-entry orientation to thought that necessitates the explicit articulation of positive ontological commitments. This methodology retains its critical standpoint in necessitating, in one moment, the assertion of the necessity of contestability before reflexively applying that back onto its own status. It thereby gestures toward and at a reality it cannot ultimately grasp. Thus, theorizing language and ontology, in opposition to Rorty's anti-foundationalism, as fundamentally contestable, Connolly offers an understanding of concepts that illustrates this moment of necessity. Concepts are always complex (relational), open (temporally variant), and appraisive (normative). As such, languages always exist in vaguely defined and multifaceted networks of interdependent beliefs and every language carries with it relations and assumptions not explicitly articulated. Ontology is thus irreducible as it stows away, often unarticulated, within every vocabulary. Further, Connolly's positive ontology of ambiguity holds that the world always exceeds our categorizations. Contingency is necessary because our languages are never adequate to the world or themselves. There is always a veil. Thus, the mastery approach, in seeking to encapsulate the world within a means-ends logic, only produces more contingencies as it pushes further into the details of reality. The critique of Rorty is twofold. First, in isolating language within communities and from the world and each other, Rorty produces a social foundationalism and ignores the critical resources of ontological reflection. He veils the veil.[319] Further, in positing languages as stable and susceptible to control, outside of periodic shifts, Rorty enacts a mastery of the moment that ignores the spatial-relational dimension of contingency found in Connolly's contestability. Second, in advocating a post-metaphysical mastery, Rorty re-inserts the demand for and assumption of a world predisposed to human control and conceptualization. He ignores and precludes analysis into how such a demand introduces a covert set of ontological assumptions beneath an

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[319] The mechanism of veiling present in Rorty's pragmatism-historical method will be introduced in Ch.3. Its political consequences will be examined in Chs. 4 and 5.

implicit claim to post-metaphysical neutrality because he ignores the possibility of ontological criticism. Both of these points will be developed further in Ch. 3 and its examination of the questions of naturalism and history.

CH3. MASTERY AND ITS VEIL: NATURALISM
AND HISTORY

> The essence of Enframing is that setting-upon gathered into itself which entraps the truth of its own coming to presence with oblivion. This entrapping disguises itself, in that it develops into the setting in order of everything that presences as standing-reserve, establishes itself in the standing-reserve, and rules as the standing-reserve... This disguising is what is most dangerous in the danger.[320]

> Man will know, i.e. carefully safeguard into its truth, that which is incalculable, only in creative questioning and shaping out of the power of genuine reflection. Reflection transports the man of the future into that "between" in which he belongs to Being and yet remains a stranger amid that which is.[321]

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter continues the analysis of the dynamic of mastery and mechanism of veiling into the two themes of naturalism and historicism. In addition to the contingency and priority of language, these themes comprise Rorty's positive articulation of philosophy following his critique of foundationalism; essentially, what Rorty thinks philosophy can achieve. With naturalism, he theorizes the extent to which philosophy can contact reality. It is clear in this analysis that he radically restricts our ability to theorize the world and reduces the theme of naturalism to a way of understanding (the contingency and priority of) language as a behavioural and limited causal relationship with the world. This extends both his social-practice based understanding of language and his prescription of mastery to the physical sphere. Consequently, for Rorty, philosophy is left only with the resources of narrative and history for self-understanding. Progressive and linear developments are tracked through the past in order to provide an understanding of and prescription for the present. Here, Rorty once again returns to mastery as the modern disposition most capable of improving the human situation. Through a reading of modernity, he argues for its historical necessity and superiority. While in Ch. 2 Connolly's work provided the main

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[320] Heidegger, Martin. "The Turning" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (trans. William Lovitt). London, UK: Garland Publishing Inc, 1977. p.38 – (hereafter: *QT)*
[321] Heidegger, Martin. 'The Age of the World Picture" in *QT* op cit. p.136

critical resources to critique the dynamics of mastery in Rorty's work, this chapter will focus on the work of Martin Heidegger.

While Rorty's anti-essentialist naturalism remains within the epistemic limits of his understanding of the contingency and priority of language, Heidegger gestures beyond such constrictions. Though the latter is equally aware of the failure of philosophical foundations, his work develops an ontological disposition designed to exceed the pragmatic. Through a singular focus on the question of Being, Heidegger offers an analysis of modern scientific naturalism and a critique of modernity as technology that reveals both the assumptions of modern mastery and the mechanism of neutrality therein. Further, he illustrates the necessity of the appearance-reality distinction in his language of the veil. Connolly develops Heidegger's analysis of modernity and veiling through a critique of modernity and its implicit dependence on an ontology of plasticity and concord. He illustrates how Rorty's thought (and pragmatism's) depends upon a demand for truth to be one; for a unified viewpoint apparent and susceptible to human mastery. Through Heidegger and Connolly's assessments of modernity and history, Rorty's understandings (and the mastery approach in general) are exposed as impossible desires based on a set of unjustifiable ontological presuppositions (thus contradicting his anti-foundationalism). In both the themes of naturalism and history, Rorty assumes reality is fundamentally mutable which places it at the service of human purposes. The flaws of this presupposition, and its negative effects, are exposed here by the further development of Heidegger and Connolly's critical ontological form of questioning. These latter two indicate the possibility of an alternative (ontological) approach for the philosophical analysis of politics (further developed in Ch. 5). The confrontation here reveals how ontology can be philosophical resource for the critical interrogation of our thought and politics in the wake of foundations.

NATURALISM AND TECHNOLOGY: NATURE AND ITS VEIL

The question of the material world inevitably arises within every positive philosophy. Is it a determinative medium that structures our social, economic, and physical lives? Is it a pliable free-floating sphere constructed through the categories of thought, language, the mind, or some non-corporeal order? Or, is it something in-between? These caricatured positions represent the extremes of the positions addressing the nature of materiality, what is often referred to as the idealism-materialism divide (or idealism-realism in Analytic philosophy). Essentially, whether languages/concepts (either innate or constructed) or physical/structural realities (either natural or imposed) have priority in

our explanatory frameworks. Following the failure of philosophical correspondence, Rorty attempts to enact a version of Spinozan parallelism with respect to nature and culture. However, due to the continued priority of language and the social within his account, and a consequently simplified understanding of the relational nature of both the linguistic and physical spheres, Rorty produces a reductive account of the causal and reinstitutes a firm language-reality divide which subordinates the latter to the former in the relationship of mastery. All of this is framed within his continued endorsement of a pragmatic, anti-ontological, and behavioural account of the material that constructs naturalism not as an understanding of the material but as a way of viewing language.

Rorty's anti-essentialist naturalism is contrasted here with Heidegger's opposing account of ontological questioning and his consequent critiques of modern science and technology. By focusing on the question of Being, Heidegger offers a critical disposition for philosophical thought that allows him to identify the assumptions, exclusions and limits of modern mastery. He thereby illustrates how Rorty's linguistic and social-practice view of naturalism results in a non-critical social foundationalism. Further, Heidegger develops the double-entry orientation of ontological thought identified in Ch. 2. Through recourse to the language of veiling and an implicit appearance-reality divide, he indicates the possibility of a critical perspective that Rorty's naturalism obscures. In this manner, he exceeds the naturalistic and the pragmatic in a gesture towards the ontological.

Rorty's Nod to the Material: Darwin, Naturalism and the Limits of the Causal

Naturalism, the concept through which Rorty addresses the material, is a concept he often has recourse to but rarely defines in any detail. It remains opaque within his thought, not so much an account of the physical as a particular way of viewing language that accounts for the natural world. Thus, naturalism (and historicism) must be understood as occurring within Rorty's account of the priority of language as social practice. It is part of his attempt to offer an anti-metaphysical view of language while simultaneously escaping the charge of idealism. However, ultimately it remains open to the flaws of his philosophy of language. Stability in the form of a social foundationalism emerges within this account where culture (as language) is given priority over and divided from nature.

As discussed in Ch. 1, Rorty's early work in the philosophy of mind embraced a form of materialism that attempted to address mental (linguistic) categories. Subsequently, he became more concerned with adequately accounting for the material in light of his thesis of the contingency and priority of language. However, it is important to understand that for Rorty, within the history of philosophy, the debate about materialism occurred within

the metaphysical context and thus necessarily outside of anti-metaphysical pragmatism. This is clear in his description of Spinoza as a turning point in the history of philosophy. In *Truth, Politics, and Post-Modernism* Rorty, as he often does, re-narrates the history of this debate from its Greek inception.[322] This is the debate between Plato's gods (anti-materialists) and giants (materialists) over whether reality is in the end spiritual or material. Both of these positions, for Rorty, depend upon the appearance-reality distinction and the idea that the veil of appearance can be penetrated to the reality of the natural order of things. Blessedness is the anti-materialist sense of having achieved this by discovering how reality is in fact predisposed to humanity in some way. This is the main distinction between these groups. For materialists, there is no hope of such a relation. The natural order can still be accessed but doing so would only give us the utilitarian profit of manipulation; no metaphysical comfort[323] is offered in this view of "atoms in the void." For Rorty, this opposition between gods and giants continued throughout the history of philosophy until Spinoza. He sought to reconcile materialism with the hope of blessedness by theorizing the parallelism of matter and mind. Descriptions of reality in terms of matter, on the one hand, and mind, on the other, are two equally valid descriptions of the universe.[324] They are two equally legitimate ways of viewing the same underlying reality.

For Rorty, contrary to Spinoza's intentions, this very move destroyed the blessedness. The notion of equally valid descriptions of reality, for him, imperils the very idea of a natural order that is in principle knowable, upon which the metaphysical view of reality is premised. As soon as one admits that there is more than one valid way to describe reality, one has to ask why it would be assumed that any description actually approximates it. For Rorty, this is due to the inevitable entrance of the notion of utility. As soon as multiple descriptions are valid, the idea that they serve different purposes is inevitable. 'Perhaps we have no idea when, if ever, our descriptions of the universe are accurate, as opposed to merely being more useful for one or another such purpose than the available alternative descriptions.'[325] It should be noted that this is the anti-epistemological point that we can never know reality, if in fact it has an order to know, rather than the ontological point (that Connolly and Heidegger make) that reality exceeds and overflows our descriptions of it.

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[322] History and narrative are key aspects of Rorty's thought and method. His own understandings of them are addressed below and in Ch.4's discussion of his methodology for the social sciences. For another discussion of the centrality of history to his method, see: Malachowski, Alan. *Richard Rorty*. Chesham, UK: Acumen Publishing Ltd, 2002. pp.41-5; and, Hall, David L. *Richard Rorty: Prophet and Poet of the New Pragmatism*. Albany, US: State University of New York Press, 1994. Ch. 1

[323] Connolly argues that pragmatist mastery is a compensatory ontology that provides metaphysical comfort in assuming the world as susceptible to our purposes (see Ch.2).

[324] Rorty, Richard. *Truth, Politics, and 'Post-Modernism'*. Assen, The Neatherlands: Van Gorcum, 1997. pp.14-5

[325] Ibid. p.16

This slide toward pragmatism, for Rorty, questions the very idea of a natural order. Order, instead, is the effect of descriptions, which have no way to connect themselves to reality. Consequently, it is reflection on the nature of ontologies as linguistic that leads to the idea that they will never approximate the world. As Rorty notes, 'the more one thinks about language, the less there is to think about nature.'[326] Thus, Spinoza stands as a fundamental turning point in the history of philosophy. By introducing the notion of equally valid descriptions, he inaugurated the pragmatist move toward language and away from reality and the appearance-reality divide. The question now is, in what sense do materialism and naturalism remain for Rorty? What is his nod to the material? It is precisely in the *use* of the physical vocabulary and the naturalization of our understanding of social practice. We will take each of these in turn.

Rorty endorses a version of this pragmatic, Spinozan parallelism regarding the status of physical and mental descriptions of reality. His point is to offer a view of the relations between humans and the world that, though naturalized, is not reductive or scientistic. This "non-reductive physicalism" draws principally on two key theses of Davidson. First, there is the idea that reasons can be causes. This amounts to an equivocation between the mental and physical vocabularies used to explain action. If reasons (as linguistic) can be causes (as physical), then they both impact on reality in a similar manner. What Davidson is suggesting with this thesis, for Rorty, is that mental and physical events are just two descriptions of the same process, the same event. Reasons and causes are no different than macro-structural and micro-structural explanations of the same process. Thus, a non-reductive physicalist is someone who holds that every event can be explained within another set of terms, perhaps micro-structural. The reason why this is not reductive, for Rorty, is that this is paired with the idea that such a reduction is merely linguistic and not ontological.[327] Showing the validity or applicably of another vocabulary is not to reduce one to the other. Nothing, for him, could achieve that. Every term gains its meaning through its place and relations within a given language game. Thus, as long as there is the practice of using a term, it exists. To be a physicalist, on Rorty's account, is to acknowledge the continued use and validity of physical vocabularies. This seemingly paradoxical proposition, that language determines reality (and we have seen this before in Ch. 2's discussion of the ontological priority of the social), is resolved by the second Davidsonian thesis Rorty employs: that there is no relation of correspondence or representation

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[326] Ibid. p.17

[327] This argument recalls both Rorty's "eliminative materialism" and epistemological behaviourism. Here Rorty combines these in arguing for the relativity of physical and mental descriptions. Both occur within language. For Rorty, this argument is specifically not ontological. It is a repetition of his sociological circumvention of philosophy. See Ch. 1.

between languages and the world. We should replace the distinction between sentences that access reality in some way and those that do not in favour of distinctions between the various *uses* of vocabularies for equally various *purposes*. In this way the mental and physical vocabularies (among others) are acknowledged to have equal validity and Rorty can remain a physicalist (i.e. assert the use and value of the natural sciences) without falling into reductionism.[328] The actual nature of his physicalism will be examined through his understanding of the causal. However, initially it is necessary to understand how naturalism and naturalization have another use for him beyond the technological developments of the physical sciences.

For Rorty, the key contribution of naturalism to his philosophy is in how it changes our understanding of social practice and its development. To recall, Rorty follows Brandom and Sellars in holding that "all awareness is a linguistic affair" (see Ch. 2). It is this move that makes utility and coherence paramount and which isolates humans from the world within their linguistic communities.

> If our awareness of things is always a linguistic affair, if Sellars is right and we cannot check our language against our nonlinguistic awareness… There is no authority outside of convenience for human purposes that can be appealed to in order to legitimize the use of a vocabulary. We have no duties to anything nonhuman.[329]

For Rorty, in getting out from under nonhuman authority, the only task now is to examine our vocabularies and practices in the hope of making their details coherent and explicit. We are limited, in this project, only by our present practices and vocabularies (their use and purpose) and the alternatives we can create or mine from history. The crux of this new pragmatic understanding is a *naturalized*, behavioural understanding of language as social practice that allows Rorty to link cultural and biological evolution.[330] This requires some unpacking.

Rorty fundamentally distinguishes his naturalism from the dominant variants in Analytic philosophy, referring to his as either "subject" or "pragmatic" naturalism as opposed to "object" or "reductive" naturalism. For him, the latter are concerned with the identification of perennial philosophical problems of word-world relations and addressing these problems through the explanation of non-particles by particles, or language by the world. For Rorty, his naturalism opposes the very idea of pictures (ontologies) of these relations. Our conceptual systems are better described, for him, as systems of linguistic

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[328] Rorty, Richard. "Non-Reductive Physicalism" in *ORT*. pp.113-6
[329] Rorty, Richard. "Robert Brandom on Social Practices and Representations" in *TP*. p.127
[330] Ibid. p.125

behaviour.[331] Naturalism starts from the understanding of humans and communities as "natural creatures in a natural environment." As organisms adrift in the flux of reality, we are merely attempting to cope with each other and our environments through language. Thus, in opposition to discoveries of fundamental word-world relations, all we can hope for is narratives about evolutional development; about how our practices and vocabularies have changed and grown in complexity in order to better cope amidst our shifting purposes. Behavioural explanation is all we have outside these narratives to distinguish between organisms. Pragmatism, thus, wants to escape the whole idealism-realism argument by eschewing the question of representation/correspondence, 'in favour of descriptions of the interaction of language-using organisms with other such organisms and with their environment.'[332] Unless particles (as physical) are somehow given an ontological status prior to organisms (as language-using), these narratives of cultural evolution are as naturalistic as explanation can be.

Due to this behavioural model of naturalism, Rorty often utilizes the language of evolutionary theory in a view he calls, "Darwinian Naturalism." For him, the evolutionary model of contingent and non-teleological responses to changing circumstances and developments is a productive non-essentialist way to think about language use and change. Consider: 'Davidson lets us think of the history of language, and thus of culture, as Darwin taught us to think of the history of a coral reef. Old metaphors are constantly dying off into literalness, and then serving as a platform and foil for new metaphors.'[333] And, 'Nietzschean history of culture, and Davidsonian philosophy of language, see language as we now see evolution, as forms of life constantly killing off old forms – not to accomplish a higher purpose, but *blindly*.'[334] This naturalistic account of language-use and worldview change emphasizes, for Rorty, the fact that his view of contingent social practice is necessarily non-teleological and non-purposive. Changes in our behaviour and practices occur neither with a predetermined end in mind nor under the aegis of some determinate decision. Rorty's reason for this may be at least partially explained by briefly referring to the work of John Dewey, whose own naturalism and influence on Rorty was discussed in Ch. 1. In an essay entitled "The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy" Dewey argues that Darwin's work was a fundamental turning point for philosophy. For him, Darwin initiated a revolt against the dominant assumptions of intellectual life at the time. This was the

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[331] For an account of Rorty's opposition to such picturing and his argument for the superiority of his social-practice oriented view of languages, see; Rorty, Richard. "Representation, Social Practice, and Truth" in *ORT*

[332] Rorty, Richard. "Naturalism and Quietism" in *PCP*. p.158. The similarity of this language and view with Dewey's (discussed in Ch.1) is obvious. Both neutralize scientific naturalism.

[333] Rorty, Richard. *CIS*. p.16

[334] Ibid. p.19 – (my emphasis)

assumption of the superiority of the fixed and final over the dynamic where change is always a perversion that is tolerated only as a means to a predetermined end (telos). Darwin destroyed this purposiveness through introducing a mode of thinking that removed the idea of a prior intelligent causal force or design. Under his logic of natural selection the interest shifts from the essence behind specific changes (the essential or metaphysical) to the question of how these specific changes serve concrete and different purposes (the pragmatic!). In another sense, this was a shift away from a single intelligence or design to *particular* entities striving in different directions; or a shift away from transcendent conditions to the specifics of time and chance.[335] Thus, Darwin is a key figure in providing the intellectual groundwork for pragmatism specifically and a different, anti-essentialist and post-metaphysical, intellectual culture generally. For Rorty, both this general disposition and the specific themes of anti-transcendence and contingency are key to his naturalism and its role in his philosophy.[336]

Rorty's naturalism offers an understanding of relations that is explicitly framed in opposition to a transcendental mode of ontological explanation. Instead, his naturalism remains within his account of contingency detailed in Ch. 2. Transcendental explanation, or the explanation of actuality by eternal verities or conditions of possibility, is impossible here as it is one more attempt to escape from (temporal) contingency. Rorty reads the history of philosophy as the history of successive, privileged *a priori* conditions. Whether it is mind/consciousness, experience, logic, or language, all privileged principles can, after Darwin, be explained naturalistically as a particular social practice serving a particular evolutionary function; a view that Rorty in one instance refers to as, 'making Spirit continuous with Nature.'[337] Further, each transcendental condition, or "unexplained explainer," eventually falls victim to the self-referential problem regarding their own possibility. This is the problem of how entities used to explain knowledge are themselves known. This problem arises because transcendent conditions always function as the source of explanation for the rest of reality (including the material). Thus, everything or entity must always stand in some sort of relation to these conditions before they are accessible to experience, description, etc.

> Call the lower-level entities, those which stand in need of being related in order to become available, entities of type B. These are entities which require relations but cannot themselves relate, require contextualization and explanation but cannot

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[335] Dewey, John. "The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy" in *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy: And Other Essays in Contemporary Thought*. New York, US: Holt Press, 1910. p.15

[336] He also often utilizes Darwinian language and explicit arguments regarding Darwin's significance in naturalizing Western thought. See, for example: Rorty, Richard. "Afterward: Pragmatism, Pluralism and Postmodernism." in *PSH*.

[337] Rorty, Richard. "Wittgenstein, Heidegger and the Reification of Language" in *EHO*. p.53 n. 5

themselves contextualize or explain. The Platonic Forms, the Kantian categories, and the Russellian logical objects are examples of what I shall call type A entities. These entities contextualize and explain but cannot, on pain of infinite regress, be contextualized or explained.[338]

For Rorty, this type of explanation assumes that no entity is available for experience or description without being in a relationship which exceeds that between everyday type B entities. Type A entities, as conditions of possibility, provide for this necessary transcendence. However, this leads to the aforementioned self-referential problem of access. If type A entities serve as their own conditions of possibility and we are justified in believing in them without relating them to something which conditions them, the problem of access to type B entities seems to fall apart. Why are type B entities not available to us apart from some condition in the way that type A are? In opposition, Rorty defines his naturalism as anti-transcendent. It is the understanding that anything might be otherwise (might be put into a new set of relations) and that there are no conditionless conditions (nothing that is outside relations). This makes all possible explanation of the actual, causal. It is about the present state of relations between entities. Whether language or physical reality, the point is to adopt a holistic view which rejects any distinction between available and unavailable (privileged and unprivileged, ineffable and effable, *masked* and *unmasked*, etc.) entities in favour of, 'a seamless, indefinitely extensible web of relations.'[339] Thus, Rorty's naturalism, as anti-transcendent, chooses to exist solely on the level of the actual relations of the physical and linguistic worlds. The nature of this relationism and the consequences for the causal will be addressed in turn.

While the previous discussion has introduced a current of relationism in Rorty's philosophy that seems to contradict Ch.2, where Rorty was critiqued for lacking a relational view of language, the purpose of deferring the discussion of this aspect till now is twofold. First, Ch.2 attempted to illustrate the dominant theorization and function of language within Rorty's philosophy. There, a social-practice tool-oriented view of language served to emphasize both the priority and isolation of language. The relational strain currently under discussion, it must be emphasized, is a minority report within Rorty's philosophy.[340] Second, this relationism, as the last paragraph indicated, flows explicitly from his naturalized worldview whereby the impossibility of transcendence necessitates a different understanding of the interactions between humans, each other, and the world.

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[338] Ibid. p.54

[339] Ibid. p.59

[340] Previous to *PSH* this relationism is only present in Rorty's characterization of sentences as relational and in his view of the self as webs of beliefs and desires. See: Rorty "Wittgenstein" op cit. pp.56-7; and, Rorty, Richard. "Inquiry as Recontextualization" in *ORT*. p.93 – As illustrated below, while language is relational for Rorty, its relations are stable and confined to a given language.

This should become clear once Rorty's naturalism, relationism and understanding of causality have been addressed. Finally, though this relationism is a departure from Rorty's other reflections on language, it does not fundamentally deviate from that account's central conclusions. There remains a (flawed) focus on the priority and isolation of language; one that, in my view, leads to a dangerous assumption of social mastery and the reinstitution of a firm and inflexible division between nature and culture, reality and language (which Rorty does not seem to intend).

The continued prioritization of language within this relational viewpoint is clear within Rorty's most detailed exploration of this theme in his late essay, "A World Without Substances or Essences." He frames this discussion within an identification of what he feels is the best overlapping area of work between the Analytic and Continental philosophical traditions. This is the strain of thought that he broadly refers to as anti-dualist, antiessentialist and anti-metaphysical where the classic binaries of Western metaphysical thought are opposed in favour of a "panrelational" view of the world as a flux of continually changing relations. For Rorty, this understanding is best illustrated through learning to see everything (objects, languages, social institutions, electrons, individuals, etc.) as *numbers*. Numbers, for him, are not easily assigned intrinsic natures, essential cores surrounded by accidental characteristics. Rather, numbers can only be defined by their relations to every other number. No relation of a number seems more essential to it than another. Excluding the possibility of set theory axiomatics that are capable of reducing numbers to sets and generating all relations, such a comprehensive essentialist project is generally not possible elsewhere. It is for this reason that Rorty thinks of objects as numbers in the following respect,

> there is nothing to be known about them except an initially large, and forever expandable, web of relations to other objects. Everything that can serve as the term of a relation can be dissolved into another set of relations, and so on forever. There are, so to speak, relations all the way down, all the way up, and all the way out in every direction: you never reach something which is not just one more nexus of relations.[341]

Thus, the panrelational view, by opposing the idea that there are essential characteristics that are somehow more central to an object, destroys the intrinsic-extrinsic divide. If relations go all the way down, then all descriptions are particular constructions of a certain set of relations. This observation allows Rorty to return the discussion of relations and objects to *language* and *use*.

In Ch.2, it was illustrated that, for Rorty, all language takes place within the confines of some vocabulary and all experience takes place within the confines of a language. For

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[341] Rorty, Richard. "A World Without Substances or Essences" in *PSH*. pp.53-4

this reason, there is no knowledge about something except those sentences which are used to describe it. Each such sentence is in fact a description of one relation it has to other objects. All sentences attribute some relational property. The only things we can know of objects are their relations to various other objects. Thus, Rorty is offering a view of language not as a *veil* that stands between humans and reality, but as a means of relating objects to one another. Nonetheless, language remains, for him, our only access to those objects. There is no pre- or non-linguistic access that provides a more primordial knowledge.[342] "All awareness is a linguistic affair." And "everything is a social construction." These two mantras, the first Analytic and the second Continental, are both ways of holding that there is no awareness without linguistic mediation. The first asserts that all knowledge is attained through description rather than immediate access; the second, that our linguistic and social practices are interwoven to such a high degree that those descriptions are always a function of our social needs. The history of philosophy, for Rorty, is the history of the attempt to escape the bounds of society and convention (i.e. our linguistic practices) in order to make contact with nature. He admits that on his account, summed up by these two mantras, the nature-culture divide disappears because, 'there is no such thing as a *physis* [nature] to be known.'[343] Instead, because no description, no particular prioritization of elements or relations, is more real than another, there is only the distinction between different descriptions (tools) which may be better or worse for particular purposes/uses. Importantly, these social purposes, for Rorty, are always on a philosophical, rather than practical, par.

Rorty is aware that this position may earn him charges of reinstituting a linguistic idealism, of suggesting that there were no objects to discuss before people began discussing them. However, for him, this confuses two quite different questions. 'How do we pick out objects?' and 'Do objects antedate being picked out by us?'[344] The existence of objects before language about objects, which Rorty in no way denies, does not, for him, get us any closer to essence. This anti-essentialism is the crux of Rorty's naturalism. His linguistic parallelism, pragmatic naturalism, critique of transcendence, Darwinianism and relationism are all designed to remove the question of essence and its dependence on the appearance-reality divide. Instead, they offer a naturalized understanding of reality that extends Rorty's social-practice view of human languages and communities. Specifically, as discussed below, it extends the instrumentalist mastery-oriented gradualism of Dewey. For Rorty, this pragmatic framework and its rejection of essence make any lament about

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[342] Ibid. p.57
[343] Ibid. p.48
[344] Ibid. p.58

being cut off from reality by a veil a *useless* tautologous exercise.[345] Nonetheless, it is also a claim he does not seem to deny either. This issue will reappear in the discussion of Heidegger. For now, it should only be understood that Rorty believes his naturalism avoids the disposition to essentialism in both idealism and materialism by accounting for both language and the physical world. This is most apparent in his reflections on the place of language in human evolution and the extent and nature of the causal (a topic we have been steadily moving towards).

The important point to understand in Rorty's anti-essentialist naturalism is that language, as a uniquely human ability, places humans in a fundamentally exceptional position with respect to nature. Language use involves the ability to describe. Numbers and objects relate to one another but humans alone relate through a relationship of description and humans alone are measured by the success of their descriptions in allowing us to cope with and utilize the world. Darwin's work is so significant because he replaced the image of humans as having an intrinsic faculty of reason with an evolutionary account of our "increased cunning." The development of symbolizing abilities is then used to explain the uniquely complicated interactions humans have with each other and their environment. 'These interactions are marked by the use of strings of noises and marks to facilitate group activities, as tools for coordinating the activities of individuals.'[346] Naturalism, on this account, is about viewing language not as a representative medium but as a process of relating tools to what they manipulate for a particular purpose. For Rorty, this seems to have two distinct effects. First, it allows us to view all human behaviour in naturalistic terms and thereby see it as entirely continuous with animal behaviour (thus, seemingly effacing a nature-culture divide). Second, importantly, it changes our very relation to nature. We are no longer meant to represent or correspond to it, instead, 'our task is to master it [nature], or adapt ourselves to it.'[347] Thus, naturalism entails and leads to mastery. Without the question of essence, our imperative is only to master nature for our purposes. As in the discussion, of contingency and Heidegger in Ch.2, for Rorty, mastery is the anti-essentialist response to naturalism (contingency). The extent of this orientation only becomes clear through his account of the causal.

Rorty's account of the causal is meant to reconcile physical and linguistic (social) accounts of the world, to be suitable to both *Geistes-* and *Naturewissenschaften* and thereby end that problematic distinction. This desire flows from Rorty's previously discussed parallelism and leads to an account of the causal that is meant to apply to both

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[345] Ibid. p.58

[346] Ibid. p.64

[347] Rorty, Richard. "Afterward: Pragmatism, Pluralism, Postmodernism" in *PSH*. p.269

texts (language) and lumps (brute physical reality). Nonetheless, it is fundamental to his reinstitution of a division between culture and reality, one that is both philosophically flawed and politically harmful. This divide is reinstituted precisely in Rorty's continued prioritization of language. For him, texts and lumps do not have different epistemological statuses. The hard facts of science are in no way prior to or privileged over their interpretation. Rorty holds this point because, for him, interpretation, as an act, is irreducible. No "encounter with reality" occurs outside of some set of socially determined rules or structures that determine meaning and significance. He is aware that in making this claim he is inviting the charge that he is confusing the causal (physical) force of the event with the merely social force of the events' consequences. In opposition, he insists that he is, contra the idealist, not denying the presence of brute physical forces, but that this nonlinguistic brutality should not be understood as facts available to humans and describable in language. The world acts on us causally, but there are as many facts about the world as there are languages for describing any causal interaction. Facts, as described, always include both the physical and explanatory aspects and thus are not free of some socially derived system of rules and criteria. To explicate this, Rorty refers to the language of programming. The world acts on us causally and, in this sense, does cause us to hold beliefs. However, it does not suggest this belief to us because such causation always occurs within a structured set of social practices with which we have been preprogrammed. An object cannot insist, 'on being *described in a certain way*, its *own* way. The object can, given a prior agreement on a language game, cause us to hold beliefs, but it cannot suggest beliefs for us to hold. It can only do things which our practices will react to with preprogrammed changes in beliefs.'[348] Thus, causation and justification are two separate acts; the former is physical while the latter is social-linguistic.[349] Differences in explanation then are institutional, in the sense of social, rather than epistemological, in the sense of being privileged. Once again, Rorty reconciles language and reality by giving language (and his anti-essentialist naturalism) priority.

Within this account of a physical-cultural parallelism, Rorty continues to oppose the image of language as a veil or medium between humans and reality. He does this in spite of reinstituting a theory in which reality is very much mediated through language. His purpose, in this, is pragmatic rather than philosophical. Rorty wishes to remove the desire to find a manner of making the veil match what it veils (i.e. in a analysis aimed at correspondence or representation). To do so, he offers an alternative image of languages

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[348] Rorty, Richard. "Texts and Lumps" in *ORT* pp.83-4

[349] Guignon, Charles & David R. Hiley. "Introduction" in *Richard Rorty* (ed. Charles Guignon & David R. Hiley). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. p.11

as tools for engaging with this brute reality. The question then becomes what these tools are for, what do they allow us to do on this conception for Rorty? Is this a better image; one that, in its purported absence of philosophical assumptions, avoids the problems of the veil? His answer is very much about control. For Rorty, conceiving of languages as tools allows us to see them as ways to master our environment and ourselves. They are alternative means of "grabbing hold" of the causal forces that surround us and altering them and ourselves to our purposes. It is for this reason that languages should not be viewed as, 'veils between us and objects, but as ways of putting the causal forces of the universe to work for us.'[350] He emphasizes that the justification of this metaphor (mastery of a tool) over the veil is not a matter of philosophical argument but of narrative. All he can do is tell stories about the development of Western culture that emphasize the negative consequences of the veil metaphor and the positive possibilities of the tool. The substance of this narrative, however, will be deferred until the analysis of Rorty's relation to history. Now, it is necessary to discuss Heidegger's contrasting account of essence, naturalism, the veil and their consequences.

Heidegger: Ontology, Technology and the Veil

Heidegger's philosophy provides the resources to challenge both anti-foundational thought in general and Rorty's particular brand thereof. Where Rorty premises his understanding of philosophy (and its relation to politics) after foundations with a rejection of ontology, Heidegger makes ontological thought (and a consideration of "metaphysical" questions) a necessary prelude to both a critique of metaphysics and any consideration of the subsequent nature of philosophy and politics. Specifically, in conceiving of metaphysics as a wider dynamic (beyond the issue of foundations) of the forgetting of Being and historicizing that problematic into an epochal history of Being, Heidegger provides a critical capacity to engage with the present. He inaugurates a critical posture on modernity and new conception of freedom.[351] Essentially, through the theorization of a distinct mode of ontological questioning, Heidegger creates the possibility of critically engaging the dominant assumptions of an age. Further, through an analysis of modernity, he reveals the limitations of Rorty's naturalism and mastery in the mechanism of veiling introduced in Ch.2. Thus, he both provides this analysis with a furthering of the critical posture introduced by Connolly, and undermines Rorty's naturalism and historicism. He

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[350] Rorty, "Texts" op cit. p.82

[351] In Ch. 5, Herbert Marcuse extends this analysis to a critique of the nature of domination in advanced technological society. This reveals the implicit connection between Rorty's pragmatic philosophy and his particular theorization of post-metaphysical liberalism.

illustrates that, rather than freeing thought from external non-human authorities, Rorty's pragmatic naturalism circumscribes our critical capacities and confines us to the present thinking.[352]

The question of Being is the frame of Heidegger's thought. It is the centre his entire philosophy circles around; its constant point of orientation. *Being and Time* is solely concerned with re-awakening and understanding the meaning of this question. His project is to address this question of the meaning of the being of all beings and to discern its formal structure.[353] He sharply distinguishes this fundamental ontology from regional ontologies that only investigate a specific type of beings. For him, such ontologies operate within a pre-given perspective that assumes a set of worldviews, metaphysical constructions, and anthropological considerations. They presuppose a particular understanding of being (e.g. being as life, being as nature, being as politics). His purpose is to think the common frame of all such inquiries. This is the proper task of philosophy. It is not meant to make evaluations and prescriptions, but to understand the formal structure of being in general (and the specific determinations of regional ontologies). This makes Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* a- or pre-political. His ontological analysis intends to understand the conditions for the political; to establish the frame within which politics is thought.[354]

For Heidegger, the question of Being is historical. He is clear that this question has been forgotten and neglected. His analysis is prompted by a particular relation to the question, '… a dogma has developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect.'[355] It is this position, which greatly resembles Rorty's, that Heidegger opposes. In this manner, he understands the present historically. Its relation to the question of being (to ontology) defines it in terms of a deficiency, a forgetting of the question. It is thus defined by its relation to the ontological. Contrary to Rorty's reading, his desire is not merely to return to some previous relation or understanding of Being, but to grapple with the forgetting. 'It is

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[352] The following argument makes use of very particular aspects of Heidegger's work. Rather than attempting to remain faithful to his project, which was not consistent over his career, it only draws on a particular dynamic therein for a critique of Rorty and post-metaphysical thought.

[353] Heidegger also articulated this as, 'the question of beings as a whole.' This focus on wholeness and totality is key and will be returned to below. See: Heidegger, Martin. "What is Metaphysics?" in *Pathmarks* (ed. William McNeil). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998. pp.82-3

[354] De Beistegui, Miguel *Heidegger and the Political*. London, UK: Routledge, 1998. pp.9-11. – This prioritization is no less problematic than Rorty's prioritization of the social. Any hierarchy among different levels of enquiry is problematic as all mutually depend in complex manners. In spite of this, the use of Heidegger's theorization here is not subject to this potential problem. Even if the question of Being is not primary, it can still be both necessary. A given determination of Being can limit other areas of thinking.

[355] Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* (trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson). Oxford, UK: Blaclwell Publishing Ltd, 1962. p.22

a matter of acknowledging the question as that question to which belongs the very covering up of that question, that question which is characterized by a peculiar self-effacement. The history of that self-effacement is the history of metaphysics, ontology proper.'[356] However, this investigation is not only a negative critique but also a positive exploration of the value of that tradition in order to enact a fundamental ontology of the conditions of the question of Being. The difficulty, illusiveness and indistinctness of the question and its object do not allow us to avoid them. Rather, they necessitate confronting them in enquiry. Enquiry, for Heidegger, is a seeking and an interrogation. Further, the disposition and orientation of the questioner is fundamental. 'Inquiry itself is the behaviour of a questioner, and therefore of an entity, and as such has its own character of Being.' And, 'Being, as that which is asked about, must be exhibited in a way of its own, essentially different from the way in which entities are discovered.'[357] The question of Being requires an ontological mode or disposition of questioning. It is in pursuing this that Heidegger makes his contribution to critical thought.

While he shares with Rorty a critique of the foundationalism of the Western epistemological tradition, for Heidegger, foundationalism is only one form of a larger dynamic of metaphysics within Western thought. Metaphysics is this forgetting, eclipse, and abandonment of Being and its question. It is the concealment of humanity's necessary relation to the revealing of Being. Further, it is the concealment of the necessarily inadequate nature of all revelations of Being. As discussed in Ch.2 with Connolly, every revealing conceals. Every determination of Being is inadequate in a world that is not predisposed to humanity.[358] Defining it in this way, rather than as solely an issue of foundations, makes ontology necessary rather than metaphysical (in Heidegger's sense). Further, beyond necessity the question of Being is also primary. As the primordial question for philosophy,[359] it structures what real philosophy consists of and is thus a normative benchmark for philosophical enquiry. All real philosophical questioning is ontological; it approaches, without actually answering (as this would be a covering-over), and circles around the question of Being. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger argues that the ability to stand back and question the entirety of Being is the unique capacity (and role) of humanity. It is a historical possibility that must be reactualized and

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[356] De Beistegui, *Heidegger*, op cit. p.26

[357] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit. pp.24, 25 – see also p.44

[358] For a more detailed account of the dynamic of revealing and concealing in Heidegger's work, see; Pattinson, George. *The Later Heidegger*. London, UK: Routledge, 2000. p.194

[359] For Heidegger, the question of knowledge occurs within a determination of Being. Consequently, epistemology follows ontology. See, Feenberg, Andrew, *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*. London, UK: Routledge, 2005. p.54.

repeated continually. It is in this way that he gives this question and questioning priority. 'Our question is the *question* of all true questions--that is, of those that pose themselves to themselves—and it is necessarily asked, knowingly or not, along with every question. No questioning, and consequently no single scientific "problem" either, understands itself if it does not grasp the question of all questions, that is, if it does not ask it.'[360] The issue then becomes: what is the capacity of this questioning? For Heidegger, as outside the everyday practical realm of use, it cannot be judged by usefulness or "everydayness." Rather, ontological questioning is untimely. It allows us to confront that world and to disrupt it. Questioning shatters the unity of the everyday and pulls us out of the established order of beings. What this provides is a different perspective on that realm; for Heidegger, a more true and essential perspective.[361]

We can only ask the question of Being from within what Heidegger calls, 'the questioning attitude.' He describes this attitude as 'open resoluteness.' The point is to open us up to the truth of Being and to allow us to stand back from particular determinations or organizations of Being. This attitude opens up a space for the question and thus provides us with the proper orientation to Being. As discussed throughout this thesis, Rorty's pragmatism includes a fundamental orientation of instrumentalism. The world is confronted not as a thing to be known, with certainty, but to be controlled. For Heidegger, we must set aside both the epistemological and instrumental approaches to beings. Instead we must orient ourselves to the essence of Being. Essence denotes the ontological dimension to something. The essential is the aspect of a thing that covers its relation to Being in general. Thus, to question something, or Being in general, is to question it apart from its mode of revealing within a specific determination of Being (e.g. the natural, common-sense, or anthropological attitudes).[362] Philosophical and ontological questioning is explicitly concerned with essence. Consequently, Heidegger often makes use of a distinction between 'the true' and 'the correct.' True here is not to be understood on the correspondence model of knowledge that Rorty rejects, but as the essence of a thing, its ontological dimension and how it participates in the current revelation of Being. In contrast, the correct relates to the revealed nature of a thing within the dominant interpretation of Being. Thus, within modernity, science, technology and the

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[360] Heidegger, Martin. *Introduction to Metaphysics* (trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt). London, UK: Yale University Press, 2000. p.7

[361] Ibid, p.11

[362] Ibid. p.20. Also, De Beistegui, *Heidegger*, op cit. pp.9, 37

anthropological perspective may be correct in their various interpretations of things, but they are never true.[363]

This theorization of ontology leads to a distinct approach to politics. Rather than addressing specific political issues, Heidegger is concerned with the site of politics and its ontological determination, the *polis*. For him, the *polis* (or the *political*) is the site of history, of the collective determination of Being. It is the place where epochs emerge; where humanity, in its unique role, unconceals and conceals Being. To translate *polis* as state, or to name the state (or the interstate system), as the primary site of politics is to understand politics from within a specific determination of Being (the modern). In contrast, the *polis* is the site of humanity's historico-ontological dwelling. It is the site where our collective relation to Being arises. It is in this sense that the essence of the *polis* is in an essential relation with the unconcealment of beings. It presents the frame in which we understand beings as a whole.[364] What Heidegger indicates here is the social aspect to our determination of Being. What ontology offers is the ability to think the extent of this universe, its limitations and tendencies. In this manner, he offers us a much-needed counterweight to the dominance of pragmatic social categories in our thinking that Rorty ("correctly") theorizes. For Heidegger, thinking the social requires, before an examination of its practices, an understanding of the limits and exclusions of that perspective. This results in a unique critical position for ontological thought.

As in Connolly's discussion of the double-entry orientation to political thought, Heidegger asserts the necessity of an ontological approach in order to critically address the present universe of thought. The orientation we take is essential. 'When we first ask the fundamental question, everything depends on our taking up the decisive fundamental position in asking its *prior question*, and winning and securing the bearing that is essential here.'[365] For Connolly, rather than merely rejecting truth as Rorty does, Heidegger's ontological mode of questioning and understanding of truth draws that concept out of the epistemological framework of modernity in order to undermine its truth/falsity pairing. This pairing conceals the "untruth" that exceeds it.

