

# Reason Papers

*A Journal of Interdisciplinary Normative Studies*

## Rethinking Foundationalism: Metaphilosophical Essays

Edited by Gregory R. Johnson and Glenn A. Magee

Preface ..... *Gregory R. Johnson and Glenn A. Magee*

### *Articles*

- Founding Philosophy..... *Stanley Rosen*  
Philosophy Without Foundations..... *G.B. Madison*  
Phenomenology and the Foundationalism Debate..... *John J. Drummond*  
Foundations, Rationality, and Intellectual Responsibility:  
A Pragmatic Perspective..... *Sandra B. Rosenthal*  
Deconstructing Foundationalism and the Question of  
Philosophy as a Systematic Science..... *William Maker*  
Hegel's Remedy for the Impasse of  
Contemporary Philosophy..... *Richard Dien Winfield*  
Self-Referential Arguments in Philosophy..... *Steven Yates*  
Evidience and Justification..... *David Kelley*  
Systematic Pluralism and the Foundationalism  
Controversy..... *Walter Watson*

### **About the Contributors**

### *Discussion Notes*

- Game Theory and the Virtues: The New and Improved  
Narrowly Compliant Disposition..... *Grant R. Brown*  
*Ei Tu Quoque?* Rationalism Reconsidered..... *Paul F. Sigal*

### *Book Section*

- David L. Norton's *Democracy and Moral Development:  
A Politics of Virtue*..... *Mark Turiano*  
Michael D. Bayles' *Procedural Justice*..... *Clifton Perry*

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Preface ..... *Gregory R. Johnson and Glenn A. Magee* 2

## **Articles**

Founding Philosophy..... *Stanley Rosen* 3

Philosophy Without Foundations..... *G.B. Madison* 15

Phenomenology and the Foundationalism Debate..... *John J. Drummond* 45

Foundations, Rationality, and Intellectual Responsibility:  
A Pragmatic Perspective..... *Sandra B. Rosenthal* 73

Deconstructing Foundationalism and the Question of  
Philosophy as a Systematic Science..... *William Maker* 95

Hegel's Remedy for the Impasse of  
Contemporary Philosophy..... *Richard Dien Winfield* 115

Self-Referential Arguments in Philosophy..... *Steven Yates* 133

Evidence and Justification..... *David Kelley* 165

Systematic Pluralism and the Foundationalism  
Controversy..... *Walter Watson* 181

## **Discussion Notes**

Game Theory and the Virtues: The New and Improved  
Narrowly Compliant Disposition..... *Grant A. Brown* 207

*Et Tu Quoque?* Rationalism Reconsidered..... *Paul T. Sagal* 219

## **Book Section**

David L. Norton's *Democracy and Moral Development:*  
*A Politics of Virtue*..... *Mark Turiano* 225

Michael D. Bayles' *Procedural Justice*..... *Clifton Perry* 237

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## *Preface*

*This issue of Reason Papers* is dedicated to the task of "Rethinking Foundationalism." Since the project of foundationalism has been central to modern philosophy from its inception, the task of rethinking foundationalism is an ideal starting point for the task of rethinking philosophical modernity as such. And, since modern philosophy figures itself out against the background of classical philosophy -- just as postmodernity configures itself against the ground of modernity -- rethinking philosophical modernity requires us to rethink philosophy as such. Hence our subtitle: "Metaphilosophical Essays."

What is the necessity of such a task? Here is one possible argument. Phenomenology and Gestalt psychology have revealed a deep, structural necessity in consciousness: to do any familiar activity is not to reflect upon it; to reflect upon it is not to do it. In doing, our focal awareness is directed toward what is to be done, not toward our activity of doing it. When playing the piano, we focus on the piece being played, not on the individual finger movements. Because of this, all human action, cognitive or practical, tends to be naïve. In turning toward its proper objects, human action turns away from reflection on itself. In gaining the world, we lose ourselves. And in losing account of ourselves, we lose responsibility and autonomy. Philosophy is the recovery of human autonomy and responsibility from naïveté. Philosophy thinks what is unthought in all worldly activities; philosophy is thinking about thinking itself. But if philosophy is truly to think about thinking without simply duplicating the naïveté of ordinary life on a higher level, then *philosophy must think about itself*. It must become metaphilosophy.