> Modern "truth" is a mode of revealing that enables judgments of correctness and incorrectness within its frame. But every historical regime of revealing also conceals. It conceals possibilities of being that cannot be brought into a particular

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[363] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" in *QT*, op cit. pp.4-6 – see also, De Beistegui 141-2

[364] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* op cit, pp.162, 204. – see also: De Beistegui, *Heidegger*, op cit. Ch 5. – Heidegger's limitations for politics should be apparent here. It is not the contention of this thesis that he provides an adequate framework from which to think either liberalism in general or Rorty's particular form. Rather, he provides a standpoint for thinking that enables a specific form of critical political thought. Thus, this thesis utilize the work of Herbert Marcuse in developing this in later chapters on Rorty's pragmatic liberalism. For another view, see: De Beistegui, *Heidegger*, op cit. pp.5-6

[365] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* op cit, p.44

> way of life without confounding its basic principles of organization. "Untruth" is deeper than truth and falsity, then: untruth is that which cannot achieve sufficient standing within the terms of discourse of a time without stretching contemporary standards of plausibility and coherence to their limits of tolerance.[366]

This dynamic requires engaging thinking what is not commensurate with the current historical determination of thought. Truth is not epistemology but the attempt to understand how truth was reduced to epistemology. Rorty, in rejecting truth entirely (in an anti-foundational gesture), assumes the sufficiency of the epistemological tradition's definition. What Heidegger offers us is a truly critical perspective on the present and its universe of thought. He offers us the ability to understand its borders and assumptions; to reveal how it excludes other frameworks for thinking politics and the world. This is particularly useful in the present analysis because Rorty, through Dewey, attempts to formalize the actual manner in which social justification occurs and changes in language. He attempts to take the present naturalism and pragmatically neutralize it through a disposition of mastery. For Rorty, such a disposition is the only non-foundational response to contingency. In this, he attempts to explicitly exclude ontological (and epistemological) perspectives. Heidegger, in contrast, shows how genuine and total critique requires us to stand back to the ontological level and question totally. This does not mean everything is questioned at once but only that we understand our present as a unity and totality when we question it. Contra Rorty, true critical thought is not only piecemeal. Rather, it requires the ontological perspective of totality and the appearance-reality distinction he rejects.

The present study is arguing that in spite of humanity's inability to access a reality beneath appearance, we must retain the critical posture of this divide. There is an ontological rationale for this. We cannot pierce the veil down to reality. But at the same time, we cannot simply exist on the level of appearance. We do not have such access. Our languages, as imperfectly related to that reality, are always partial, always inadequate. Thus, we need that posture to gain critical purchase on the present. The veil allows us to assert the necessary inadequacy of the present; to assert that there is something it obscures and excludes, something relevant to our current thought. It asserts that there are dynamics, structures and limits we cannot yet see but that are politically relevant to our present world. If we think only in terms of the present universe, if we reject the presence of a veil, we cannot make that critical assertion of inadequacy and hidden dynamics. We lose the ability to say that beneath and in current situations, there is something as yet unseen that we should oppose. Essentially, we become subsumed under the current public logic. 'We usually lose ourselves among beings in a certain way. The more we turn toward

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[366] Connolly, William E. *The Ethos of Pluralization*. London, UK: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. p.5 – See also; Heidegger, Martin. "On the Essence of Truth" in *Pathmarks,* op cit.

beings in our preoccupations the less we let beings as a whole slip away as such and the more we turn away from the nothing. Just as surely do we hasten into the public superficies of our existence.'[367] For the present study, this perspective, and its resulting critiques of science, technology and modernity, is what is living in Heidegger's thought.

In his later work, Heidegger turned toward an explicit critique of science and technology within modernity.[368] For him, the problem with both scientific naturalism and modern technology is that they exclude the ontological and obscure their exclusion under a claim to neutrality. They are limiting perspectives. However, while the former is dangerous for its effect on ontological questioning, the latter is dangerous in terms of the alternative ontology it offers and the mechanism of veiling contained therein. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

The essence of modern scientific naturalism is research. In research, knowing consists of a procedure enacted in some realm. Heidegger emphasizes that procedure here does not merely refer to method or methodology but the manner in which its sphere is revealed and the accompanying orientation we take to it. 'Every procedure already requires an open sphere in which it moves. And it is precisely the opening up of such a sphere that is the fundamental event in research.'[369] The unconcealing of Being in science is mathematical[370] and it is only within this "groundplan" of nature that an event appears and is meaningful. Methodology and the experimental features of research only follow this. They both assume conditions of research and knowledge that entail a particular revelation of Being. Further, every science, by virtue of its circumscribed object-sphere and methodology of experimentalism, must particularize itself into specific, institutionalized, fields. As an on-going activity, one Rorty lauded in *PMN* as self-corrective, it adapts itself, its knowledge, and its procedure to its past results. 'In the course of these processes, the methodology of the science becomes circumscribed by means of its results. More and more

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[367] Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" op cit. pp.91-2 – This issue regarding the appearance-reality distinction and its necessity for a critical perspective will be developed further through the rest of the thesis. It is a central argument against Rorty's pragmatic mastery.

[368] While some materials for this analysis have drawn on the "early Heidegger," its focus is on the critique of technology found in the later Heidegger. This critique differs from Heidegger's early language regarding tools and being in *Being and Time*. The latter, which Rorty draws on to bring Heidegger closer to pragmatism (see: Rorty, Richard. "Heidegger, Contingency, Pragmatism" in *EHO* op cit.) is not addressed here. Nor is there space to address the supposed "turn" in Heidegger's thought. For an account of the later Heidegger's specific rejection of the language of tools, see; Zimmerman, Michael E. *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*. Indianapolis, US: Indiana University Press, 1990. p.143. For a discussion of the notion of an early and late Heidegger, see; Pattinson, *Later Heidegger,* op cit. pp.5-6

[369] Heidegger,' World Picture" op cit. p.118

[370] Heidegger here discusses the centrality of calculation and measurement, two central elements of Dewey's instrumentalism as discussed in Ch.1. See also, Heidegger, Martin. "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics?' in *Pathmarks* op cit. p.235

the methodology adapts itself to the possibilities of procedure opened up through itself.'[371] Further, though circumscribed, it also dominates over the object world, becoming the sole arbiter of whatever is for Heidegger.

These dynamics change the role of the intellectual. In the place of the scholar there is the researcher who has specific projects for specific problems.[372] No total understanding or new thinking is intended. Essentially, the disposition to the world in science changes to a procedural objectification of whatever is.[373] For Heidegger, the consequence of this disposition is a relocation of the authoritative centre. Just as in Rorty and his discussion of anti-authoritarianism, in scientific modernity man frees himself to himself; i.e. 'Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its truth. Man becomes the relational centre of that which is as such.'[374] As the determinant of all value, all thought must be oriented toward humanity and its improvement. Thus, the essence of science is to serve the public[375] and its current priorities.

While in his analysis of science Heidegger demonstrates how its naturalism excludes ontological thinking and limits our universe of thought, it is only in his analysis of modern technology that he fully reveals the ontological frame of our present and its systematic limitation of thought.[376] In "The Question Concerning Technology" Heidegger enquires into the essence of technology, which is, famously, nothing technological. In opposition to the instrumental and anthropological views, technology is not about contrivance or instruments. Rather, the essence of technology, its ontological dimension, is that it is the archetypal form of revealing in modernity. As the very mode of disclosure within modernity, technology stands behind specific forms of knowledge as the basic relation to Being. Further, there are two main aspects to this relation, an attitude and a mode of disclosure, challenging-forth and standing-reserve respectively.[377] The posture modern technology adopts with respect to the world is challenging-forth. This orientation demands that nature supply energy to be extracted and stored. The earth is thus set upon

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[371] Heidegger, 'World Picture" op cit. p.124

[372] As will be discussed in Ch. 4, Rorty lauds this image of philosophy.

[373] Ibid. p.126

[374] Ibid. p.128

[375] This term should not be interpreted to mean a collectivity. Rather, in Heidegger's (and Marcuse's) language it indicates the current determination of being and universe of thought. It is the bounds of the present. It is discussed at length in Ch.5. See, for example: Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on Humanism" in *Pathmarks* op cit. p.242.

[376] For Heidegger, science too is part of technological enframing. See; Heidegger, "World Picture" op cit. p.116.

[377] While this division within Technology may be a bit forced with respect to Heidegger's work, it is a useful device for understanding the manner in which Heidegger's ontological enquiry is corrective of Rorty's rejection of ontology. Further, it recalls two aspects of Dewey's instrumentalism: his challenging quest for control and his instrumental homogenization of reality.

in a 'setting-to-order' intended to unlock, expose and transform through the regulation and organization of its elements. Thus, this challenging revealing, for Heidegger, reveals the world as standing-reserve, as everywhere ordered to stand-by. Being as a whole appears to us as a ready resource to be organized and utilized. 'Thus when man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve.'[378] Technology is thus a demand and a revealing. It is a 'challenging claim which gathers man thither to order the self-revealing as standing-reserve.'[379] Heidegger names this form of revealing, Enframing.

The essential danger of Enframing is not its specific determination of Being, though that is dangerous, but its relation to the question of Being in general. Enframing conceals its own particularity. It denies that it is a specific determination of Being. As a result, it not only drives out every other possibility of revealing, 'but it conceals revealing itself and with it That wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, comes to pass.'[380] Enframing denies and obscures the ontological question. Like Rorty, it rejects the necessity of this question and cloaks its own determination in a neutrality that excludes all others. Thus, opposed to Enframing, Heidegger offers a redefinition of freedom, one that contradicts Rorty's specifically anti-ontological and anti-authoritative hermeneutic of freedom. For Heidegger, freedom is unconnected to the idea of will or choice. Rather, freedom, in its essence, is related to the dynamic of revealing necessary to Being. It is a happening of revealing, a moment for the true. 'Man becomes free only insofar as he belongs to the realm of destining and so becomes one who listens and hears, and not one who is simply constrained to obey.'[381] But what does freedom allow us to hear? For Heidegger, we are constrained to obey when we are forced to forget the question of Being in general and the manner in which it allows us to break out of our current mode of thought and adopt a questioning attitude to it. As such, 'Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose clearing there shimmers that veil that covers what comes to presence of all truth and *lets the veil appear as what veils.*'[382] Freedom allows us the experience of and chance to critique the dominant determination of Being and its circumscription of the

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[378] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" op cit. p.19
[379] Ibid. p.19
[380] Ibid. p.27
[381] Ibid. p.25
[382] Ibid. p.25 – my emphasis

universe of thought. In this manner, Heidegger ties freedom to critique; the former is achieved only when we have the genuine possibility of the latter.[383]

Thus, contra Rorty, for Heidegger, true (and essential) freedom requires the question of Being. Pragmatism, instrumentalism and hermeneutics, cannot provide for this freedom and perspective. Their humanism, their understanding of humanity as the only source of authority (epistemic or political), rejects the question of being and limits us to the technological universe. For Heidegger,

> 'In ek-sistence [the ontological perspective] the region of *homo animalis*, of metaphysics, is abandoned. The dominance of that region is the mediate and deeply rooted basis for the blindness and arbitrariness of what is called "biologism," but also of what is known under the heading "pragmatism." To think the truth of being at the same time means to think humanity of *homo humanus*. What counts is *humanitas* in the service of the truth of being, but without humanism in the metaphysical sense.'[384]

Scientific naturalism cannot take a critical perspective on the present. Its reduction of thought to social instrumentalism, to a series of problems and responses by the human animal and its social structures, makes it incapable of conceiving its relation to the question of being. It is incapable of asking how it has determined being before research and mastery. It is important to note here that Rorty does not reject science so much as its status. It basic revelation of being and orientation to reality remains in his work. In fact, it goes unchecked in a subterranean current of mastery that hides beneath an explicit assumption of the neutrality of technology within his naturalism. [385] His anti-essentialism and critique of unmasking justify this exclusion through an anti-foundational and reductive reading of the appearance-reality divide.[386] Here he divides language, and our critical thought, from reality and reduces us to our social practices. Where Rorty saw ontology as one more limitation on the free expression of human desires, Heidegger saw it as a necessary medium one must pass through for freedom, both ontological and political; an imperfectly accessible opportunity to expand our thought and our present. One that we must continually gesture towards without ever grasping.

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[383] See also for this; Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" op cit. p.93

[384] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" op cit. p.268

[385] Thomson, Iain. (2010). "Rorty, Heidegger, and the Danger and Promise of the Technological Archive". *Time Will Tell, But Epistemology Won't: In Memory of Richard Rorty A Symposium to Celebrate Richard Rorty's Archive*. UC Irvine, Retrieved from:

http://escholarship.org/uc/item/4b09r4st

[386] Heidegger in contrast, like post-foundational thought and weak ontology, rejects the anti-foundational logic as remaining within the metaphysical universe. See; Heidegger, Martin. "The word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'" in *QT* op cit. p.61

From within the contingency and priority of language, and the social (i.e. anti-essentialist) understanding of naturalism, Rorty turns to history as his positive method for social and political progress. He is a self-declared "historicist" and historicism is the final major theme of Rorty's positive articulation of philosophy. With it, we encounter his turn to politics; it is with history and narrative, for him, that philosophy can be utilized for positive social change. Through a confrontation with Connolly and Heidegger, this section illustrates how Rorty's utilization of history and narrative, understood from within his work on the contingency of language, leads to his readings of Hegel and modernity and an explicit human-centred form of mastery. It is in Rorty's understanding of history and modernity that we see his fullest theorization of the stability of the historical period (outside of contingent shifts). Much like his treatment of languages, he isolates eras from one another in their vocabularies and reinserts a demand for a unity and stability to be mastered. This "mastery of the moment," will be illustrated through a confrontation with Connolly and his critique of modernity. It is within his writings on history and modernity that Rorty reveals both the demand for unity in his thinking and how it is involved with his theorization of pragmatism as mastery. Further, this section will also return to Heidegger to identify the dangerous "humanism" at the basis of Rorty's pragmatist-historical method. By making human social groups the sole epistemic and political authority, Rorty compromises critical thinking. He destroys our ability to exceed the public present. Thus, his social foundationalism, through the three themes of contingency (of language), naturalism, and historicism, will be exposed. Finally, this will indicate how philosophy and ontology, in spite of their reformulated capacities for thought after foundations, can gesture towards a more critical orientation to the given.

History, Hegel, and Modernity: Rorty and the Pragmatic Self-Assertion of Reason

Like naturalism, historicism is a concept that Rorty often had recourse to but which he rarely defined in any detail. As vaguely defined, it is not so much a theory of history as a way of understanding the status of the present (and its languages), and the capacity to change that present in a directed manner. Thus, like naturalism, it must be understood from within Rorty's social-practice account of language. Like his theorization of language and naturalism, his historicism is an attempt to articulate the project (and the limits thereof) of philosophy in the post-metaphysical context. Ultimately, as in both of those areas, it is open to charges of reinstituting a stability in mastery that assumes that our world, languages, and groups are plastic forms mutable to human wills.

As discussed, for Rorty, language is a social practice (tool) that allows us to cope with our environment and each other through an understanding of the world and its relations. Its development is contingent and characterized by the movement from one language to another through the process of the literalization of new metaphors. Here, languages are both given priority and isolated from each other and the world. For Rorty, this account has specific consequences for any discipline attempting to understand human behaviour.[387] Simply put, rather than attempting to explain the macrostructural (behaviour at the individual and social levels) by the microstructural (particles, e.g. nature of mind-brain functions), we must engage in the creation of narratives of our development. To understand our cultural practices, we must see them as distinct from the biological states that make them possible.[388] For Rorty, philosophy can only articulate what makes humans distinctive (exceptional) through the creation of narratives, rather than the search for perennial features. This narrative focus again brings philosophy and enquiry back to the category of *use*. Philosophy must approach humanity not with the aim of discovering the immutable but of understanding the past uses of various conceptualizations in order to understand how they led to the present conceptual landscape. In this way, philosophy should not be understood as a puzzle to be solved, but a continual process of 'reinterpreting and recontextualizing the past.'[389] For Rorty, this model of enquiry redirects our focus from the "methodologico-ontological" to the "ethical-political." It ends the idea that certain objects and topics demand to be studied in a certain way and instead redirects enquiry to the *purposes* it hopes to achieve and the alternatives available. For him, these are always on a philosophical par.[390]

This view changes the nature of enquiry. Rather than being a process of accumulating knowledge about the world, redescription becomes central. It is this aspect of Rorty's theory that necessitates history. When enquiry is redescription, philosophical debate becomes about the use of any given practice or vocabulary. For Rorty, use is debated through the descriptive comparison of a given practice or vocabulary with a past or proposed future one. Thus, pragmatically, philosophy must become *historical*.[391] It must offer understandings of the past, not to be understood as "true," but as contingently useful.

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[387] Throughout his career, Rorty never clarified his position on the difference between the physical and human sciences. While he opposed any prioritization of *Naturwissenschaften* (science) over *Geisteswissenschaften* (humanities), he retained a difference between the two. This was often articulated through a comparison of the relative capacities for consensus between the two with the former often achieving high levels and the latter necessarily not. However, he failed to delineate the consequences of this. See; "Method, Social Science, and Social Hope" in *CP*.

[388] Rorty, Richard. 'Holism and Historicism' in *PCP*.pp.177-8

[389] Ibid. p.182

[390] Rorty, Richard. "Inquiry as Recontextualization: An Anti-Dualist Account of Interpretation" in *ORT*. p.110

[391] Rorty, Richard. "Introduction" in *CP*, p.xxix

Here, the importance of narrative to Rorty becomes obvious. Albeit contingent, narratives can provide a line of historical progression. These narratives are the only tools available to the pragmatist to recontextualize the practice or vocabulary they are offering. In a sense, it is the only anti-essentialist, argumentative means to change the way we think about a given topic.[392] While in naturalism, mastery is the only disposition available to the anti-essentialist, Rorty argues here that history is the only tool of change.

History has several distinct functions in this view of narrative. For our purposes, Rorty identifies four beneficial types. The first two, which he contrasts, are historical and rational reconstructions. The former situates a thinker and attempts to understand them from within their historical context. This provides what Rorty calls "self-awareness;" the awareness of the difference (and hence contingency) of forms of intellectual life. In contrast, rational reconstructions are singular interpretations that integrate thinkers into the present philosophical context. This provides what Rorty calls "self-justification." Here, past thinkers are incorporated into the present debate in an attempt to provide continuity and a rational line of progression through the temporal development of philosophy. While anachronistic, this allows us to conceive of philosophy as a "long conversational interchange." It assures us of rational progress and, for Rorty, is consequently an important project. 'We need to think that, in philosophy as in science, the mighty mistaken dead look down from heaven at our recent successes and are happy to find that their mistakes have been corrected.'[393]

The third and fourth types of history are similarly connected. Intellectual history, for Rorty, provides the raw material. Philosophy always occurs within a wider intellectual and cultural context. As an honorific title, what counts as philosophical is often contentious. Intellectual history provides the material for canon reformation, a process that must, for Rorty, be continual. But what decides the canon? For Rorty, it is specifically the fourth type, *Geistesgeschichte*. These "spirit-histories" draw on both historical and rational reconstructions (as well as the raw material of intellectual history). From the former, they derive the awareness of the relativity of philosophical vocabularies and problems. From the latter, they draw the project of justification. Yet, theirs differ in scale. Where rational reconstructions focused on specific problems and thinkers, *Geistesgeschichte* engages problematics and asks the meta-questions of what philosophy is and should be.[394] For Rorty, these meta-histories fulfil several purposes. First, they illustrate the contingency of

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[392] Rorty, "Inquiry" in *ORT*. p.110

[393] Rorty, Richard. "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres" in *TP*.pp.249-50. Rational reconstructions are always judgments/interpretations of past thinkers by present standards. They do not discern the truth of those philosophies but only their present applicability.

[394] Ibid. p.260

our own time. Second, they simultaneously provide us with an understanding of philosophical development that assures us that progress has been made, that we are "better off" than those before us. These upward narratives provide us with the hope to continue on with the project of a community. Finally, these narratives point us to the future, to the ways in which that time will be better than our own.[395] There are several unclear issues here. For the present, these will be deferred as a discussion Rorty's reading of Hegel and his narrative of Western civilization and modernity will help bring them into focus.

As both Rorty and his critics have observed, [396] he employs only a very particular aspect of Hegel's thought, his historicism. For Rorty, Hegel's "temporalization" of rationality in his history of varying rationalities dialectically progressing through European civilization was the most important step toward pragmatism. This historicism made the criteria for rationality dependent on the language and epoch within which it operates. However, it is necessary to remove this historicist emphasis from the overwhelming discourse of the Absolute in Hegel, a process Rorty refers to as "de-absolutizing" or "de-ontologizing" Hegel. What remains is the admittedly minimal part of Hegel's philosophy where philosophy itself is understood as 'its time apprehended in thought.'[397] For Rorty, Hegel first posits the pragmatist notion that justification and philosophical problems are internal to an epoch and shift with the general movement of temporal contingency. Thus, he is instrumental in the development toward Rorty's own characterization of languages and truth as temporal, contingent developments (Ch.2). In "Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism" Rorty posits Hegel's "romanticism" (i.e. his sense of the temporal relativity of vocabularies) as his chief contribution to toppling nineteenth century scientism. He exposed,

> the relativity of significance to choice of vocabulary, the bewildering variety of vocabularies from which we can choose, and the intrinsic instability of each. Hegel made unforgettably clear the deep self-certainty given by each achievement of a new vocabulary... He also made unforgettably clear why such certainty lasts but a moment. He showed how the passion which sweeps through each generation serves the cunning of reason, providing the impulse which drives that generation to self-immolation and transformation.[398]

The stability each generation achieves with the creation of a new vocabulary is inevitably lost in the intrinsic temporal instability of all such vocabularies. Thus, in Rorty's view of

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[395] Ibid. pp.270-3

[396] See: Rotenstreich, Nathan. "Rorty's Interpretation of Hegel" in *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 39 (2), 1985; Redding, Paul. " History as Celebration or Justification? Rorty versus the Non-Metaphysical Hegelians" in *Clio*, vol. 31 (4), 2002; Matarrese, Craig B. " Satisfaction or Supersession? Expression, Rationality, and Irony in Hegel and Rorty." In *Clio*, vol. 36 (1), 2006.

[397] Rorty, "Dewey Between" in *TP*. p.302

[398] Rorty, Richard. "Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism" in *CP*. p.148

history and his use of Hegel, there is a certain model of development. Change is progressive and developmental. It moves in one consistent direction from each period of normal discourse to the next through the necessary revolutionary period of vocabulary change brought on by the inevitable effects of the temporal instability of our worldviews. Furthermore, Hegel also contributed to this shift from the eternal to the future, from searching for the universal foundation of things to positive hope for change. 'With Hegel, intellectuals began to switch over from fantasies of contacting eternity to fantasies of constructing a better future. Hegel helped us to start substituting hope for knowledge.'[399] This language of the future, which we have encountered previously, will return in Chs. 4&5.

Like Hegel, Rorty provides such linear, upward narratives throughout his works. The common thread that runs through them is a view of the development of Western thought and culture as a process of de-divinization and secularization.[400] For Rorty, from the religiosity of the medieval period, through the love of reason in the Enlightenment, and finally the romantic love of the inner truth of man in the 19th century, we have looked to idealizations and external absolutes to define human ends. The imperative now is to reject all such static conceptions and divinations. It is to have history and narrative, 'replace God, Reason and Nature as the source of human hope.'[401] It is this upward narrative and the theorization of the self-sufficiency and self-enclosed nature of each historical 'epoch' that motivates his dismissal of modernity as a "philosophical problem."[402] For him, modernity is merely the result of a multiplicity of social, economic, and historical contingencies. Due to his progressive and periodized model of time, where each period is taken to be isolated in language and enquiry from those preceding and following it, and movements between these moments are only the products of contingent shifts, Rorty assumes that no deeper explanation of a period is possible. No criteria is available that can transcend the epoch in which something is explained. Further, no deeper logic is present behind it.[403] Rather, when we understand our time, we can only hold it in thought; we can only offer those progressive narratives of justification.

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[399] Rorty, Richard. "The End of Leninism, Havel, and Social Hope" in *TP*.p.233

[400] *CIS* is both a justification of this upward narrative approach and an example of Rorty's own particular version. Through narrative this work justifies the development of Western civilization towards Rorty's own vision of pragmatic liberalism.

[401] Rorty, Richard. "Afterward: Pragmatism, Pluralism, and Postmodernism" in *PSH*. p.265

[402] This is a reference to Robert B. Pippin's seminal work: See; *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1991.

[403] Rorty, Richard. "Comment on Robert Pippen's 'Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel's Compatibalism" in *European Journal of Philosophy*. 7 (2), 1999. pp.213-16

Rorty connects these themes of narrative, history, and modernity to his ethic of mastery and critique of Continental philosophy in his review of Hans Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, "Against Belatedness." For Rorty, the power of Blumenberg's work is that it offers an understanding of modernity that defends the Enlightenment without recourse to the foundational nature of reason; essentially, it offers an anti-foundational justification. Rorty frames this review in terms of a critique of Continental philosophy (Nietzscheans, Heideggerians, and Marxists especially) and its recourse to the logic of "unmasking"[404] in its critique of the "belatedness" of the modern age. Both of these terms require unpacking. As discussed in Ch.2, Rorty critiques Continental philosophy (and Heidegger) for employing the logic of unmasking in philosophical critique. Here, the appearance-reality distinction is maintained in the attempt to penetrate through some distorting veil to a hidden reality within. "Belatedness" is the associated view that modernity, for some reason, is fundamentally impoverished in comparison to some idealized past (Nietzsche and Heidegger are particular examples for Rorty). It is a distinction between some "pristine old and nasty new" that smuggles the appearance-reality distinction back in. In contrast, the virtue of Blumenberg's work is that he offers a justificatory narrative of the Enlightenment, an "old-fashioned *Geistesgeschichte*," without a totalizing metaphysics. Essentially, he combines a recognition of historical contingency with a reinvigorated defence of modernity; two things Rorty believes rarely go together but need to be combined.

> What we want, on this view, is acknowledgement of discontinuity and open-endedness and contingency, rather than either nostalgia or exuberance... Those of us who agree with Nietzsche and Heidegger that the philosophical tradition is pretty well played out, with Carlyle and Foucault that the arts and sciences have not been unmixed blessings, and with the Marxists that we should not believe what the lying capitalist press tells us about the modern world, but whose highest hopes are still those of Mill, now have a champion.[405]

For Rorty, this is a contest of narratives. Is modernity where humanity has become freer in its projects of disenchantment and democracy? Or is it merely a secularized form of the same ancient and Christian eschatology as various Continentals have charged?

Blumenberg both refutes this reading and offers a justificatory narrative of modernity within the mastery dynamic. Regarding the former, for Rorty, he undercuts the "alternative forms" thesis of modernity as secularized theology by highlighting the intense differences between modernity and earlier periods. For Blumenberg, the very project of picking a sufficiently abstract description able to encompass ancient, medieval, and

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[404] See; Rorty, Richard. "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (ed. Chantal Mouffe). London, UK: Routledge, 1996. p.14

[405] Rorty, Richard. "Against Belatedness" in *London Review of Books*. Vol.5 (11), June 1983. p.3

modern, and thus see them as alternative forms of the same thinking, is facile and misleading. He justifies this with an alternative reading that highlights the distinctiveness of modernity. For him, medieval theology created its own destruction within its articulation of the total omnipotence of God. With Ockham and medieval nominalism, God's omnipotence and transcendence were so absolute that his purposes became utterly unknowable. The only path left to humanity, was what Rorty calls the "Baconian pragmatism" of modernity. Blumenberg makes a key distinction in his work between two Enlightenment projects: *self-foundation* and *self-assertion*. For him, critiques of modernity confuse the two. Self-foundation is the project of discovering an ahistorical framework for human knowledge and existence. It can be eschewed without rejecting the "mode of life" (self-assertion) that came with it. The fact that it lacks these foundations is not a point against it. Rather, for Rorty as for Blumenberg, 'the legitimacy of the modern consciousness is simply that it is the best way we have so far found to give sense to our lives.'[406] In contrast to Heidegger's account of the history of Western philosophy as successive movements away from a primordial relationship to Being, Blumenberg understands that history as a series of rational rejections of alternatives. These were not rational in some ahistorical sense, but only in the sufficient sense of being a *pragmatic* choice among *tools*.

Baconian pragmatism is the expression of self-assertion, the orientation or disposition[407] of technical mastery towards the world. The demands of knowledge are not fixed by some absolute but only by the "requirements of domination over natural reality." Thus, self-assertion is the priority of human aims, desires, and happiness and their fulfilment through a post-metaphysical (i.e. without self-foundation) pragmatic practice. It is a replacement of the future for the historical or primordial; for it involves the, 'substitution of an infinitely long time in which progress can occur for a pre-existent infinite.'[408] For Rorty, this substitution, and the pragmatic mastery-oriented approach of modernity, involves replacing metaphysics with "historical self-consciousness." These are narratives that provide a distinct understanding of our past that allows us to understand our superiority over it in terms of sufficient rationality. While this is a "Whiggish" approach, it is self-consciously so and thus aware of its own status. Its value lies in its perception of the difference between the two projects of Enlightenment, self-foundation and self-assertion, its critique of the former and justification of the latter, and its ability to

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[406] Ibid. p.3

[407] Like in Ch. 1, Rorty argues for a instrumental disposition to the world.

[408] Rorty, "Against Belatedness," op cit. p.3

eclipse metaphysical thought while preserving human purposes and progress.[409] Blumenberg, 'helps us see that the demand to unmask completely, to make all things new, to start from nowhere, to substitute new true consciousness for old false consciousness, is itself an echo of the Enlightenment. It is precisely that part of the Enlightenment which really *is* 'bankrupt.'[410] No more metaphysics, no more *unmasking*. Through Blumenberg, Rorty draws together the various themes of his historicism to offer an understanding of modernity as a period where human purposes are liberated from previous ideals, and human means are liberated from metaphysical requirements. It is the unique time where we can approach the future as a resource to be mastered and a tool for human development. It is in this analysis that Rorty fully illustrates what was referred to in Ch.2 as his "pragmatist-historical method."[411] This is the project whereby the pragmatic self-assertion of man and his purposes is enacted through the construction of historical narratives of upward progress. It combines an emphasis on the use of contingent historical events in narrative construction with the self-assertion of humanity. It is thus *pragmatic* (masterful) and *historical*. For Rorty, as anti-foundational and post-metaphysical, it replaces ontology and philosophy as the means for social hope and progress.

This discussion has illustrated the importance of history and narratives in Rorty's philosophy. Like his theorizations of contingency and naturalism, his account of historicism occurs within his social-practice view of language. Here, narrative is the only means of connecting past practices to the present and providing an understanding of their progression; for it is through narratives of historical development that a people understand their past and decide their future. Hence, the importance of history. History emphasizes both the contingency and progress (the two aspects of *Geistesgeschichte*) of human development. Hegel's work is a particular exemplar of this type of reflection; one that, as will become clearer subsequently, comes with a flawed model of change. Finally, Rorty's work on modernity, his justification of modern mastery and the upward path of Western civilization, clarifies his historical method as part of his pragmatic response to the post-metaphysical situation. For him, after the fall of foundations and the resulting naturalization of our relation to the world, our philosophy must be historical while our disposition to the world must be *pragmatic* and *masterful*. The dangers of Rorty's use of history and his understanding of modernity are exposed in the subsequent comparison

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[409] For an insightful critical account of Blumenberg and hisclaims that the self-assertion of reason is free from ontological assumptions, see – Widder, Nathan. "On Abuses in the Uses of History: Blumenberg on Nietzsche; Nietzsche on Genealogy" in *History of Political Thought*. Vol. XXI (2), 2000.

[410] Rorty, "Against Belatedness," op cit. p.3

[411] Calling this a method is not to suggest that Rorty believes his philosophy leads to some determinate conclusion that achieves something true, but to say that it structures one's understanding of the world through a limiting set of ontological presumptions.

with Connolly's critique of modernity and Heidegger's identification of the human at the basis of mastery.

Truth and Ice: Connolly, Modernity and Mastery

What is the status of modernity? Is it the necessary eclipse of the ancient and the medieval (as Rorty and Blumenberg theorize)? Or a wayward fall from a more primary relation to community and/or Being? In his analysis, Connolly manages to avoid these two hackneyed approaches to the question of modernity. Instead, he offers a detailed interrogation of its dominant positions; one that is explicitly informed by his ontology of ambiguity and contestability. This section will utilize his critique of the mastery dynamic within modernity in order to contest Rorty's reading and further the critique of modernity initiated through Heidegger. Specifically, Connolly's analysis will expose the hidden ontological assumptions and demands that accompany the self-assertion of human reason. It will illustrate that beneath Rorty's use of history there is the unifying demand for a truth to be grasped and dominated. This demand excludes the partiality of all of our understandings fundamental to both Connolly and Heidegger's frameworks. To this end, Rorty stabilizes the historical moment, ignoring its instability, in order to make it susceptible to human mastery and places our purposes as the only critical standard. Heidegger's work will briefly return to expose this dangerous reduction of critical thought and to indicate (with Connolly) the possibility of a more rigorous critical, ontological disposition.

In *Political Theory and Modernity* (hereafter: *PTM*), Connolly, building on Heidegger, thinks the modern frame. Eschewing the question of whether it is intrinsically unique, Connolly believes that modernity is a distinctive period with its own constellation of perspectives on the world. Whether laudatory or critical, these viewpoints assume its fundamental separation from earlier periods. Together this matrix constitutes a 'distinctively modern mode of consciousness'[412] that is available for interrogation. Its unity is found not in its prescriptions but in its common set of concerns, including, but not restricted to: the question of meaning, the relation of human life to nature, the relation of the present to the past and future, and the form of a well-grounded order. Thus, in

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[412] Connolly, William E. *Political Theory and Modernity*. London, UK: Cornell University Press, 1993. p.2. Connolly, and Heidegger, are aware of the diversity of modernity. Nonetheless, they think it necessary to discern an ontological unity behind this plurality to critically confront the assumptions that govern contemporary life. Importantly, this unity, unlike Dewey and Rorty's, does not homogenize either material reality or a time period as an object to be mastered. The difference is in the disposition. Heidegger and Connolly acknowledge the contestability of their own readings. Every revealing conceals. Further, they do no analyze modernity to use it but to expose its circumscriptions.

opposition to those who deny the existence of modernity,[413] Connolly asserts its presence while not assuming that it has in fact fulfilled its self-given criteria. It is useful here to refer back to a discussion in Ch.2 regarding the contemporary matrix of Anglo-American political thought. For Connolly, this matrix roughly covers the major positions of modern thought. Along its horizontal axis are *mastery* and *attunement* (to intrinsic purpose or Being), and along its vertical, the *individual* and *society*. Every position uniquely combines these elements and their hidden assumptions. Specifically, mastery and attunement both demand that the world be for us; that is, be predisposed to the fulfilment of our purposes in some manner. Connolly critiques this demand as an ontological narcissism for its tendency to mask 'the conversion of a world of microcontingencies into a world of global contingency by its insistence that the world itself must be predisposed to us in one way or the other.'[414] It obscures the very contingencies that escape both projects and indicate the failure of modernity to control the world. Rorty, in spite of theorizing contingency, also obscures contingency in his use of the mastery dynamic.

In *PTM*, Connolly targets the assumption of a world predisposed to humans within the mastery dynamic specifically (attunement being more of a reactionary response). In modernity, control of the world becomes the ultimate concern. Elements therein, whether natural, individual, or social are all approached as at the disposal of humanity. This can still lead to several approaches (all within the mastery dynamic). 'Nature becomes a set of laws susceptible to human knowledge, a deposit of resources for potential use or a set of vistas for aesthetic appreciation.'[415] The world loses its enchanted nature where divine will and realities were inscribed upon it and order was obvious through some great hierarchy of Being. Instead, with modernity, it becomes resources to mine and material to augment. In *PTM*, Connolly largely agrees with Rorty and Blumenberg's account of the internal tensions of medieval thought that led to the emergence of modernity as mastery. Nominalism, by asserting simultaneously the complete transcendence of God and God's freedom from any external determination, made the world thoroughly contingent and without an order discernable to humans. It opened up the desire for humans to assert more effective control over the world.[416] Thus, all modern approaches are governed by the desire to form and reform, to perfect control over change and hence assure progress. In such a world, modernity becomes a continual process of critique, absorption and reform

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[413] See, for example, Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern* (trans. Catherine Porter). London, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.

[414] Connolly, William E. *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. London, UK: Cornell University Press, 1991. pp.29-30

[415] Connolly, *Political Theory*, op cit. p.2

[416] Ibid. p.20

(or what in Rorty becomes matching political institutions to the manner in which social change actually occurs – see Ch.4), a way to guarantee its notion of continual temporal progress.

Yet, for Connolly, modernity may not be as free from ontological assumptions as Rorty and Blumenberg think. Drawing on Nietzsche, Connolly attempts to explore the (nonmodern) consequences of the disenchanted world. In a world without the assurance of God, truth is jeopardized. Without design it is unlikely that human capacities for cognition will correspond to the world's nature, or that the human ability to know will measure up to its complexity. Thus, the entire correspondence theory of truth breaks down as symmetrical relations between humans and the world disappear. 'In a world without a divine designer knowing is not a correspondence but an imposition of form upon the objects of knowledge.'[417] Knowing forces its subject-matter into a set of discrete categories that do not correspond to but shape it. Rorty would seemingly have no problem with this opposition to the correspondence theory of truth so far. As addressed in Chs. 1 and 2, much of his philosophy is directed against the attempt to synthesize language and reality.[418] However, for Connolly, coherence, consensus, and pragmatist theories of truth are also imperilled. These theories continue to presume and demand that, '...truth be one, that a doctrine or theory not be treated as true unless it is the *only* one that meets the established standard of truth.'[419] Truth is exceptional, there can be only one and it must be, at least for the moment, stable. Thus, while Rorty may contest the correspondence theory of truth, he shares its insistence, that it itself shares with the world of religion, that truth (even as pragmatic instrumentalism) be one (as the only legitimate post-metaphysical response). While this formulation may presently be opaque, the fog will clear.

Connolly clarifies this charge in a reading of Nietzsche's "How the Real World at Last Became a Myth"[420] and a critique of the pragmatic use of Hegel. In the former, Nietzsche provides a succinct, six-stage history of truth within Western thought that roughly narrates the death of the appearance-reality distinction. For Connolly, each stage in this process preserves something of the previous. Here, it is stage five that is important. 'The "real world" – an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer – an idea grown useless, superfluous, *consequently* a refuted idea: let us abolish it!'[421] For Connolly, this is the moment of pragmatism and utilitarianism when human use and organization exhaust

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[417] Ibid. p.10

[418] See, for example; "The World Well Lost" in *CP*

[419] Connolly, *Political Theory*, op cit. p.10 – My emphasis

[420] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ* (trans. R.J. Hollingdale). London, UK: Penguin Books, 2003. pp.50-1 – Interestingly, Rorty cites this as a pragmatic text. See; "Introduction" in *EHO*. p.2

[421] Ibid. p.50

the true. Citing Rorty as an example of this "naturalized Hegelianism," he notes that this view is still to "cheerful." It fails to understand or interrogate how its own assumptions are determined by the metaphysical tradition. It seeks the ontological minimalism of truth as pragmatic action and ignores the possibility of alternative (and resistant) ontologies. It thus, 'lives in a house of rotting foundations and plants flowers in the backyard.'[422] Connolly critiques Marx in a manner that furthers this assessment of pragmatism and its use of Hegel. For Connolly, Marx pairs an explicit critique of Hegel's ontology of Spirit with an implicit assumption of a counter-ontology of plasticity in nature. If the world is not being progressively realized in Spirit through the dialectical march of history, it is becoming progressively more susceptible to human mastery. This converts nature from a world standing against and perhaps over humanity, to a deposit of resources utilizable for human ends. Thus, for Connolly, Hegel and Marx (and Rorty) still share a fundamental "pattern of insistence." All three *insist* that the world be for us in its fundamental structure. Rorty's version is simply a Hegel without Spirit. It, 'is Hegelianism by other means. It is the conversion of Hegelianism into a set of presumptions more credible and amenable to modern sensibilities.'[423] The question now becomes, what is the further step that Nietzsche takes beyond the pragmatist gesture of stage five, what is stage six of the history of truth?

The final stage of truth is the abolition of the apparent world. For Connolly, this is not the idealism it may appear to be, but a statement on the nature of knowledge without the appearance-reality distinction. 'We must stop comparing belief to the pure model it seeks to copy and start appraising beliefs according to standards of living. We might even begin to discern that knowledge – an authoritative organization of experience – is both a support and danger to life.'[424] With pragmatism, Nietzsche assumes that knowledge bears utility. Knowledge is a mode of power,[425] a way of imposing form on the world in order to make it comprehensible and utilizable. Here, knowledge is not simply power but a form or "tool" of power. Like Rorty, Connolly compares knowledge (language) to a tool in that it shapes and refines. It does not merely reveal the world but acts on it and organizes it. It "wills it" in Nietzsche's language. The will to knowledge is the will to change the world to bring it in-line with human capacities and purposes. Yet Nietzsche goes further than this pragmatism.

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[422] Connolly, *Political Theory*, op cit. p.145

[423] Ibid. p.132 – a claim that Rorty made above.

[424] Ibid. p.144

[425] Pragmatism is not usually thought of as sharing this insistence with Nietzsche. However, as briefly discussed above, Rorty embraced Bacon's version of pragmatism where knowledge is the power to shape the world for humans. While he was often brief on this point, it is persistently referred to throughout his works. E.g. see – Rorty, "A World" in *PSH*. p.50

Knowledge is both a support (like a tool) and a danger (like a mask?). Nietzsche does not assume, with the pragmatist, that the world is susceptible to the forms we impose. 'Thus a residue of the providential view of the world clings to the categories through which the pragmatist seeks to organize it. The pragmatist *naturalizes* Hegel and forgets that a naturalized world may not be as responsive to human capacities as one filled with Spirit. The ghost of Hegel's Spirit still roams the world of pragmatism.'[426] Rather, for Connolly, via Nietzsche, the world *resists* our interpretations of it. Instead of merely rejecting truth and the real world (the "let us abolish it!" of stage five pragmatism), Connolly supports the explicit alternative ontology of resistance.

> 'Suppose human bodies... and external nature... contain elements stubbornly opaque to human knowledge, resistant to incorporation into human projects... Under these conditions, each worthy design we enact will subjugate some characteristics while releasing others, create new resistances while dissolving previous ones, and engender new contingencies while taming old ones.'[427]

This ontology of resistance develops the ontology of ambiguity discussed in Ch.2. On this understanding, all views of the world are partial as they all both reveal and conceal elements therein.[428] Due to this, for Connolly, "Truth is Ice."[429] It is the attempt to fix what cannot be fixed. He utilizes this image of the stabilizing effects of truth to expose its pernicious effects and the way in which modernity still participates in a faith. This is the faith that truth is one. Pragmatic instrumentalism assumes that it is done with truth in its anti-foundational and post-metaphysical self-assertion of humanity. Yet, it still demands that reality be one in its plasticity and susceptibility to human purpose and assumes the neutrality of its pragmatic method. It is still an ontology of coherence and concord (discussed in Ch.2) and thus, is 'a demand for external guarantees inside a culture that has erased the ontological preconditions for them.'[430] This is the paradox of modernity and its faith.

For Heidegger, this demand is inherent to modernity's understanding, use of and disposition to history. For him, part of the effect of modernity's enframing and its revelation of the world as a standing-reserve to be challenged-forth, is the understanding of the world as picture. The scientific objectification of nature addressed above requires a "picture" in order to establish the world as an object subject to humanity. On this understanding, the world as picture indicates a particular revelation of Being.

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[426] Connolly. *Political Theory*, op cit. p.145

[427] Ibid. p.132

[428] Here, Connolly makes the connections between Heidegger and his own ontology of ambiguity obvious.

[429] This is not the truth of Heidegger's critical ontology. There truth represents that which exceeds the present demand for stability and uniformity. This is the truth of the implicit demand (of Rorty and pragmatism) that truth be one.

[430] Ibid. p.11

> 'Hence world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture. What is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by man, who represents and sets forth. Wherever we have the world picture, an essential decision takes place regarding what is, in its entirety.'[431]

The world as picture denotes, for Heidegger, that within modern enframing, the world is established before humanity as an object (it is "pictured") to be grasped. Further, this grasping of the world as picture is fundamentally part of establishing the aforementioned normative and epistemological primacy of humanity.[432] This is, as discussed above, a particular relation to Being; it is an anthropocentrism where all things are judged relative to the human as relational centre and all values are oriented to the self-assertion of humanity in general.

> 'the more extensively and the more effectually the world stands at man's disposal as conquered, and the more objectively the object appears, all the more subjectively, i.e., the more importunely, does the *subiectum* rise up, and all the more impetuously, too, do observation of and teaching about the world change into a doctrine of man, into anthropology.'[433]

Heidegger's analysis of the world as picture illustrates that Rorty, in focusing on the use of historical narratives justifying our present, establishes history as an object to be dominated. While he does not repeat the representationalist logic that Heidegger critiques here, his instrumentalism establishes the same relation between language and the world (only with a different status). This is the relation whereby the former grasps the latter as a tool to be put to some end; the world as a picture for humanity and its purposes. The consequence of this relation and disposition to our social narrative is a, 'peculiar dictatorship of the public realm.'[434] For Heidegger, when humanity is the source of authority, its current, public determination of Being dominates and excludes. It maintains the objectification of everything that is particular to modernity. 'But because it stems from the dominance of subjectivity the public realm itself is the metaphysically conditioned establishment and authorization of the openness of beings in the unconditional objectification of everything.'[435] Importantly, for him, language, as the house of Being, and contingency are domesticated in this determination. They are incapable of undermining the present.

For Heidegger, this subterranean relation to being affects the use of history. Under humanistic mastery, history stabilizes. History, like science above, can only explain within

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[431] Heidegger, 'World Picture" op cit. p.130

[432] Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation*, op cit. p.87

[433] Heidegger, 'World Picture" op cit. p.133

[434] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" op cit. p.242

[435] Ibid. p.242

its given determination. Thus, it represents what is fixed and reduces the past to the intelligible. As an object to be controlled, whatever does not fit within the pre-established dynamic, or use and purpose, is excluded.[436] History also grasps the world as picture and does so within an assumption of the ontological primacy of man. This dictatorship of the public (and our present social universe) obscures the partiality of the present as a necessary condition. While recognizing the contingency of human history, the disposition to mastery within Rorty's thought ignores its inevitable stabilization of the present and exclusion of critical perspectives. It can only understand history as a tool for that present; a narrative justification of what is.

> 'As a good antiessentialist, I have no *deep* premises to draw on from which to infer that it is, in fact, better.... All I can do is recontextualize various developments in philosophy and elsewhere so as to make them look like stages in a story of poeticizing and progress.'[437]

Heidegger, in contrast, rejected this project. For him, holding our time in thought (i.e. developing a philosophy for our time) reduces philosophy to worldviews. Instead, philosophy should be an untimely intervention of a question; one that disrupts the present rather than reinforcing it.[438]

In approaching the world as an object to be grasped, Rorty's pragmatist-historical method assumes the unity of the world. It assumes it is one; that it is susceptible to our grasping and that this approach is neutral (i.e. without philosophical and ontological presuppositions). For Rorty, the only antiessentialist and anti-foundational disposition in response to contingency is to master the world. Consequently, history and narratives of hope, are tools to effect change in that world. However, it is clear from Rorty's reading of Hegel and his narrative of modernity that history is a tool rooted entirely within the mastery dynamic. It is to be utilized in the justification of our present and the self-assertion of humanity in general. In mandating narratives of progress, Rorty circumscribes us to the assertion of the present and its (public) values. His model of historical change only exacerbates this dynamic. Drawing on Hegel, he asserts the self-enclosed, unified and stable nature of historical periods. This is re-enforced in his reading of Blumenberg that assumes that modernity is a discrete, unified epoch. He stabilizes them as human contexts to be mastered through his method. He "masters the moment" to be used in a narrative toward some human purpose. Further, that reading of Blumenberg illustrates the most bare and obvious basis of mastery in Rorty's thought and his reading of history and modernity. Beyond establishing history as a tool of present mastery, he makes humanity,

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[436] Heidegger, 'World Picture" op cit. p.123
[437] Rorty, Richard. "Inquiry as Recontextualization" in *ORT*. p.110
[438] Pattinson, op cit. p.188

and its current universe, the ultimate source of value. It is in the priority of the self-assertion of humanity that we become the relational centre of Being.

For Connolly and Heidegger, historical sense must become more than just awareness of past events and their contingency.[439] It must be about the refusal of familiar representations that merely domesticate history according to some pre-given frame. The historical approach, even in an anti-foundational mode, smuggles in metaphysical assumptions about the unity of the moment (the historical period), its susceptibility to our purposes and humanity as the source of value.[440] What then is the status of Rorty's understanding of modernity and the pragmatist-historical method? Heidegger and Connolly's analyses of modernity as mastery expose the underlying assumption of Rorty and pragmatism that truth be one. This involves two assumptions. First, Rorty both assumes the triumph of modern mastery and its anti-foundational nature and ignores the implicit ontology of plasticity it harbours. Second, he assumes the fundamental unity, or mastery of the moment, of the modern period and historical epochs in general. Rorty fails to see that, when knowledge is understood as imposed, it is not only fallible, but incomplete. It encounters a world that will resist its attempts at control because that knowledge fails to match it. This is Connolly's positive ontology of ambiguity.

Through the work of Heidegger and Connolly, it is clear that Rorty's mastery domesticates history and its contingency. For Heidegger, beneath modern history there is the same ontological disposition of mastery and technology. The world is approached as an object to be grasped and is defined in relation to humanity and its present purposes. Connolly extends this analysis of modernity. For him, the modern frame contains the covert demand that truth be one; the world must be susceptible to our purposes. Pragmatism shares in this demand in assuming that in the absence of correspondence, the world is susceptible to its disposition of instrumental action. It denies the inevitable ontology within its disposition; one that the world will resist. Heidegger and Connolly's critiques amount to the claim that our determinations of the world are always insufficient. Every revealing conceals and thus, there is always a veil. Rorty's mastery approach, in rejecting the veil and offering an ontology of social instrumentalism coupled with a pragmatist-historical method, domesticates this contestability (as the contingency of language). Thus, the pragmatist-historical method is revealed. It is a project whereby the pragmatic self-assertion of man and his purposes is enacted through the construction of

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[439] Cornel West also notes that Rorty's historicism is reductive and simplistic. His aversion to theory prevents any deeper understanding of history's movements. See his; *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism.* London, UK: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. pp.207-209

[440] Widder, "On Abuses in the Uses of History," 2000. p.320

historical narratives of upward progress. However, fundamental to this method is the circumscription (and veiling) of the world to humanity, and the reduction of history to our present desires. These exclusions, as will be discussed in Chs. 4 and 5, reduce our capacity to critically engage that present and its universe of thought. They turn our thought to *ice*.

CONCLUSION:

Through this chapter and the last, this thesis has offered a detailed reading of Rorty as a philosopher of mastery. The purpose has been to situate his pragmatism; to understand, following Ch.1's analysis of his relationship to Analytic philosophy and pragmatism, how he shapes his positive role for philosophy in the world. He does this, fundamentally, through restricting its scope and drawing its limits in the three above themes of the contingency and priority of language, naturalism, and historicism. Through these, he constricts understanding while fundamentally extending the possibility of control. For Rorty, our languages (and ontologies) cannot make contact with the world, they can only provide *useful* descriptions and narratives which either increase or decrease the capacity for control. However, the rhetoric surrounding this latter project is one of limitless upward progress; a sort of cornucopian technocratism that sees the manipulation of nature and society as unproblematic. This constitutes Rorty's philosophical answer to the problem of philosophy after foundations. The value of his work is that he develops an original and insightful answer to this fundamental contemporary question. The weakness is that his answer fails to account for its own presuppositions and eschews critical self-reflection. Through Connolly and Heidegger, this chapter has exposed this approach as a form of unconcealed optimism, as one based upon the assumption that in the absence of correspondence, metaphysical assumptions can be avoided altogether. In his work, Rorty rejects ontological enquiry, in fact all philosophical enquiry that offers an overt position on the nature of the world, as a project of *unmasking*, as fundamentally still under the assumption of a hidden reality beneath the apparent. His concern with this project is political. Like all metaphysics, for him, the reference to reality is an authoritarian gesture, one that removes the discussion from humanity and its purposes by setting up an external standard. Rorty wants our purposes to be the only significant ones and so he theorizes a means (mastery) that is singularly capable of attaining them. However, as stated in Ch.2 and illustrated here, while there is no unmasked reality, this is also no maskless post-metaphysical pragmatic disposition. The project of mastery (and modernity) comes with its own assumptions.

Ontology is inevitable. Thus, a different approach to the question of philosophy after foundations must emerge. Throughout these two chapters, to draw out a criticism of Rorty and establish an understanding of his work, I have attempted to offer an understanding of Heidegger and Connolly that centres on their construction of a critical disposition and a resulting critique of modernity. Both emphasize the necessity of the ontological perspective for critically engaging the present as a totality. Both emphasize the dynamic of mastery that dominates that present and which is clearly evident in Rorty's philosophy. The strength of Rorty's work is found in the problematic he addresses and reveals. After philosophical foundations and given the situatedness of our thought, are human purposes the only lens through which to critically address thought and politics? For Rorty the answer is yes and the pragmatic disposition of mastery uniquely operates from within the finitude of humanity while still providing for the possibility of human progress. When confronting this problem of authority Rorty articulates, Heidegger and Connolly's approaches both imperil and address Rorty's concerns. Heidegger's theorization of ontological questioning and his analysis of modernity and its dynamic of veiling reveal the partial nature of all determinations of being. This adds instability to his conception of history. Every determination conceals as it reveals. None are unified and self-enclosed as all can be disrupted by the ontological perspective. Rorty, rejecting this orientation, unifies historical epochs. In his ontology of ambiguity, Connolly furthers this illustrating the underlying assumptions of pragmatic mastery and contrasting this with a world that is fundamentally unknowable, unavoidable, and resistant to those purposes. With veiling and contestability, these two thinkers offer a perspective that incorporates that ambiguity, that contestability, into the very structure of its assertions. Nonetheless, they both retain the critical gesture toward reality that Rorty lacks. The latter isolates humanity within the social practices of the linguistic community. The formers, in spite of using truth in opposing senses, gesture toward that reality through the critical identification of the necessity of a veil and its current limitations. Thus, both Heidegger and Connolly retain some relation to the appearance-reality divide. This argument will be returned to in Ch.5's discussion of Marcuse. At this point it should be clear that while philosophy after metaphysics cannot provide blueprints, it can offer indicative, critical and constructive resources. What those resources will amount to, their scope, nature and limits, will become clearer subsequently where the analysis of the project of pragmatism as mastery in Rorty's work will be brought to his prescriptions for pragmatic and liberal, political universe.

Ch.4. Rorty's Political Liberalism:
Pragmatic Procedures and Romantic Narratives

> Today, any liberalism which is not also a radicalism is irrelevant and doomed.[441]

Introduction:

The connection between Rorty's philosophy and politics has stood behind this analysis so far. Presently, however, it is necessary to ask: how is Rorty's liberalism also a pragmatism? How does the pragmatist-historical (non) method, as the philosophical unity of Rorty's thought, affect and shape his politics? This chapter, and the following one, will critically analyze both this connection and the manner in which Rorty understands it. While he is often inconsistent on the subject of the relationship between his philosophy and politics, his pragmatism and liberalism, he does firmly reject the idea of a necessary relation between the two. In contrast, it is argued here that there is a clear philosophical connection between Rorty's pragmatist-historical method and his 'minimalist liberalism.' Both, as argued in earlier chapters, are rooted in the ontological disposition of mastery and the behaviourism and anthropocentrism thereof. To recap; Rorty derives his mastery from both an early critique of analytic philosophy and an appropriation of the fundamental philosophical disposition of John Dewey and the latter's instrumentalism. This disposition understands enquiry, not as correspondence, but as a self-correcting process of adaptation and control of one's environment. Here, human communities are treated (existentially) as organisms in environments; beings thrown into social existence whose only response is to control their surroundings through piecemeal and experimental movements (akin to proto-forms of the scientific method) within their environment. Rorty's philosophical project was, like that of Dewey, to overturn a history of philosophic activity that, in opposition, saw philosophy as the quest for certain knowledge (rather than

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[441] Dewey, John. "Liberalism and Social Action" in *The Later Works of John Dewey, Vol. 11*(Jo Ann Boydston) Carbondale, US: Southern Illinois Press, 1987. p.41

control). Consequently, Rorty offered a philosophy of pragmatism that attempted to wed this understanding to new developments in the philosophy of language. Thus, he articulated his philosophy through three themes: contingency (of language), naturalism, and historicism. Through these, Rorty offers an understanding of, and method for, social change; one that emphasizes the gradual nature of developments, the unity of vocabularies, the central role of narratives and the priority of the social.

This chapter illustrates these themes within Rorty's overt philosophical justification of liberalism. It demonstrates how Rorty's liberalism is the political formalization of his social-practice oriented understanding of human behaviour and culture. Essentially, it claims that Rorty's understanding (and justification) of liberalism attempts to provide for a form of political organization that gives precedence to humanity and its external control of the world. This particularly liberal form of mastery entails the same anti-metaphysical and minimalist set of assumptions that were addressed in Chs.1,2, and 3 of this thesis. This view asserts the priority of the human in the pursuit of control. In his politics, Rorty is attempting to demonstrate the compatibility of post-metaphysical culture and liberalism with this very modern project of self-assertion. In so doing, Rorty enacts the same veiling addressed in Chs.2 and 3. By positing the post-metaphysical potentiality of liberalism, he obscures its own partiality. In implicitly claiming liberalism's neutrality and privatizing theoretical thinking, he furthers gelds critical political thinking within liberalism with the same logic as in his hermeneutics of enquiry (see Ch. 1). In this manner, liberal mastery comes to be a deep conservatism.

This chapter argues that, as with his hermeneutic form of enquiry and pragmatist-historical method, Rorty's articulation and justification of liberalism is situated within the problematic of foundational philosophy. Specifically, it is situated within two divisions Rorty makes: a public-private divide, and a division of the public into procedural and hermeneutic logics. Importantly, both of these are gradualist, piecemeal methods conforming to his pragmatic mastery. Further, Rorty's procedural logic, drawn from Rawls, is based in an anti-foundational attempt to reground liberalism solely within the practices of present democratic communities. It pragmatizes and de-philosophizes politics by making the practices and traditions of the given community the bounds of political discussion. This chapter argues that through an implicit, pragmatic claim to neutrality, Rorty locks us within our present languages in this. Further, he circumscribes criticism through a critique of radical thought that circumvents, rather than addresses, its ideas. Rather, through this argument Rorty scales back social criticism and political activity to a maintenance of the status quo. Finally, this chapter argues that Rorty's romantic culture of

liberalism, the aspect of his politics meant to provide for social progress, reduces all political progress to ethical and cultural change. Thereby, Rorty completes his restriction of politics to his social-practice view. He insulates the liberal mastery of proceduralism from critique and creates the political framework to re-enforce his pragmatic ontology. In providing a pragmatic articulation and justification of liberalism (mastery) Rorty furthers and deepens liberalism. He denies us the critical capacity to exceed this ideology by compromising the potentiality of critical thought. In this movement, his liberalism *veils* the status of his own thought. His pragmatic disposition of mastery and social instrumentalism provide a basis for his pragmatic liberalism to obscure its own partiality. In this manner, his philosophy comes to once again re-enforce his politics of *liberal mastery*.

FOUNDATIONS AND METHOD: RORTY'S POLITICAL PROBLEMATIC

It is important to understand the framework within which Rorty's theorizes and justifies liberalism. As in his philosophy, Rorty's politics must be understood from within his critique of philosophical foundationalism. The rejection of foundations sets the boundaries of his political theory. When Rorty theorizes liberalism, it is to answer two implicit questions related to this issue. First, how can liberalism as a political culture and democracy as a political method be justified without reference to philosophical foundations (i.e. pragmatically and historically)? Second, what would such a post-metaphysical liberal culture and democratic method look like? In a sense, how should liberalism be understood as inherently post-metaphysical and how does this make it a superior form of politics? This concern to simultaneously justify and redescribe liberalism in terms of post-metaphysical, pragmatic thought frames Rorty's theorization of liberalism. Specifically, the problem of foundationalism in politics leads him both to a defence of (a form of) political liberalism and to a public-private divide that dominates his political philosophy. Consequently, he concludes that an understanding of the world and our knowledge of it cannot participate in a public, political discussion. For Rorty, this necessitates a division between these two spheres and changes the role of philosophy in politics and culture. Foundationalism and metaphysics in politics become the products of misunderstanding the possible role of philosophy in politics. Further, this role is itself qualified by a second division between two approaches politics: on the one hand, an established logic within which politics occurs, and on the other, a normative language around the ends that logic should pursue. This second division, and its ultimate piecemeal logic, only further insulate Rorty's politics from critique. This section will establish the

problematic within which Rorty theorizes liberalism. Further sections will both articulate that understanding and draw out its consequences.

Two Divisions: Philosophy and Methodology

Two divisions structure Rorty's political thought.[442] The first was discussed in detail in the introduction to this thesis. This is the division between the philosophical and political projects. For Rorty, the attempt to formulate a common framework, to hold reality and justice in a single vision, is the unifying flaw of the Western philosophical tradition. It represents another iteration of the quest for certainty. In contrast, for Rorty, these two projects are fundamentally distinct. There is no way to philosophically ground or unmask our politics. There are only the contingent justifications of language speaking communities at a given moment.[443] These are public and political, shared languages. Philosophy, in contrast, is private. It is about an integrated vision that can subsume all things. For Rorty, philosophy and politics are separated by a division between private and public.

The second division operates around a difference in two approaches to politics. As discussed in Ch. 1, Rorty rejects the overt language of method as an attempt to ground knowledge. However, he retains a sense of method in the notion, appropriated from Dewey, that there is a set of dispositions that are conducive to open and productive enquiry. This attitude has broadly been characterized as an ontological disposition of mastery, a philosophy of *social instrumentalism*. The argument here is that this same set of ontological dispositions (this divided unity of an instrumentalism within an understanding of the primacy of the social) is present in Rorty's political thinking. There is a method to his liberalism; one that limits and constrains his thinking. In order to access this implicit structure of thought within Rorty's politics, it is useful to turn to a relatively early essay in his work, "Method, Social Science and Social Hope." Here, Rorty attempts to unify his opposition to the rhetoric of scientific method in order to resituate the role and limits of the social sciences. As such, it illustrates how and to what extent politics can be thought. The scientific method has usually been understood as our unique access to the real; it is the means to understand how nature is in-itself. For Rorty, this understanding is based on two, related mistakes. First, that connection to the real is dependent on a framework that

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[442] Neither Rorty nor the available critical literature discusses Rorty's liberalism in terms of these two divisions. While they are always aware of the first division between philosophy and politics, the second is ignored. Like his mastery, it remains a hidden dynamic.

[443] See; "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" in *PSH*. For accounts of this essay, see: Habermas, Jürgen. "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in *Rorty and his Critics* (ed. Robert Brandom). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000; Voparil, Christopher. *Richard Rorty: Politics and Vision*. Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006.

should offer no metaphysical comfort. Second, that such a method should yield predicatively useful generalizations. In opposition, for him, while we should value the discoveries of modern technological civilization, they do not tell us 'anything about the nature of science or rationality. In particular, they do not result from the use of, nor do they exemplify, something called the "scientific method."'[444] As discussed in Ch. 1, enquiry is a social product. It is the product of a community and so must take place (whether in conformity with or in opposition to) within a group and its current vocabulary. Further, the only sense in which method can be understood is as a certain disposition; one directed at control. For Rorty, this is the original Baconian sense of method, which is solely focused on ordering our thinking for control. This understanding of method,

> means merely being rational in some given area of enquiry… it means obeying the normal conventions of your discipline, not fudging the data too much, not letting your hopes and fears influence your conclusions unless those hopes and fears are shared by all those who are in the same line of work, being open to refutation by experience, not blocking the road of enquiry. In this sense, "method" and "rationality" are the names for a suitable balance between respect for the opinions of one's fellows and respect for the stubbornness of sensation.[445]

Such an approach is not epistemologically distinct. It has no unique access to reality. It is merely a formalization and standardization of 'the same banal and obvious methods all of us use in every human activity.'[446] Echoing Dewey, for Rorty, the scientific method is only a methodological codification of a much wider (pragmatic) way of experiencing the world, one characterized by openness, experimentalism, and constant revision through trial and error.

This conception of method has important consequences for Rorty's understanding of the nature of the social sciences and their role in political life. Echoing his rejection of the distinction between *Geistes-* and *NaturWissenschaften* in *PMN,* Rorty attempts to circumvent the methodological divide (fundamental to the social sciences) between "value-free" and hermeneutic social science. For him, the whole debate between these two "methods" is misguided. Rather, these are merely two different forms of enquiry which fulfil two different purposes: explanation and understanding. Rorty's point must be understood from within his understanding of the primacy, unity, and contingency of vocabularies (Ch 2). Explanation and understanding are two different types of descriptions (vocabularies) that fulfil different purposes. Explanation, which refers to the types of descriptions you get in the (value-neutral) hard sciences, is only the sort of understanding one wants when the priority is prediction and control (what Rorty calls

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[444] Rorty, Richard. "Method, Social Science and Social Hope." in *CP.*p.191
[445] Ibid. p.194-5
[446] Ibid. p.193

"technical interest"). Understanding, in contrast, is enquiry into what we should do, the normative question of the purposes of our social and political forms. For Rorty, once again, the confusion in this debate is in the conflation of these two projects. 'It is a mistake to think that when we know how to deal justly and honourably with a person or a society we *thereby* know how to predict and control him or her or it, and a mistake to think that ability to predict and control is *necessarily* an aid to such dealing... narratives as well as laws, redescriptions as well as predictions, serve a useful purpose in helping us deal with the problems of society.'[447] For Rorty, both of these forms of enquiry are merely ways of knowing within a vocabulary. They are oriented towards different purposes and should not be judged by each other's criteria. Implicitly connecting his analysis here to *PMN*, for Rorty, being hermeneutical is enquiry in the same sense as value objective science. It is merely enquiry when the larger purposes of that project are as yet undecided. It employs the same methodological attitude of mastery described above. It is still a trial and error process without larger preconceived objectives. It is experimentation with new ways of thinking and speaking focusing on the consequences of these changes. Further, it is this aspect of enquiry which reveals the aforementioned social aspect of knowledge. The necessity of a discussion of larger purposes, of the path of enquiry itself, reveals our implicit awareness that we are members of a community. This division of labour, between the hard sciences of prediction and control and the hermeneutical discussion of the larger purposes of our enquiry and our community, is thus within the social (public) aspect of our existence (rather than the private or individual). It is subject to the constraints of a linguistic, social community. It repeats Rorty's imperative, discussed above, to divide certain human projects from one another. We should, following the same logic, eschew the urge to reconcile such projects and live with difference between them.[448]

For Rorty, this understanding of the social sciences as "beyond method" can engender two opposed responses. First, the narratives and unities created within the vocabularies of enquiry (or any form of reflection on our communities) can be understood as the only mechanism for directing the future development of these communities. For him, this is the Deweyean conception of communal life as unimpeded possibility; a form of living together as enquiry into how to live better than we do now. It is a view based only on an "unjustifiable hope" in the possibilities of human solidarity. Against this, Rorty describes the Foucaultian path. Importantly, for Rorty, Dewey and Foucault broadly share the shame critique of method in the social sciences. They,

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[447] Ibid. p.198
[448] Ibid. p.200

'make exactly the same criticism of the tradition. They agree, right down the line, about the need to abandon traditional notions of rationality, objectivity, method and truth. They are both, so to speak, "beyond method."... But Dewey emphasizes that his move "beyond method" gives mankind an opportunity to grow up, to be free to make itself, rather than seeking direction from some imagined outside source... His experimentalism asks us to see knowledge claims as proposals about what actions to try out next... Foucault also moves beyond the traditional ideas of method and rationality as antecedent constraints upon enquiry, but he views this move as the Nietzschean realization that all knowledge-claims are moves in a power-game.'[449]

What Dewey offers, that Foucault does not, is a sense of hope, and a way to think many traditional concepts (democracy, truth, progress, etc.) without an epistemic ground. For Rorty, the problem with Foucault is that the possibility of human solidarity and community disappears as a consequence of the critique of epistemology. All knowledge is understood only as domination. In contrast, for Dewey, 'the will to truth is not the urge to dominate but the urge to create, to "attain working harmony among diverse desires."'[450] Dewey's democratic hope allows for a positive politics of creation. It provides for the possibility of 'unjustifiable hope, and an ungroundable but vital sense of human solidarity.'[451]

This discussion has revealed two divisions in Rorty's political thinking. The first, referred to above and discussed in detail in the introduction to this thesis in Rorty's autobiographical essay, is a division between two forms of thinking: one public and shared and the other necessarily private and unshared. For Rorty, the great failure of his critics, who criticise him either for refusing to philosophically justify his liberal politics (the Right) or for failing to further his philosophy to a critique of the bourgeois rhetoric of liberalism (the Left), is their inability to understand this fundamental separation. The division between these two projects changes the role of philosophy in public life. Here, we come to the second division. In Rorty's reflections on method, he formulates a division within public thinking, introduced in *PMN* (addressed in Ch. 1) and elaborated in the essay discussed above, between two types of enquiry. Rather than engaging in a perpetual back and forth between value-neutral and hermeneutic methods, Rorty encourages us to understand these two approaches, not as opposed but as two different forms of thought. The former is normal and stable. It is enquiry which works out the consequences of an established vocabulary and seeks prediction and control within those terms. The latter, is revolutionary (in Rorty's limited sense). It questions the larger directions of enquiry.

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[449] Ibid. p.204-5

[450] Ibid. p.207

[451] Ibid. p.208 - This critique of Foucault will be elaborated on below in the discussion of Rorty's rejection of radical thought. His justification of a politics of hope will be addressed in detail in Ch. 5. For an account of Rorty's relationship to Foucault's work, see; Malecki, Wojciech. "If Happiness is not the aim of politics, then what is?: Rorty versus Foucault" in *Foucault Studies*, no. 11, 2011.

Occurring at this meta-level, it is fundamental to the change of vocabularies. As discussed in Chs.2 and 3, this occurs gradually and historically through the piecemeal shifting of language and the use of new metaphors. Importantly, both of these forms of enquiry occur through the same pragmatist disposition to experimental, piecemeal practices.[452] Hermeneutic enquiry is the experimental and pragmatic testing of new ways of speaking. Thus, Rorty performs a strategic, philosophical circumvention. As in his critique of epistemology and theorization of epistemological behaviourism (Ch.1), rather than philosophically disproving correspondence, he uses a sociological explanation to argue that the implicit "method" of actual enquiry (whether in the hard or hermeneutic modes) is already pragmatic and social. The whole issue of correspondence and value-neutrality is elided through recourse to a meta-level of sociological enquiry into vocabularies. The consequence of this argument is another division within thinking. However, this divide, between two forms of enquiry, resides within the public realm. It is a division within politics between an established and normal set of stable procedures, on the one hand, and a hermeneutic, narrative method of cultural change, on the other. As will be discussed, for Rorty, it is only within the hermeneutic form of enquiry into politics that philosophy participates. Nonetheless, politics in general is subject to the common disposition of pragmatic mastery. Both methods employ the pragmatic logic of piecemeal experimental reform. The former (procedural) is a formalization of it while the latter (hermeneutic) employs it in the creation of new vocabularies. Presently, it is necessary to turn to Rorty's elaboration of liberalism in order to understand how he constructs it as an explicit formalization of this basic disposition.[453] He understands liberalism as the only available political method of a post-metaphysical community because it is the political manifestation of communal, pragmatic enquiry. As a stable set of procedures and a method for cultural reform it is a piecemeal and experimental liberal mastery.

THE PRIORITY OF DEMOCRACY AND THE MINIMALISM OF LIBERALISM

This set of concerns, about the method and role of enquiry into human society and the relation between philosophy and politics, structures Rorty's liberalism. His central political work, *CIS*, offers a post-metaphysical description and justification of liberal, political methods and culture. There are two key aspects of this liberalism. First, Rorty attempts to detach the language of and case for liberalism from its foundationalist past through a re-justification of liberalism along anti-foundationalist, pragmatic lines. This is

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[452] Ibid. p.193
[453] Ibid. p.207

related to the aforementioned issue of method. For Rorty, liberalism can and must be justified from within an acknowledgement of contingency and without a claim to neutrality. Given the centrality of the human community, the contingency of language and vocabularies, the historical context of all phenomena, and the consequent limitations on enquiry and human claims, how can a pragmatic argument for liberalism be made? For him, the answer is in how liberalism can politically match pragmatic culture. Rooted in the community and its language, minimalist and procedural liberalism is the political formalization of pragmatic enquiry, and the most compatible political structure with a post-metaphysical culture.[454] Second, continuing this re-theorization of the connection between philosophy and politics along the lines of his separation of the two (central) aforementioned projects (reality and justice), Rorty offers a different understanding of the role of philosophy in political life. Rather than establishing universal principles or exposing the reality of social relations beneath some ideological veil (the Anglo-American and Continental approaches to philosophy and politics respectively), philosophy's role is humbled. As a form of narrative, a participant in our wider cultural conversation, it cannot offer theoretical analyses. Rather, philosophy can only, in the piecemeal and gradual manner of hermeneutics, shift our public vocabulary. It can, over long periods and through many increments, offer communities new ways of speaking. Consequently, it cannot participate in or critically analyse the actual procedures of liberal democracy. It can only offer new descriptions. It is important to emphasize that both of these political projects, the justification of liberalism as pragmatism and the redescription of liberalism as a hermeneutic, cultural project, recast the relationship between philosophy and politics through the central mechanism of Rorty's political thinking: his public-private divide. While he portrays this as a necessary division within a post-metaphysical context and an acknowledgement of the diversity of human projects and desires, it will be argued here that this division functions as a restriction on critical thinking and a naturalization of liberalism. This section concerns the first project of Rorty's detachment of liberalism from philosophy; subsequent sections will address the new roles he articulates for it.

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[454] This analysis reads Rorty's liberalism as explicitly connected to his pragmatism. For strong critical readings of Rorty that also do this, see: Bacon, Michael. *Richard Rorty: Pragmatism and Political Liberalism*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2007; Voparil, *Richard Rorty* op cit; Bernstein, Richard E. "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward: Rorty on Liberal Democracy and Philosophy" in *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992; Shapiro, Ian. *Political Criticism*. London, UK: University of California Press, 1990. – However, even these exceptions limit their questioning to the tradition of the thought (pragmatism) Rorty emerges from. The nature of Rorty's limiting of thought calls for a wider confrontation of his work; one from outside the conversation he himself remained loyal to.

Public and Private as the Confines of Thinking

In *CIS*, Rorty unites his theoretical distinction between the projects of reality and justice with an articulation of political liberalism. He opens, true to his pragmatist-historical method, with a broad narrative of Western thinking focused on the relation between public and private. Similar to his critique of the persistence of visual metaphors and the image of the mind as the mirror of nature in philosophy, for Rorty, political philosophy has been similarly plagued by a project to fuse public and private. The Platonic (philosophical) quest for certainty is matched by a Platonic (political) quest for unity. This project requires the assumption of a common human nature. It assumes that what is private, for each of us, is somehow connected to what we have in common with others, 'that the springs of private fulfilment and of human solidarity are the same.'[455] *CIS* is Rorty's attempt to provide space for both public and private thinkers through a fundamental division between them. For him, the purpose is to see them, not as opposed, but as oriented to different, exclusive projects, which cannot be integrated into a single vision. These are the projects of self-creation and justice. The former is the quest for private perfection, the desire to create oneself apart from the community and achieve autonomy. The latter is the quest for human solidarity, the desire to provide for collective identity and action in the pursuit of greater justice. Importantly, for Rorty, this is the difference between two vocabularies, two ways of speaking. 'The vocabulary of self-creation is necessarily private, unshared, unsuited to argument. The vocabulary of justice is necessarily public and shared, a medium for argumentative exchange.'[456] The difference between public and private emerges as two distinct ways of speaking and thinking. The private is thought outside of the framework of one's society. It exceeds that framework in some manner. In contrast, public thinking, as shared, necessarily occurs within the common vocabulary. Rorty's project in *CIS* is to provide space for both of these types of vocabularies. He wants to illustrate that in the absence of metaphysics a liberal society is still possible. Further, he wants to argue that a liberal politics is, in a sense, the most compatible form of political organization and culture for such a postmetaphysical society. Finally, that such a culture must reject both philosophical foundationalism and the quest for the unity of public and private. This division allows for the compatibility of liberalism and anti-foundationalism. In fact, a historicist, nominalist and postmetaphysical culture, for Rorty, is possible only with a public-private divide. It allows for the two goals, individual development and communal solidarity, to co-exist. It allows us to fully replace

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[455] Rorty, *CIS*. p.xiii
[456] Ibid. p.xiv

Truth with Freedom.[457] In Rorty's language, this is replacing the desire to ground our politics in universal principles or human nature with the desire to provide the cultural and institutional resources to pursue both greater individual diversity and collective solidarity.

It is important to re-emphasize Rorty's method here. Falling within that second (hermeneutic) form of enquiry, he is not *arguing* for his articulation of liberalism. Rather, he is merely offering a different understanding and narrative of liberalism and the relation between philosophy and politics. One that rejects two alternative approaches to this question: metaphysics and radical critique. While not strictly separate for Rorty, as the latter is really just a particular political manifestation of the former, it is useful to distinguish them. Metaphysics, as discussed above, still assumes the appearance-reality distinction Rorty rejects; it still assumes, 'a single permanent reality to be found behind many temporary appearances.'[458] When dealing with politics, this assumption manifests itself in the notion that philosophy's role is to establish the principles that ground institutions and behaviour. Radical critique also assumes the appearance-reality distinction. However, this assumption is found not in a project of grounding present institutions but in the attempt to radically critique them by piercing their ideological veils and unmasking their essential natures. Marxism, and its pretentions to science, and post-Heideggerian Continental thought, with its philosophical unveilings, are Rorty's usual examples. However, rather than argue against their methods, he only wants to present a coherent and desirable image of a culture without that demand.[459] On his own terms, Rorty redescribes. He does not argue.[460] However, as discussed, he does have a broad critique of radical theory as dependent on some form of philosophical essentialism. The broad argument of this thesis is that Rorty both mis-describes this group and fails to counter their implicit criticisms of his pragmatic approach. Thus, it focuses much more on his treatment of this body of thought rather than his critiques of "metaphysical" (i.e. broadly Kantian) philosophies. In seeking to avoid foundationalism through a rejection of the appearance reality-divide and the language of unmasking, Rorty compromises the critical potential of his thinking. He fails to see that a genuine methodological pluralism can acknowledge the critical validity of different theoretical frameworks. It can assert that they expose different dynamics in the world that are all operative though they may differ.

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[457] Ibid. p.xiv-xvi

[458] Ibid. p.74

[459] Rorty, Richard. "The End of Leninism, Havel and Social Hope" in *TP*, 323

[460] Rorty does engage in philosophical argument. He is often showing the limits or false suppositions of the views he opposes. However, when articulating his own politics, he does rely more on narrative to illustrate the liberal society he offers. It is in this sense that this claim must be understood. See; Bernstein, Richard. "Rorty's Liberal Utopia" in *The New Constellation* op cit. p.261

Without such a position, we lack the critical resources to exceed the current framework of thinking (liberal mastery) and remain locked within our current political horizon. Presently, it is necessary to engage Rorty's liberalism more deeply in order to understand how it is involved with his philosophical disposition of mastery.

For Rorty, much of the impetus behind *CIS* was to counter his critics who had claimed that his philosophical views, where he opposed classical distinctions in moral and political philosophy (e.g. the morality-prudence distinction), would fail to establish the necessary philosophical preconditions for a just (and liberal) society. As such, the basis of his argument is the position that the continued success and progress of liberalism is better served by a post-metaphysical vocabulary.[461] For Rorty, his own vocabulary, which revolves around the centrality of language and metaphor, the primacy of the community and its social practices and the historical nature of all phenomena, is much better suited to this purpose. However, he is emphatic that his framework does not provide philosophical foundations for liberal democracy. Rather, it only permits it to be redescribed as a project of collective solidarity and individual self-creation.[462] Such a description better serves its purposes of increasing human freedom. Thus, this is a project of political vision, not foundation.[463] The desire for the latter simply disappears in this redescription. What Rorty is offering here is a different culture for liberalism; a different way to understand its status and virtues and a different vocabulary in which to describe its practices and goals. He claims that the postmetaphysical language of redescription is more coherent with liberalism than the language of foundation.

> 'The difference between a search for foundations and an attempt at redescription is emblematic of the difference between the culture of liberalism and older forms of cultural life. From its ideal form, the culture of liberalism would be one which was enlightened, secular, through and through. It would be one in which no trace of divinity remained, either in the form of a divinized world or a divinized self. Such a culture would have no room for the notion that there are nonhuman forces to which humans should be responsible.[464]

As discussed previously, there is a *philosophical* anti-authoritarianism at the basis of Rorty's political thinking.[465] What Rorty opposes is the idea that there could be a nonhuman element (God, Reason, History, etc.) in the justification of our knowledge and

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[461] Rorty, *CIS*. p.44

[462] Redescriptions are the only justifications Rorty overtly offers. Thompson, Simon. "Rorty on Truth, Justification and Justice" in *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues* (eds. Matthew Festenstein and Simon Thompson). Cambridge, UK: Politiy Press, 2001. p.34 – However, this chapter argues that there is a covert claim to pragmatic neutrality here.

[463] Voparil, *Richard Rorty* op cit. p. 20.

[464] Rorty, *CIS*. p.45

[465] Bacon, Michael. "Rorty and Pragmatic Social Criticism" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* vol. 32 (7), 2006. p.865 – Bacon argues this is the central theme of Rorty's pragmatism and liberalism. Further, it makes Rorty a pragmatist.

political institutions. For him, the process of de-divinization, so central to his thought and narrative of modernity, culminates in the pragmatic notion that it is only to other humans that we must justify ourselves and our political practices. Appeals to extra-human standards are opposed to the culture of liberalism which understands freedom as, 'the recognition of contingency.' In framing liberalism and freedom in this way, Rorty is attempting to elide the entire debate around the foundations of liberalism and the charge of relativism. For him, the virtue of liberalism is the ability to understand our values and their vocabulary as contingent and yet remain committed to them. The manner in which he articulates his liberalism, and the relation between philosophy and politics in general, is structured by this philosophical anti-authoritarianism and the attempt to rebut the charge of relativism in the absence of foundations. Thus, Rorty's liberalism is articulated within a context of a concern for its justification, and hence the stability of its values, given his rejection of foundations. The suggestion here will be that he may go too far with this concern; that his attempt to situate liberalism in the absence of philosophical foundations leads to a constriction of critical (non-liberal) thinking.

Rorty situates his account of liberalism in *CIS* in an advocation of plurality[466] through Isaiah Berlin's argument in "Two Concepts of Liberty." Here, Berlin argues that to understand freedom, we must acknowledge the necessary incompatibility of our diverse human desires and ends.[467] Rorty reads this as the impossibility of a single framework or overall conception for political life. The virtue of liberalism is the ability to recognize the contingency of our political framework and yet remain committed to it. It is important to recall Rorty's philosophy here. As discussed in Ch.2, the absolute validity of a belief is impossible for Rorty as those beliefs always occur within a vocabulary (a linguistic system whose coherence is internal and separate from other vocabularies). Absolute, or intra-vocabulary, validity is dependent on some foundational distinction which would allow one to differentiate between something peripheral and illusory and something which allows access to that absolute (such as: a distinction between two sorts of selves, reason and passion; or a distinction between two sorts of persuasion, rational and irrational). For Rorty, justification is always internal to a language (social) and there is no such standpoint between them. 'This amounts to giving up the idea that intellectual or political progress is rational, in any sense of "rational" which is neutral between vocabularies... progress, for

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[466] For Robert Brandom, this advocation of plurality is a result of Rorty's understanding of vocabularies and their normative isolation. See; "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism" in *Rorty and his Critics* op cit. p.168. – This chapter follows Brandom's argument in placing Rorty's naturalism and historicism at the base of his political theory, p.172.

[467] Berlin, Isaiah. "Two Concepts of Liberty" in *Four Essays on Liberty*. London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1969. – Like Berlin, Rorty argues that plurality is best protected through the negative liberty of a public-private divide.

the community as for the individual, is a matter of using new words as well as of arguing from premises phrased in old words.'[468] For Rorty, the vocabulary of foundations and critique cannot explain the relation between old and new. It cannot explain change. This is due to its proclivity to seek reasons rather than causes. There is no (context independent) reason for a change in vocabulary. Reasons are always internal to vocabularies and hence we will always use one vocabulary to judge another. Thus, in the case of a change in vocabularies, a vocabulary will always be judged by criteria foreign to it. New ways of speaking are only causes for a change in the same sense in the same way as physical realities may cause new beliefs but never determine the actual belief (see Ch. 2). Consequently, we are confined to the languages, practices and cultures of our communities.[469] There is a priority of the social and the linguistic here.