Now this account of the necessity of metaphilosophy is itself metaphilosophical and would not gain the assent of some of our contributors. Our purpose here, however, is not to set out a single metaphilosophical approach, but rather to gather together a set of synoptic statements representing the plurality of metaphilosophical options. In this we have not been fully successful. Some approaches are represented twice while others are conspicuous by their absence. We would have liked, for instance, to have included papers representing such perspectives as Popper and Bartley's evolutionary epistemology; feminism; social-linguistic pragmatism in the tradition of Quine, Sellars, Putnam, Davidson, and Rorty; Thomism; and process philosophy in the tradition of Whitehead, Hartshorne, and Weiss. Our ignorance of Eastern philosophical traditions is, of course, scandalous. We hope, however, that we can rectify these gaps in the future, that this issue will be the first installment of a larger project.

In addition to the authors and financial contributors, we wish to thank professor Tibor R. Machan for making this project possible and Mark Turiano for making it actual. We wish to dedicate this issue to the memory of Ludwig M. Lachmann (1906-1990), Michael Oakshott (1901-1990), and J.G. Merquior (1941-1991).

Gregory R. Johnson  
Glenn A. Magee

*Athens, GA Sept. 1991*

## FOUNDING PHILOSOPHY

Stanley Rosen

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The English noun *foundation* is derived from the Latin verb *fundo, fundare*: to set up, to establish. We may found a city by deciding to build it on a certain geographical spot; the building is subsequent to the decision. To found by decision is to set the mind in a certain way, to take something for something else, to assert an intention, to hold oneself in readiness to act in such and such a way. Buildings are artifacts that we produce as the result of a decision. The founder decides that his followers will live in a certain location; he sanctifies the ground and calls the city into being, but without producing any artifacts distinct from his pronouncements.

One could easily imagine a case in which a city is founded but never built; the site has been selected and the decision sanctified, yet the founder and his followers may be destroyed by an unexpected enemy before they are able to erect a single structure. The act of founding is here almost, but not quite, a phantom, waiting, perhaps forever, for some descendents of the slaughtered troops, the children of their children left in another town, or the children of these children -- someone may some day, having heard of the original founding, arrive at the site in order to bring the physical city into existence. Or consider the case of the soldier who decides that, from this moment forward, he will face the exigencies of battle with resolute courage, come what may, no matter how desperate his situation. All of his acts are henceforward founded in this decision, yet he builds nothing; in the extreme case, he may even do nothing but die suddenly by an unexpected blow from behind. Can we say that such a man died bravely or resolutely? If the decision was genuinely taken, then I

believe that we must, even though the man did not act on the foundation he established.

Unbuilt cities and principles that are never acted on: these are, of course, extreme examples of founding. I intend them, not to serve themselves as the foundation for an elaborate theory, but as evidence of the ambiguity of the concept "foundation." One can found without building, producing, or acting. We found ourselves by taking a stand in preparation for building, producing, or acting. Although the etymology is entirely spurious, we may nevertheless say that the inner logic of the concepts legitimates the claim that we find ourselves by founding ourselves in the properly grounded sense of the term. The foundation is the ground we stand on, as for example when we gaze at the stars on a clear night, or when we look instead into our souls in order to determine who we are.

What would it mean to be a person without foundations? Let us return to the example of the soldier; only now we imagine that he has failed to establish his mental or spiritual attitude toward danger and death. This soldier is neither brave nor cowardly, nor does he respond in accordance with any other principle, for example, that of expediency. He has not found himself; he cannot find what has not been established, nor can he even begin to look without deciding that there is something to be found. This latter decision is that of the skeptic, or more fully, of the man who looks to see what can be found. Skepticism is itself a founding or establishing oneself in a certain direction, which is possible only if we first come to a stand.