This priority is matched with a historicist emphasis. All phenomena are historical; they occur within history, they have changed throughout history, and they are interconnected with other aspects of their epoch. As discussed in Ch. 3, Rorty has an epochal conception of history where each period is integrated in a dominant vocabulary that shifts through piecemeal linguistic change. Further, understand a process of change is retrospective. The role of philosophy in history is to provide narratives and understandings of the unity of these moments by, as Rorty notes, "holding our time in thought."[470] For him, this quasi-Hegelianism means, 'finding a description of all the things characteristic of your time of which you most approve, with which you unflinchingly identify, a description which will serve as a description of the end toward which the historical developments which led up to your time were means.'[471] Philosophy *celebrates* history. It finds a way to rationalize the present as the positive result of past developments and encourages us to identify with that process and result. For Rorty, while the language of the natural sciences (Truth, correspondence with the world, method, etc) was fundamental to the development of political liberalism, it is no longer suitable. Rather than philosophical foundations, liberal culture needs a new self-description to shift its focus away from the natural sciences and towards literature and utopian politics. Instead of searching for philosophical foundations, it should aim at creating the conditions for infinite, poetic redescription. Culture must be poeticized and opened up to the hermeneutics of change discussed above.[472]

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[468] Rorty, *CIS*. p.48-9
[469] Ibid. p. 50
[470] See; Hegel, G.F.W. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (trans. H.B. Nisbet) Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991. p.21
[471] Rorty, *CIS*. p.55
[472] Ibid. p. 53-5

In addition to a culture of redescription, and akin to the normal method of mastery outlined above, for Rorty, the absence of foundations requires a justification of liberal institutions that avoids the logic of grounding. Through Rorty's readings of Rawls and Habermas it is clear that this justification is based on an understanding of liberal procedures as the institutionalization of pragmatic mastery. They are the self-assertion of humanity in that they are a political form without reference to non-human authority. In contrast to the charges of his radical critics, the absence of philosophical foundations does not imperil liberal institutions and culture. The latter are justified as the political formalization of the pragmatic, social model of enquiry.

Pragmatic Democracy and The Community as Ground

As Rorty's pragmatic, social justification of liberalism is implicitly a response to those radical critics,[473] it is useful to briefly introduce Rorty's critical reading of them. His brief critique of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a particularly illustrative example.[474] He concedes to these two critical theorists that the Enlightenment's own spirit of critique eventually consumed the alternative foundations (in "rationality" and "human nature") it constructed; that the scepticism of the Enlightenment critically undermined the tools which it itself utilized in criticism. However, they wrongly assumed that this leaves contemporary society in a state of moral and philosophical bankruptcy. They presume that the absence of philosophical foundations compromises political liberalism. For Rorty, in this position, they misunderstand the nature of intellectual and cultural progress. A culture is not bound by the terms with which it initially frames a new vocabulary; 'the terms used by the founders of a new form of cultural life will consist largely in borrowing from the vocabulary of the culture they are hoping to replace. Only when the new form has grown old, has itself become the target of attacks from the avant-garde, will the terminology of that culture begin to take form.'[475] The critique of Enlightenment foundationalism is a development within modern (liberal) culture. It is not a move away from it.

For Rorty, Horkheimer and Adorno's fundamental mistake is in their understanding of the consequences of modernity's critique of itself, its rejection of its own purported

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[473] Rorty's critique of radical criticism is addressed below. Presently, it is only important that they represent a form of philosophical critique that depends upon the logic of unmasking and the appearance-reality distinction. Rorty rejects their analyses of the consequences of the failure of Enlightenment rationalism. For him, this failure does not compromise liberalism. See; Rorty, Richard. "Philosophy as Science, as Metaphor, and as Politics" in *EHO*. pp.24-5

[474] I am not addressing the accuracy of Rorty's reading of *Dialectic* here. Such a task is beyond this project. It is only discussed as an example of his critique.

[475] Rorty, *CIS*. p.56

foundations.[476] For them, as Rorty quotes, 'every specific theoretic view succumbs to the destructive criticism that it is only a belief – until even the very notions of spirit, of truth and, indeed, enlightenment itself have become animistic magic.'[477] For them, the consequence of this is the loss of critical and foundational grounds for society. Modernity, in the absence of foundations, is incapable of thinking beyond the status quo. "Blindly pragmatized" thought (i.e. thought without a foundation) lacks the ability to critically transcend the present and so establish a relation to truth. For Rorty, this analysis goes too far. The failure of Enlightenment rationalism does signal the failure of foundationalism in general. However, as discussed earlier, truth and justification are separate. The lack of foundations merely means that all theoretical frameworks are one more description. Their justification always has been social. Thus, another justification of our present institutions and values is possible; one that is rooted in our present practices.

In "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" Rorty attempts to argue for a form of social theory that, splitting the difference between liberal foundationalists and communitarian historicists (as well as some post-Marxist "radicals"), manages to retain the political benefits of the legacy of the Enlightenment while acknowledging the centrality of the community as the only source of our political and moral justification.[478] For Rorty, this is the Jeffersonian compromise; the ability to create a common political heritage and identity while differing about its ultimate source (i.e. religion). Jefferson privatizes religion. He views it as irrelevant to the social order of liberalism. For Rorty, John Rawls,[479] who is the focus of his essay, illustrates how liberal democracy can function without philosophical presuppositions in a similar manner.[480] For the former, the latter privatizes philosophy by applying the principle of toleration (through exclusion) to it. This principle, on Rawls's own understanding, was the precondition for allowing a plurality of doctrines and conceptions of the good to be affirmed within a single (democratic) society. It also serves as the basis of Rorty's argument that philosophy is not necessary to public life. 'We can think of Rawls as saying that just as the principle of religious toleration and the social

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[476] For another reading of these authors by Rorty, see; "The Overphilosophication of Politics" in *Constellations*, Vol. 7 (1), 2000.

[477] Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (trans. John Cumming). New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1972. p.23 – quoted in; Rorty, *CIS*. p.57

[478] As argued in Ch.3, Rorty's attempt to wed the self-assertion to a social-practice oriented linguistic naturalism defines his positive philosophy.

[479] The accuracy of Rorty's reading of Rawls is not discussed here. Rather, only how his reading of Rawls illustrates his understanding of the relationship between philosophy and politics is at issue.

[480] Rawls does this mainly in, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 14, 1985. Elsewhere, Rawls argues that liberalism's nonphilosophical nature makes it uniquely capable of addressing issues around multiculturalism and tolerance. For him, it is uniquely capable of providing 'a shared public basis for the justification of social and political institutions.' "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus" in *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol. 7 (1), 1987. p.1

thought of the Enlightenment proposed to bracket many standard theological topics when deliberating about public policy and constructing political institutions, so we need to bracket many standard topics of philosophical inquiry.'[481] For Rorty, in the wake of the critique of Enlightenment reason and metaphysics, the imperative is not to rethink the philosophical foundations of liberal political institutions and values that arose with them. Rather, we can "benignly neglect these topics" (for the purposes of political theory). For Rorty, this neglect is exactly what makes Rawls' theory political rather than philosophical. Rawls notes, 'since justice as fairness is intended as a political conception of justice for a democratic society, it tries to draw solely upon basic intuitive ideas that are embedded in the political institutions of a democratic society and the public traditions of their interpretation. Justice as fairness is a political conception in part because it starts from within a certain political tradition.'[482] Justice as fairness is rooted only within the present community. It is a systematization of the values and principles already held within the American community and is thus internal to its standards. Without an external standard it is a *reflection* rather than a critical analysis.

For Rorty, rooted in the community and its practices in this manner, Rawls' analysis avoids philosophical presuppositions. It is "thoroughly historicist and antiuniversalist," avoiding philosophical issues in the manner that Jefferson avoided religious ones. In this reading, the only background assumptions a society needs are the types of "common-sense" understandings offered by history and sociology. It is important to note that "common-sense" is not a better or more grounded form of reasoning. Rather, it is the shared understandings of a community; the meanings and associations generally assumed by their public discourse. For Rorty, philosophical questions about such topics are not public. This shared language does not go that deep and hence philosophy can be ignored in political questions. For him, politics does not require the authority philosophical foundations attempt to provide. Rather, when

> 'justice becomes the first virtue of society, the need for such legitimation may gradually cease to be felt. Such a society will become accustomed to the thought that social policy needs no more authority than successful accommodation among individuals, individuals who find themselves heir to the same historical traditions and faced with the same problems. It will be a society that encourages the "end of ideology," that takes reflective equilibrium as the only method needed in discussing social policy.'[483]

It is important to clarify exactly what Rorty means by justice (via Rawls) and how central it is to his anti-metaphysical, liberal culture. For him, the emphasis on justice is indicative

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[481] Rorty, Richard. "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" in *ORT*. p.179-80 – such bracketing reflects Rorty's own marginalization of philosophy in his public-private divide discussed above.

[482] Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," op cit. p.225-6

[483] Rorty "The Priority of Democracy" op cit. p.184

of the shift from metaphysical to political thinking. It is the end of the appeal to authority. When justice, rather than an antecedent order, is the focus we are free from non-human (non-social) authority. This is his "freedom as the recognition of contingency." While Rorty often assumes freedom in its negative sense, he refers to it more often in this manner; freedom as social and historical autonomy (i.e. a community free from self-imposed and external forms of authority). This is freedom as the recognition that we are finite, linguistic, historical communities with no ultimate basis for our social practices and vocabularies. It is freedom as the recognition that only we create and justify those languages and habits. Liberalism, and Rawls (who only formalizes its principles), in their emphasis on justice as accommodation amongst individuals in a community, institutionalizes this freedom. It grounds public discussion, not within an antecedent order, but within the history and traditions embedded within public life.[484] It is non-ideological in its *method* of seeking reflective equilibrium in an existing linguistic, social, and historical community.

Rorty's definition of philosophy lurks behind this discussion. For him, both philosophy and religion can be defined in a manner broad enough for everyone to share philosophical presuppositions or a religious faith. However, he chooses to understand the former in the narrow sense of questions concerned with the nature of human beings and reality. Rawls, in Rorty's view, argues that such questions be excluded from politics; that they should be a private concern unconnected to public discussions of social policy. The point is that beliefs about these topics are not necessarily wrong but that they threaten freedom by referring to an authority outside of the human community.[485] It is in this concern that the real effects of Rorty's argument are revealed. While he narrows his definition of philosophy, his alternative excludes much more than the contents of that description. It excludes thinking and vocabularies that are not the language of the public. Discussing the limits of that sphere, he notes, 'We have to insist that not every argument need to be met in the terms in which it is presented. Accommodation and tolerance must stop short of a willingness to work within any vocabulary that one's interlocutor wishes to use, to take seriously any topic that he puts forward for discussion.'[486] When the practices and languages of a community are the sole ground of its politics, alternative theoretical and explanatory frameworks are immediately excluded from political discussion. Furthermore, our ability to question the institutions that reinforce those practices is

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[484] Ibid. p.185

[485] Ibid. p.182-3 – this argument recalls William E. Connolly's description of ontological minimalism discussed in Ch. 2. The critique of this element of Rorty's work here, that his minimalism contains a liberal form of mastery, relies on Connolly's analysis.

[486] Ibid. p.190

compromised. 'It is not evident that they [democratic institutions] are to be measured by anything more specific than the moral intuitions of the particular historical community that has created those institutions.'[487] For Rorty, this situates politics solely within the democratic community. It gives priority to democracy over philosophy by placing political right over philosophical good. Importantly, and uniquely, for Rorty, this justification is solely political. Whatever its flaws, this conception is not plagued by philosophical presuppositions (and seemingly neither is his liberalism).

It should be evident that Rorty rejects non-human authority and attempts to ground our practices solely within the community (as a shifting and contingent entity). This position has distinct effects on his understanding of politics and the manner in which he redescribes modern liberalism. His "Postmodern Bourgeois Liberalism" is an attempt to illustrate a politics situated in this simultaneous rejection of philosophical foundations and celebration of the community. Once again, he situates this (pragmatic) justification of liberalism as a third-way alternative to Kantian liberals and their post-Marxist/communitarian critics. While Rorty finds common ground with the latter in a Hegelian historicism, he distinguishes himself by the political (rather than philosophical) demand to preserve liberal institutions without their traditional justification. Postmodern bourgeois liberalism is a non-philosophical form of liberalism. For it, the only justification for institutions is the community that creates, shapes, and maintains them. For Rorty, those who take this position can justify their practices solely within solidarity (i.e. within the views of the contingent historical community.)[488] Postmodern bourgeois liberalism is a contingent justification of a set of institutions and practices rooted only in the community it emerges from. It is self-consciously partial and contextual. It is justification without foundation. Rorty emphasizes that he uses this label to highlight these two aspects. He calls it "bourgeois" to acknowledge it is a set of institutions and practices only 'possible and justifiable in certain historical, and especially economic, conditions.'[489] Further, he calls it "postmodern," recalling the work of Jean François Lyotard, to indicate that it rejects "metanarratives" which describe abstract transhistorical entities (e.g. Absolute Spirit, the Proletariat, etc). These contrast with historical narratives, which are the only source of such justification. Philosophy can only help us summarize those views after the fact, rather than justify them.[490]

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[487] Ibid. p.190

[488] Rorty, Richard. "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism" in *ORT*. p.200

[489] Ibid. p.198

[490] Ibid. p.200

This self-confessed methodological parochialism[491] where political discussion is confined to competing narratives of a society's practices, places progressivism at the centre of Rorty's politics. When vocabularies are understood as tools, tools that emerge in a gradual and piecemeal fashion where their function and effects are only understood *retrospectively*, stories of progress that explain the positive in the present become the only form of politics for philosophy (and culture in general). In this manner, we hold our time in thought by understanding how all the small developments that preceded the present were particularizations and contributions to the general good of the present moment. In its hermeneutic (public) function, philosophy does provide macro-analysis, but only retrospectively and only for the purposes of justifying the present.

> '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. We can view these people as toolmakers rather than discoverers because we have a clear sense of the product which the use of those tools produced. The product is *us* – our conscience, our culture, our form of life.'[492]

Philosophy looks backward in order to understand the present. The centrality of narrative to politics in Rorty's thought is due both to his methodological dualism, between pragmatic method and hermeneutic reform, and to his understanding of the centrality of identity. Despite his invocations against the politics of identity, his liberalism, as should be evident, is situated within his understanding of Western liberal culture.[493] Identity is central because it is a manifestation of those social practices which have epistemological and political primacy. Politics and morality is primarily a matter of what Rorty, drawing on Wilfred Sellars, calls "we-intentions." An implicit understanding of the community we are a part of and the range of acceptable behaviour therein dominate our public life. Anything that exceeds that range is what "we" would not do. Further, identity is the product of a narrative. It is the product of understanding our development, not general principles.[494] To have any significance identity must be inherently contrastive. It must, for Rorty, denote some group smaller than humanity in order to have something with which to differentiate itself. It is an understanding, rooted in narrative, about who we are, how we got here, what we do, and how we are different from others.

This understanding of identity and politics makes social practices central. For Rorty, general principles of morality and politics only have sense, 'insofar as they incorporate tacit reference to a whole range of institutions, practices, and vocabularies of moral and

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491 Rorty positively describes this trait as an "ethnocentrism." It will be addressed in Ch.5.
492 Rorty, *CIS*, p.57
493 Voparil, *Richard Rorty* op cit. 64
494 Rorty, *CIS*, p.60 – See also, Ibid. pp.190-1 and Rorty, "Postmodernist" op cit. p.200

political deliberation.'[495] They are a result of those practices rather than causes of them. Such an understanding emphasizes the community as the contingent and *experimental* site of political conversation about those practices. This is the primacy of the social. It is important to emphasize here that Rorty's conception of politics and resulting advocation of liberalism is the result of the linguistic (in terms of contingency), social, and historical aspects of his philosophy. Politics, for him, is situated in a community, articulated in the language of that community, and speaks to the present through an understanding of the past. Liberalism, consequently, must be based in a community and its vocabularies. Further, it must be able to cope with the presence of different vocabularies within it and it must be open (in some way) to the gradual movement of progressive, piecemeal historical change. In spite of this theorization of contingency, where freedom becomes recognizing it as a condition, by limiting politics Rorty locks us within the present community. Criticism changes under these intellectual (epistemic, ontological, etc.) conditions. All we can achieve is, 'a circular justification of our practices, a justification which makes one feature of our culture look good by citing still another, or comparing our culture invidiously with others by reference to our standards.'[496] Criticism becomes empirical and comparative. It becomes about protesting against aspects of society that do not conform to its current self-image[497] (hermeneutic) and suggesting concrete alternative practices (pragmatic). For Rorty, this turns politics away from revolution, toward reform.

> 'A liberal society is one whose ideals can be fulfilled by persuasion rather than force, by reform rather than revolution, by the free and open encounters of present linguistic and other practices with suggestions for new practices. But this is to say that an ideal liberal society is one which has no purpose except freedom, no goal except a willingness to see how such encounters go and abide by the outcome.'[498]

Situating politics within the community necessitates such an approach. If no total perspectives are possible, and change (in history, language, and actual cultures/communities) *is* piecemeal and experimental (i.e. reformist), then politics must be liberal. In one telling moment Rorty, connecting his social naturalism to politics, argues that, 'rational behaviour is just adaptive behaviour of a sort which roughly parallels the

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[495] Rorty, *CIS*, p.59

[496] Ibid. p.57

[497] Rorty nearly approximates Michael Walzer's notion of the "connected critic" in situating social criticism primarily within the standards of the community. However, the difference is that Rorty makes the critic ultimately *loyal* to those standards as well. For Walzer's account of social criticism, see; *Interpretation and Social Criticism*. Cambridge, US: Harvard University Press, 1987. For accounts of the differences between Walzer and Rorty, see; Allen, Jonathan. "The situated critic or the loyal critic? Rorty and Walzer on Social Criticism" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 24 (6), 1998; and, Shapiro, *Political Criticism*. Op cit. Chs.2&3. For defences of Rorty in this area, see; Horton, John. "Irony and Commitment: An Irreconcilable Dualism of Modernity," in *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues* op cit; Bacon, "Rorty and Pragmatic Social Criticism" op cit; Bacon, *Richard Rorty*, op cit. pp.38-42.

[498] Rorty, *CIS*, p.60

behaviour, in similar circumstances, of the other members of some relevant community.'[499] There is a claim to truth here. Rorty has a distinct understanding of society, language, and the nature of historical movement. In this sense, liberalism is the formalization of social pragmatism. It is the politicization of this non-foundational, piecemeal, communicative, social-practice oriented philosophy. Further, it is the anti-metaphysical and pragmatic culmination of the achievements of modernity.[500] Presently, it is necessary to connect this conception of politics and justification of liberalism to Rorty's rejection of radical thought. To do this, it is necessary to examine his reading of another "anti-radical;" it is in his qualified endorsement of the work of Jürgen Habermas that Rorty's connection of philosophical pragmatism and political liberalism is revealed.

THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE SUBLIME: HABERMAS, RADICAL THOUGHT AND SOCIAL CRITICISM

If pragmatic philosophy's (overt) public role is to participate in the hermeneutic, cultural conversation of modernity, its concealed function is to justify the superiority (and hegemony) of liberal proceduralism (as mastery). This repeats the aforementioned division between hermeneutics (narrative) and method (liberal procedures) within Rorty's politics. It is to his defence of the latter that we now turn. This consists of a two-part reading of Habermas. First, Rorty defends the latter's politics while critiquing the manner in which he supports it. For him, Habermas is a "liberal without being an ironist." He asserts the superiority of liberal mechanisms and gestures towards their pragmatic justification. However, he also goes too far and slips back into foundationalism.[501] Second, in a series of essays, books, and discussions, Rorty clarified his critique of "radical thought" through a comparison with Habermas' philosophy.[502] Selectively drawing on the latter's critique of postmodernity Rorty identifies in both radical thinkers and Habermas (though in different forms) a common demand for a philosophical validation of politics. They continue to assume that philosophy represents the ultimate judgement for our social and

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[499] Rorty, "Postmodernist" op cit. p.199

[500] Rorty, *CIS*, p.57

[501] Rorty and Habermas are remarkably close in many of their ideas. The key distinction is in the status they accord to their philosophies and politics. Rorty focuses on this status and so often distinguishes himself from Habermas in the arguments referred to below. For a account of their similarities and common "non-foundational pragmatic humanism," see; Bernstein, Richard J. "What is the Difference that Makes a Difference: Gadamer, Habermas and Rorty" in *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, Vol. 2, 1982.

[502] Rorty, Richard. "Habermas and Lyotard On Postmodernity" in *EHO*; Rorty, Richard. "Cosmopolitanism Without Emancipation: A Response to Jean-François Lyotard" in *ORT*; and, Rorty, Richard. "Habermas, Derrida and the Functions of Philosophy" in *TP*.

political lives. Thus, while Habermas, for Rorty, represents the archetypal public (liberal) philosopher, he (unlike Rawls) shares the universalizing demand to unite philosophy and politics that Rorty diagnoses in postmodern radicals. His approach is still foundational. Habermas, like those he critiques, fails to realize that the only justification of liberal institutions is pragmatic. Piecemeal, empirical comparison and social decision-making procedures are the only validation liberalism asks for and allows. Through this analysis, it is obvious that the virtue of liberal proceduralism, for Rorty, is the purported lack of a philosophical *veil*. It is collective life without philosophical presuppositions, without external authority. It is the political manifestation of pragmatic (anti-metaphysical) thought. It is freedom as the recognition of contingency.

Habermas: Reconstructing Foundations

The basis of Rorty's readings of Habermas and radical thought is the aforementioned distinction between the two projects of public solidarity and private self-creation. This division leads Rorty to separate thinkers and ideas into those conducive to either project. It is important to reiterate that this divide is not between two spaces within society[503] but is an intellectual division within individuals and between different types of intellectual activity and thinking. For Rorty, a thinker's work can be judged public or private even while every individual has public and private aspects to themselves. Further, while these aspects are not incompatible in a person or society, both of which can have multiple and contending drives, they cannot be reconciled within a single theoretical framework.[504] They are two different types of vocabularies. Public is that which occurs within the vocabulary one shares with a community. Contrariwise, private are those attempts to speak outside or to transcend that vocabulary in some manner. Thus, Rorty describes it as parasitic on the public, as it is always an attempt, implicit or explicit, to overcome public thinking and speaking.[505]

Within his philosophy, Rorty's readings of Habermas and radical thinking serve to reinforce this division.[506] Both, for Rorty, misunderstand the public-private divide. The result is twofold; Habermas rejects "postmodern[507]" thinking in general, when he should

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[503] Rorty notes this in response to Nancy Fraser's accusation that his public-private divide repeats the classic distinction between private home and public forum. "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. pp.307-8 note 2. For Fraser's critique, see; Fraser, Nancy. "Solidarity or Singularity: Richard Rorty between Romanticism and Technocracy." in *Reading Rorty* (ed. Alan Malachowski). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1990. pp.314-5

[504] Rorty, *CIS*, p.120

[505] Rorty, *CIS*, p.9

[506] The accounts of both Habermas and Radical thinking below are Rorty's. While selective criticisms of these readings are made, the focus is on how these readings illustrate Rorty's liberal philosophy as mastery.

[507] There is a terminological difficulty in Rorty's work. In these discussions he tends use the terms "postmodern," "radical," and "ironist" with little clear differentiation. All three clearly share a general

merely understand its utility more specifically, and radical thought miscalculates the consequences of their own critique. Rorty frames his discussions of Habermas and radicals as a conflict between two extremes;[508] one that he will cut a middle way between. The difference between these two is in the necessary philosophical conditions for social criticism. For Habermas, radical thinkers, or philosophers roughly in one of the two philosophical heritages engendered by Nietzsche,[509] lose their emancipatory potential in their unmasking of all universals. For him, it is necessary to retain at least one (universal) standard for the explanation of domination or all distinctions (free and oppressed, theory and ideology) lose their critical force. Without such a standard, we cannot have a "theoretical approach" to politics. We will be left only with a context-dependent (socio-historical) form of social criticism; one which ignores the elements of reason contained within "modernity's ideals." For Habermas, the question must be, 'How can an intrinsic ideal form be constructed from the spirit of modernity, that neither just imitates the historical forms of modernity nor is imposed upon them from the outside?'[510] Consequently, his own "communicative rationality" attempts to locate a structure of universal validity claims within communication (irrespective of context) itself. For Rorty, Habermas does not think the type of parochial, social narratives he offers is enough of a basis for political life and action.[511] They do not provide a basis for critique.

For Habermas, postmodern and radical thought leads to a political cul-de-sac. He admits that Nietzsche correctly diagnosed the "philosophy of subjectivity" (the attempt to locate an extra-social foundation for our political and moral obligation within the human subject) as unable to provide for human emancipation. However, in entirely rejecting all grounds, Nietzsche radically divorced the emancipatory project from philosophy. This refusal is Nietzsche's legacy to twentieth-century thought; 'a disastrous legacy, one which has made philosophical reflection as best irrelevant, and at worst antagonistic, to liberal hope.'[512] Habermas's response is his own philosophy of intersubjectivity which replaces a

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philosophical disposition that eschews the classical foundationalist projects. All three are generally historicist, anti-metaphysical and critical of traditional epistemology. While the term "Postmodern" has a complicated history in Rorty's work, he has embraced and rejected it at various times, it generally refers to this philosophical disposition; one that Rorty claims to share. The real difference depends then on politics. Radical tends to denote those in this disposition who reject liberalism and advocate philosophical analyses of contemporary society. Ironists are those who understand Rorty's public-private divide and confine their anti-foundationalism to the private.

[508] In particular, see: Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard" op cit.

[509] Habermas, Jürgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (trans. Frederick Lawrence). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1987. Ch. 4 – Here, Habermas argues that Nietzsche produces two pathways in Postmodernity. One, Heideggerian and Derridean, and the other Foucaultian. Both overemphasize the world-disclosive aspects of language and mythicize the other of reason.

[510] Ibid. p.20

[511] Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard" op cit. p.164-7

[512] Rorty, *CIS*, p.62

subject-centred conception of reason with the aforementioned communicative version. Here, reason is understood as the internalization of social norms and democratic institutions are grounded only in "domination-free communication." However, while Rorty lauds these moves, his appropriation of them will be addressed below, for him, Habermas goes too far. First, while the latter acknowledge the inevitability of metaphor within the "hard disciplines" (law, science, politics, economics, etc.), he maintains the presence of universal validity structures behind, and unaffected by, these world-disclosive functions of language. These structures provide for grounded argumentation and for the possibility of theoretically identifying domination within communication. Essentially, Habermas wants to reconstruct, rather than reject, rationality along communicative lines. Rorty, in contrast, does not seek a replacement for rationality. His understanding of the contingency of language (Ch.2) and his anti-authoritarianism require this space to remain unoccupied. Second, this resurrected foundation within Habermas' thinking leads him to misunderstand postmodernism. Habermas rejects *ironism*, Rorty's term for his particular liberal form of postmodern/radical thinking (addressed below), with the same incorrect assumption radicals hold. This is, 'the assumption that the real meaning of a philosophical view consists in its political implications, and that the ultimate frame of reference within which to judge a philosophical, as opposed to a merely "literary," writer, is a political one.'[513] Habermas retains the quest for the unity of the philosophical with the political. This error leads him to reject radical thought as a "symptom of exhaustion." Its lack of any critical standards against which to study politics means that it is a tradition without continued use. For Rorty, Habermas misunderstands postmodern philosophy and its function. He has confused public and private forms of thinking. He has judged private thinkers by public standards and repeated the quest for unity. 'Where Habermas sees a contrast between a socially useless, exhausted philosophy of subjectivity and a socially unifying philosophy of rationality-as-intersubjectivity, I see a contrast between the private need for autonomy and the public need for a synoptic view of the goals of a democratic society.'[514] For Rorty, the proper way to understand this form of thinking is as a private attempt at autonomy. For him, speaking outside language of the public makes that thought non-political.

Like Habermas, radical thought repeats the demand for the unity of the philosophical and the political. However, while Habermas overestimates the need for a philosophical foundation for liberalism, radical thinkers overestimate the consequences of that

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[513] Rorty, *CIS*, p.83 – see also: Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard" op cit. p.171 and Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. p.310

[514] Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. p.316

foundation's lack. Thus, while his critique of Habermas focuses on the latter's attempts to reconstruct rationality, Rorty's critique of this group focuses on their attempt to draw political conclusions from postmodernism. For Rorty, there is still both a social and pragmatic justification of liberalism after foundations. Radical thought misses this possibility in its own quest for unity. Fundamental to Rorty's critique of this group is his own much commented-on distinction between *ironism* and *metaphysics* in *CIS*. These two are opposing philosophical dispositions. The former is defined by "radical and continuing" self-doubt with respect to the vocabulary one uses. It holds to Rorty's general proposition that there are only vocabularies and that there is no way to neutrally chose amongst them. Irony is anti-essentialist and holds to the contingency of language, society and history. Metaphysicians, in contrast, are essentialists. They continue to search for a comprehensive framework for reality, one which provides certain knowledge and is not subject to time and place. The difference can be illustrated through their respective methods. Ironists redescribe, Metaphysicians argue. The former attempt to "play off," in Rorty's language, various descriptions against each other in order to gradually enact a metaphoric redescription (see Ch.2) of something. Metaphysicians attempt to argue in terms that are universalizable and certain. For Rorty, as metaphysics is deeply woven into the public rhetoric of Western liberal democracies, the imperative is to shift that language to the ironist disposition (while not in whole, at least in part).[515] This requires acknowledging the contingency of language, the isolation and unity of vocabularies, and the ubiquity of redescription. This changes the function of philosophy and thought in relation to politics. The former can no longer ground the latter but can only engage in context-specific (i.e. concrete) appraisals of the existing situation. For Rorty, this is the difference between asking, "how are we currently humiliating [oppressing] people?" rather than, "Why should we not humiliate?" It is the difference between a contingent question and a foundational one. Further, the former, which is the question that should dominate public language and the redescriptive efforts of Rorty's *liberal ironists*, is a redescriptive question. It is necessary to distinguish here between redescription for public and private purposes. The former creates connections between different descriptions for the purpose of understanding amongst groups. It redescribes in order to help us understand the situation and vocabularies of other people. Private, idiosyncratic description is specifically

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[515] Rorty, *CIS*, p.87 – Rorty has been critiqued from several angles for this total rejection of metaphysics. See: Conway, Daniel. "Irony, State and Utopia" in *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues*, op cit. p.56; Critchley, Simon. "Metaphysics in the Dark: A Response to Richard Rorty and Ernesto Laclau" in *Political Theory*. Vol. 26 (6), 1998. p.813

unrelated to this project and in fact structurally separated in Rorty's liberalism. It is an exercise in autonomy.[516]

It is important to clarify the series of moves Rorty has made here and their consequences for the role of philosophy. The distinction between irony and metaphysics is a distinction between the linguistic, social, and historicist brand of pragmatism Rorty theorizes and the traditional foundational project of philosophy. This distinction, and Rorty's advocation of a public culture of liberal irony where we do not ask foundational questions in politics but only specific and contingent ones, allows Rorty to propose a public-private division between vocabularies oriented toward expanding that public sphere, and those that do not. Further, it allows him to distinguish between types of thinking that are conducive to this project and those, subsequent to the failure of philosophical foundationalism, that we know are not. Metaphysics is privatized.[517] The question now is: why and how is philosophy a form of private perfection as opposed to a critical framework for the interrogation of the public?

Radical Thought and Autonomy: Rorty's Claim to Procedural Neutrality

In the absence of foundations for philosophical thought, philosophy (theory) becomes a means to private perfection rather than human solidarity. Theory is broad; it is specifically about standing back from an entire tradition or body of thinking in order to get a new perspective on it. However, as with the previous distinction, theory in this situation is specifically opposed to metaphysical philosophy, which searches for a unity behind the plurality of appearances. Ironist theory, in contrast, is critical of this tradition. Its goal is, in fact, to free itself from it and its metaphysical urge. In *CIS* Rorty reads ironist thinkers (e.g. Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida) as seeking *autonomy* rather than enacting a new method, platform or rationale,. They are attempting to free themselves from the vocabulary they inherited and think anew. Consequently, the standards within their thinking change.[518] Further, this desire to speak and think outside the confines of an existing vocabulary extends beyond themselves. Ironist theorists have an implicit demand for their autonomy to exceed themselves; for the act of their autonomy to rupture the given stasis. For Rorty, this is the difference between the merely beautiful and the gloriously sublime.

> 'They want the sublime and ineffable, not just the beautiful and novel – something incommensurable with the past, not simply the past recaptured through rearrangement and redescription. They want not just the effable and relative

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[516] Ibid. p. 91-3
[517] Ibid. p. 94
[518] Rorty, *CIS*, p.97

> beauty of rearrangement but the ineffable and absolute sublimity of the Wholly
> Other; they want Total Revolution.'[519]

There is a temptation here to relapse into metaphysics. For Rorty, because theory abstracts, because it stands back and attempts to develop a general understanding of a tradition all at once, it often assumes that its redescriptions achieve some sort of permanence. In this manner, it repeats the philosophical quest for unity. In contrast, ironist theory has equally failed (even in the method of narrative) to unite public and private, to synthesize self-creation (in the above sense of thinking anew) with social responsibility. Consequently, it is necessary to divide these two projects as separate logics. For Rorty, no new way of speaking and acting, even one that abstracts away from the present to some large entity (his examples are "Europe" or "History"), has public relevance.

Rorty's account of ironist theory and his critique of radical thought are dependent on Bernard Yack's *The Longing for Total Revolution*. This work is a historical critique of a covert demand within European philosophy for radical, social transformation. This is the desire to exceed the social, to overcome an oppressive set of conditions often understood as inherent to modernity and our current social universe. These conditions somehow pervert our humanity. Through readings of Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche and Marx, Yack diagnoses this longing as dependent on two assumptions. First, that modern humanity is somehow lacking and unable to achieve itself. Second, that the cause of this limitation is fundamental to the nature of modern social conditions. The longing for total revolution develops out of an analysis of these obstacles within modernity. Importantly, this tradition identifies these obstacles in some fundamental sub-political sphere of social interaction which shapes humanity and society. Removing this condition requires a total revolution, 'which transforms the whole of human character by attacking the fundamental sub-political roots of social interaction.'[520] For Yack, the two assumptions above are problematic. The first assumes it is possible not to be fully human; that is, it assumes a human essence which we can fail to achieve. The second assumes the underlying unity of the social. It assumes that when institutions do not provide for the full realization of our humanity, they dehumanize us. It demands that institutions match our humanity and that we should realize our humanity within social conditions. For Yack, this is the ultimate source of the longing and the reason why it will never be fulfilled. The desire for total revolution falls into a self-contradiction. By defining human freedom in terms of the individual's ability to resist external conditioning, it immediately invalidates the entire

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[519] Rorty, *CIS*, p.101

[520] Yack, Bernard. *The Longing for Total Revolution*. Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University Press, 1986. p.9

project of realizing our humanity in the social world. With such a definition of freedom, all social conditions will be dehumanizing.[521] The error of this thinking is in positing the unity of the social in a single spirit that characterizes social interaction. For Yack, this is what necessitates a revolution from the present. Once it is understood that these analyses are constructions, that they are particular vocabularies in Rorty's parlance, there is no obstacle to social change. Thus, 'partial reform and, indeed, partial revolution regain meaning and importance.'[522] Rather than rejecting it outright, Rorty's solution is to privatise this revolutionary impulse. Through his public-private divide he takes a desire to overhaul the existing conditions of human society and converts it into an intellectual desire to overcome one's intellectual predecessors. The argument here is that this domestication is fundamental to his overt rejection of radical thought and his articulation of procedural and minimal liberalism as the only framework for thinking publically.

Rorty diagnoses in radical thinking the same assumption of an inner human core free from socialization. For him, the conditions of possibility of social action are set by (and continually changing because of) semantic world-disclosure. There is no access to, and thus no such thing as, an essential humanity to be emancipated. There is no set of social relations more distorted or obscured than another. For him,

> '*every* form of social life is likely, sooner or later, to freeze over into something the more imaginative and restless spirits of the time will see as "repressive" and "distorting." What is wrong with these forms of life is not that they are "ideological," but just that they have been used to justify the systematic administration of pain and humiliation.'[523]

For Rorty, the problem with radical thought is that it cannot accept that all discourse is coerced insofar as it is limited to the terms and practices of a given community at a given moment. It rebels against this condition and, through a series of concepts (ideology, dehumanization, etc.), assumes the possibility of a non-socialized human essence.[524] For Rorty, as soon as emancipation is dissociated from a particular instance of oppression, as soon as it is thought in an abstract and general sense, it relies upon some understanding of the un-oppressed human and its nature. Yack illustrates that to reject such a core requires a public-private division. Efforts at autonomy, where the entire field of thought is overcome through some new description, should not be seen as the "actualization of a common human potentiality" but only as an effort in self-creation. Radical thought attempts to take something private and apply it to the public.[525] For Rorty, the fallacy in

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[521] Ibid. p 366-7
[522] Ibid. p.369
[523] Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. p.320
[524] Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard" op cit. p.167
[525] Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. p.324

radical thought is their desire to speak anew, outside of the public vocabulary of the present; outside of terms meaningful to it. In this, it takes a system of meaning that is only significant for it and subsumes the contemporary world underneath its conceptualization. This is a powerful desire that promises affiliation with a higher power, disclosure of a hidden reality and the possibility of total autonomy.[526] The desire for autonomy (freedom from all social limitations) becomes a claim to external (nonhuman) authority. In its reliance upon an appearance-reality distinction and its use of philosophical abstraction, radical theory becomes metaphysical and misunderstands the connection between philosophy and politics. It understands contemporary society and "ideology" the same way ironists understand metaphysics, as an insidious temptation that must be overcome. This produces the notion that criticizing metaphysics is political and that theory has political consequences. For Rorty, this assumption stands behind a diverse range (both politically and philosophically) of Continental thinkers all of whom repeat the quest to unify the political and the philosophical.

The final question remains, what is social critique after philosophical foundationalism? Where radical thought (and Habermas) seek emancipation, Rorty emphasises *tolerance* as the virtue of pragmatic liberalism. In contrast to the ability to penetrate appearances down into reality, the strength of liberalism is its reformism, its ability to alter itself from within. It does not oppose incommensurable frameworks of analysis to each other (e.g. in some overt model of contestation), but, in Lyotard's parlance, converts *différends* into litigation. Its logic creates the possibility of gradual reform both between different frameworks in the moment and between different periods. For Rorty, in this disposition, pragmatism is inherently inclusive. It 'constantly changes to accommodate the lessons learned from new experiences... [This is a] program of constant experimental reformulation.'[527] Rorty encourages us to see ourselves as part of this "pageant of historical progress." In such a reformism there is tolerance. There is the gradual accommodation of new experiences and situations. This is tolerance, not so much as a political virtue (though Rorty would not exclude this), but as a philosophical disposition for cultural change. With this "anglo-saxon utilitarian-reformist brand of social thought" the aforementioned distinctions between ideology-nonideology, humanizing-dehunamizing, and emancipation-oppression fall away. They are replaced with a single political distinction between force and persuasion. For Rorty, this distinction is non-theoretical. It is merely the difference between communication that is systematically

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[526] Ibid. p.323
[527] Rorty, "Cosmopolitanism" op cit. p.219

distorted and that which embraces the reformist cosmopolitan brand of tolerance. Obstacles to the latter are not in need of deep theoretical disclosure or ideology-critique. Rather, they are obvious, such as a lack of democratic institutions or a free press.[528] Freedom is empirical. It is the lack of constrictions on democratic institutions and pragmatic communication. Further, such freedoms require no foundation but the consensus of a community. For Rorty, the social is given priority in politics. Consequently, the freedom of social communication is the only sense in which truth has meaning. Truth is merely a product of the decisions of a community and its unrestricted communication. 'When you take care of freedom, truth will take care of itself.'[529]

It is only in this sense of a lack of constrictions on communication that "rationality" can have any sense after philosophical foundationalism. Within Rorty's thought, if we think publically, 'we shall identify the rational with the procedures, and the true with the results, of "undistorted communication" – the sort of communication characteristic of an ideally democratic society.'[530] Liberal procedures are not rational because they tend toward universal validity but because they provide for pragmatic, piecemeal (adaptive) change. They allow us to have no other authorities than the public. Due to this anti-authoritarian pragmatism, social criticism becomes empirical and contextual. It is about the suggestion of concrete, alternative situations or organizations, not the analytical exposure of a hidden dynamic. Pragmatic anti-metaphysical liberal 'culture is one in which doubts about the public rhetoric of the culture are met not by Socratic requests for definitions and principles, but by Deweyan requests for concrete alternatives and programs.'[531] For Rorty, disclosing an alternative social world is the only (pragmatic) social criticism that can occur. Further this process of suggesting concrete alternatives is explicitly piecemeal. It is about gradually confronting established habits and institutions with new dynamics and situations. Thus, the imperative is once again Rawlsian reflective equilibrium,

> between our old moral principles (the generalities we invoke to justify old institutions) and our reactions to new developments, our sense of the desirability of various recently disclosed possibilities. ... So there would be continual social criticism, but no *radical social theory*, if "radical" means appealing to something beyond inherited principles and reactions to new developments.[532]

Criticism must be gradualist. It must explicitly work from the present universe of meaning (vocabulary) and reform upon that base. It must not attempt to radically shift that base.

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[528] Rorty, *CIS*, p.84 – see; Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. p. 309

[529] Rorty, *CIS*, p.84 – see; Rorty, Richard. *When You Take Care of Freedom, Truth Will Take Care of Itself* (ed. Eduardo Mendieta). Stanford, US: Stanford University Press, 2006. p.58

[530] Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. p.309

[531] Rorty, *CIS*, p.84 87

[532] Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. p.322

For Rorty, the problem with radical thought is it does not speak to the present. '...adopting a new vocabulary only makes sense if you can move back and forth, dialectically, between the old and the new vocabulary.'[533] Radical thought tries to shift too much too fast. It wants to dramatically change the language of the present, to revaluate the existing conditions with no positive use of the present understanding. In this, for Rorty, it ignores the social basis of the political. It ignores how culture and society actually change.

Rorty's strategy here is familiar. He does not argue against the substantive analyses of radical theorists. Rather, he sociologically circumvents those critiques. Much like his treatment of Analytic thought and the philosophy of mind addressed in Ch.1, Rorty treats radical thinkers as a social group who share a cultural demand for total revolution. He circumvents actually addressing their ideas by viewing them primarily as a linguistic community. In this approach, Rorty assumes the neutrality and priority of his own perspective without actually establishing that priority. Rather, he obscures the partiality of his perspective under a therapeutic pragmatism. However, there is a circular logic at work here. Assuming the neutrality of his own perspective, Rorty critiques radical thought as based on a demand that exceeds the actual possibilities of human social life and its capacity for change. However, still having never clearly asserted the truth of this perspective, he then uses his critique of radical thought to argue for the necessity of those limits on political reflection. In this manner, he walks us into a self-reinforcing circle of thinking that operates solely on the basis of an implied claim to neutrality.[534] This mechanism, or *Rortian Circle*, will recur in this thesis. Presently, it is necessary to briefly address the consequences of Rorty's critique of radical thought and reformulation of social criticism.

When freedom is the recognition of contingency liberalism's greatest virtue becomes its minimalism: its rejection of philosophical questions, its consequent lack of substantive claims and its capacity for continual reform. The arguments for it, over alternative forms of political organization, are only empirical. 'Preferring what Sandel calls "procedural republics" to other regimes is merely historical, not philosophical. Procedural republics are those in which as few answers to substantive moral questions... are built into the political institutions as possible. Such republics have the best track record among the regimes which we have tried so far.'[535] Liberalism brackets the true (in the substantive

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[533] Rorty, "Cosmopolitanism" op cit. p.221

[534] For Rorty, this type of circular justification which remains internal to a given language, is extent of possible argument. See; Rorty, *CIS*, p.57

[535] Rorty "A Defence of Minimalist Liberalism" in *Debating Democracy's Discontent: Essays on American Politics, Law, and Public Philosophy* (ed. Anita L. Allen and Milton C. Regan). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998. p.119

sense) in favour of the "priority of the practical." In this it encourages a pragmatic public disposition, one that emphasizes the tolerance and reformism that characterizes it. Further, in political criticism, this disposition specifically resists abstraction. As aforementioned, the role of philosophy, for Rorty and his particular form of minimalist liberalism, comes after rather than before political decisions. The public, through its common vocabulary and piecemeal political reformism, decides. Only then do philosophers celebrate and explain.[536]

The consequence of Rorty's philosophical anti-authoritarianism is the advocation of both a de-divinized pragmatic form of politics and the creation of socially centred hermeneutics of politics that emphasize the central role of the community in political thinking and justification. This priority places the human community at the centre of his conception of politics. Its only ground is a pragmatic understanding of how change actually occurs within human groups (i.e. piecemeal and gradual). The consequence of this is a firm rejection of the use of philosophy, and specifically radical forms thereof, in the public. Instead, such expressions are privatized and the public becomes solely the domain of the pragmatic form of political enquiry. However, in spite of Rorty's Kuhnian image of enquiry whereby decisive (i.e. revolutionary) shifts are possible through a change of vocabulary, his theorization of liberalism restricts thinking to the present, liberal universe. When change can only work from the present, and it must occur within the vocabulary of the present, thought and critique are restricted. While Rorty was adept at refuting such criticisms, he did admit this. For him, his position does assume that 'the instruments of perfectibility are already, in the rich North Atlantic constitutional democracies, in place – that the principle institutions of contemporary democratic societies do not require "unmasking" but rather strenuous *utilization*, supplemented by luck.'[537] Functionally and structurally, Rorty's thought constricts social organization to the liberal model. Social change is redefined, not as the possibility of continuing change (of both the radical and reformist sort) but solely as the *perfecting* of the liberal model.

THE CULTURE OF THE LIBERAL PRESENT: PRAGMATISM AS ROMANTIC UTILITARIANISM

While it has been peripherally discussed, it is necessary to illustrate Rorty's liberal culture and the hermeneutic task therein. As aforementioned, for him, hermeneutics is the cultural counterpart to public proceduralism. The latter is the non-philosophical logic of liberal methods and institutions. It is the justification of those structures and the formula

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[536] Ibid. pp.120-1
[537] Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida" op cit. p.326 – my emphasis. See also; Rorty, *CIS*, p.63

for its politics rooted only in the communicative practices of a community. It is the force for stability. The former, in contrast, is the method for change. Where proceduralism stabilizes, hermeneutics reforms. It offers new descriptions and understandings in order to change our language and our practices. In his work Rorty often situates this project in the *romantic* culture of pragmatism. This cultural is plural and diverse. It attempts to open up rather than close down. This is Rorty's political (cultural) adaptation of his hermeneutics of enquiry (see Ch.1). However, similarly, this form of thought is fundamentally limiting. By defining plurality solely in terms of individuality, Rorty ethicizes politics. Political change becomes a process of self-creation, rather than collective action. Further this ethicization makes politics, and specifically political change, an entirely cultural project. It focuses solely on adapting our narratives and descriptions rather than critically engaging our assumptions or altering our institutions. Political progress becomes about loosening and expanding our groups rather than systematically changing the relations within that group. This limitation is due to the disposition of mastery at the basis of Rorty's philosophy and politics. Hermeneutic (ethical and cultural) change is solely piecemeal and reformist. It works out from the present stasis making cautious, experimentalist gestures. At the basis of Rorty's pragmatic culture of liberalism, there is a demand for coherence with the (dominant) present; to must speak in, and to, the old vocabulary. As a result, Rorty's philosophy ends up divorced from any critical project. It obscures this dynamic beneath a language of hermeneutic openness and change. It *veils* its exclusion.

Romantic Pragmatism: Revolutionary Change at a Piecemeal Pace

For Rorty, in the absence of non-human authority structures, the political shift to liberalism requires a corresponding movement from unity to plurality. Without a universal framework for thought neither enquiry nor politics can integrate our diverse ends and desires. This assertion of necessary plurality is the challenge of *romanticism*. For Rorty, this movement, like pragmatism, is a disposition in thought; one specifically oriented against the universalist desire to reconcile all questions within a single intellectual framework. Once again drawing on Berlin, he asserts the necessary diversity of our desires and purposes. This is the "collision of the good with the good." 'For pragmatists intellectual and moral conflict is typically a matter of beliefs that have been acquired in the attempt to serve one good purpose getting in way of beliefs that were developed in the course of serving another good purpose.'[538] This conflict is inevitable and

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[538] Rorty, Richard. "Grandeur, Profundity, and Finitude" in *PCP*.p.81

can only be addressed through compromise and redescription. For Rorty, romanticism had a fundamental role in criticising the Platonic model of enquiry and its quest for certainty. In its assertion of plurality it made politics as piecemeal problem-solving the only possibility.[539] However, romanticism is not without its proclivity to demand unity. As in the discussion of radical thought above, for Rorty, romanticism has a tendency to desire the infinite. Rather than the inclusive framework of universalism, romantic unity desires the removal of all limitations on thought (i.e. completely unrestricted plurality). This is the desire for perfect or absolute freedom through philosophical depth. For Rorty, we need to reject all metaphors of height, both the ascendance to truth in universalism and the access into our deepest self of romanticism. We must be suspicious of both universalist grandeur and romantic depth. Pragmatism cuts a middle path between these two alternatives, universalism and romanticism, by reconciling their two needs: the need for intersubjective agreement (stability) and the desire for novelty (change). Thus, while Rorty emphasizes a plurality of purposes and desires, in actual discussion he seems to focus mainly on the need to reconcile or provide space for these two specific needs.[540] The source of this ambiguity, discussed below, is a conflation between the project of private self-creation and the hermeneutic task of politics.

Pragmatism is the philosophical disposition that provides for these two, separate tasks: stable proceduralism and dynamic hermeneutics. Pragmatism is romantic utilitarianism. For Rorty, pragmatism's affinity with romanticism is found in both their mutual rejection of non-human standards and their emphasis on the *imagination*. The latter, rather than ontology, determines the universe of thought. 'Ontology remains popular because we are still reluctant to yield to the Romantic's argument that the imagination sets the bounds of thought.'[541] As the source of language (See Ch. 2 and its discussion of metaphoric redescription) imagination defines the range of human thinking. For Rorty, part of accepting this limitation and rejecting the quests for certainty (in philosophy) and unity (in politics) is to think of reason only as a social practice, 'the practice of enforcing social norms on the use of marks and noises, thereby making it possible to use words rather than blows as a way of getting things done. To be rational is simply to conform to those norms.'[542] Standardization through agreement within our linguistic communities allows us to act collectively. It is in this sense, for Rorty, that speaking in the terms of the community is rational. Imagination is the ability to shift these

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[539] Ibid. p.83
[540] Ibid. p.85
[541] Rorty, "Pragmatism and Romanticism" in *PCP*.p.106
[542] Ibid. p.107

terms and thereby change our practices. Intellectual and political progress, on this understanding, is not a deeper understanding of the Real but a new use of language that increases our ability to "do things;" one that allows us to have richer and fuller experiences. It is specifically the imaginative ability to reflect on those terms, the terms which structure our discourse, and consider alternative sets of terms that allows for human freedom beyond mindless impulse-response. Imagination differentiates humans from animals who are only mechanistic in their response to environmental stimuli. 'Mechanism stops, and freedom begins, at the point where we go metalinguistic – the point at which we can discuss which words best describe a given situation. Knowledge and freedom are coeval.'[543] Imagination, as the source of new descriptions, is the basis of freedom. It is the only manner in which we can critically appraise the vocabulary within which we currently operate. 'Rationality is a matter of making allowed moves within language games. Imagination creates the games that reason proceeds to play. Then... it keeps modifying those games so that playing them is more interesting and profitable. Reason cannot get outside the latest circle that imagination has drawn.'[544] Imagination sets the bounds of thought. Rorty emphasizes that even his reduced, social, and communicative form of rationality is subject to the imagination. "Imagination has priority over reason." This understanding repeats his reading of hermeneutics as the destabilizing and freeing form of enquiry (Ch. 1). Freedom is, once again, here cast as the ultimate value of Rorty's liberal culture.

Ethics and Culture: The Limits of Reform in Rorty's Liberalism

The limitation of this hermeneutic of freedom is revealed in a fundamental ambiguity in Rorty's account of pragmatism and romanticism. In his thought, the necessary plurality of desires may contribute to gradual reform over time, but in the moment it leads to a crass individualism and the privatization of critical thinking. In the absence of a universal framework for integrating that plurality, Rorty advocates a poetic polytheism for liberal culture.

> 'Polytheism... is pretty much coextensive with romantic utilitarianism. For once one sees no way of ranking human needs other than playing them off against one another, human happiness becomes all that matters... human perfection becomes a private concern, and our responsibility to others becomes a matter of permitting them as much space to pursue these private concerns – to worship their own gods, so to speak – as is compatible with granting an equal amount of space to all. The tradition of religious toleration is extended to moral toleration.'[545]

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[543] Ibid. p.114
[544] Ibid. p.115
[545] Rorty, Richard. "Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism" in *PCP*.p.30 – my emphasis

The privatization of religion within liberalism is extended to all substantive moral and political views. Thus, the consequence of the romantic aspect of pragmatism is not only a hermeneutics of reform as freedom, but a public-private divide; one that separates off non-public language from the sphere of liberalism. It is in this sense that Rorty can claim that, while his pragmatism may not necessitate democratic politics, democratic politics is inferentially connected to (and encourages) the pragmatic disposition. For him, one's devotion to democratic politics and its desire for agreement will not be sincere if one is a monist. The latter position will still be authoritarian in the sense that some external authority will condition the validity of human politics.[546] However, liberalism, as political anti-authoritarianism matches pragmatism's similar emphasis on the human community as the only authority in public life. The aforementioned ambiguity emerges in corresponding notion that the individual is the only authority in private life.

This ambiguity is between the two projects of the romantic aspect of pragmatism (rather than the utilitarian aspect which roughly conforms to the proceduralism address in the previous section): (private) self-creation and (public) hermeneutic reform. As both are based within our capacity for imaginative redescription, they are fed by a common source. Thus, the ambiguity here is regarding self-creation and its relevance to the public. While Rorty usually strictly separates self-creation off as private, he periodically conflates it with the hermeneutic task of politics. He seems to see some individual self-creation as public. This confusion within Rorty's romantic culture of liberalism further reveals the unintelligibility of the public-private divide. It also reveals that it functions to separate off non-liberal thinking from the public. In this role, it repeats the dynamic of the *veil*. It masks its exclusion of "non-public thought" through a hermeneutic of freedom claiming to open up critical reflection.

This circumscription of non-pragmatic critical thinking involves two related and interwoven movements in Rorty's redescription of politics: an ethicization of politics and a "making cultural" (or social) of the political. Both of these build on this individualist interpretation of plurality discussed earlier.[547] In "Ethics Without Principles" Rorty offered a pragmatic understanding of the scope of ethical thinking. While he generally denies the public relevance of private development[548], here, through an opposition to both the prudence-morality and reason-sentiment distinctions, he connects ethical development to the hermeneutic project. For him, both of these distinctions are based within a desire to

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[546] Ibid. pp.33-4 – see also; Rorty, Richard. "Afterward: Pragmatism, Pluralism and Postmodernism" in *PSH*, p.271

[547] Ibid. pp.270-1

[548] This argument were addressed above. See also; Rorty, *CIS*, Chs. 4 & 5.

ground moral and political obligation through some essential human core or element which we share with others. The former distinction, between morality and prudence, is a differentiation between unconditional or categorical obligations and conditional/hypothetical ones. He rejects it for the same reasons he rejects universalism and the quest for certainty and attempts to reconstruct it along pragmatic lines. The latter distinction, between reason and sentiment, is a differentiation between two forms of moral reasoning, one grounded in a universally available framework, and one that is not. For Rorty, both of these distinctions should be recast as distinctions of degree, rather than kind, and understood within a relational, social perspective. The result is that morality-prudence becomes the difference between established and controversial moral relationships and claims. The latter are those that are settled and "common-sense" within our communities. The former are novel claims which do not have that status. The result of this move is to understand moral and political progress in terms of a "progress of sentiments." This Humeanism[549] emphasizes that the only sources of moral and political obligation are 'tradition, habit and custom.'[550] Progress is the introduction of new claims that are eventually accepted. Sentiment is the means by which these new claims are acknowledged.

For Rorty, in contrast to earlier works denying its relevance[551], it is a misunderstanding of the self as non-relational that is the cause of these errors. For Rorty, the self, as in his naturalism in general (see Ch. 3), is constituted by its relations. It is in this sense that Rorty, throughout his philosophy, has referred to the self as a "network of beliefs and desires." Such a network is not coherent or centred by any one aspect of itself. Rather it is composed of the same multiplicity of competing drives as romantic plurality. Consequently, the self should be understood as an unharmonized entity, a dynamic process with no telos. For Rorty, this changes the nature of moral development and political action. 'Moral development in the individual, and moral progress in the human species as a whole, is a matter of re-making human selves so as to enlarge the variety of relationships which constitute those selves.'[552] Changing our obligations requires changing ourselves. Recalling the above discussion of the difference between humans and animals in romanticism, Rorty emphasizes that this difference, in this discussion, becomes one of flexibility. Humans are more flexible in the boundaries of the self and the quantity of

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[549] For an account of the role of Hume's work in Rorty's thought, see; Williams, Michael. "Rorty on Knowledge and Truth" in *Richard Rorty* (eds. Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. pp.69-75

[550] Rorty, Richard "Ethics without Principles" in *PSH*, p.76

[551] See especially, Rorty "The Priority of Democracy" op cit. p.178

[552] Rorty, "Ethics" op cit. p.79

relations that can go into our constitution. Importantly, this is a difference only of degree, not of kind. The resulting imperative is to widen that sensitivity and responsiveness to include more people and needs. For Rorty, we cannot ground obligation within a universal, however we, '*can* aim at ever more sensitivity to pain, and ever greater satisfaction of ever more various needs. Pragmatists think that the idea of something nonhuman luring us human beings on should be replaced with the idea of getting more and more human beings into our community – of taking the needs and interests and views of more and more diverse human beings into account.'[553] Moral progress is about widening sympathy. Importantly, for Rorty, this is a piecemeal and gradual process. Such a project requires rejecting metaphors of depth and height in favour of metaphors of breadth. The latter denotes the "thousand little commonalities" that could be used to stitch groups together into a wider community. The means to do this is once again imaginative redescription. It is the only means for this cultural aspect of the project of liberalism. In this manner, Rorty ethicizes politics. He understands the hermeneutic side of political progress solely as a process of ethically recreating ourselves to widen our range of sympathetic connections.

This ethicization leads to the priority of the cultural within Rorty. The political task of liberalism, which Rorty largely seems to restrict to the question of relations between various communities and his own Western liberal "we," is to spread our community.[554] Thus, the ultimate chapter of *CIS*, entitled "Solidarity," argues that expanding solidarity is the political task of post-metaphysical liberalism. Building on the priority of identity and community in his pragmatic framework, he emphasizes that this is a continual project of expansion; one that utilizes philosophy's ability to hermeneutically reweave our vocabularies to suit this purpose.[555] Fundamental to this process is the development of inclusive narratives which seek to include more groups. The apotheosis of this, and the only concrete narrative Rorty explores, is the myth of American democracy he focuses on in his later work.[556] The power of this narrative is its individualism. For Rorty, its inclusiveness (key to his post-metaphysical liberalism) is its ability to draw individuals from any vocabulary into its individualism. It levels and unifies. It creates one public speaking one language against the plural background of individuality. It thus satisfies both aspects of pragmatism: common intersubjective unity and individual plurality.[557] For

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[553] Ibid. p.82

[554] Rorty, Richard. "Justice as Larger Loyalty" in *PCP*, p.55

[555] Rorty, *CIS*, p.192-8

[556] Rorty, "Truth Without Correspondence to Reality" in *PSH*. – Rorty's use of his mythology will be discussed in Ch. 5.

[557] Rorty, Richard. *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies: A Conversation with Richard Rorty*. Chicago, US: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2002. pp.21-2

Rorty, creating such narratives is the public (and hermeneutic) role of philosophy. Philosophy does not ground or unmask, it re-imagines our communities and others in order to expand our liberal community. It extends the present.

In Rorty's romantic culture of liberalism, he attempts to provide space for novelty and change. Romanticism and hermeneutics are the necessary counterpart to the need for intersubjective agreement in procedural liberalism. Where the latter unifies through the epistemological and political dominance of the community and its common language, the former moves our communities forward. Through emphases on the necessary plurality (and incompatibility) of our individual and collective purposes and the imagination as a means for reimagining ourselves and others, Rorty theorizes how the community can progress within the structure of procedural liberalism. For Rorty, such meta-reflection about the languages we use and the purposes we have is the fullest sense of (pragmatic) freedom. However, an ambiguity emerges in Rorty's account of this culture; one that is indicative of a larger dynamic within his work. His emphasis on individual plurality and his admission that some forms of self-reflection are part of this hermeneutic project violates his public-private divide. It raises the question of why some imaginative redescriptions, some new conceptualizations of the world, are public and others are not. The only answer within Rorty's work repeats the mechanism revealed in the last section. For Rorty, a language is private when it differs too much from the dominant (liberal) language of the present. Thus, hermeneutic thought must be piecemeal. It must be close to the current public. It must still speak (mostly) within its terms.[558] Thus, in spite of his public-private divide, this ambiguity illustrates how the private does find a public role in Rorty's liberalism. However, it is a domesticated role; one made subject to the logic of the public (mastery) and its veiling (of hermeneutic freedom). Thus, the private too is colonized and subsumed under the logic of the public. This is a concealed dynamic within his thought, a veiled hegemony of the liberal logic. Beyond this mechanism, this self-reinforcing logic is only doubled in Rorty's focus on ethics and our collective disposition. This emphasis is Rorty's culturalism, his attempt to replace political with cultural change. It is only in the hermeneutic sphere where change occurs in his framework. Institutions and their procedural logic remain.

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[558] Rorty, "Pragmatism and Romanticism" op cit. p.107

CONCLUSION:

This chapter has critically investigated Rorty's liberalism and the manner in which he justifies it through an analysis of the connection between philosophy and politics. Rorty divorces the two. Through a reading of the philosophical tradition, he diagnoses a deep metaphysical trend to combine the public and private projects, one that he assumes fails. Further, through a methodological discussion, he distinguishes between two types of political enquiry: one, scientist and technical (stable); and the other, hermeneutic (developmental). Through these two divisions, the public-private divide and the division of the former into hermeneutic and procedural forms, he restricts critical philosophy from politics. This chapter has argued that this construction, and Rorty's liberalism in general, is the political formalization of his pragmatism as a social-practice oriented understanding of human culture. Essentially, that Rorty's understanding (and justification) of liberalism is the attempt to provide for a form of political organization that gives precedence to humanity and its external control of the world. The mastery of proceduralism is, for him, the only alternative to the metaphysics of the Kantian and radical forms of political thinking. Proceduralism, on this understanding, is superior because it is collective control without philosophical preconceptions (without a veil).

In contrast, this chapter has illustrated the manner in which this proceduralism limits thought. When the political is defined by the present public and restricted to the dominant mode of thinking through a rejection of abstract critique, the non-liberal comes to be defined as the non-public. Rorty's thought ends up privatizing theory that attempts to expose new, unseen dynamics. These are interpreted as private fantasies because they do not fit into the overall framework of the present public. He thus incapacitates his own model of enquiry that is supposed to allow for revolutionary (i.e. paradigm shifting) forms of thought. Instead, we can only get piecemeal changes. Rorty locks us in liberalism in these two movements. Politics must be firmly separated from both the quest for certainty and foundations (which is a defunct philosophic project) and from the new role he accords to philosophy. Thus, philosophy's only political role becomes cultural and linguistic. It is concerned solely with changing the language within which we understand ourselves, our identity and our purposes. In this, Rorty's thought has the implicit claim that we should match social criticism to the actual way in which change occurs. Change is limited, and so our social theory should be too. He repeats this circular argument in a critique of radical thought which assumes the neutrality of its own perspective in order sociologically circumvent the arguments of these thinkers and reduce their thought to a social pathology. For Rorty, the failure of this group only re-enforces the pragmatic limits he sets on

thinking. As a result, philosophy cannot engage in the critical analysis of politics. It can only participate in a society's conversation on the macro world-disclosing level. It cannot and should not be involved with actual political prescriptions or analysis. In this manner he prevents the wholesale critique of our political structures and institutions. The argument of the next chapter is that this mechanism repeats the *logic of the veil* described in earlier chapters. Rorty's proceduralization of politics veils his circumscription of thought. His justification of liberalism then becomes, in function, a form of conservatism for the liberal (modern) epoch. It serves as a political and intellectual method for preventing significant change. It is the self-reinforcing logic of *liberal mastery*.

Another sign of our times… is the new importance given to the single person.
Everything that tends to insulate the individual – to surround him with barriers
of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world is as his, and man shall
treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state – tends to true union
as well as greatness… The world is nothing, the man is all.[559]

The publicity of self-actualization promotes the removal of the one and the
other, it promotes existence in that immediacy which, in a repressive society, is
(to use another Hegelian term) bad immediacy (*schlechte Unmittelbarkeit*). It
isolates the individual from the one dimension where he could "find himself":
from his political existence, which is at the core of his entire existence. Instead,
it encourages non-conformity and letting-go in ways which leave the real
engines of repression in the society entirely intact, which even strengthen these
engines by substituting the satisfactions of private and personal rebellion for a
more than private and personal, and therefore more authentic, opposition.[560]

INTRODUCTION:

When the world is partitioned into public and private and the former is further
segregated into an established procedural logic for institutions and a restricted
hermeneutic of cultural development, there seems little left for political philosophy to
engage with. Instrumentalism has taken over questions of means and culturalism
questions of ends. This final chapter addresses the remaining task for philosophical
thinking in Rorty's work. It critically engages his theorization and concrete articulation of,
what he terms, *the politics of social hope*. As discussed in Ch. 4, Rorty circumscribes the
political role of philosophy to the role of participant in the cultural conversation of a
community. Philosophy can provide theorizations and justifications of developments after
they occur, but it cannot function as a critical arbiter on social and political changes. It can

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[559] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The American Scholar" in *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (ed.
William H. Gilman). New York, UK: New American Library, 1965. pp.239-40

[560] Marcuse, Herbert. "Repressive Tolerance" in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance.* Boston: MA, Beacon Hill Press,
1965. p.115

neither ground nor unmask. The question naturally follows, in what way can philosophy look forward? How can it be involved in actual social and political change? Rorty's answer is social hope. Philosophy can provide inspiring alternative visions of its community. It can re-describe these concrete alternatives in terms of their differences to the present. And it can hope that these visions convince the democratic public sphere of discussion. In this manner, philosophy can be utopian.

This thesis has not often emphasized the strong aspects of Rorty's work. His attempt to reorient politics away from eternal standards and towards a utopian politics of the future does provide political thought with an important base following the failure of philosophical foundations. However, this disposition is fundamentally limited by his rejection, and structural circumscription, of criticism of the present. Without such criticisms, how can a future be understood? Without explorations of what is wrong now, how are alternatives to be judged? This chapter will proceed by illustrating this politics of social hope and how Rorty roots it within the social practices of the community. If, as addressed throughout Chs.3 and 4, the practices of one's social and linguistic group set the pragmatic bounds of possibility, then only the imagination can carry human thinking forward in social changes. Further, as in Ch. 4, such changes, after metaphysics, can only be justified within a democratic framework where procedures are based only on persuasion. Such procedures are the political formalization of the pragmatic way in which justification actually occurs. The result of these points is that, for Rorty, the hoped-for future should serve as an ontological ground or hypergood for social change. Alternative visions offered on the democratic marketplace of ideas are the only basis for such change.

After illustrating the ontology of social hope in Rorty's work, this chapter will turn to the work of Herbert Marcuse in order to establish a critical framework that exposes the limits of the former's philosophy and politics. Marcuse continues the ontological critique of modernity and technology Heidegger began. However, unlike Heidegger, Marcuse focuses on a particular material situation: the advanced technological capitalism of the West. He identifies how a particular framing of the political field, one that matches Rorty's pragmatic restriction of politics, circumscribes political thought and prevents genuine criticism and alternatives. Marcuse's analysis of the universe of thought within liberal democracy and the manner in which a set of intellectual conditions are interrelated with and reinforce a particular disposition toward social criticism clarify the internal dynamics and consequences of Rorty's liberalism (introduced in Ch. 4). Further, this analysis extends the critical framework of mastery developed in Chs.2 and 3. There, Heidegger's (and Connolly's) mode of philosophical questioning revealed the possibility of a general critique

of an ontological framework and the identification of specific dynamics within that framework which limit our understanding of Being. Specifically, the assumptions that inform both that dynamic and the mechanism of veiling therein. For Marcuse, modern technological rationality veils its own partiality within a language of operationalism and behaviourism that claims to work within the actual possibilities of knowledge. Similarly, contemporary political discourse veils its circumscription of thought within a pragmatic language of problem-solving and a claim to non-ideological neutrality. In opposition, Marcuse argues for the necessity of critical, philosophical methods that exceed these limitations on thought and politics.

Applying this critical framework, this chapter offers a critical reading of Rorty's interpretation of the "New Left" and the radical political movements of the 1960s. For Rorty, this group represents a turn away from genuine Leftism and the accomplishments of the social democratic Left of the first half of the 20th century. He diagnoses several fallacies within that movement that follow on from his general critique of radical thinking (see Ch.4) and argues for the necessity of patriotism and positivity in an American politics of hope. In contrast, for Marcuse, this movement represented a new source of liberation in an increasingly effective, repressive political context. Rather than a futile rejection of effective reformism to a cultural politics of identity, the New Left is the negative manifestation of the forces of liberation within advanced technological capitalism. Further, these forces, irrespective of the success or failure of their campaigns, are uniquely illustrative of the limits, and the mechanisms by which they are maintained, of the liberal present. Through a comparison of these two accounts this section will illustrate that Rorty's politics of hope lacks any genuine transformative potential; that Rorty's circumscription of thought impoverishes his politics of hope. The result is that, functionally, his pragmatism and liberalism result in the very conservatism he opposes.

PRAGMATIC SOCIAL CHANGE: RORTY AND THE FUTURE OF HOPE

In a series of later writings, Rorty articulated a politics of social hope designed to develop the constructive role of his culture of liberalism (see Ch. 4). Such a politics is an attempt to provide for the possibility of collective political action in spite of the impossibility of grounding or unmasking in politics. It is meant to serve as an alternative "ground" for social change; one that inspires without falling into the fallacies of metaphysical politics. Instead of basing its alternative visions on immutable principles or disclosing analyses, it looks to *hope* for the motivation for social and political change. Undefined hope functions as a "hypergood" in this part of Rorty's philosophy. Importantly,

following his justification of liberalism, he both grounds this project within the languages and practices of the community and structures it within his account of pragmatic toleration. In this, he intends an inclusive political project of communal hope meant to provide the resources for an active reformism. The limits of this project will be addressed in subsequent sections.

The Social Foundation of Hope

Rorty's theory of social hope is rooted within his earlier examinations of the role of the community in shaping epistemic standards, and his theorization of a pragmatic form of liberal democracy as the formalization of the virtues of tolerance and diversity. As discussed in Ch. 1, Rorty argues that the language of a community sets the parameters of knowledge. Importantly, this is not a metaphysical argument about the nature of truth but a sociological point about the manner in which justification actually occurs. Similarly, the same constraints operate within politics which is not a process of grounding or disclosing, but one of reaching consensus within a community. For Rorty, our socially situated nature requires a pragmatic disposition. This entails embracing what he, drawing on Rawls, terms the principle of tolerance. Here, tolerance is "benignly neglecting" substantive notions of the good and philosophical issues when thinking politically. This position makes liberalism political (and pragmatic) rather than metaphysical. It is based solely within the traditions of a community rather than in a set of principles or a metaphysic. Those traditions set the limits of political thinking and action. As such, they are the necessary context of any constructive politics of hope. For Rorty, this is fundamentally liberating. By being rooted solely within the history of a community, politics is understood as freedom from external (non-human) standards. The consequence of this is Rorty's acknowledgement that any justification of political and social organization is contingent; it is restricted to a particular community at a particular time.[561] However, there is another result here. By resituating liberal tolerance as the disposition of a contingent community, Rorty places that community's ability to make positive moral and political statements in question. The basis of his response to this problem forms the logical frame for his politics of hope.

In "On Ethnocentrism: A Reply to Clifford Geertz," Rorty denies this risk arguing that his pragmatism is not a relativism. It does have the ability to make positive commitments. In this article, he discusses the problem of relativism in relation to ethnocentrism. While he never defines the latter term, it seems to denote the assumption that the values of one's community are superior to the alternatives. For him, this position is no longer acceptable

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[561] See Ch. 4

within liberalism. However, refusing such a claim risks descending into relativism. Thus, Rorty argues, contra Geertz and "wet liberals," for his own inelegantly named disposition of "anti-anti-ethnocentrism." This temperament is rooted in two aspects. First, he claims that bourgeois liberal culture is opposed to ethnocentrism. It is defined by its continuing project to widen its sympathies and "we," by its 'tolerance of diversity.'[562] This comprises its first "anti." The second represents its rejection of relativism. For Rorty, this problem is a product of the desire to philosophically ground our politics and practices. However, they need no such bases. They are justified (which as discussed in Ch.1 is different from founding) by being central to the community in question. The problems of relativism and ethnocentrism are the product of assuming a distinction between rational judgement and cultural bias. Liberal rationalists want to simultaneously rationally justify their beliefs and acknowledge their particularity. This bind, for Rorty, has led to what he calls a "psychological problem" in this group, as they are pulled between these two incompatible positions.[563]

The desire to distinguish between rational judgement and cultural bias is a product of the Enlightenment's attempt to justify liberal ideas and specify the transcultural limits to tolerance. Effectively, to know when tolerance is no longer due. For Rorty, those limits can only be decided pragmatically, 'case by case, by hunch or by conversational compromise, rather than by reference to stable criteria.'[564] Further, procedural logic is ideal for setting those limits outside of substantive values.

> One does not have to accept much else from Western culture to find the Western liberal ideal of procedural justice attractive. The advantage of postmodernist liberalism is that it recognizes that in recommending that ideal one is not recommending a philosophical outlook, a conception of human nature or of the meaning of life, to representatives of other cultures. All we should do is point out the practical advantages of liberal institutions in allowing individuals and cultures to get along together without intruding on each other's privacy, without meddling with each other's conception of the good.[565]

The pragmatic justification of the procedural logic is neutral. While Rorty never explicitly claims this, if proceduralism is capable of arbitrating between every other substantive viewpoint, it must hold some superiority or neutrality amongst them. Thus, in the very least, the pragmatic logic is exceptional. Further, it allows communities to make positive political decisions.

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[562] Rorty, Richard. "On Ethnocentrism: A Reply to Clifford Geertz" in *ORT*, p.204
[563] Ibid. p.207
[564] Ibid. p.208
[565] Ibid. p.209

In his later volume on social hope, Rorty develops this argument in order to pragmatically justify his ethnocentric liberalism.[566] He begins "Pragmatism, Pluralism and Postmodernism," with a historical argument about the development of philosophical thinking over the past century. Briefly, he argues that Darwin, utilitarianism and pragmatism have all contributed to the growing acceptance of philosophical pluralism in the West. 'I shall use the term "philosophical pluralism" to mean the doctrine that there is a potentially infinity of equally valuable ways to lead a human life, and that these ways cannot be ranked in terms of degrees of excellence, but only in terms of their contribution to the happiness of the persons who lead them and of the communities to which these persons belong.'[567] These various intellectual developments all contributed to a general shift from unity to plurality and the sense that, 'a perfected society would make possible ever-proliferating human diversity.'[568] For Rorty, the liberalism of J.S. Mill is designed specifically around this aim. He is quick to qualify that while pragmatism does not necessitate liberalism, liberalism does necessitate such pragmatic pluralism. He wants to understand this pragmatism only as the view of knowledge most compatible with the advocation of liberalism as the best sociopolitical alternative.[569] Political theory in general, Rorty emphasizes, should be understood in this sense; as suggestions for future action emerging out of historical experience. The advocacy of liberalism is not, contra post-colonial critics, susceptible to the charge of ethnocentrism. Rorty is not arguing that the West has a superior rationality. Rather, the claim for liberalism is only its experimental success. Criticism, for Rorty, must come by the way of concrete alternatives. A commitment to pluralism does not entail an inability to identify irrational positions. Rather, the concept can still be used to denote, 'a readiness to ignore the results of past experience, rather than to signify a departure from the commands of an ahistorical authority called Reason.'[570] Irrationality has a pragmatic sense. It refers to intellectual standpoints that do not give experience and experimental reasoning priority. It is in this sense that tolerance, for Rorty, is pragmatically justified. Historical experience teaches that it is significantly more successful at allowing different groups to live together. In light of such experience, it cannot be considered a relativistic position. 'The difference between

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[566] There is a striking continuity over fourteen years here in Rorty's work. Using recent publications by Geertz as platforms, he makes strikingly similar arguments around pluralism and procedural liberalism.
[567] Rorty, Richard. "Pragmatism, Pluralism and Postmodernism," *PSH*, p.268
[568] Ibid. p.270
[569] Ibid. p.272
[570] Ibid. p.275

pluralism and cultural relativism is the difference between pragmatically justified tolerance and mindless irresponsibility.'[571]

These two essays reveal how Rorty believes liberals can argue for the superiority of their institutions and values. Further, they also reveal the constraints within which any political change must occur. Consequently, they clarify the implicit framework of pragmatic neutrality within which Rorty's politics of social hope operates. To recapitulate, for him, politics is situated within the social practices and history of a community. This necessitates a liberal approach to political change because liberalism (as pragmatism) is a formalization of how social and political change actually occurs. In the articles discussed above, Rorty makes two arguments to this effect. First, he argues that the Western value of tolerance and the procedural institutions and logic meant to provide for it are pragmatically justified. Their validity is thus implicitly neutral. It exists between substantive cultures and modes of thinking. Second, the pragmatic logic of change, whereby concrete alternatives to the present are judged through the lens of history and experience, is the product of the development of a series of philosophical themes around pluralism and diversity throughout the 20th century. The self-acknowledged particularity of this logic to the West does not make it a relativism. Rather, it is the only manner of judging between social and political developments. Contra Rorty, I will argue that this implicit neutrality violates his commitment to anti-authoritarianism by marginalizing other critical frameworks and functionally constraining change. However, presently, it is necessary to shift to his actual articulation of social hope to understand how the priority of the social and the implicit claim to pragmatic neutrality affect Rorty's understanding of political change.

Philosophy and the Future: Ontological Foundations Re-emerge

The concept of *social hope* in Rorty's work is his explicit attempt to offer a progressive politics of change. For him, such an approach is necessitated by the contemporary situation. It is the only possible positive *and* post-metaphysical (pragmatic) method for political development. Building on the romantic culture of liberalism addressed in Ch.4, it focuses solely on shifting the community through narratives and a language of hope. The undefined and imaginative future can then function as a hypergood or ontological foundation for political action. In a sense, it can bridge the theory (or in this case, narrative)/action divide that is of fundamental concern to pragmatism. Further, without the ability to critique political reality, it remains Rorty's only positive move to affect the

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[571] Ibid. p.276

concrete realm of politics. However, as politics and justification for him are both rooted in the community and the previously discussed claim to pragmatic neutrality, this politics of social hope is limited by two constraints: the standards of the present community, which may exclude many forms of thought, and the necessity of dreaming concrete alternatives to the present which (as in Ch. 4) only build on and reform that present. Rorty's positive politics is ultimately compromised by an inability to critically engage the present. Consequently, his future hope lacks a present against which to attempt change. Without such a critical understanding, political action is both capricious and unmotivated.

The politics of social hope is Rorty's solution to a particular problem in contemporary Western politics; one which particularly afflicts the Left. Rorty's *Achieving Our Country* (hereafter: *AOC*), which will be addressed below, is his detailed diagnosis and response. This problem is the loss of political hope in contemporary Leftist politics. This lack of hope is caused by the perception of failure in the 20th century of the two main methods of achieving a classless, cosmopolitan society: revolution and reform. Importantly, it has had a distinct intellectual effect upon Leftist academics. For Rorty, 'The appropriate intellectual background to political deliberation is historical narrative rather than philosophical or quasi-philosophical theory.'[572] Such narratives provide an understanding of the past up to the present, a situation for politics to engage with or problems to solve. For Rorty, the most insightful political philosophy (his examples being Marx, Dewey and Rawls) is always parasitic on narratives of recent history. They designed their conceptual systems for critically engaging existing institutions with reference to a narrative of what has happened and where we might reasonably hope society will go in the future. In contrast, recent political thought, on his interpretation, is dominated by a turn away from such historical narratives toward theory and the philosophy of language. 'This seems to me the result of a loss of hope – or, more specifically, of an inability to construct a plausible narrative of progress. A turn away from narration and utopian dreams toward philosophy seems to me a gesture of despair.'[573] The intellectual turn to theory is a symptom of the loss of hope and its replacement with fear and resentment. Rorty's specific concern here is with the role of theory in political action. Theory should not dictate action. It should only aid in formulating redescriptions of social phenomena once one "already knows what one wants." Theory should not dictate or affect the direction of our politics. It should only help with a predefined path. It is a good servant but a bad master.

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[572] Rorty, Richard. "Globalization, the Politics of Identity and Social Hope" in *PSH*, p.231
[573] Ibid. p.232

The key problem here is the role of philosophy. Rather than constructing large theoretical frameworks that undermine social and political organization on the whole and offer some new defining principle,[574] Rorty emphasizes that philosophy's task is experimental. While he commented on this notion frequently, his most focused treatment of this humbled role is found in a later essay focused on the role of the "future" in his politics of social hope. While consistently elusive, this concept is fundamental to his alternative basis for political change. In "Philosophy and the Future,"[575] he argues that the future has replaced the eternal as the normative base of political thought. Philosophy began as an attempt to escape flux and access something permanent.[576] This replacement is one of the dominant trends of modern philosophy which, unlike previous forms, "takes time seriously." While Rorty fails to significantly clarify what this means, it seems to indicate a general acknowledgment of temporality and contingency. This dynamic has led philosophy to gradually replace the desire for knowledge of another world with hopes for the future of this world.[577] This shift has led to a new task for philosophy. The shift to the future compromises the priority of contemplation over action. The loss of the eternal does not entail the death of philosophy; rather, only the contemplative image. Philosophy must turn to the world instead of away from it. It must engage in the contextual and contingent present situation. Thus, its agenda must be set by the present, not by the eternal.[578]

The important issue when assessing Rorty's mandate that philosophy turn to the present is the manner in which he situates philosophical thinking in relation to that present. Philosophy *responds* to social and cultural changes. It addresses, 'the need to replace a human self-image which had been made obsolete by social and cultural change with a new self-image, a self-image better adapted to the results of those changes.'[579] For Rorty, such changes necessitate new descriptions and new languages within which to understand ourselves. In a telling line Rorty comments, 'Only a society without politics— that is to say, a society run by tyrants who prevent social and cultural change from occurring—would no longer require philosophers.'[580] Politics is social and cultural change

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[574] For his rejection of this aspect of Marxism, see; Rorty, Richard. "The End of Leninism, Havel and Social Hope" in *TP*, pp.228-47

[575] There is a lack of critical attention on this essay in examinations of Rorty's politics of social hope. While there is no non-speculative way to explain this, it seems linked to the tendency of Rorty's critics to avoid connecting his philosophy and politics. For an explanation of this trend, see the introduction to this thesis.

[576] Rorty is vague here about the details of these developments. However, he did address these themes in *PMN* and elsewhere,, see Ch.1.

[577] Rorty, Richard. "Philosophy and the Future" in *Rorty and Pragmatism: The Philosopher Responds to his Critics* (ed. Hermann J. Saatkamp). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995. p.197.

[578] Ibid. p.197-8

[579] Ibid. p.198

[580] Ibid. p.198

and philosophy is reinterpreting ourselves in light of those changes. Drawing on Dewey, Rorty emphasizes that this role is prompted by conflict between inherited institutions and contemporary tendencies. This Hegelian role for philosophy makes it a reaction, and hence parasitic on, contemporary developments. Rather than a vanguard, it should 'mediate between the past and the future.' Philosophy must, 'weave together old beliefs and new beliefs, so that these can cooperate rather than interfere with one another.'[581] This imperative particularizes philosophy. It deploys it against particular problems that arise in particular situations; specifically, in contexts where past understandings and the present situation are in conflict.

Importantly, there are several consequences of this understanding of philosophy's relation to social and political change. First, philosophy loses the avant-garde and becomes an under-labourer, 'clearing away the rubbish of the past in order to make room for the constructions of the future.'[582] However, Rorty does note, in addition to this, philosophy can also be prophetic. It can offer visions of the future. Despite the title of this essay, he is noticeable reticent about what this entails; what function the future and such visions have. Here, philosophy seems to be mostly reactive to what has already occurred while still also dreaming into the future. This ambiguity will be clarified subsequently. Presently, it is important to emphasize the other effects of this role for philosophy. For Rorty, it (which takes philosophy away from the eternal) invalidates the distinction between science and ideology.[583] Such a distinction, along with the distinction between *a posterori* and *a priori*, is an attempt to make philosophy autonomous; to accord it a distinct and clear area of culture within which it has a unique task. For Rorty, these distinctions assume for it a method or unique access it cannot justify.[584] They are symptoms of two temptations in philosophy that should be avoided: Analytic professionalism and non-Anglophone radicalism. The latter, which is our concern here, is based on the premises Rorty criticizes in his account of "radical thought" addressed in Ch. 4. Instead of repeating this, he argues that philosophy should be oriented towards a liberal and democratic cosmopolitanism. This utopian tradition, as discussed above, ignores cultural traditions in political decisions. Forming such a society for Rorty requires the "gradual and gentle and piecemeal" persuasion of other groups to similarly ignore the distinctions between them and others. Philosophers can provide the contingent and contextual languages to do this in each

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[581] Ibid. p.199

[582] Ibid. p.201

[583] See, especially. Rorty, Richard. "Feminism, Ideology and Deconstruction: A Pragmatist View" in *Mapping Ideology* (ed. Slavoj Žižek). London, UK: Verso, 1994.

[584] Here, Rorty repeats his critiques of Analytic epistemology and method primarily articulated in *PMN* and early essays. For accounts of these, see Ch. 1.

specific case. 'In a thoroughly temporalized intellectual world, one in which hopes for certainty and changelessness have disappeared altogether, we philosophers would define ourselves as servants of that sort of freedom, as servants of democracy.'[585] The philosophy of the future is still pragmatic. It is a piecemeal project of the expansion of pragmatic democracy. The question now is what is at the basis of this conception. Why be pragmatic and future-oriented?

In a review symposium on Charles's Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, Rorty argues for a central political role for his notion of social hope. In that book Taylor both identifies a tension within modernity between moral universalism and romance, specifically between the social demands of equality within the former and the desire to differentiate oneself in the latter, and argues that this tension indicates the insufficiency of moral motivation in modernity and its eschewal of substantive goods. Responding to these claims, Rorty argues that Taylor fails to see a possible reconciliation between these two aspects; one that addresses the problem of motivation and grounding. He fails to see the possibility of a non-reductive naturalism and a socially oriented liberalism. For Rorty, this reconciliation (achieved in pragmatic liberalism) can provide the political grounding (or "hypergood") Taylor desires.

> 'This is to say that human beings are, indeed, self-interpreting beings, and consequently not Cartesianly apparent, while insisting that their self-interpretations are at their best when they are social... Why should not the social creative imagination be a hypergood? ... [Why cannot] The Glorious Social Future, the one in which the procedural morality of the Enlightenment has made possible the spiritual flourishing of everyone rather than just the happy few, do the work that God, or some other version of The Objectively Existent Good, used to do?[586]'

In spite of the tensions Taylor identifies in modernity, politics can be grounded in our capacity to hope and imagine. For Rorty, centring our politics on our ability to imagine visions of our society different and better than the present reconciles moral universalism and romantic differentiation. It allows us to dream a collective and glorious social future which acts as a normative and critical standard against the present.[587] Further, it resolves the motivational deficit within Modernity and liberalism and the eschewal of substantive goods that Rorty supports. It is important to note that, for him, pragmatic proceduralism is the frame and condition of possibility of imagining that glorious social future. Rorty's

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[585] Rorty, "Philosophy and the Future" p.205

[586] Rorty, Richard. "Taylor on Self-Celebration and Gratitude" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 54 (1), 1994. p.199 – For an account of this argument, see; White, Stephen K. *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2000). pp.65-7

[587] For Rorty, Truth should be replaced by the future as the standard against which we judge the present.

reconciliation takes the shape of a pragmatic procedural universalism providing for the possibility of romantic and creative individual expression.[588]

The strength of Rorty's account here is the novelty of its response to a genuine philosophical problem. Given the lack of foundations for political thought, how do we justify social criticism and political change? Rorty identifies within the philosophical tradition a shift from knowledge to hope; from an analysis of what must be to what could be. The weakness is in the results. As illustrated below, Rorty formalizes the existing liberal method of change. Further, rather than providing for free development, this mode of thought circumscribes thinking to its own categories and the limited world they reveal. Marcuse provides the theoretical framework to expose this. Rorty's concrete reading of the New Left and consequent reformist politics illustrates this circumscription.

The Universe of Thought: Marcuse and the Circumscription of Thinking

In what way might Rorty's philosophy and politics constrain thought? How does the relation he draws between the two prevent genuine critical thinking in either? Up to this point, the Heideggerian critique of Modernity and technology as mastery has offered the resources for immanent critiques of Rorty's pragmatism and liberalism. Within the former, a hidden dynamic of mastery has been identified. In the latter, a series of distinctions and exclusions have been revealed. However, such criticisms have not connected in detail, other than suggestively, the exclusions in Rorty's philosophy and those in his politics. In order to expose these connections, which as aforementioned contradict Rorty's own account of the relation between his pragmatism and liberalism,[589] this thesis will now turn to the work of Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse provides a unique opportunity to critically assess Rorty's liberalism. While illustrating the former's critical framework, this section will highlight how it exposes the connections between Rorty's mastery and its limitation of thought, and his liberalism and its limitation of critical political thinking. While Marcuse's work has suffered from both a harsh critical reception and eventual dismissal,[590] I argue that its value is in its extension of the Heideggerian critique of technology (and modernity) as mastery by identifying how the mechanism of veiling functions within the intellectual, social and political practices of advanced technological society. In revealing these procedures, he provides a (implicit) holistic criticism of Rorty's philosophy and politics

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[588] Rorty, "On Ethnocentrism" op cit. p.206-7

[589] See Ch.2 and; Rorty, Richard. "Response to Ernesto Laclau" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (ed. Chantal Mouffe). London, UK: Routledge, 1996. p.73

[590] My use of Marcuse's work will be clarified below. This section is not a wholesale endorsement of his theory, but a qualified usage of a dynamic within his work.

and its circumscription of thought. Further, Marcuse's critical framework takes precisely the perspective that Rorty rejects. Thus, the former's work becomes both an ideal critical voice on Rorty's philosophy and a contradiction of Rorty's critique of radical thought[591]. Through an ontological critique of mastery Marcuse illustrates how a set of intellectual and material conditions can serve to constrain political thinking and action. This section identifies the intellectual conditions he outlines and how they are connected to both Rorty's liberalism and his politics of future hope.

Reading Marcuse: Heidegger and The Question of Essence

While there may be several elements to focus on in any reading of Marcuse, including: Hegel, Marx, Freud, and Critical Theory,[592] this thesis will only focus on the Heideggerian dimension to his theory. Correspondingly, while Marcuse's work can by no means be reduced to the ontological (having complex empirical, material and psychoanalytic elements), that aspect will also be emphasized here. This section will argue that there is a lasting connection between Heidegger and Marcuse's philosophies. Specifically, that beyond the usual connection made between the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and Marcuse's early attempt at a phenomenological Marxism, there is a common philosophical analysis between Heidegger's critique of modernity as technological enframing and Marcuse's critique of advanced technological society.[593] They both reveal an ontological circumscription of thought in technology and a corresponding mechanism of veiling that obscures the partiality of the technological perspective. Marcuse, importantly, extends this analysis to a concrete critique of how this veiling prevents critical political thinking.

There is a tendency among commentators on Marcuse to situate his work entirely in its social-historical context. Beginning his academic career in inter-war Germany during epistemological crises in both Marxist theory and German philosophy[594] and an unstable political and economic climate, his work is often interpreted as reflective of these pressures.[595] Specifically, it is understood as an attempt to epistemologically justify Marx's

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[591] This critique is fundamental to his limitation of critical thinking in liberalism. See Ch.4,

[592] The range of Marcuse's work is a significant obstacle to understanding his thought as a whole. See; "Introduction" in *Marcuse, Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* (eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles Webel). London, UK: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1988. p.xi

[593] While some of Marcuse's early work is discussed to frame his relation to Heidegger, this chapter focuses on *One-Dimensional Man*, *The Essay on Liberation* and "Repressive Tolerance". These works only span five out of Marcuse's forty-year career. Thus, should not be interpreted as representing his whole thought.

[594] For an account of these crises and Marcuse, see; Wolin, Richard and John Abromeit. "Introduction: What is Heideggerian Marxism?" in *Heideggerian Marxism* (eds. Richard Wolin and John Abromeit). London, UK: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

[595] See Douglas Kellner's *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*. London, UK: Macmillan, 1984. Kellner argues for reading Marcuse's work as a response to the crisis within. For a condensed version, see; Kellner, Douglas. "Herbert Marcuse's Reconstruction of Marxism" in *Marcuse, Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*

analyses of the dynamics of capitalism by connecting it to the phenomenological ontology of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. In this project, Marcuse attempted to link Marxism (specifically *The 1844 Manuscripts*[596]) to Heidegger, through their mutual emphasis on historicity, in a common critique of objectification (or reification in Marxist terms). Most of these analyses conclude that the Marxist side of Marcuse's work was the dominant intellectual base of his philosophy.[597] Further, they conclude that Marcuse correctly saw the failures of this project, especially after Heidegger's turn to National Socialism (another historical explanation), and turned instead to Hegel.[598]

This approach is explained by the legacy of Marcuse in subsequent philosophical debates. To be blunt, there is a common perception that his philosophy has not aged well; that it has fallen below the level of current philosophical debate.[599] Ironically, this dismissal is similar to criticisms Rorty has received. Marcuse is criticized from 'the right as a wholly negative or destructive critic, merely tearing down the achievements of modern culture, technology and economy, *and* by critics from the left as so full of positive promises of happiness as to be characterizable as "utopian," nonprogrammatic, even romantic.'[600] Rejected by both, his work has fallen between the dominant schools of thought; specifically, critical theory and post-structuralism. In the former, there was a turn away from the critique of modern rationality (epitomized by Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse) and towards a reformulation of that rationality under Habermas.[601] Marcuse never reversed his critique of pragmatism while Habermas drew on that movement in both his dialogical conception of reason and his justification of democracy. Regarding the latter, post-structuralism, the key difference is the linguistic turn. Marcuse consistently maintained a materialist understanding of subjectivity and never turned to language as a

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(eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles Webel). London, UK: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1988. For another of this type of reading, see; Wolin, Richard. *Heidegger's Children*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001. Ch.6.

[596] György Lukács' attempt to revitalize the Marxist tradition was also fundamental to this project. See his, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (trans. Rodney Livingstone). London, UK: Merlin Press, 1971. For an account of Lukács and Marcuse's, see; Feenberg, Andrew. *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*. Oxon, OX: Routledge, 2005. Ch.4. See also; Goldmann, Lucien. *Lukács and Heidegger: Towards a New Philosophy* (trans. William Q. Boelhower). London, UK: Routledge, 1977.

[597] Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, op cit. p.135

[598] Abromeit, John. "Herbert Marcuse's Critical Encounter with Martin Heidegger" in *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader* (ed. John Abromeit and W. Mark Cobb). London, UK: Routledge, 2004. See also; Marcuse, Herbert. "Heidgger's Politics: An Inteview" in *Heideggerian Marxism*, op cit. pp.165-6

[599] Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, op cit. p.132

[600] Pippin, Robert Andrew Feenberg, Charles Webel. "Introduction" in Marcuse, *Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, op cit. p.xiii

[601] Key to this Habermas' "Technology and Science as "Ideology" in *Toward a Rational* Society (trans. J.J. Shapiro). Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1970. See also; Gandesha, S. "Marcuse, Habermas and the Critique of Technology" " in *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, op cit. For a general account of the Habermasian turn in Critical Theory, see; Kompridis, Nikolas. *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory Between Past and Future*. London, UK: MIT Press, 2006. Ch.1

basis for philosophy. Further, connected to this project, he continued his attempt to rethink Marxism in light of the changing conditions of the 20th century while post-structuralism generally turned away from social theory and emancipatory politics.[602]

The result of this situation is a lack of attention to Marcuse's work outside of understanding it as a reflection of his various social-political contexts. While this historical approach has validity, clarifying Marcuse's questions, it remains descriptive and uncritical. It contradicts his imperatives and philosophical method to focus on the current material context and dialectically update our concepts as the changing circumstances require. Instead, this chapter approaches his work philosophically. It examines it in terms of its relevance to contemporary philosophical questions (particularly as they relate to Rorty) and its use therein. In both this approach and the emphasis on the ontological dimension of Marcuse's thought, the work of Andrew Feenberg is significant. Feenberg attempts to formulate a critical theory capable of responding to what, for him, is the fundamental problem of contemporary democracy, 'the survival of agency in this increasingly technocratic universe.'[603] In order to achieve this, he develops the critiques of technology initiated by Heidegger and others (primarily: Marcuse and Foucault[604]) in order to democratize technology. With this aim, in *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*,[605] he establishes the fundamental philosophical connections between these two figures.

Against convention, Feenberg argues for deep philosophical connections between Heidegger and Marcuse beyond the latter's early attempt to formulate a Heideggerian Marxism.[606] He argues that, in spite of his self-declared rejection of Heidegger, Marcuse continues to address questions drawn from the former's ontological problematic. It is these basic questions that structure both of their projects and create the potential for a critical stance on the present. I argue here, extending an analysis Feenberg begins, that it is in this sense that Marcuse continues the analysis of technology and modernity as veiling addressed in Heidegger's work (see Chs.2 and 3). Marcuse reveals how the contemporary universe of thought circumscribes critical perspectives on itself while obscuring this very

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[602] Abromeit, John and W. Mark Cobb. "Introduction" in *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, (ed. John Abromeit and W. Mark Cobb) London, UK: Routledge, 2004. pp.15-6

[603] Feenberg, Andrew. *Questioning Technology*. London, UK: Routledge, 1999. p.101

[604] This may raises questions as to why Marcuse, whose work is problematic at times, has been employed in this context instead of Foucault. While this issue is addressed below, I will say that Marcuse's analysis has been chosen because of the specific dynamic of veiling that he develops from Heidegger and its relevance to a critique of Rorty.

[605] See also Feenberg's; "Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History" in *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, op cit. And; "The Bias of Technology" in *Marcuse, Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* op cit.

[606] An exhaustive account of these early essays is beyond the scope of this section. For an introduction and collection of these works, see; Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism* op cit.

process through a particular revealing of social being. In order to illustrate this, it is necessary to both follow some of Feenberg's argument and move well beyond the, admittedly problematic, relationship he establishes between these two thinkers.[607]

For Feenberg, in spite of Marcuse's break with Heidegger,[608] they share a project to recover the notion of *techné* for the modern world; they have a utopian demand, in light of similar critiques of technology, to redeem modern technology through recovering something from the ancient understanding of production. Neither desires a simple return to the Greek model, rather, only the incorporation of something lost to overcome the domination inherent within the modern technological horizon. To this end, Feenberg gives a reading of the basic question of Greek philosophy. The Greeks posed the question of being from the perspective that humans are primarily labouring beings engaged in transforming their environment. This assumption structures the entire history of Western philosophy and its core distinctions. First, there is the distinction between nature (*physis*) and practical activity (*poiésis*). The former is that which creates itself while the latter covers all things that are the product of human activity. *Techné* refers to the knowledge that governs a particular form of *poiésis* (e.g. medicine is a *techné* aimed at the human practice, *poiésis*, of healing the sick). Importantly, for the Greeks, *techné* is objective. It is the correct way to achieve the end it is put to (*poiésis*). Second, there is the distinction between essence and existence. The latter refers to whether a thing is or not. The former refers to what the thing is. The problem, especially in the modern conception that Heidegger and Marcuse criticize and Rorty lauds, arises in the relation between these two distinctions; specifically, in the concept of *techné*. As aforementioned, *techné* has an objective sense. Each *techné* contains the essence of the thing to be created which is independent of its actual existence. This essence already contains a purpose. Thus, when humans create, they act according to a plan and for a purpose which is independent of them. However, for the Greeks, this dynamic of essence and existence also occurs in nature. *Physis* contains essential forms which are independent of and determine existence. In this manner, Greek thought understood both *physis* and *poiésis* (i.e. all being) according to this dynamic between essence and existence in *techné*.[609]

The obvious problems with understanding nature in terms of essence and existence led to the Modern rejection of this distinction. Modernity, represented by Descartes and Bacon for Feenberg, correctly criticizes the Greeks for treating their own social

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[607] Feenberg is aware that in bringing them together, he does violence to each of these thinkers. See; "Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History," op cit. p.70

[608] See, Wolin and Abromeit. "Introduction: What is Heideggerian Marxism?" op cit. p.xxvi

[609] Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, op cit. pp.6-7

conventions as essences (i.e. for treating their particular understandings of the purpose of human and natural creations as immutable). However, like Rorty, they move from this to a rejection of the language of essence in general. They are not concerned with *what* something is but *how* it works. Importantly, there is still continuity in this shift. Modernity, like Greek philosophy, understands being in terms of technology (production). The latter has just shifted.[610] Modernity is defined by the rejection of the essence-existence distinction. This culminates in the anti-essentialism that has been discussed throughout this thesis in both Rorty's philosophy and politics.

The rejection of essence leads to the assumption of the neutrality, or lack of values, within modern technology. Modern technology does not realize objective essences within nature; it is merely instrumental. As a means toward purely subjective ends, it is mechanistic rather than teleological. This view alters the understanding of reason. Reason is only about means, not ends. It is not about discovering something's intrinsic purpose, but controlling it for human purposes. Similarly, in Rorty's anti-authoritarian pragmatism, we are only subject to human ends. Rationality can only have a procedural sense. After philosophical foundations, 'we shall identify the rational with the procedures.'[611] For Modernity in general, means and ends are radically separated. The neutrality of technology with respect to ends implies that it is also neutral in terms of culture. In serving whatever ends it may be applied to, technology is the most effective means irrespective of one's other substantive values.[612] It is thus universal in the same manner Rorty argues liberal institutions are. It is the source of the hidden claim to pragmatic (philosophical) and liberal (political) neutrality revealed in Ch.4.

Heidegger and Marcuse's critiques of modern technological civilization are prompted by this claim to neutrality. While they agree that the Greek understanding of essential forms within nature was deeply problematic, they dispute the value-neutrality of technology. Further, they both reveal an obscured dynamic of veiling within this claim: Heidegger in the basic ontological determination of the modern West, and Marcuse within the circumscribed universe of thought in advanced liberalism.

As discussed in Chs.2 and 3, Heidegger critiques the circumscription of thinking in modernity. This account, which revealed the modern determination of Being in terms of a *standing-reserve* and the modern disposition as a *challenging-forth*, identified the central mechanism of technology, veiling. Enframing (the ontological determination of modernity as technology) obscures its own partiality. It veils the veil in a claim to instrumental

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[610] Ibid. p.12

[611] Rorty, Richard. "Habermas, Derrida, and the Functions of Philosophy" in *TP*, p.309

[612] Feenberg, "The Bias of Technology", op cit. p.229

neutrality.[613] For Feenberg, this analysis presumes the aforementioned distinction between Greek *techné* and modern technology. Heidegger's critique of technology rethinks the Greek conception of essence. The Greeks understood essence as what endures through change. Instead, Heidegger thinks essence as revealing. Revealing, which grants an entire world to humanity, is the ultimate essence from which we can think a particular determination of Being (in this case, Modernity). This is the distinctness of the ontological perspective. It creates the capacity to view the bounds and presumptions of our own thinking. It allows us to see that we always know things *as* something because of a prior revealing; that before knowledge, even social and contingent knowledge, there is limitation in a revealing.[614] Rorty emphasizes similar limitations in the contingency of language and the priority of the social. However, he falls into the modern determination by focusing solely on the human relation and its role in the production of knowledge. He does not see how a set of presumptions always limit any ontological determination, even one premised on the finitude, contingency, and socially situated nature of humanity. Feenberg offers an insightful reconstruction of Heidegger's argument, one that exceeds its source, which clarifies this issue. In his interpretation, for Heidegger, the Greeks correctly identified the importance of being as the source of meaning. The moderns ignored this but correctly saw the importance of the human being in its essential activity. Neither saw both.[615] Heidegger seeks to correct this by developing a perspective, necessarily outside the language of the present, that reveals Being. It reveals the inevitability of an essential dimension and the necessary shifting ground of essence.

It is in this sense that Heidegger reaffirms a distinction between the "True" and the "correct."[616] As discussed in Ch. 3, Truth for Heidegger is the recognition of revealing as the essential dimension. The ontological perspective asks the question of Being (essence). The essential is the aspect of a thing that covers its relation to Being in general. Thus, to question something, or Being in general, is to question it apart from its mode of revealing within a specific determination of Being (e.g. the natural, common-sense, or anthropological attitudes).[617] Thus, the distinction between true and correct is not about factuality. It is the difference between two manners of revealing. The ontological perspective is aimed at truth. Truth is the revealing of revealing, it does not lift the veil but

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[613] Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (trans. William Lovitt). London, UK: Garland Publishing Inc, 1977. p.25

[614] Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, op cit. p.37

[615] Ibid. p.44

[616] This distinction is similar to the distinction between Being and beings for Heidegger. It is the forgetting of this distinction in philosophy that is the central object of Heidegger's critique of that entire tradition. See; Pattinson, George. *The Later Heidegger*. London, UK: Routledge, 2000. pp.35-6

[617] De Beistegui, Miguel *Heidegger and the Political*. London, UK: Routledge, 1998. pp.9, 37

only reveals its operation. Thus, truth, contra Rorty, is not about correspondence. Truth is the inevitability of determination. It is freeing awareness of the limitation of present thinking, 'seeing the veil as what veils.'[618] This perspective's relevance to politics is specific. Neither Heidegger nor Marcuse suggested that all political thinking must be ontological. Rather, the claim is merely that it is a necessary dimension of critical political thought. Marcuse, notably, blends several other critical frameworks with it. Thus, neither of these thinkers entirely rejects the correct, instrumental thinking of modernity. Its weakness is that it is entirely internal to modernity. It is limited by that intellectual horizon and does not, like Heidegger's ontological account, gesture beyond that framework. In this sense, the instrumental account is uncritical. It does not attempt to exceed the terms of the determination in which it occurs.[619] While Rorty seems to acknowledge this need in his understanding of vocabularies, he does not provide for its realization. In rejecting the concept of truth and the appearance-reality distinction, he obscures the veil and compromises critical thought.

When thought is oriented to Truth, it can critically gesture beyond the current, historical determination. Further, a mere consciousness of essence is not sufficient. Unlike modernity, the Greeks had an understanding of essence. However, they did not question the essences they attributed to things; their revealing and its limitations. As Feenberg notes, 'That question, the question of being, can only occur where the very concept of essence is in question.'[620] Modernity did overcome the Greeks and their lack of an understanding of the human involvement in revealing. However, it does this by entirely rejecting the question of being and essence and assuming the total determination of the "is" by human thought. Heidegger reveals that the modern rejection of the distinction between essence and existence (true and correct) constitutes its veil. This mechanism is its veiling of the critical (ontological) dimension of thought. Marcuse extends this by illustrating how the distinction between true essence and merely correct, or reality and appearance, provides the philosophical resources for radical political criticism at its widest. Unlike Marcuse, Heidegger never gives the concept of essence truly critical, political force.[621] Freedom for him is only seeing the veil as what veils. For Marcuse, it is thinking a politics beyond that veil. Thus, to reveal the limitations of Rorty's liberalism, it is necessary to turn to Marcuse's work and his critique of the universe of liberal thought.

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[618] As discussed in Ch.3, the ontological perspective's revelation of the present is fundamentally freeing for Heidegger. As discussed below, Marcuse too construes freedom in this critical, ontological manner.

[619] Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse,* 2005. p.25

[620] Ibid. p.39

[621] Ibid. p.17

From Heidegger to Marcuse: Politicizing Essence

By establishing ontological questioning on a distinction between reality and appearance (essence and existence), Heidegger initiates a critical intellectual framework. By identifying the lack of this distinction in modernity, he reveals the mechanism of the veil and the manner in which mastery occurs in modernity. Marcuse extends this analysis in the critique of advanced technological society. He identifies the common assumptions of mastery in both the intellectual framework and the socio-political structures of modern liberalism.[622] Further, he reveals the contemporary universe of thought and how the modern mechanism of veiling limits forms of thinking that transcend that universe. In *One-Dimensional Man* (hereafter: *ODM*) and other works, he illustrates this liberal universe of thought and the manner in which it excludes non-liberal forms of thinking. This section will illustrate this analysis in relation to the Heideggerian problematic of modernity as technology and the mechanism of veiling discussed above. This will establish a framework within which to understand the limitations of Rorty's philosophy and politics. Marcuse illustrates how real political change requires the conditions for transcending the current universe of thinking. Further, he reveals how Rorty's pragmatic limitation of politics gelds critical thought and prevents substantial change.

Before addressing this analysis in detail, it is necessary to illustrate the connection between Heidegger and Marcuse's critiques of technology.[623] For Feenberg, Marcuse, like Heidegger, is responding to the claim for the neutrality of technology in modernity. This is the understanding that technology is neutral with respect to both ends and its context (i.e. its cultural-historical-political environment).[624] Instead, both claim: first, that technology contains hidden values and assumptions; second, that it offers a circumscribed revelation of existence; and finally, the claim to neutrality therein is particular to modernity. However, Marcuse goes well beyond Heidegger. For him, the problem with the claim to the neutrality of technology is not only that it is a particular determination of reality that veils the nature of being as concealment/unconcealment. It has more concrete socio-political effects. In both its intellectual and material aspects, technology and the claim to neutrality tend toward domination. As discussed above and in Ch. 3, Heidegger does argue that in

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[622] Two caveats are necessary. First, due to the need for brevity, only the former of these two will be focused upon. Nonetheless, it should be understood that Marcuse's critique has material, as well as psychological, dimensions. For accounts of these, see: Schmidt, Alfred. "Existential Ontology and Historical Materialism in the Work of Herbert Marcuse" and Hyman, Edward J. "Eros and Freedom: The Critical Psychology of Herbert Marcuse" in *Marcuse, Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* (eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles Webel). London, UK: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1988. Second, Marcuse's analysis of advanced technological society is not confined to liberalism. He identifies the same mechanisms in Soviet communism. However, the focus here is on the former as this is s applicable to Rorty.

[623] While many have taken this for granted, few critics have explored these connections in any depth.

[624] Feenberg, "The Bias of Technology", op cit. pp.229-30

technology all of being, including humanity, is drawn into *standing-reserve*; that all things become a means. However, his concern is solely ontological. It is with the forgetting of being, an inauthentic existence. This is another form of the separation of philosophy and politics. While acknowledging they are interwoven, Heidegger separates the two in making politics subordinate to philosophy. Rorty merely reverses this in the priority of democracy to philosophy. Comparatively, Marcuse understands the interrelation of the political and the philosophical. For him, modern technological liberalism is characterized by a simultaneous intellectual and political circumscription of critical thought.

It is important to emphasize Heidegger's contribution to Marcuse's analysis. These two thinkers share a common understanding of the contrast between Greek and modern technology and common critique of the latter's lack of a notion of essence. In fact, the specifically Heideggerian aspect of Marcuse's work is his notion of the two dimensions of society which politicizes the ontological difference between essence and existence. However, while the concept of essence for Heidegger is about ontological revealing, in Marcuse it is about the capacity for critical truth in general. It gains a normative dimension. What is lost in modernity for Marcuse is the difference between two dimensions of being, the ideal and the real. This is, 'the notion that what is is fraught with tension between its empirical reality and it potentialities.'[625] This is the basic ontological point that within the present, there is direction, tendencies and limitation. Like Rorty, modernity rejects this idea of tension and the language of essence and potentiality. It aims only at quantifying, classifying, and controlling. For it, there is no tension between true and false being and thus no difference between a preference and a potentiality inherent to the thing. The empirically observed thing becomes the extent of the real. This limitation is why technology is neutral. In the perspective of bare empirical reality, technology can be put to any ends. The telos of ancient technology is replaced with subjective choice. Essential potentialities and subjective choice are collapsed in modernity.[626] In its anti-essentialism, modernity limits the range of questioning and thought.

Despite the strengths of Feenberg's work, there is a lacking in his connection of Marcuse and Heidegger.[627] For him, the former exceeds the latter's contribution in the

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[625] Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, op cit. pp.86-7

[626] Rorty goes further in this limitation by making all access to that real entirely social and linguistic. He exacerbates this tendency within modernity.

[627] Feenberg's work is not without its own critics. While his project of rethinking the conditions of modern technology has met with enthusiasm, his attempt to read Heidegger and Marcuse together has been received more harshly. Iain Thompson accuses him of misreading Heidegger's project in criticizing the latter for technological essentialism. In a very perceptive review essay, Ian Angus argues that Feenberg's attempt to reconcile the Heideggerian and Marxist projects of Marcuse's work through recourse to a Hegelian notion of revolutionary reversal ultimately fails. For him, in spite of the persistence of phenomenological themes within Marcuse's work, these two projects cannot stand together. See: Thomson, Iain. "From the Question Concerning

theorization of a utopian alternative to modern technological society.[628] While he is correct, Marcuse develops this much further, Feenberg fails to explore how Marcuse's analysis of technology and its dynamic of veiling exceed *and* extend Heidegger's account. He ignores how Marcuse's analysis of advanced technological liberalism reveals that frame's restricted political thinking.[629] Marcuse politicizes Heidegger's identification of the mechanism of veiling. This addition is partially explained by the former's context. As a member of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory Marcuse was concerned with the failure of 20th century Leftist movements. In his words, this school confronted the following question. 'What, however, if the development outlined by that theory [Marxism] does not occur? What if the forces that were to bring about the transformation are suppressed and appear to be defeated?'[630] This is the problem of Critical Theory. Its resulting task is to make social relations appear in a new light; to expose new aspects of its critical object. While Marcuse's focus and sources shifted throughout his career, this question and task are the unity of his work.[631] However, whatever the cause, the result is that his thought consistently focuses on the material, political situation. As Habermas observed, the essential difference between Heidegger and Marcuse is that while Heidegger remains on the level of ontological abstraction, concerned mainly with the revelation of being, Marcuse links ontological structures to concrete processes.[632] With this turn, he develops the normative centre of freedom around which the critique of technology is premised. He offers a detailed description of how an ontological mechanism of veiling circumscribes our universe of thought and action in contemporary liberalism; how the manner in which we

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Technology to the Quest for a Democratic Technology: Heidegger, Marcuse, Feenberg" in *Inquiry*, 43, 2000. And; Angus, Ian. "Walking on Two Legs: On the Very Possibility of a Heideggerian Marxism" in *Human Studies*, 28 (3), 2005. It is important to note that my own use of Marcuse and connection of him to Heidegger is unaffected by this criticism. The present chapter does not utilize Marcuse's re-grounding of the (Marxist) emancipatory project within a logic of negation. Rather, it only illustrates how his critical perspective reveals the limitations and the internal mechanism of veiling within Rorty's thinking.

[628] This alternative and the problematic manner in which Marcuse identifies the conditions for its realization are not the focus here. While some of this material will be briefly addressed below, Marcuse's work is utilized here for his critical ontological analysis of the circumscription of thinking with contemporary liberalism. While these two aspects cannot be absolutely divorced, it is the premise of this chapter that they can be dissociated for the purposes of this argument.

[629] In spite of Feenberg's rigorous examination of the relationship between Heidegger and Marcuse, he never exposes the political implications of "The Question Concerning Technology," nor the explicit dynamic of veiling, identified in Chs.2&3 and elaborated on here. He hints at the importance of essence in both but fails to draw out the consequences.

[630] Marcuse, Herbert. "Philosophy and Critical Theory" in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*. London, UK: Mayfly Books, 2009. p.142 .

[631] Pippin et al. "Introduction" in *Marcuse, Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, op cit. pp.xi-xii

[632] Habermas, Jürgen. "Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity" in *Marcuse, Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* op cit. p.7 – This argument is particularly illustrated by both Marcuse's early essays republished in the *Heideggerian Marxism* volume and the introduction to *One-Dimensional Man* where he indicates the empirical studies central to his ideas. See especially: Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man*. London, UK: Sphere Books Ltd, 1968. p.14 – (hereafter: *ODM*); Marcuse, Herbert. "On Concrete Philosophy" in *Heideggerian Marxism* op cit.

conceive politics is determined by a prior structuring of thinking in general. This occurs through several procedures: the loss of the distinction between appearance (given) and reality (possible), the dominance of a "total empiricism" and the generalization and homogenization of science, and the unification of opposites. These mechanisms, which are discussed below, result in the circumscription of the intellectual universe to the liberal present.

Marcuse's Dimensions of Thought

In *ODM*, Marcuse reveals how a set of intellectual and material conditions can serve to constrain political thinking and action.[633] As discussed above, his work is intended as a critical confrontation with contemporary society's tendency to contain social change that would produce new institutions, productive processes and modes of human existence. This containment is the unique achievement of contemporary technological liberalism. It is important to note, since some critics seem determined to ignore it,[634] that Marcuse is very clear that he is only identifying a *tendency* within contemporary society. For him, his account vacillates, 'throughout between two contradictory hypotheses: (1) that advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the foreseeable future; (2) that forces and tendencies exist which may break this containment and explode the society.'[635] He emphasizes that while the first tendency is dominant both are present. Such an ambiguous dynamic can be identified precisely because the explicit orientation of this analysis is on the level of totality. Technology is not treated as the sum-total of instruments but, 'as a system which determines *a priori* the product of the apparatus as well as the operations of servicing and extending it.'[636] It is a framing universe and a project which anticipates certain modes of conditioning humans and nature. Modern technological enframing constitutes only one of multiple historical alternatives. Nonetheless, it *tends* to exclusivity (to the marginalization of other approaches). Consequently, this technological universe of thought is a political universe where all things are approached as something to be transformed and organized. 'As the project unfolds, it

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[633] Due to Feenberg's weaknesses, I am not continuing his phenomenological reading of Marcuse. Rather, I connect between the later Heidegger and Marcuse's through the world-disclosive aspects in understandings of totality.

[634] Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of Marcuse is the most notable example. For him, in identifying the one-dimensional nature of contemporary thinking, *ODM* fails to provide the possibility of its own critical stance on the present. Jeffrey Stout raises the obvious point that this criticism easily applies to both MacIntyre and all other social and political theory in general. See: MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and Polemic*. New York, NY: Viking Press, 1970. p.70 -- and; Stout, Jeffrey. *Democracy and Tradition*. Woodstock, UK: Princeton University Press, 2004. p.121.

[635] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.13

[636] Ibid. p.13

shapes the entire universe of discourse and action, intellectual and material culture. In the medium of technology, culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or repulses all alternatives... technological rationality has become political rationality.'[637] For Marcuse, such an approach is inherently given to domination.

In such a situation, for Marcuse, even democracy can constrain freedom and exclude alternative forms of political thinking. Assuming the contestability of all political concepts, he notes that in the contemporary period, the concept of liberty has lost its emancipatory function and become a force for the status quo. Freedom is not simply choice, the presence of a range of alternatives. Rather, it is defined by *what* can be chosen and what *is* chosen. The presence of choice loses its quality of freedom when the options are covertly circumscribed and presented as necessary. The ability to set this range, to determine the universe of options, is (one of) the dominant modes of control within technological liberalism. Further, this is an ontological operation. For example, the media does not simply control thought with particular messages and coverage. Rather, 'The people enter this stage as preconditioned receptacles of longstanding; the decisive difference is in the flattening out of the contrast (or conflict) between the given and the possible.'[638] This is the aforementioned tension necessary to critical thought; the ability to critique the present from outside the boundaries that it itself sets to thought. The distinction between appearance and reality is rethought in Marcuse as a distinction between the given (present) and the possible (future). Yet, this futurity is essentially different from Rorty's. It is not a romantic imagination constrained by pragmatic procedures. The possible is a potentiality. It has a genuine aspect of reality. As such, it gains normative and critical force. Without it, the present is the only horizon of thought. Marcuse describes this as the power of modern technology, the 'rational character of its irrationality.'[639] Given the present universe of thinking, modern pragmatic liberalism is "correct." Consequently, critical thought is pre-emptively disempowered.

Critical political thought is eclipsed through the loss of a particular dimension of thinking; one explicitly opposed to the established, public, realm of thinking. Additionally, drawing on Freudian psychoanalytic theory, this "inner" dimension must be conceived as individual and opposed to the social. There is an unfortunate and problematic assumption in this otherwise insightful aspect of Marcuse's thinking. He, like Rorty, assumes that all non-public thought is only individual. By also politicizing it, by making it the basis of

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[637] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.13

[638] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.24

[639] Ibid. p.24

critical social thought, he falls into the flaw that Yack and Rorty identified in Ch. 4 where socialization itself is understood as the limitation to be overcome and the social is conflated with conformism. In contrast, this thesis emphasizes that non-public thought is not necessarily individual but often collective. In fact, it is the marginalization of collective and systemic ways of conceiving our situation that is problematic in contemporary (and Rortian) liberalism.[640] The result of the loss of the non-public, the mechanisms for which will be addressed subsequently, is the absorption of all thought into that dominant framework. Thought is homogenized and opposites unified. 'In this process, the "inner" dimension of the mind in which opposition to the status quo can take root is whittled down. The loss of this dimension, in which the power of negative thinking – the critical power of Reason – is at home is the ideological counterpart to the very material process in which advanced industrial society silences and reconciles the opposition.'[641] For Marcuse, through the destruction of this faculty, ideology, the set of beliefs which reinforce the present universe, becomes objective. In contemporary liberalism, ideology comes to entirely coincide with its object. It is the circular reinforcement of the present horizon of conception. The consequence of this is a mode of life that explicitly militates against qualitative change; it is a pattern of "one-dimensional thought and behaviour" in which non-public ideas are rejected or reduced to the terms of this universe.

The dominance of a one-dimensional manner of thinking arises with particular developments in the sciences. Operationalism in the physical and behaviourism in the social sciences are the two parts of a 'total empiricism' that governs thought. Concepts, ideas and forms of critique which cannot be represented within these modes are *eliminated*[642] in favour of empirical accounts. All forms of thought which 'transcend' these terms, merely in the sense of employing criteria and notions outside of their universe of discourse, are rigorously excluded as 'metaphysical.' Operationalism here comes to serve as a process of containment. All events and ideas are reduced or translated into the given universe of facts and thought. It is important to note that the causation amongst various levels (e.g. intellectual, material, psychological and historical) is not strict or efficient in Marcuse's thought. Instead, many factors arise together, which bear obvious relation without having a clear priority of causes. While the language of this section will often seem to imply that certain philosophical and intellectual developments have caused one-

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[640] As a result, the following use of Marcuse elides this aspect. For an additional critique of this aspect of Marcuse's work, see: Toscano, Alberto. "Liberation Technology: Marcuse's Communist Individualism" in *Situations: Project of the Radical Imagination*, Vol. 3(1), 2009.

[641] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.26 – The role of the negative in Marcuse's thought will be addressed below. See; Bernstein, Richard J. "Negativity: Theme and Variations" in *Marcuse, Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, op cit.

[642] Recall Rorty's strategy of eliminative materialism discussed in Ch.1.

dimensional thinking, it should be emphasized that on the level of a totality they can only be understood as concurrent and related conditions. They coexist within a larger and opaque dialectical totality. Marcuse himself notes this integration.

> 'With the gradual closing of this [critical] dimension by the society, the self-limitation of thought assumes a larger significance. The interrelation between scientific-philosophical and societal processes, between theoretical and practical Reason, asserts itself "behind the back" of the scientists and philosophers. The society bars a whole type of oppositional operations and behaviour; consequently the concepts pertaining to them are rendered illusory or meaningless. Historical transcendence appears as metaphysical transcendence.'[643]

A whole range of thought and modes of organization are blocked by the technological universe. Before addressing the underlying philosophical assumptions of this circumscription, this section will illustrate some of the effects of the loss of the critical dimension of thought.

Much of *ODM* tracks the aforementioned dynamics into various aspects of existence (e.g. material/social reality, consciousness, and language). While these aspects are important to his analysis, it is the movement towards one-dimensionality in language that is specifically significant here. Fundamental to this aspect of Marcuse's work is his notion of the universe of thought and discourse[644] and it is the narrowing of language that most clearly illustrates the restriction of thought within the pragmatic liberal universe.[645] The operationalism and behaviourism of pragmatic technological liberalism reveals a circumscribed universe. As a result, political questions can only be thought in particular, limited manners. Once again, Marcuse contrasts the language of one-dimensionality with genuine, critical thinking. For him, the language of total administration 'testifies to identification and unification, to the systematic promotion of positive thinking and doing, to the concerted attack on transcendent, critical notions. In the prevailing modes of speech, the contrast appears between two-dimensional, dialectical modes of thought and technological behaviours and social "habits of thought."'[646] These habits of thought erase the tension between appearance and reality. What is lost in the operational and behaviouristic perspectives are the processes of mediation whereby facts are known; the understanding that concepts are involved in understanding facts and, in that sense, transcend them. Without such mediations, language identifies reason with fact, essence with existence, and the thing with its current use. Essentially, the future is bound by the

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[643] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.29

[644] These three areas of analysis (material/social, the psychological, and the linguistic) resonate with the positive avenues Rorty explores after metaphysics. Chs.2 and 3 were structured around language, naturalism and social practice, and historicism. For Marcuse, each of these spheres is constricted by one-dimensional thinking.

[645] Recall Connolly on political concepts in Ch.2

[646] Marcuse, *ODM*, pp.77-8

present. These identifications link the methodology of operationalism and the politics of social conformism. For Marcuse, what is lost is the space within language for the creation of new meaning. Operationalism defines the thing by its function and thereby identifies a concept entirely with a set of operations. Outside the explicit worlds of science and technology, and in politics, this logic leads to the concept being absorbed by the word. As a result, the former has no non-public and standardized meaning. While many things in our lives can be treated in this pragmatic manner, for Marcuse, politics should not be.

> 'The functionalization of language expresses an abridgement of meaning which has a political connotation. The names of things are not only "indicative of their manner of functioning," but their (actual) manner of functioning also defines and "closes" the meaning of the thing, excluding other manners of functioning… it repels demonstration, qualification, negation of its codified meaning. At the nodal points of the universe of public discourse, self-validating, analytical propositions appear which function like magic-ritual formulas… they produce the effect of closing it within the circle of the conditions prescribed by the formula.'[647]

By restricting language to the functional, political concepts are confined to a particular (current) interpretation. Thus, political language repeats the unification of opposites. The forces and meanings opposed to the present are domesticated and excluded. Further, the functionalization of language obscures the neutralization of other meanings. Concepts like freedom and equality, which are by their nature contested, are unified under one meaning from within the concept. Antagonism never appears and they are made immune from contradiction.

The strength of the operational approach is its claim to concreteness and lack of metaphysical presuppositions. This focus contains the implicit claim to supersede the linguistic interpretation of the thing and achieve some more primal relation to it. For Marcuse, the very vocabulary and syntax of this language blocks differentiation. It blocks conceptual thinking which does not identify the thing and its function. There is nothing in principle illegitimate about this perspective. It may even be the correct way of proceeding in certain contexts. However, it also dissolves concepts into operations and excludes the intent behind such conceptual thinking. This intent is specifically to exceed the operational perspective; to see another dimension of being. For Marcuse, conceptual thinking, 'distinguishes that which the thing is from the contingent functions of the thing in the established reality.'[648] This is the ontological perspective. In opposition, Rorty (and operational thinking) only wants to see that contingent, current function of a thing. The key distinction related to these features is the one between "is" and "ought" (essence and appearance, potentiality and actuality, negative and positive). In some form, this tension is

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[647] Ibid. p.79
[648] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.85

a necessary presupposition for critical political thinking; thinking that does not merely reinforce present dynamics. For Marcuse, these are genuine antagonistic categories, 'reality partakes of both of them.'[649] Accordingly, these antagonisms are also historical. Operational rationality suppresses history. It suppresses the understanding of the future as the negation of the present. It is important to note that genuine historical consciousness for Marcuse is not about understanding the contingency of the past up to the present but seeing that the future necessarily involves the negation of that present. Reality operates under the condition of history. Everything has a history and is subject to it.

It is important to understand Marcuse's view of concepts here. For him, concepts always exceed the immediate experience of their object. They are the result of a reflection which has understood the thing in the context of other things not present in the immediate experience of the concept and which explain it in some way. There is an excess of meaning in concepts due to their generality, to their attempt to exceed particular objects. This is a move towards universality. Concepts attempt to recast the particular thing in its universal condition and relation. They attempt to transcend its immediate appearance in favour of its reality.[650] It is in this abstractness that the potential for a critical enquiry resides. At this point, Marcuse makes a distinction between cognitive and operational concepts. The former go beyond description of particular facts. In terms of society, they go beyond the particular context of facts and into the conditions that structure that society. 'By virtue of their reference to this historical totality, cognitive concepts transcend all operational context, but their transcendence is empirical because it renders the facts recognizable as that which they really are.'[651] This dimension of thought reveals the limitations of the operational description of experience. Operational thought has a false concreteness because it isolates thought from thinking the conditions of limitation which constitute the present reality. This is its political function. Operational thought analyses in terms of the present. It has a therapeutic[652] function which attempts to adjust things to the present without leaving space for the conceptual critique of this situation. For Marcuse, the therapeutic character of operational thought is manifested in forms of research devoted to

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[649] Ibid. p.86

[650] Here, Marcuse seems to be referring to Hegel's notion of *wirklichkeit*, where the actuality or reality of a thing denotes its fulfillment. In opposition to this, I am reading it here, in line with my general Heideggerian reading of Marcuse, as denoting the ontological aspect of a concept; its relation to the question of being and the manner in which this exceeds its present determination.

[651] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.92

[652] Recall, from Ch.1, Rorty's understanding of philosophy as a therapeutic practice best oriented to ignoring questions which are no longer useful. The point there was not to challenge the present structure or set of limitations on thought but to merely change the status accorded to those questions through a pragmatic form of therapy. Similarly, operational thought reconciles us with the present.

improving existing institutions within their present framework. Here, the ideological and political character of this pragmatic empiricism is revealed. It, '...insulates and atomizes the facts, stabilizes them within the repressive whole, and accepts the terms of this whole as the terms of the analysis. The methodological translation of the universal into the operational concept then becomes repressive reduction of thought.'[653] The result is that the horizon of consideration is restricted to the particulars within any situation. The context itself (its structure and limitations) is beyond critical consideration.

For Marcuse, the functionalization of language reflects a redefinition of the function of thought. While this is a philosophical development, it is part of wider tendencies within advanced technological liberalism.[654] For him, the origin of these trends is the methodology of the sciences. The scientific management and organization of society produces a pattern of thought which reinforces the technological domination of humanity. For Marcuse, this is not a specific application of science but a dynamic connected to its rationality. 'I think that the general direction in which it [technological rationality] came to be applied was inherent in pure science even where no practical purposes were intended, and that the point can be identified where theoretical Reason turns into social practice.'[655] The scientific basis of modern technology is illustrated in the former's separation of fact and value; the notion that there could be a form of thought entirely without values. Part of this process is the operationalization of science and the loss of a principle of reality (in its ontological sense). In its operational logic, it replaces the metaphysical question of "what is?" with the functional "how...?". Metaphysical certainty is replaced with a practical certainty which eschews anything but operational questions. This organizes all of experience and reality. In this manner, science projects a world, as a historical totality, through a "technological a priori" that understands nature as, 'potential instrumentality, stuff of control and organization.'[656] Science leads to a technological structuring of the social. Marcuse is conscious of the significance of this claim and the question around whether science can be connected to its application in this way. However, to even ask this question assumes the distinction between two spheres, science and technology (theory

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[653] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.93

[654] Ibid. p.91

[655] Ibid. p.121 –Marcuse vacillates over whether this is a necessary consequence of science or merely one of several dynamics compatible with its logic. His attempts to rethink the role of technology in science indicate the latter. Further, the unity of theory and practice would seem to suggest that, for Marcuse, applications of theories are always connected to the theories themselves. They represent potentialities inherent within the thing. However, a thorough investigation of this is beyond the scope of the present discussion. See: Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, op cit. Ch.6

[656] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.126 – This argument recalls Heidegger's in *QT*. It is, in fact, the only place in *ODM* where Marcuse actually cites him.

and practice), and the neutrality of the former.[657] As discussed above, this neutrality is contradicted by the mechanism of veiling and the limitations it imposes on thinking. Science and technology both, inevitably, establish barriers in thought. The argument here is that it is necessary to expose these limitations. Further, the particular violence of this enframing is its mechanism to obscure this dynamic. In this element, both science and technology enact the same logic of domination.

Like Rorty (and Dewey), Marcuse argues that the pragmatic understanding of scientific enquiry is consistent with science's logic. In this sense, the logic within science makes it technological. It becomes about the use of reality rather than objectively knowing it with certainty. Further, again with Rorty, rationality now can only have a methodological sense. Following Heidegger, the technical and instrumental approaches are "correct."[658] There is no explicit telos within this rationality. In this sense, it is neutral. However, for Marcuse, it is in its neutral character, its relativity to various ends, and the claim to this neutrality that its limitation occurs. Technology is connected to a specific historical project. The neutrality of pragmatic science and technology has a positive character. 'Scientific rationality makes for a specific societal organization precisely because it projects mere form... which can be bent to practically all ends. Formalization and functionalization are, *prior* to all application, the "pure form" of a concrete societal practice.'[659] The scientific universe, the projection of nature as a quantifiable set of relations, sets a horizon on both social practice and thought. It leads to a particular form of thought and practice; one that assumes and projects a world.[660] Feenberg clarifies this argument and its significance for the present question. For him, Marcuse's argument is illustrated by a distinction in the manner in which technology is biased, rather than neutral.

Neutrality and bias in technology are complexly interrelated. Modern pragmatic technology is biased towards the status quo; it closes off opposition. However, the bias of modern pragmatic technology is not simply the opposite to the conception of its neutrality. In order to understand this, Feenberg distinguishes between two kinds of bias: substantive and formal. Substantive bias is applying different standards to things that

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[657] Ibid. p.127 – This connection is crucial as I am making, in a sense, a corresponding linkage in Rorty's philosophy.

[658] Marcuse's repetition of an ontological distinction between the correct and the true and the centrality of this aspect to his theory may be, in addition to the focus on technology, the most convincing argument for a Heideggerian aspect to his thought. It is, oddly, ignored by commentators.

[659] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.129

[660] For Marcuse, this revelation is given to social domination through the organization and instrumentalization of humanity. A detailed account of this is beyond the present argument which is focusing on the way in which advanced technological society restricts thought. See: Marcuse, *ODM*, pp.130-1

should be judged by the same requirements (e.g. racist discrimination). Formal bias is applying the same standard but under conditions that predispose the effects in a certain direction. It is distinct in involving no necessary prejudice. In fact, there is usually a plausible general claim to fairness where there is only formal bias. For Feenberg, importantly, this plausibility only occurs on the level of facts. These facts are not under dispute. Rather, formal bias can be criticized for the restricted horizon under which those facts are understood as the extent of relevant considerations. Feenberg emphasizes that criticism of this sort is compatible with a variety of epistemological standards among which Marcuse's is only one. It only necessitates a viewpoint that emphasizes the presence of relations in a structured totality.[661] Marcuse's ontological critique of the claim to the neutrality of technology focuses on that claim's separation of technology from the surrounding social, cultural, institutional, intellectual and economic (etc.) framework. As Feenberg notes, 'the technical reason the basis of which modern technology has been developed may in itself be "neutral" in some sense, but it is an abstraction insofar as it is considered outside the entire context of the involvements in which it emerged as theory and to which it returns as practice.'[662] The novelty of this position is in its reversal of the claims of formally neutral systems. In contrast, Marcuse explicitly connects formal neutrality to both domination and the circumscription of thought.

Formal bias is a covert horizon of possibility. For Marcuse, the dominance of pragmatic technical reasoning and the assumption of its neutrality limits thought to technical issues. This establishes the current universe as the horizon of possibility while claiming that this logic has no values inherent within itself. Humanity is formally biased towards the acceptance of the present.[663] It is in this sense that science, for Marcuse, projects a limited world and why the limitations it imposes are ultimately political. This world is one which is experienced and comprehended in terms of calculable *relations* and approached to be mastered.[664] Because this pragmatic technology is the logic of a particular determination of being, for Marcuse, it cannot transcend that determination. This is the limitation of the scientific perspective. It can only extend its current framework, '…without altering its existential structure – that is *without envisaging a qualitatively new*

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[661] Feenberg, "The Bias of Technology," op cit. pp.232-4 – This is the assumption that Rorty and pragmatic technology reject. Below, this chapter will argue for its necessity.

[662] Ibid. p.239 – this point depends upon the Hegelian distinction between the "abstract" and the "concrete." The former is the part isolated from the whole. The latter is the thing in its network of relations binding it to the whole. Feenberg's point here is that Marcuse's critique of the neutrality of technology is that it understands technology from its own perspective, as a thing in isolation. It does not consider it as the part of a totality. See:Ibid. p.232

[663] The conceptual process in which this occurs is examined subsequently in the discussion of truth and the appearance-reality distinction.

[664] Recall Rorty and Dewey's's elaboration relationisms in Chs.1&3.

mode of "seeing" and qualitatively new relations between men and between man and nature.'[665] Thus, with respect to thought and social life, science has a conservative effect. All of its revolutionary reversals and developments, which Rorty highlights in his use of Kuhn, are all shifts within this horizon of limitation. Its much-lauded method of continual self-correction (and the pragmatic spirit Rorty equally values) which fuels those revolutions only extends the same historical universe of thought.

These conservative dynamics within science are matched by certain trends within modern philosophy. While these trends pervade much of the philosophy, they are particularly apparent in the therapeutic empiricism of 20th century linguistic philosophy.[666] Linguistic analysis understands philosophy as having a *therapeutic* function. It cures thought of the vestiges of its metaphysical past, extirpating the lingering "ghosts" of the pre-scientific age. In this, it explicitly situates itself in the common, current use of words and concepts. It normalizes the prevailing mode of thinking and acting. In order to understand Marcuse here, it is necessary to clarify a distinction which has emerged at several points during this discussion. This is the distinction between positive and negative.[667] For Marcuse, the battle between negativity and positivity is the most significant contest in contemporary thought. This is a conflict over critical thinking. In every aspect of his work, he was attempting to combat the effects of positive thinking and open a space for a negative confrontation with the present. It is important to understand these terms. Negativity is not mere negation. Genuine negativity, or what Marcuse called "determinate negation," is a negativity that reveals. It is a negativity that attempts to uncover something hidden. Drawing on Hegel, he emphasizes that negativity is the tension between reason and the positivity of the existing social reality. 'In terms of the established universe, such contradicting modes of thought are negative thinking. "The power of the negative" is the principle which governs the development of concepts, and contradiction becomes the distinguishing quality of Reason.'[668] As discussed above, concepts exceed their objects. Negativity is the logic under which this proceeds. Marcuse goes as far as claiming that being itself is negative. For him, the significance of Hegel is in the latter's

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[665] Marcuse, *ODM*, pp.134-5

[666] Here, Marcuse seems to be focusing on the Analytic philosophy of language. While Rorty is a notable critic of this tradition (see Ch.1), he also draws on it. Specifically, there was also an anti-metaphysical aspect of Analytic philosophy. The focus here is on this approach and other they share and which reveal the limitation of thought in the pragmatic, technical universe. See: Rorty, Richard. "A Pragmatist View of Contemporary Analytic Philosophy" in *PCP*; Rorty, Richard. "Introduction" in *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (ed. Richard Rorty). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

[667] Recall this language in earlier chapters in relation to Rorty. In his work, this contrast was merely the difference between critical thought and positive constructive efforts to articulate a new philosophy. While not unrelated to Marcuse's use, this in no way covers the depth of the latter's meaning.

[668] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.140 – See also: Bernstein, "Negativity" op cit. p.14

movement from thought to being. The pre-existing philosophical tradition had often been negative in opposing the facts as they appear.[669] Here, negativity is a thought. In Hegel, negativity is understood as at the heart of being in all its forms. Being and social reality contain negativity; within them there are opposing forces and the potential for their negation. In this manner, freedom, reason, and negativity are all linked in Marcuse's thought.[670] Freedom can then be understood, like in Heidegger, as seeing the veil as what veils. That is, as the critical identification (negation) of the present.

For Marcuse, understanding reason and negativity in terms of ontology changes the task of thought. Critical theory, as opposed to traditional philosophy, attempts to map and overcome the existing order through the identification of the limits of that framework and the elements of negation therein. These latter elements are always immanent to the existing framework which contains multiple and contradictory tendencies. With this aim, Marcuse's thought, especially *ODM*, is a rigorous identification and critique of the positive. The positive, broadly, are those elements that reinforce the present. They do this through a restriction of the negative. Marcuse develops the concept of the positive to refer to the broad tendency within positivism and its manifestations within advanced technological society in general. For him, positivism is defined by making the experience of facts the criterion of cognitive thought, the orienting of cognitive thought to science as a model of certainty, and the belief that knowledge depends on this orientation. From this, and this is fundamental when considering Rorty who may not share these, positivism entails a consequent rejection of metaphysical and transcendental modes of thought. Positivistic philosophy is only affirmative. Philosophical critique can only criticize internally, from within the present. For Marcuse, it is the eschewal of this level of questioning that destroys philosophy's critical capacity. 'The contemporary effort to reduce the scope and the truth of philosophy is tremendous, and the philosophers themselves proclaim the modesty and inefficacy of philosophy. It leaves the established reality untouched; it abhors transgression.'[671] Thus, it is this anti-metaphysical orientation that gives positivism its conservative character. It is important to emphasize that empiricism is not necessarily positive. Its relation to the established reality depends upon which dimension of experience it reveals. Certain material empiricisms, by virtue of their contradiction of the present, are negative. Whereas, for Marcuse, the empiricism of Analytic philosophy, by

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[669] For an in-depth examination of this theme, see: Coole, Diana. *Negativity and Politics: Dionysius and Dialectics from Kant to Poststructuralism*. London, UK: Routledge, 2000.

[670] Bernstein, "Negativity: Theme and Variations," 1988. p.15 – This chapter is merely drawing on Marcuse's work here in order to offer a critical posture that counters Rorty's pragmatism. For his reading of Hegel that makes the points summarized above, see: Marcuse, Herbert. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Modern Social Theory*. New York, US: New Humanities Press, 1963.

[671] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.141

restricting us to the present behavioural universe of language, is thoroughly positive. The salient issue again, is the relation to the dominant public logic of the everyday. It is correct in this but it destroys the unique capacity of philosophy for critical thought.[672] In contrast, negativity assumes that the given obscures some dimension of reality; that the legitimate range of thought is never exhausted by the present; that there is always a *veil*. For Marcuse, it is the dynamic that pushes against the current horizon of thinking.

Negative thinking accomplishes this feat through the appearance/reality distinction. This distinction stands at the base of Marcuse's critical philosophy. Like Rorty (and Dewey), he reads the history of philosophy in relation to it. He contrasts Greek and modern thought in terms of the presence of a concept of truth and this distinction. In this, he provides a history of the concept of Reason. Greek philosophy understood reality as antagonistic, a two-dimensional conception where there is both appearance and truth. The latter must be striven for; the former must be overcome. In this manner, 'philosophy originates in dialectic; its universe of discourse responds to the facts of an antagonistic reality.'[673] This explains the convergence of reason and freedom in Greek thought. Through reason, humanity overcomes the limitations of a particular viewpoint that limits its modes of thought and existence. In this manner, it is freed. For Marcuse, this understanding is not without its problems.[674] However, the important point is that it presents a fundamental contrast to the modern conception (which Rorty shares). As discussed above, this universe is fundamentally one-dimensional. It is confined to a consideration of the present; meaning the internal dynamics within the given totality.[675] It does not consider this totality as a critical object. In fact, it veils its very presence. Through readings of Plato and Aristotle, Marcuse defines a dialectical logic based on this two-dimensionality. For him, dialectical thought is in explicit opposition to given reality. By distinguishing between being and non-being, essence and fact, potentiality and actuality, dialectical thought pushes beyond the given. 'Judged in the light of their essence and idea, men and things exist as other than they are; consequently thought contradicts that which is (given), opposes its truth to that of the given reality.'[676] This feature makes dialectical thought

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[672] Ibid. p.143

[673] Ibid. p.107

[674] Principally, it invalidates all non-philosophical modes of existence as "untrue." It thus leads to the normative distinction between contemplation and action within the history of Western philosophy that Dewey and pragmatism rightly opposed (see Ch.1). See: Ibid. p.107

[675] Marcuse argues this through a critical account of "formal thinking." While an this account is beyond the scope of the present discussion, it should be noted that Marcuse argues that formal thinking is inherently connected to social domination. It is formally biased towards this qualitative mode of life. The important point here is that in rejecting the concept of potentiality, formal thinking is biased towards the present. See: Ibid. pp.112-6 – also, for a clear account of this argument, see: Feenberg, "The Bias of Technology," pp.244-8

[676] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.111

imperative. By asserting the truth of something outside the present given, it creates an "ought." Dialectical thought does not state facts but the necessity to create a fact. It identifies the critical tension between "is" and "ought" as an ontological condition. In an account with striking similarities to Dewey's in the *Quest for Certainty*, Marcuse argues that this division between two realms in Greek dialectical thinking unfortunately led to a distinction between a pure realm of contemplation and certainty and an empirical realm of contingency. Further, to protect certainty, these worlds (empirical and intellectual, action and thought, etc.) were isolated from each other. This move inaugurates the formal (empirical) side of modern thinking. As separate, the tension and contradiction between essence and fact disappears and independent logics arise in both. In the calculative mastery of empirical science, the preeminent viewpoint of modern pragmatism, humanity loses the ability to judge the given reality. It loses the normative.

Marcuse argues that dialectical thought as a necessary, critical resource for society. For him, without it critical judgement is impossible. Science, lacking an appearance/reality distinction and a tension therein, cannot condemn established reality. Consequently, he opposes a sole emphasis on either theory or practice in their isolated forms. In opposition, he offers his own dialectical ontology which 'undoes the abstractions of formal logic and of transcendental philosophy, but it also denies the concreteness of immediate experience.'[677] Dialectical thought involves a reduction of contingency which makes possible the assertion of the essence, as a critical counterpoint to the given, of something. Essence is about potentiality. It is the historical potential of a thing given the present structures, limitations and contradictions of its given form. Located in these latter elements, potentialities are not ideal but immanent to the things. In this manner, the split between "ought" and "is" is transcended and a critical consciousness is manifest. Like concepts, the examination of these potentialities is explicitly intended to explore the processes and conditions on which the facts of society depend. It is meant to pierce pragmatic reality and reveal the structure and frame. 'By virtue of their reference to this historical totality, cognitive concepts transcend all operational context, but their transcendence is empirical because it renders the facts recognizable as what which they really are.'[678] Through engaging with a historical totality, this perspective reveals a qualitatively different picture of the present, empirical world. When applied in this way,

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[677] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.117 – Marcuse often does seem to restrict critical logic solely to its dialectical form. While this is only one current within his text, it is problematic insofar as it establishes limits to critical thinking. Nonetheless, there are also the resources for a multidimensional perspective that exceeds this limitation. While it is only nascent in his text, it is the argument of this chapter that it offers a productive pathway for critical thought. This is addressed below.

[678] Ibid. p. 117– See also: Feenberg, "The Bias of Technology," p.246

the ontological tension between appearance and reality becomes a historical tension about the potentialities of the future. For Marcuse, in this manner, the concept of potentiality is a demand for freedom. It is a critical consideration of the present outside of its own categories and as a totality.[679] This is a step toward a genuine and collective decision about the future.

The question now is, what does this mean for philosophy? Marcuse articulates this question well.

> 'One might ask what remains of philosophy? What remains of thinking, intelligence, without anything hypothetical, without any explanation? However, what is at stake is not the definition or the dignity of philosophy. It is rather the chance of preserving and protecting the right, the need to think and speak in terms other than those of common usage—terms which are meaningful, rational, and valid precisely because they are other terms.'[680]

And.

> 'The philosopher is not a physician; his job is not to cure individuals but to comprehend the world in which they live – to understand it in terms of what it has done to man.'[681]

Philosophy must comprehend the present outside of its categories. Further, it must speak to and about reality outside of the public logic of modern liberalism. It must be oriented to an (new) understanding of the world and the situation of humanity. The danger of Rorty and modernity is that they understand thought outside the given present as merely normative. It is only subjective, cultural, or particular. It does not offer a conception of reality that contains a critical dimension within itself. They destroy this project. For Marcuse, this task is necessary because philosophy is uniquely situated to think in this way. Only theory can examine the totality necessary for this dimension of critical thinking. This is the perspective, excluded by technological liberalism, that we must search for.[682] How do we consider conditions that exceed the empirical and are independent of quantitative identification? Empirical methods become mystifying and ideological in this context. They cannot help us understand the frame within which the facts occur. In this, for Marcuse, the ontological level of reality is more real than the empirical because it determines the facts to be calculated.[683] To take the meta-perspective is to hypostatize the whole over the parts. For Marcuse, this hypostatization has reality. It is a real dimension of existence with real effects (though they may not be measurable) that need to be engaged.

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[679] Marcuse, *ODM*, pp.117-8
[680] Ibid. p.145
[681] Ibid. p.148
[682] Ibid. p.146
[683] Ibid. p.153

This is not to deny the correctness of empirical measurements but only to emphasize that in their correctness, they obscure another dimension of reality.

ODM is an enactment of this project. It attempts to identify and map the structural limitations of thought within contemporary technological liberalism. In this, it assumes the inevitable presence of a veil and the need of exposing the historical nature of that veiling.

> 'Under the repressive conditions in which men think and live, thought—any mode of thinking which is not confined to pragmatic orientation within the status quo can recognize the facts and respond to the facts only by "going behind" them. Experience takes place before a curtain which conceals and, if the world is the appearance of something behind the curtain of immediate experience, then, in Hegel's terms, it is we ourselves who are behind the curtain. We ourselves not as the subjects of common sense, as in linguistic analysis, nor as the "purified" subjects of scientific measurement, but as the subjects and objects of the historical struggle of man with nature and with society. Facts are what they are as occurrences in this struggle. Their factuality is historical, even where it is still that of brute, unconquered nature.' [684]

The inevitability of a veil necessitates a constant critical engagement. Marcuse's claim here indicates a broad critical perspective that exceeds his particular articulation of it. While this chapter has articulated it in his terms, it is the premise of this entire argument that this disposition should exceed the particular ontological-political determination. This perspective calls for the broad and critical confrontation of the limits of our political thinking. It argues that the ontological frame in which that thinking occurs limits our politics. A truly critical encounter then requires philosophy and ontology. Yet, this is not the only political perspective. While it is not the focus of his account, there is a subterranean call for a multidimensional, critical perspective in Marcuse's work. In these moments, he calls not simply for two-dimensional thought, or the addition of a dialectical to the existing formal logic, but for a multidimensional critical pluralism. 'For such an analysis, the meaning of a term or form demands its development in a multi-dimensional universe, where any expressed meaning partakes of several interrelated, overlapping, and antagonistic systems.'[685] Resonating with Connolly's analysis of political concepts addressed in Ch. 2, Marcuse emphasizes that the reduction of these dimensions to one-dimensional thinking occurs through the loss of these multiple meanings. Without other dimensions and meanings, the historical totality, whereby thought is critiqued on the whole, is lost. While he fails to develop it, this is a positive development in Marcuse's work. While it is beyond the scope of the present study, it is a productive pathway that deserves scholarly attention.[686] This section has illustrated Marcuse's identification of the

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[684] Ibid. p.149

[685] Ibid. 182

[686] The work of Foucault would also be key here. As indicated above, Feenberg has connected him to his analysis of Heidegger and Marcuse. Specifically, in later works, he has drawn on Foucault in rectifying

circumscription of thought and its internal mechanisms. It has argued that Marcuse's work carries on Heidegger's analysis of the veiling of modernity, by identifying how an intellectual, political, and material matrix in contemporary society excludes nonpublic (transcending) forms of thought. Before relating this back to Rorty's philosophy in detail, it is now necessary to turn briefly to Rorty and Marcuse's readings of the politics of the New Left in order to understand how their philosophies manifest in the analysis of an actual political event.

SECTION 3: A CIRCUMSCRIBED LEFT: RORTY'S SOCIAL HOPE IN ACTION

Like most Western intellectuals active in the late twentieth century, both Rorty and Marcuse had strong reactions to the countercultural, political movements of the late 1960's. Both had readings of these movements that both reinforce their philosophies and politics. Finally, both interpreted the shift in Leftist politics in these years as extremely politically significant. However, where Rorty understood the dynamics that of this period as the death of genuine Leftist progressivism (and its communal project), Marcuse saw a unique opportunity for a form of authentic resistance to the structural inequalities of advanced technological capitalism. He saw it as the manifestation of opposition appropriate to the conditions of that time. This section will critically analyse Rorty's reading with Marcuse's in order to bring into relief some of the contrasts established above. The purpose is to show how the dynamics identified in Rorty's liberalism and politics of social hope and the critical resources present in Marcuse's critique manifest in their respective analyses of political practice.

Achieving the Left: Rorty's (Restricted) Vision of Progressive Politics

Rorty's critique of the American Left is rooted in an understanding of American history and its project. While present throughout his career, especially in his relationship to Dewey and American democracy, the mythology of the American project is central to his

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Heidegger's (and implicitly Marcuse's) top down and totalizing understanding of technology and its ability to structure and exclude other forms of thinking. After criticizing Heidegger for such "technological determinism," he finds in Foucault the identification of possible sources of resistance in the many 'subjugated knowledges that arise in opposition to a dominating rationality.' (Feenberg *Questioning Technology* p.8) Feenberg highlights how Foucault's work identifies specific practices of technological domination and offers a general ontological framework and specific empirical practice to identify opportunities of resistance within this dominant universe. While it is beyond the present study, this aspect of Foucault's work (which is contained mainly within his earlier thought before the "aesthetics of the self") resonates with Ch.2's discussion of the need for an ontology of ambiguity and resistance. It also indicates the applicability of Foucault to the critical methodology of veiling established here. His ability to identify specific practices, obscured by modern *dispositifs* of governmentality, would complement Marcuse's total perspective. This connection is a fruitful possibility for later work.

later work.[687] His concern is not so much to argue for the distinctiveness of America[688] but to emphasise the importance of identifying with that tradition as a precursor of any progressive politics. For him, it represents a narrative entirely compatible with his account of pragmatic liberalism as tolerance. In a sense, where that liberalism is the formalization of his philosophical pragmatism (see Ch. 4), the mythology of American social hope represents (one of) the (possible) concrete narrativizations of that politics. It is a concretization of that political and philosophical frame; a narrative of political progress that confirms both his pragmatic (philosophical) understanding of reality (as contingent, naturalistic, and historical) and his liberal (political) understanding of politics (as piecemeal, reformist, and experimental). Consequently, the values and ideals of that mythology set the bounds of Rorty's public vision.

While politics and philosophy are strictly separate for Rorty, that pragmatism, as a philosophical project, and America, as a political one, do share a particular disposition. This is, 'a hopeful, melioristic, frame of mind'[689] that substitutes hope for knowledge. This orients both pragmatism and America toward the future and to the task of self-invention. To recall, in Rorty's philosophy, the distinction between past and future is substituted for the one between appearance and reality (as well as all other philosophical dualisms) as the basis of social change. On his reading, the pragmatism of James and Dewey drew on American transcendentalism and embraced the understanding of America as an ideal.[690] "Democracy" and "America" were sacred words situated against Europe. Where Europe looks backward towards its traditions, America and pragmatism are future oriented. They share 'a willingness to refer all questions of ultimate justification to the future.'[691] This constitutes a new conception of humans and their relation to each other and the world. For Rorty, pragmatism's anti-essentialism and Darwinian naturalism (discussed in Ch. 3) contain this future emphasis. Its understanding of the world emphasizes non-teleological

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[687] *Philosophy and Social Hope* is particularly steeped in this language. Its introduction begins with a discussion distinguishing American pragmatic thought from European traditions. See also: Voparil, Christopher J. *Richard Rorty: Politics and Vision*. Oxford : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006. pp.3, 156-8

[688] Rorty does not overtly endorse the argument for "American exceptionalism." His concern is only to emphasize the importance, politically, of identifying with that tradition. The danger re-emerges though in that there is an implicit claim here to the (pragmatic) neutrality of that identification. Such a commitment limits our critical perspective on the present. For an account of the various forms of exceptionalism, see; Ceaser, James W. "The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism" in *American Political Thought*. Vol. 1 (1), 2012

[689] Rorty, Richard "Truth without Correspondence to Reality" in *PSH*, p.24 – Here, Rorty overtly acknowledges such a connection. Further, in this essay many of the themes of Rorty's own philosophy are repeated and interpreted into the American narrative. It thus serves as a fundamental connection between his philosophy and his politics.

[690] See: West, Cornel. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

[691] Rorty, "Truth without Correspondence" op cit. p.27

development. Neither pragmatism nor America desire a specific future, only that it is different from (and better than) the present. Diversity and growth are its deliberatively "fuzzy" ideals.

The shift from the eternal to the future is characteristic of the difference between Europe and America for Rorty. The former, its thought emerging from a privileged leisure class, is concerned with stability over change. In contrast, American thought (Dewey specifically) places philosophy in the service of change. By denying knowledge, it rejects the idea of an extra-cultural foundation to custom. The consequence of this, for Rorty, is the claim that pragmatic thinking is the mode of thought appropriate to democracy; that it is in fact the result of this shift of political structure. Thus, the change of emphasis to the future and away from the permanent and the certain amounts 'to an Americanizing of philosophy.' America, uniquely, 'counts for its "reason and justification" upon the future, and *only* upon the future.'[692] There is a naturalization of the pragmatic perspective and the American project at work here. This is a repetition of the implicit claim to neutrality identified within Rorty's pragmatism in early chapters. The unique danger here is that Rorty links it to the American political project.

> The quest for certainty should be replaced with the demand for imagination – that philosophy should stop trying to provide reassurance and instead encourage what Emerson called "self-reliance". To encourage self-reliance, in this sense, is to encourage the willingness to turn one's back on the past and on the attempt of "the classical philosophy of Europe" to ground the past in the eternal. It is to attempt Emersonian self-creation on a communal scale.[693]

Pragmatic neutrality becomes American exceptionalism. Rorty connects a philosophical argument about a necessary progression in thought to a particular (national) political project. Further, the latter, he freely admits, contains its own set of values. For him, there is a "mythic individualism" in much of this American mythology which understands America itself as a individual changing itself and the world. For example, the emphasis in Emerson is not so much on democracy '... but of private self-creation, of what he called "the infinitude of the private man". Godlike power was never far from Emerson's mind. His America was not so much a community of fellow citizens as a clearing in which Godlike heroes could act out self-written dramas.'[694] The obvious question is: Does this neutralization of a particular set of values not violate his understanding of the contingency of language and culture? Here, Rorty raises a particular set of values above contingency

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[692] Ibid. p.32

[693] Ibid. p.34 – See also, Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Self-Reliance" in *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* op cit.

[694] Rorty, "Truth without Correspondence" op cit. p.26 – See also, West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, pp.12-3. Such an ontology of individual mastery is succinctly summarized in the epitaph to this chapter from Emerson.

merely because they are part of what Cornel West has called "The American Religion of Possibility."[695] This religion is privileged because it is the cultural manifestation of the only form of critical thought after (European) foundations, when the only sense in which one can have an appearance-reality distinction, or make a claim to truth, is in terms of the future. '*The only point in contrasting the true with the merely justified is to contrast a possible future with the actual present.*'[696]

Rorty's *AOC* is steeped in his understanding of this mythology as inaugurating a new project and (pragmatic) relation to the world. Rorty begins that work lamenting contemporary America. For him, it suffers from a deficit in pride. It lacks positive narratives of progress with which to identify. Further, this pride is necessary. He begins, 'National pride is to countries what self-respect is to individuals: a necessary condition for self-improvement.'[697] Drawing on contemporary literature, Rorty argues that contemporary American intellectuals approach America only with mockery and disgust.[698] The consequence is that American intellectuals find pride in America and participation in its politics impossible. Their focus on the violence of American society and history make them incapable of seeing its strengths. As a result, 'this insight does not move them to formulate a legislative program, to join a political movement, or to share in a national hope.'[699] It inspires no action. Rorty's purpose in this work is to contrast two moods and their resulting politics: hope and self-disgust, the reformist and cultural Lefts respectively. For him, the American pragmatic and transcendentalist narratives achieved the former, while contemporary culture suffers from the latter.

Drawing upon Whitman, Dewey, and James Baldwin (among others), Rorty emphasises the necessity of a national narrative and ideal. This image of America was fundamental to the reformist Left in which he identifies a more genuine form of progressive politics. In this account, he argues that the most important element of this narrative is its orientation; it is turned toward the country and project of achieving it as an ideal. This goes back to the function of narrative. As discussed in earlier chapters, there is a fundamental connection between narrative and identity. 'Stories about what the nation has been and should try to be are not attempts at accurate representation, but rather

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[695] West, Cornel and Roberto Unger. *The Future of American Progressivism: An Initiative for Political and Economic Reform*. Boston, US: Beacon Press, 1998. p.6

[696] Rorty, "Truth without Correspondence" op cit. p.39

[697] Rorty, Richard. *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America*. London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1997. p.3

[698] Their understandings, he is quick to assert, draw on and resemble those of Foucault and Heidegger.

[699] Rorty, *Achieving*, op cit. p.8

attempts to forge a moral identity.'[700] The academic Left, in rejecting this narrative, has become spectatorial. It has no vision of where the collective should go. In contrast, Dewey and Whitman offered a "civic religion" for America. Key to this understanding is an assumption of American exceptionalism, which Rorty seemingly endorses. America is unique, not in divine favour, but in pragmatic and anti-authoritarian secularism. Here, a finite, historical project is the object of ultimate significance rather than something eternal. 'They wanted to put hope for a casteless and classless America in the place traditionally occupied by knowledge of the will of God. They wanted that utopian America to replace God as the unconditional object of desire. They wanted the struggle for social justice to be the country's animating principle, the nation's soul.'[701] In this account, democracy, America, and the primacy of consensus are all intertwined in what Dewey called, 'a metaphysic of the relation of man and his experience to nature.'[702] This metaphysic places the democratic individual and collective at the centre. It redefines God as the future and the task of self-creation. Once again using Europe as a contrast, Rorty argues that America chooses hope over knowledge. Rather than searching outside humanity for its meaning and normative standard, it looks to the hope for a better future. In this sense, the American mythology is politics, pragmatized.

Together with the language of tolerance and the mythic individualism discussed above, the distinctiveness of the American project for Rorty is its desire for diversity. Rejecting an external standard for humanity, and replacing it with hope, makes the purpose of our societies an endless diversity of human forms. While the future is the norm, there is no template for it. '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.'[703] Rorty emphasises that this diversity is not the multiculturalism of separate groups preserving themselves from others. Rather, it is about interaction and movement to a greater unity. This is a "variety in unity" where all the different elements create a larger whole. The basic individualism of this account is obvious. For Rorty, to see America specifically and government in general in this manner is to think that the only purpose of social institutions is to make a new sort of individual possible; one who will understand authority only as free consensus amongst a diverse set of citizens. Further, it is the diversity of individuals, which is the aim. For this

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[700] Ibid. p.13

[701] Ibid. p.18

[702] Dewey, John. "Mateterlinck's Philosophy of Life" in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 6 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978). p.135.

[703] Rorty, *Achieving*, op cit. p.24

to be possible Rorty emphasises, a basic equality is necessary. Thus, this is not a project with a foundation to support it, but only an image to offer as an incentive.

With this narrative and normative standard, Rorty redraws the lines within Leftist thought of the late twentieth century. His primary concern is with the divide between leftists and liberals. For Rorty, this division originates within Marxist and socialist elements of the Left. His imperative is to overcome this division and reunite this group. To this end, he offers the label of "reformist Left." This term covers anyone working within the confines of constitutional democracy to "protect the weak from the strong." This group he juxtaposes to the "New Left." Not significantly deviating from the latter's traditional meaning, this term denotes those, from the late 60's on, who did not think it was possible to work for social justice within that system.[704] Through a narrative of the key moments of the reformist Left, an adequate account of which is beyond the present discussion, Rorty describes how this group, 'preached that America could be true to itself only if it turned left—that socialism, in some form or another, was necessary if our country, its government, and its press were not to be bought up by the rich and greedy. The ministers of this national church told America that it would lose its soul if it did not devote itself to "a conscious social ideal".'[705] The language is key here. This movement spoke to the moral identity of America. It claimed it had failed by its own standards.[706] For Rorty, fundamental to this argument is rereading the relationships between movements and figures. Narratives of national hope require synopses of similarities and the ignoring of differences.[707] They require identification with past social movements, not abstract philosophers. Thus, they require the imposition of unity and the disregard of difference.

It is important to emphasize here that while critical of the New Left's break with the Old Left, and its lack of hope in America, Rorty does acknowledge its achievements.[708] Further, he does acknowledge that their civil disobedience and rejection of the liberal-democratic system may have prevented the loss of American democracy. However, it becomes clear throughout this text that while attempting to reconcile diverse elements of the Left, Rorty proceeds entirely on his own terms. For example, 'I think we should abandon the leftist-versus- liberal distinction, along with the other residues of Marxism that clutter up our vocabulary—overworked words like "commodification" and

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[704] This division seems to repeat earlier divides in Rorty between pragmatists and metaphysicians, and liberal and radical thought (see Ch.4)

[705] Rorty, *Achieving*, op cit. p.50

[706] This is the hermeneutic form of cultural critique addressed in Ch.4. This is a form of loyal internal criticism.

[707] Recall Rorty's conception of justice and manner of expanding his "we" (Ch.4).

[708] He also simultaneously critiques and lauds the politics of identity. See: Rorty, *Achieving*, op cit. p.82 and; Rorty, Richard. *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies: A Conversation with Richard Rorty*. Chicago, US: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2002. pp.23-4

"ideology."'[709] What Rorty is suggesting here is a Left without Marxism, a Left without the elements he dislikes. This is not so much a reconciliation but a redefinition of the Left. In this manner, his analysis reflects the confines of his thought. He can only prescribe in terms of his own categories. He can only think within the (pragmatic) confines of his own values.

Rorty's final target in *AOC* are the heirs of the New Left (mainly within the academy).[710] This "Cultural Left" specializes in the "politics of difference/identity." It replaces economic concerns with cultural ones. Beginning an exhaustive history, Rorty concludes that this group is defined by its rejection of reformism. Crossing over with his analysis of Radical thought (Ch. 4), here liberal politics is infected with dubious philosophical presuppositions and, consequently an inherently oppressive mind-set. Thus, rather than concrete opposition, it is opposed to an entire manner of thinking. For the Cultural Left, to resist oppression, we need "otherness[711]." This brings Rorty to his main critical object. For him, otherness impedes our ability to participate in collective politics. A constant attention to otherness and the inherent oppressiveness and illegitimacy of the American state impedes that Left from making alliances and creating the "common dreams" necessary to progressive politics. This requires inspiring images of the country. The focus on otherness divides. It does not provide for the unity needed.[712] For Rorty, such commonality is the necessary condition of progressive politics.

Rorty's argument for the necessity of communal politics and his critique of the Cultural Left is informed by a reading of contemporary global economic and political conditions.[713] For him, the most salient factor is the globalization of the economy and its particular effects on labour. In the West, wage-levels and social benefits enjoyed by workers bear little relation to the increasingly fluid global labour market, leading to the steady immiseration of workers since the 1970s. For Rorty, the issues of industrialization and wage-slavery have re-emerged in a new form with globalization. However, in this instance, the ability of each state to manage or mitigate this situation has disappeared. These dynamics exceed them. Further, a global and cosmopolitan managerial upper-class has emerged that whose interests are served by these new trends and who consistently work against any national attempts to protect labour. Just as in the cultural Left and the

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[709] Rorty, *Achieving*, op cit. p.42

[710] See also, Rorty, "The Unpatriotic Academy" in *PSH*.

[711] For Rorty, this term denotes a cultural, rather than economic, form of oppression. His point is not that it is not a real form of oppression but that an exclusive focus on it proves incapable of genuinely progressive politics. See: Rorty, *Achieving*, op cit. pp.78-82, 92-7

[712] Ibid. p.101

[713] See also, Rorty, "Back to Class Politics" in *PSH*

politics of otherness, cultural issues become the main substance of politics in this context as the actual politics and economics of the situation are avoided by the "international, cosmopolitan super-rich."[714] For Rorty, the Cultural Left has, in its singular focus on otherness and its refusal to engage in the practical affirmative politics of the present nation, ignored this dire situation.

To regain relevance and address these issues, the Left must open relations with the old reformist Left and trade unions. For Rorty, there are two necessary movements. First, the academic Left must "kick its theory habit." Rorty's critique of theory has been addressed in earlier chapters extensively, and so it will not be rehearsed here. However, it is important to understand that his criticism of the Cultural Left and its use of theory centres on its depoliticizing effects. The totalizing level of abstraction of this Foucauldian Left[715] makes it incapable of prescribing specific social and political practices. Instead, in a religious fashion, they mythologize "power" into a ubiquitous presence that haunts every practice. For Rorty, such analyses are obstacles to effective political organization and action. Philosophy in general is not necessary to this project. 'For purposes of thinking about how to achieve our country, we do not need to worry about the correspondence theory of truth, the grounds of normativity, the impossibility of justice, or the infinite distance which separates us from the other. For the purposes, we can give both religion and philosophy a pass. We can just get on with trying to solve what Dewey called "the problems of men."'[716] Second, the cultural Left must also regain national pride through a narrative ideal[717] to be achieved. Only through embracing an ideal for America, and thereby rejecting simple anti-Americanism, can the academy make alliances outside of itself. This entails a shift away from the politics of otherness to focus on our similarities and ignore our differences in order to build a collective.

These two changes result in the imperatives that the Left must become both more reformist and pragmatic (i.e. procedural) in its approach to politics and more narrative and utopian (hermeneutic) in its intellectual culture. For the former, the Left must focus on actual social and political practices and thereby participate in reform. This is where the

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[714] The political need to oppose this upper class is the subject of Rorty's *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies*, op cit.

[715] Foucault and his followers are Rorty's most frequent targets here. For an account of Rorty's various readings and critiques of Foucault, see: Malecki, Wojciech."If Happiness if not the aim of Politics, the what is?" in *Foucault Studies*, No. 11, 2011. And; May, Todd. "A New Neo-Pragmatism: From James and Dewey to Foucault" in *Foucault Studies*, No. 11, 2011. – May argues that, in contrast to the pragmatism of Rorty and Dewey, Foucault's analysis of social practices contains a political element they lack. He illustrates how Foucault could extend this argument in the future.

[716] Rorty, *Achieving*, op cit. p.97

[717] The only narrative possible for Rorty is the narrative of Whitman and Dewey addressed above. Fundamental to this is accepting the present necessity of the nation state. See, Ibid. p.98

country is addressed as it actually is; here, the pragmatic logic rules. Second, it must describe the country in terms of hope, rather than knowledge. In hermeneutic narratives, America must be described as it hopes to be. 'You have to be loyal to a dream country rather than to the one to which you wake up every morning.'[718] This twofold approach, between reform and narrative, repeats Rorty's political division of labour between proceduralism and hermeneutics identified in Ch. 4. By substituting hope for knowledge in this manner, the Left will become an agent rather than a spectator in politics.

Rorty's account here is not without insight. The Left has seemingly failed to successfully oppose the economic trends of the past forty years. This failing is surely connected to the death of the alliance between labour and the academy and the shift of focus, in the New and Cultural Lefts, to the politics of identity. Finally, effective opposition of these trends and their current consequences does require a different set of relations between these groups. However, as discussed below, Rorty's prescriptions ultimately suffer from the self-imposed limitations of this thought. This section has illustrated that Rorty's prescriptions in *AOC* and his use of the American mythology of democracy, are entirely consistent with his philosophy and politics. In fact, they represent the ultimate forms of his ideals. In this sense, this text is the narrativization of Rorty's pragmatic philosophy and his liberal politics.

Hope and Liberation: Rorty's Politics in (a Marcusean) Perspective

Where Rorty reads the New and Cultural Lefts as depoliticized "cultural" politics lost in abstraction, Marcuse uses their manifestation to probe the limits of political thinking.[719] This reveals the extent of their differences. Where Rorty considers only success and failure, or whether they have offered a plausible alternative organization (i.e. pragmatically), Marcuse illustrates the possibility of a critical perspective. He illustrates how these groups reveal the limits of our present society. In this, he turns the focus not onto the legitimacy of their protest, but on the legitimacy of the status quo. This difference reveals the respective standpoints of these two thinkers. Rorty and Marcuse have entirely different relations to the given. They confront the question of the justifiability of the present from within different philosophical and ontological systems. The former's is a pragmatic and naturalistic account of reality and existence. Here, there is a priority of the

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[718] Ibid. p.101

[719] This chapter is not arguing that Rorty's critique of the cultural Left is wholly incorrect while Marcuse's represents a truer understanding. The point in this contrast is to understand the limits of their philosophies for understanding a political event. How Rorty removes an entire level of questioning from his analysis. History may have proven Rorty correct. However, his analysis remains locked into a single dimension and a single mode of understanding politics. As such it may be reflective of the current hegemony. It illustrates the accuracy of Marcuse's identification of the material and intellectual forces of containment discussed above

social and a politics built upon that basis. The latter's is an ontological and materialist account which emphasizes the structured nature of our experience and social and political lives. It necessitates a totalizing vision. However, this perspectival difference does not leave us with mere relativism. Where Rorty attempts to close down the perspectives on the present, Marcuse's thought has the resources to open up our critical encounters. In this manner, they are judged by the consequences of their views. However, this is a more genuine pragmatic criterion; one that judges a philosophy and politics by its consequences within a totality. This section will utilize Marcuse's *An Essay on Liberation* in order to introduce this Marcusean critique of Rorty. It will move beyond that text and back to *ODM* in order to draw together the critical threads of this chapter.

In *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse thinks freedom and change very differently.[720] Discussing the new social forces that emerged in the 1960s and their opposition to the current society, he argues that their salience is not found in a concrete alternative they offer.

> 'None of these forces is the alternative. However, they outline, in very different dimensions, the limits of the established societies, of their power of containment. When these limits are reached, the Establishment may initiate a new order of totalitarian suppression. But beyond these limits, there is also the space, both physical and mental, for building a realm of freedom which is not that of the present: liberation also from the liberties of exploitative order — a liberation which must precede the construction of a free society, one which necessitates an historical break with the past and the present.'[721]

Where Rorty thinks of politics as the pragmatic positing of alternative social practices and forms of organization, Marcuse wants to create a space to think liberation as beyond the present limitations on our collective and individual lives. The significance of opposition movements, in the first instance, is not the alternatives they offer but the limits of the present they expose. It is in this sense that *ODM* and this text argue for a conception of freedom explicitly opposed to the present and the actual. The natural question is: why should freedom be thought in this manner? Why not define it pragmatically in a set of particular conditions (as Rorty does)? The answer is compelling. For Marcuse, freedom must be thought as a contradiction to the present because of the historical nature of reality. The social, economic and intellectual conditions of society change and develop. Liberation must react to these changes. Thus, when Rorty laments the loss of a labour-centred opposition and the excesses of the new countercultural movements, he misunderstands historicism (which he broadly endorses) and its significance. The changing nature of global capitalism has engendered new and different sources of

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[720] The purpose of this section is not to rehearse the entire argument of this text but just to indicate some points useful for criticizing Rorty.

[721] Marcuse, Herbert. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999. p.viii

opposition. Marcuse emphasises that these forces do not replace earlier ones; they provide a new consciousness for freedom.

> 'It is of course nonsense to say that middle-class opposition is replacing the proletariat as the revolutionary class... What is happening is the formation of still relatively small and weakly organized (often disorganized) groups which, by virtue of their consciousness and their needs, function as potential catalysts of rebellion... their consciousness and their goals make them representatives of the very real common interests of the oppressed... in the advanced monopoly-capitalist countries, the displacement of the opposition (from the organized industrial working classes to militant minorities) is caused by the internal development of society.'[722]

A truly historical perspective must accept and respond to changing social, political and economic conditions. To remain critical, freedom must be thought as outside of this shifting present. If it is defined internally according to any particular stabilization of conditions, such as the pragmatic account internal to modernity, one risks circumscribing politics to that universe. Marcuse's point is not that all political activity must be thought in this manner. There is space for the operational and experimental frameworks.[723] His argument is only that this is a necessary dimension of political thought.

The central problem of Rorty's *AOC* is its inability to engage with these changing circumstances in a critical way. While Rorty is surely aware of some dynamics within contemporary global capitalism (i.e. the globalization of labour), he fails to explore new modes of resistance. His solution is more of the same type of politics that failed to prevent these dynamics. The fault here lies within his framework. He contrasts the cultural and Old Lefts in terms of a focus on "sadism" and "greed" respectively.[724] The former is concerned only with cultural violence against "others," while the latter is concerned with the attempts of one class to politically disenfranchise and economically exploit another. This manner of casting the difference between these two groups is indicative of his limitations. While Marcuse would see these as structural responses to new conditions, Rorty understands them culturally and socially.[725] The problem is not a structure or a wider logic, but a culture of greed or sadism. Rorty 's solution to the failure of the Left is to then shift away from the politics of otherness to a "politics of greed." There are two problems here. First, Rorty's account of cultural Left is subject to his own criticism of that group. By reading them socially, he has only understood this group as a cultural response. His vision is constricted in the same way he accuses theirs of being. He ignores how they may be involved in wider dynamics. Second, he creates a false dualism between the "politics of

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[722] Ibid. pp.51-2

[723] Ibid. p.86

[724] Ibid. p.76

[725] Recall Ch.4's criticism of Rorty's liberalism which illustrated that all social change is restricted to the cultural and ethical aspects of society while structural changes are proscribed.

otherness" and pragmatic "reformist politics." He judges a whole by one of its parts and assumes that all philosophical analysis of politics is invalid because he can argue that particular form of it is. Some of his criticisms of the Foucauldian Left may have merit, but those do not prove the general uselessness of philosophy for politics. Assuming they do compromises our resources for critically assessing the American tradition.[726]

The desire to dissociate philosophy from politics structures Rorty's choice here.[727] In this desire, his preference for one type of politics (reformism) and one political group (the Old Left) over others has a philosophical basis. In their use of the American democratic narrative, this method and group represent a pragmatic and liberal approach to politics. There are several key themes here that illustrate this: liberalism as pragmatic tolerance, the individual and diversity, and hope as the future ideal. As previously discussed, Rorty's liberalism depends upon a pragmatic justification. Liberalism has been uniquely successful in arbitrating amongst the variety of groups and individuals in contemporary society. Specifically, its ethos of tolerance, like pragmatism, allows for the encouragement of diversity outside of substantive norms. Rorty's claim is that the pragmatic logic of tolerance allows for a diverse yet non-relativistic form of liberalism. However, this non-substantive claim is compromised by *AOC*. There, Rorty argues that the American democratic myth is a narrative capable of the commonality required of progressive politics. Its democratic emphasis and focus on diversity makes it capable of addressing both economic and cultural issues. In this manner, this myth represents a narrativization of pragmatic and liberal neutrality. However, his attachment to this norm compromises the claim to the pragmatic tolerance of liberalism. Both that narrative and its philosophical justification contain covert values and marginalize others. The individualism of the American myth identified previously thus infects his entire theory. In a particularly telling interview, Rorty clarified his support of diversity. 'I'm thinking of individual difference rather than group difference. I don't care whether anybody thinks of themselves as Vietnamese-American, Italian-American, or Baptist. I would just like them to be free to make up their own lives, in a good Nietzschean manner.'[728] In order to protect the American public realm, alternative collective identities and perspectives must be excluded. Thus, the ideal of American democracy does not embrace or provide for diversity outside of certain bounds. It only values a limited diversity of (American) individuals in an individualistic (i.e. liberal) culture. 'I just don't see what's wrong with the politics of

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[726] Churchill, David S. "Specters of Anti-Communism: Richard Rorty and Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America" in *Canadian Review of American Studies*, Vol. 38 (2), 2008. p.286

[727] This desire structures much of his philosophy and politics.

[728] Rorty, *Against Bosses*, op cit. p.22

individuality, conjoined with the usual attempt to repeal this or that law, overcome this or that prejudice, and so on... Why not narrate a politics of contempt for group difference, a glorification of individual difference.'[729] In Rorty's American ideal, citizens do not only privatize their identities, they reject them. Rather than ignoring differences in favour of similarities, we must reject differences in favour of the unity of the present public. This neutralizes a quite particular narrative and generalizes it to all.

In "Repressive Tolerance," Marcuse argues that the liberal framework of tolerance serves only to reinforce the status quo. While an adequate account of this essay is beyond the present study, it is relevant to note that, here, tolerance is liberating only under certain conditions. A pluralistic, persuasive democracy, where procedures weigh alternatives within an ethos of tolerance, is not sufficient. When meaning is closed, such as in the reduction of thought to the operational, non-public modes of thinking are precluded and genuine tolerance is impossible. 'These conditions invalidate the logic of tolerance which involves the rational development of meaning and precludes the closure of meaning.'[730] Genuine tolerance is rational (i.e. critical). It is critical of the present and its meaning. Pragmatic tolerance is necessarily precluded because it is not critical. In this sense, it is understandable why Rorty's pragmatic and tolerant liberalism ends up repeating the values of the dominant American narrative. His politics of future social hope lacks the critical capacity to transcend them.

Marcuse illustrates that a philosophy focused on the future can only be critical if it exceeds the pragmatic and retains the appearance-reality divide. This is the fundamental difference between Rorty and Marcuse's philosophies. Where this divide depends upon an untenable notion of contact between thought (or language) and world for the former, for Marcuse, it is a necessary presumption of critical thought on the level of totality. As discussed above, the limitation of thought in pragmatic, technological liberalism extends to consciousness and its products. The imagination is compromised. 'The order and organization of class society, which have shaped the sensibility and the reason of man, have also shaped the freedom of the imagination... Between the dictates of instrumentalist reason on the one hand and a sense experience mutilated by the realizations of this reason on the other, the power of the imagination was repressed; it was free [only] to become practical.'[731] Marcuse also sees a key role for the imagination in political change. However, it is an imagination liberated from the present (pragmatic) framework; one that has taken on a "total character." The imagination is only free at the level of totality. In the

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[729] Ibid. pp.25-6

[730] Marcuse, Herbert. "Repressive Tolerance" in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. London, UK: Cape, 1969. p.96

[731] Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, op cit. p.29

circumscribed universe of liberal pragmatism, where thought is restricted to the operational, the imagination loses it capacity. Marcuse makes a similar point regarding hope. Hope is only free when it is a refusal of the actual; when it can dream in languages and thoughts beyond the present.[732] Constricted to the present, Rorty's hope ends up empty. It remains unclear what change it is meant to effect.[733]

A totality is necessary for critical thought. For Rorty, totalizing is apolitical. It prevents opposition to specific practices. For Marcuse, totality conditions how those practices are experienced. As such, a political engagement with totality is a necessary precondition of political action. The appearance-reality divide allows one to analyze a totality. It allows one to identify the formal bias of such a totality. By referring to a historical totality, thought can transcend the current and establish an alternative potentiality of the present outside of a furthering of its present pathway. Operating on this level allows us to think a qualitatively different set of structures and limitations. Totality and potentiality can function as a sort of ground. While not open to confirmation, as their dynamics exceed assured empirical verification, they are theoretically and normatively necessary levels of reality. We cannot assure their contents but only their existence and we must take the political step of characterizing them. For Marcuse, there is no theory-practice divide. Rather, applications of a logic are always intimately connected to the logic itself. They represent one (most likely of many) of its potentialities. There are always multiple possibilities. In this sense, Rorty's philosophy and liberalism are only one set of possible consequences of pragmatic technology. However, it is the position of this thesis that they represent a potentially dangerous dynamic that does manifest in the political world. As such, it is a trend that needs to be critically confronted and *unveiled*.

If we ignore this task, our totality remains under its present, assumed framework. Rorty, in his pragmatic response to the failure of philosophical foundations, fails to understand that contingency requires a political commitment to overturn the present. It requires a commitment to engage with totality. Marcuse is no less aware of contingency and the dangers of purging it from the empirical context. However, the necessary political response to contingency is to acknowledge the historical nature of reality. Conditions will change. The totality will shift. Thus, we require modes of thought that engage that shifting horizon of possibility. The claim to pragmatic neutrality, to the absence of a veil between our determination of the present and its alternative possibilities, obscures this necessary level of analysis. Genuine progress requires more than mere hope.

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[732] Ibid. p.34

[733] Deneen, Patrick J. "The Politics of Hope and Optimism: Rorty, Havel, and the Democratic Faith of John Dewey." in *Social Research*, Vol. 66 (2), 1999. p.578.

> 'To teach what the contemporary world really is behind the ideological and material veil, and how it can be changed… not empathy and feeling, but distance and reflection are required. The "estrangement-effect" (*Verfremdungseffekt*) is to produce this dissociation in which the world can be recognized as what it is.'[734]

It requires the critical distance of a distinction between appearance and reality.

CONCLUSION:

The politics of social hope is Rorty's further elaboration of the cultural side of liberalism. It is meant to be the forum for progress compatible with the pragmatic (i.e. non-substantive) procedures of contemporary liberalism; the means he offers that culture to respond to the present crises (of hope) in the Left. Through an emphasis on the undefined future and the use of hope as ground, it is Rorty's mechanism for a genuinely progressive politics. For him, in pragmatism and modernity, the future replaces the past as the critical standard of philosophy. However, the future, unlike the past, does not immutably ground principles for social change. Rather, its function is to pragmatize social change. With an emphasis on the future, one can only respond to contemporary problems in terms of concrete alternatives (in narrative form). Social hope is the dreaming of those alternatives and method designed to achieve it. Only in this way does the glorious social future serve as a "hypergood" in Rorty's work. However, this chapter has argued that, following Rorty's reduction of politics to a division between a pragmatically justified proceduralism and reformist liberal culture, this politics fails in that role. Hope and the future are compromised by pragmatic conditions. If philosophy is only reactive, can only respond to present tensions, and its (cultural) role is only to offer piecemeal alternatives to that present, it cannot be critical. In this manner, the future is bound by pragmatic limitations. As discussed in earlier chapters, Rorty's philosophy suffers from an inability to connect to the present.[735] Consequently, social change occurs solely through human imagination and its ability to create new languages. The reason for this is the division of duties in Rorty's politics between pragmatic proceduralism and a hermeneutic culture of liberalism. As noted above, imagination and social hope require the frame of pragmatic liberalism to function. Pragmatic proceduralism is the political logic within which piecemeal, social change occurs. Thus, it cannot provide free and critical progress because it lacks the ability to think outside of the political and intellectual categories of the current public.

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[734] Marcuse, *ODM*, p.65

[735] Voparil connects this point to the lack a critical perspective in Rorty. See; *Richard Rorty*, op cit. p.47

Marcuse's philosophy has been essential here. Developing Heidegger and Connolly's critique of pragmatic mastery discussed in Chs. 2 and 3, it has revealed how the pragmatic reduction of thought to the operational and the behavioural (i.e. the scientific) circumscribes the universe of political thinking. This reduction and its rejection of an appearance-reality distinction, veils the partiality and limitations of the pragmatic perspective. It formally biases thinking to the present liberal universe. In this way, the pragmatic framework and logic Rorty imposes on his politics restricts it to liberalism and produces a self-reinforcing mode of thought for that present. Marcuse's work has served two purposes here. First, it has illustrated how Rorty's thought fails to be critical, through the lack of appearance-reality distinction and resulting inability to connect to reality. Second, it has revealed how Rorty's pragmatic, liberal mastery obscures both this circumscription and its implicit claim to neutrality through an ideological mechanism of veiling. The point is not that Marcuse's is the correct perspective; that we should always view things through the lens of an ontological totality. The argument here is only that it is a necessary aspect of a critical politics. One that Rorty's thought excludes in order to naturalize its own restricted vision of philosophy and politics.

This point has been illustrated through a reading of *AOC*. This text represents the mature development of the inherent trend towards critical stagnation and conservatism of Rorty's philosophy. His inability to understand new social movements and conditions outside a previous form of resistance that confirms his philosophy and politics reveals the limitations of his thought. It reveals that thinking of the future solely in terms of a pragmatic assessment of the present circumscribes the critical utopian project. Consequently, Rorty's positive reformist politics ends up as a mere narrativization of his pragmatic philosophy and his liberal tolerance results only in tolerating individuals and politics that fit the mainstream, present public. Once again, Marcuse exposes these limits. Not through a revelation of the truth of these groups but through a different approach which uses those forces to expose the confines of the present. In the end, this is his unique offering: a philosophical orientation which allows for a critical posture to the present. Here, this manifests as a holistic criticism of Rorty that extends to every aspect his philosophy (e.g. instrumentalism, contingency, naturalism, historicism). By tracking the dynamics and trends of one-dimensionality into the major sectors of our social, political and intellectual lives, Marcuse provides unique insight into the unity of Rorty's thought; the connection between his philosophical pragmatism and political liberalism.

> Do we participate in a politics of cynicism or a politics of hope? ... I'm not talking about blind optimism here — the almost wilful ignorance that thinks unemployment will go away if we just don't talk about it, or the health care crisis will solve itself if we just ignore it. No, I'm talking about something more substantial... Hope in the face of difficulty. Hope in the face of uncertainty. The audacity of hope!
>
> Barack Obama, *Democratic National Convention*, 2004

> Here is the danger of too much hope – sceptics are treated like blasphemers, and indifference becomes equal to hate.
>
> *The Boondocks*

INTRODUCTION: THE OPPORTUNITY AND CONFINES OF RORTY'S PERSPECTIVE

The thought of Richard Rorty is enigmatic. Whenever one identifies a critical perspective on some aspect of his work, there is a caveat there designed to elude that line of criticism. Rorty was adept at weaving a pathway through an argument only to return to its beginning to declare it just one more redescription.[736]However, his philosophical self-awareness failed in one manner. While he could skilfully reduce a philosopher's work to a single significance, thereby placing them along a narrative path designed to end with his own pragmatism, he failed to turn this integrative vision on himself. He never managed to see how his entire work, his pragmatic philosophy and liberal politics, all "hung together."[737] This is clearly evident in his autobiographical essay discussed in the introduction to this thesis. In "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids," Rorty radically divided his philosophical and political projects and argued for the impossibility of a total vision. Further, he argued that the imperative now was to remove the desire for some bridging framework overtop of all human activity and accept that, 'it is human solidarity, rather

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[736] See, for example; Rorty, *CIS*, pp.44, 48
[737] The ubiquity of this phrase in his work is perhaps ironic then.

than knowledge of something not merely human, that really matters.'[738]However, Rorty ignored the contradiction here. By placing the human community in the position of a philosophical vision, he reinstituted a common framework connecting his philosophy and politics. While it may not be a metaphysical abstraction, it nonetheless links these two aspects of his work and has allowed this study to investigate the relationship between his philosophy and politics.

The philosophical and political centrality of the human community is Rorty's alternative to foundationalist philosophy and the logics of grounding and unmasking. As discussed above, if in his work on the contingency of language and pragmatic naturalism he drew the limits of thought back to the human community, his work on history, narrative and redescription illustrated the positive pathways open to communities. Thus, the disposition and orientation of those groups becomes fundamental.[739] This thesis has argued that Rorty's pragmatic disposition contains an ontological undercurrent of mastery; one that places the human at the centre of philosophy and politics by assuming that the world and humanity are susceptible to our desires. However, for Rorty, this disposition was characterized by hope. Hope links philosophy and politics, pragmatism and America.

> Pragmatism and America are expressions of a hopeful, melioristic, experimental frame of mind. I think the most one can do by way of linking up pragmatism with America is to say that both the country and its most distinguished philosopher [Dewey] suggest that we can, in politics, substitute hope for the sort of knowledge which philosophers have usually tried to attain. America has always been a future-oriented country, a country which delights in the fact that it invented itself in the relatively recent past.[740]

Philosophy and politics can be linked by a common disposition for him. This disposition of hope attempts to reduce politics, away from universalist principles, to human desires. Further, it locates these desires within the linguistic frameworks of existing communities. The imperative then is the loyal, linguistic reform of the practices of these groups in terms of the values they already hold.[741]

It is this disposition to criticism in the present community that links Rorty with both pragmatism and America. This thesis has followed Cornel West in arguing that from this

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[738] Rorty, Richard. "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" in *PSH*. p.20

[739] Voparil also acknowledges the centrality of vision and orientation for understanding Rorty's thought. See; Voparil, Christopher J. *Richard Rorty: Politics and Vision*. Oxford : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006. p.36

[740] Rorty, Richard. "Truth Without Correspondence to Reality" in *PSH*. p.24 – Here, Rorty nears advocating a version of American exceptionalism around the notion that the former is uniquely capable of a foundationless (and fully pragmatic) politics. See; pp.31-4

[741] Allen, Jonathan. "The Situated Critic or the Loyal Critic? Rorty and Walzer on Social Criticism" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 24 (6), 1998. pp.32-3

disposition, Rorty's work shares common features with pragmatism and this understanding of America. West sums this up well.

> 'American pragmatism is a diverse and heterogeneous tradition. But its common denominator consists of a future-oriented instrumentalism that tries to deploy thought as a weapon to enable more effective action… [this] evasion of epistemology-centered philosophy – from Emerson to Rorty – results in a conception of philosophy as a form of cultural criticism in which the meaning of America is put forward by intellectuals in response to distinct social and cultural crises. In this sense, American pragmatism is … a set of interpretations to explain America to itself at a particular historical moment.'[742]

Rorty formalizes this implicit posture into a pragmatic philosophy and liberal politics in response to the absence of philosophical foundations. He theorizes the present as a new motivational ground. This was the power and originality of Rorty's project. As some commentators have noted, for someone so universally rejected, he was so often discussed. As one obituary described on his death, 'Rorty's enormous body of work, which ranged from academic tomes to magazine and newspaper articles, provoked fervent praise, hostility and confusion. But no matter what even his severest critics thought of it, they could not ignore it.'[743] While we can only speculate as to the exact reason for this, it is the position of this thesis that his project intentionally spoke to and resonated with his communities. He managed, in one body of work, to address several ongoing conversations (e.g. pragmatists, analytic thinkers, philosophers in general, Western liberals, and Americans[744]) and draw them together into one intellectual discourse on how philosophy should connect to politics.

While discussed throughout this thesis, it is necessary to return to the significance and opportunity of Rorty's thought. As briefly discussed in Ch.5, Rorty was attempting to reactivate American culture and politics. He was trying to resurrect an intellectual project, central to American culture, which had been lost. To do this, and in light of his constriction of social criticism to the present, Rorty attempted to formalize the present in his philosophy. He attempted to establish philosophical conditions which limit thought to that conversation and then argue for a form of politics within the American context which only operates within those conditions; the conditions of actual social change. This is his

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[742] West, Cornel. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. London, UK: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. p.5

[743] Cohen, Patricia. "Richard Rorty, Philosopher, Dies at 75." In *The New York Times*, June 11, 2007.

[744] The reactions of most of these groups to Rorty's work have been addressed in some manner in this thesis. His reception from more journalistic sources however, has been passed over. For a succinct summary of this literature, see; Gross, Neil. *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher*. London, UK: University of Chicago Press, 2008. p.25

pragmatic, liberal politics of hope.[745]As represented above in the quotation from President Barack Obama, this language of hope and future are still central to American politics. The success of this rhetoric in the latter's campaigns only further indicates how deeply within America these themes still resonate. This is not meant to suggest that the 44th President of the United States is a Rortian,[746] but only that they are both accessing a dominant language within progressive American politics.[747] It may only be one dynamic, one thread of that conversation. But it is a real and persistent limit on thought.

The implicit connection between Rorty and the frame of current politics is the spur of this study; its prompting intuitive faith. For Heidegger, every thinker only asks one question. This thesis has read Rorty through the connection between philosophy and politics. It has attempted to clarify and critique his answer to the question of the role of philosophy in politics after foundations. Rorty himself permits this type of reading. 'I am a hedgehog who, despite showering my reader with allusions and dropping lots of names, has really only one idea: the need to get beyond representationalism, and thus into an intellectual world in which human beings are responsible only to each other.'[748] If this thesis were reduced to one question, it would be: what are the current limitations of political thinking? What assumptions set those boundaries and barriers? It has attempted to use a critique of Rorty to enact this; to inaugurate a philosophical and intellectual confrontation of the present.

To this end, this study has not sought to pick out particular flaws in Rorty's work but stand back and read it as a totality; to understand its internal dynamics and its external consequences. It has attempted to rigorously connect his philosophy to his politics. Further, contradicting Rorty's mandates for social criticism, it has attempted to recontextualize it out of his context (Anglo-American thought) in order to critically assess

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[745] As noted in Ch. 5, this politics makes narrative essential. For an approach that draws on Rorty's, see; Green, Judith M. *Pragmatism and Social Hope: Deep Democracy in Global Contexts*. Chinchester, UK: Columbia University Press, 2008. Ch. 1

[746] This has been suggested. See; Berkowitz, Peter. "Pragmatism, Obama Style" in *The Weekly Standard Magazine*, Vol. 14 (31), 2009. – It should be noted that this rather reactionary piece of journalism is only cited to note a popular recognition of the similarity between Rorty and President Obama. There is also forthcoming academic work. For example; "Symposium on Obama and Pragmatism", (eds. Colin Koopman and Mark Sanders), *Contemporary Pragmatism*, vol. 8 (2), Dec., 2012.

[747] What West, in another work, has called "the American Religion of Possibility." See, Unger, Roberto Mangabeira and Cornel West. *The Future of American Progressivism: An Initiative for Political and Economic Reform*. Boston, US: Beacon Press, 1998. Ch. 2.

[748] Richard Rorty, "Philosophy as a Transitional Genre" in *Pragmatism, Critique, Judgment: Essays for Richard J. Bernstein* (eds. Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser). Cambridge, US: MIT Press, 2004. p.4 -- Rorty's reference here is to Isaiah Berlin's noted distinction between the hedgehog, who "knows one big thing," and the fox, "who knows many things." See, Berlin, Isaiah. *The Hedgehog and the Fox*. New York, US: Simon and Schuster, 1970. p.1

it on different terms; terms, Rorty rejected. However, this is a very Rortian gesture.[749]How it has done this will be addressed below, it is important presently to indicate what it has hoped to expose through this.

This thesis has often accused Rorty of attempting to formalize a pragmatism, naturalism and instrumentalism he sees as already operative within social communities. This is his language of "how justification actually occurs;" his sociological and pragmatic eliding of philosophy. This strategy reintroduces a claim of neutrality in his work. Further, this neutrality contradicts his very framing of the problem of liberalism and foundations, as a problem of combining individual development with collective justice. This tension in the combination of these two projects is a particularly American one which, on Rorty's understanding, is central to the context of American democracy. However, Rorty is entirely comfortable with this particularity. He can, on his own method, only speak within the terms of his community. This is a self-imposed restriction of his thought to a particular community. Nevertheless, as illustrated throughout this thesis, he does have a basic philosophical disposition (mastery) and method (the pragmatist-historical method) which shapes the project he offers his community. This disposition produces the aforementioned claim to neutrality by placing the human, beyond foundations, at the centre of our epistemological and political lives. There is a circularity here. Rorty uses a neutralized understanding of enquiry, to justify a particular (and limited) form of politics. And that limited form of politics ensures the conditions for this way of knowing the world (the priority of the pragmatic and the privatization of other forms of thinking). In this manner, he creates a *Rortian circle[750]* by providing for the (pragmatic) epistemological conditions for a liberal politics and the (liberal) political conditions for a pragmatic form of knowledge. He walks into a social and intellectual dynamic, designed to match how he thinks justification occurs, with no exit. In this manner, Rorty's narrative of the American present, which exists within this account, comes to dominate his thought.[751]

THE ONTOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF RORTY

Through the ontological perspective, this thesis has recontextualized Rorty by removing him from his self-imposed universe of thought and revealing the hidden dynamics of both his philosophy and his context. This perspective is not a universal

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[749] While this contradicts Rorty's description of the loyal critic, I have called this gesture Rortian as he often uses it on the philosophers he reads.

[750] This circle represents the closure of the political universe theorized in Ch. 5 in the work of Marcuse.

[751] West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, op cit. p.209

criterion of critique but an ontological double-entry form of questioning meant to retain critical ground from within an acknowledgement of the partiality of all revelations of Being. This questioning has intended to show the limits of Rorty's thought, philosophically and politically. Further, it has intended to reveal the mechanisms whereby those limitations are imposed *and* obscured. It has argued that Rorty's work is characterized by an anti-foundational rejection of ontology for philosophical and political reflection. Instead, Rorty offers a pragmatic understanding of the primacy of the social community in these two areas. Further, our social lives are constrained by the contingency (and priority) of language and situatedness in a naturalized environment. Consequently, the only way to shift our communities, to enact social and political change is through changing our languages and the narratives that inform those communities. Thus, politics must match these constraints and model itself on a division of labour between a procedural and reformist set of practices and institutions that avoid philosophical assumptions and a hermeneutic politics of hope that, by speaking loyally to the community in its present, can shift its language and narrative to effect progressive change. Finally, for Rorty, America represents an attempt at this pragmatic politics of the future.

Ch.1 situated Rorty within his initial critiques of epistemology and the philosophy of mind. It argued that Rorty's method here was to sociologically circumvent the epistemological question by focusing on the manner in which justification and linguistic change occurs within human groups. It then examined Rorty's relation to the philosophy of John Dewey from whom Rorty draws a basic ontological disposition of instrumentalism. Paired with his emphasis on the social, Rorty's use of Dewey reveal a basic social instrumentalism in his philosophy; one that constricts his thought rather than opening it up as his hermeneutic of freedom intended. All of this is prompted by a basic anti-authoritarianism in Rorty's philosophy that attempts to put human communities at the centre of our epistemology and politics (rather than some external standard). This analysis continued in Chs.2 and 3 through an examination of Rorty's positive pragmatic philosophy. By confronting Rorty with the critique of mastery, the three central elements of his pragmatism (contingency, naturalism, and historicism) were illustrated. Ch.2 critically confronted Rorty's opposition to ontology and theorization of the contingency of language with the work of William E. Connolly. Connolly's double-entry orientation to ontological thought, understanding of contestability and ontology of ambiguity reveals the social foundationalism within Rorty's positive thought. Further, Rorty's domestication of contingency in his reading of Heidegger revealed his turn to a disposition of mastery which furthered the instrumentalism identified in Ch.1. Finally, this chapter introduced

the language of the veil and the argument for the necessity of ontologically accounting for the partiality of all of our understandings of reality. Ch.3 extended these arguments into Rorty's naturalism and historicism. Through readings of Heidegger and Connolly on modernity, it illustrated the effects of Rorty's mastery. Rorty assumes that truth is one, that the world is available for unproblematic pragmatic use and that no assumptions or limitations enter. Further, the ontological perspective was developed here by illustrating how it allows us to understand the mechanisms of exclusions that exist within modernity and Rorty's work. Thus, it is through an analysis of these themes that the veiling mechanism of neutrality is revealed in Rorty's work. Through a purported lack of metaphysics, Rorty assumes the pragmatic neutrality of his conceptions and obscures their own partiality. He reduces any particularity to culture and ignores their philosophical significance.

Finally, in Chs.4 and 5, this thesis connected Rorty's anti-ontological pragmatism to his *procedural* liberalism. It argued that the same mechanism of veiling and resulting claim to pragmatic neutrality operates in both. After metaphysics, philosophy can only be pragmatic (i.e. concrete, piecemeal problem-solving) and politics can only be procedural and liberal (i.e. without permanent substantive content). In this, liberalism is the political formalization of the acknowledgement of human finitude within pragmatic mastery. It was argued here that this position, and Rorty's resulting public-private divide, serves only to exclude non-pragmatic and non-liberal forms of political thinking through two divisions of labour: one, between public and private which constricts political thinking to the present framework, and a second within the public between procedural and hermeneutic modes of thinking. The latter division is meant to provide for the possibly of social change but only within the pragmatic and reformist logic of social criticism that places the philosopher primarily within the thought of their community (Ch.4). Finally, through a confrontation with Herbert Marcuse's critique of the one-dimensionality of the contemporary universe of thought (in Ch.5), it became clear that rather than opening thinking, Rorty's political pragmatism restricts thought to the present range of options. His philosophy of the future and politics of hope is still bound by the philosophical and political confines of the present. Rather than providing a basis for political criticism, they deepen the present thinking and structure. What Rorty offers in his philosophical pragmatism and political liberalism is not a method for cultural change but a self-reinforcing mode of thought for contemporary liberalism. His liberal attempt to provide for a political framework without philosophical predetermination fails. In his pragmatic elaboration and justification of mastery (philosophy) and liberalism (politics) he obscures the deep connections between his

philosophy and his politics. In opposition, this thesis has argued for the necessity of ontology for a truly critical, political form of questioning.

POSITIVE PATHWAYS: TOWARDS A CRITICAL PLURALITY

Ontology is the attempt to gesture outside of the present universe at its widest. However, the ontological perspective is both necessary and insufficient to this task. It is necessary for a genuinely critical approach to the thought and politics of our present. However, it is insufficient to complete this. Several productive pathways for the future have emerged in the course of this study. All of these have been encountered in some form here. This final section will briefly indicate a few.

While the reading of Dewey above, which identified him as the sources of instrumentalism in Rorty, was generally critical, there are also great resources in his work for thinking the use of philosophy in politics. While also embracing a language of social hope, Dewey's political philosophy asserts the need for a non-foundational critical ground to thought. He rooted this within a form of critical intelligence based in the instrumental method. This thesis has not intended to reject this approach entirely but to reveal its problematic mechanisms in Rorty where it becomes the only disposition. Combined with other forms of thinking, in a pluralistic critical methodology, Dewey's thought offers a critical form of democratic thinking that attempts to move democracy beyond the institutional[752] to a genuinely critical method of reform.[753] While this thesis has emphasized the necessity of exceeding the present, it has also noted its insufficiency. We cannot engage in perpetual revolution, a critical logic of reform is also necessary. Thus, Dewey's work could provide some of the resources for thinking one aspect of this pluralistic, critical form of political thought.

This thesis has only broached the possibilities of a disclosive critique of society. Further, it has by no means meant to suggest the sufficiency of Heidegger and Connolly's work here. Both offer us the possibility of an orientation. However, their critical resources tend to remain on the level of entire revelations of being rather than specific practices.

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[752] See: "Democracy and Education" in *The Middle Works of John Dewey vol. 9* (ed. Jo Ann Bordston) Carbondale, US: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980; and "Philosophy and Democracy" in *The Essential Dewey Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy* (ed. Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M Alexander). Indianapolis, US: Indiana University Press, 1998; and, "Reconstruction in Philosophy" in *The Middle Works of John Dewey Vol. 12* (ed. Jo Ann Boyston) Carbondale, US: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982.

[753] While Dewey's philosophy has the capacity for some change, at least on the reformist level, Rorty's loses that capacity through his absolute detachment of philosophy from the world. Rorty's instrumentalist disposition becomes paired with a social foundationalism which isolates it from anything transcending that community. It becomes entirely immune to critique in this way. Its public goes unchallenged. In contrast, Dewey's attempt to think democracy as a wider project of education and culture is a valuable source of political criticism.

This is not so much a flaw as an incompletion. Marcuse, in parts of his work, makes significant strides toward such a perspective. But he also remains on the level of totality.[754] There are two productive possibilities here for rounding out a plural critical perspective that can operate on multiple levels of thought. First, Critical Theory, long dominated by Habermasians who have rejected the broad project of a critical theory of society, has been murmuring. Recently, Nikolas Kompridis has attempted to re-orient the project of this school towards disclosure. Attempting to evade the binary between locking us within our traditions and assuming we can transcend them, he theorizes a more reflective approach to modernity; one that acknowledges the need to look to the future for our normative guide while retaining a critical perspective on the present. To this end, he attempts to wed the project of critical theory to a Heideggerian logic of disclosure.[755] In this manner, his work is in the same spirit as the above wedding of Heidegger and Marcuse.

Further, recently there have been attempts to examine the compatibility of pragmatism and Foucault. While this work often also addresses William James and Rorty's connections to Foucault,[756] the most significant focus has been on Foucault and Dewey. These analyses tend to focus on the common opposition in these figures to traditional epistemology and philosophical dualisms, and the attempt to offer a new critical method for studying concrete social practices. For example, Colin Koopman, central to this movement, argues that pragmatism and genealogy need each other. Pragmatism focuses generally on the positive reconstruction of problematic situations. It is "forward-facing." In contrast, genealogy exposes and articulates the problematizations which condition the possibilities of doing, thinking and being in the present world.[757] It is "backward-facing."

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[754] However, there is room for a productive dialogue between Marcuse and Dewey. While the latter never engaged with the former, Marcuse did review one of Dewey's books. While critical, Marcuse does note that Dewey gestures beyond other pragmatisms toward a "material logic of ends." See: Marcuse, Herbert. " Review of John Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Enquiry*" (trans. Phillip Deen) in *Transactions of the Charles S Peirce Society*, vol. 46 (2), 2011; and, Deen, Phillip."Dialectical vs. Experimental Method: Marcuse's Review of Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Enquiry*" in *Transactions of the Charles S Peirce Society*, vol. 46 (2), 2011.

[755] Kompridis, Nikolas. *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory Between Past and Future*. London, UK: The MIT Press, 2006. For an account of Kompridis, see; Sinnerbrink, Robert. "The Future of Critical Theory? Kompridis on World-disclosing Critique" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 37 (9), 2011. Axel Honneth too, in recent years, has hinted at the need for a reorientation of the project of Critical Theory. See his: "The Social Dynamic of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today" in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007; and, " The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique of Society: The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in Light of Current Debates in Social Criticism" in *Disrespect*, op cit.

[756] Malecki, Wojciech. "If Happiness is not the aim of politics, then what is?: Rorty versus Foucault" in *Foucault Studies*, no. 11, 2011; and Edmonds, Jeffrey S. "Criticism Without Critique: Power and Experience in Foucault and James" in *Foucault Studies*, no. 11, 2011; Marchetti, Sarin. "James, Nietzsche and Foucault on Ethics and the Self" in *Foucault Studies*, no. 11, 2011.

[757] In this focus, genealogy is clearly linked to Heidegger's ontological questioning discussed above. For an examination of this, see; Rayner, Timothy. *Foucault's Heidegger: Philosophy and Transformative Experience*. London, UK: Continuum, 2007; Milchman, Alan and Alan Rosenberg (eds.). *Foucault and Heidegger: Critical Encounters*. Minneapolis, US: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

> In fact, pragmatism and genealogy need one another. Any full-scale practice of critical inquiry requires the fulfillment of both intellectual desiderata of reconstruction and problematization – hence critical inquiry calls for something like pragmatism that provides a reconstructive service as well as something like genealogy that performs a diagnostic service. To perform only one of these services is to chagrin the responsibilities we have assumed in embracing the task of thought as work. We must kick up the dust, and then work to settle it again. We must meliorate in the midst of a problem, and then look hard to see what new problems we may have inadvertently facilitated.[758]

Reconstruction and problematization. In the combination of genealogy and pragmatism, Koopman and others are attempting to develop a more holistic form of critical inquiry.

This thesis has not argued for the sufficiency of the ontological perspective to our political lives. Rather, it has only defended that form of thought from Rorty and anti-foundationalism. It has argued that an ontological analysis can identify real assumptions and limitations on political thinking. Beyond this, philosophy has other roles to play in the world. There is a need for a critical, methodological pluralism in the theoretical analysis of politics; many perspectives that identify different aspects or dynamics within the world. In the end, such an orientation is exactly what Rorty's pragmatic philosophy and political liberalism preclude. As I hope to have indicated here, there is much more to do. This study of Rorty has been the initial step in this process of learning to think outside the confines of the present.

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[758] Koopman, Colin. "Foucault and Pragmatism: Introductory Notes on Metaphilosophical Methodology" in *Foucault Studies*, no. 11, 2011. p.6. See also: Koopman, Colin. *Pragmatism as Transition: Historicity and Hope in James, Dewey, and Rorty* London, UK: Columbia University Press, 2009; Stuhr, John. *Pragmatism, Postmodernism, and the Future of Philosophy*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2003; Stuhr, John. *Genealogical Pragmatism: Philosophy, Experience, and Community*. Albany, US: SUNY Press, 1997; May, Todd. "A New Neo-Pragmatism: From James and Dewey to Foucault" in *Foucault Studies*, no. 11, 2011; Rabinow, Paul. "Dewey and Foucault: What's the Problem?" in *Foucault Studies*, no. 11, 2011.

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