Our soldier is not a skeptic. He is the paradigm of the contingent individual: neither here nor there. One could not therefore say that he is a man of such and such a type; to use an old-fashioned expression for our own purposes, he lacks bottom. In the midst of battle, this soldier does not act; he only reacts, as for example by falling to the ground when he is shot. The brave man dies nobly; the coward dies basely. But the contingent man cannot properly be said to die; he is "terminated" or (still more brutally) "put down." This is the technical language of the contemporary adventure film, where the adventure consists largely of numerous acts of "termination" by a hero who is at least defined by his motives, however detached these become from his acts by the technical language that sterilizes them of any human content.

To be "put down" is to be transformed into a brute, or indeed, into an object. We put down a package on the table; we put down our shoes on the floor. In the adventure film, the hero "puts down" his victims, who are not human beings but obstacles to his progress. In the case of the radically contingent man, it is appropriate to speak of his being "put down" (more appropriate than to say that he has been "terminated with

extreme prejudice"). He has no foundation; hence he cannot stand or be kept erect. His falling to the ground is a motion of no significance, not a human act. Here *zu Grunde gehen* is an ungrounded dissolution. The radically contingent man was already dissolving before the bullet took his life. The bullet is the consequence of a founding; the undergoing of its impact is not.

This extreme example, different from the first two, is nevertheless equally instructive. The purpose of the first set of examples was to demonstrate that founding is independent of constructing artifacts, that is, entities separate from and produced by the act of founding itself. The purpose of the second example was to demonstrate that there are in fact no radically contingent human beings. Human life is founded; it is *foundational*.

What then does it mean to speak of "philosophy without foundations"? Are we to assume that philosophy is disconnected from human life? Even on the extreme hypothesis that philosophy is a life-long preparation for dying, the assumption cannot be sustained. The person who spends his life preparing to die has founded himself in a decision that regulates his thoughts and deeds. This foundation does not require the construction of what professors call an epistemology; one way in which to prepare to die is by discovering that knowledge is impossible, or in less extreme terms, that we cannot know that we know.

The serious question is not whether philosophy has foundations, but whether we found philosophy or it founds us. It would seem that this question cannot be pursued until we come to some decision as to the nature of philosophy. But this is, I think, an illusion; the desire to grasp the nature of philosophy is already a consequence of philosophy. The desire to know is not a tenet in a doctrine. Conversely, there is no useful doctrine of the desire to know that is not itself rooted in that desire.

These very simple reflections lead to the following thesis. We do not arrive at philosophy from the outside, as if we had encountered some external and initially alien entity on a voyage to a foreign land, or a monument the identity and significance of which must be determined by consulting a guide-book. In somewhat different terms, there is no method for the construction of philosophy, as if philosophy were the parts of an amplifier that come to us in the mail, together with instructions for their assembly. *Philosophy founds us*. This is my understanding of Aristotle's assertion at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* that all men desire by their nature to know.

This assertion is sometimes taken to be a demythologized version of the Platonic doctrine of Eros, according to which philosophy is the love of wisdom. I note in passing that *philia* or friendship is not the same as eros or erotic love. This apart, Eros is a daimon or a god who comes to us



from outside ourselves, but in response to our natural desires. The sense of the Platonic doctrine is in a way quite close to the typical axiom of modern philosophy: man is by nature desire for what he lacks. But Eros is not simply the expression of this desire or the attempt to satisfy it. Eros is a force that leads us to recollect what we possessed, or what we encountered, prior to our incarnate, human existence. Eros corrects or redirects our desires. Apart from Eros, desire does not know what it craves.

It would be possible to say that for Plato, man does not desire by his own nature, or by his own nature alone, to know. Eros is of course not "supernatural" in the Christian sense, but it expresses a bifurcation within nature between the human and the divine. The bifurcation is at the same time a root, as Diotima indicates in the *Symposium* when she calls Eros an intermediary who "interprets" the commands of the gods to mortals and the desires or prayers of mortals to the gods. Mortals and immortals are both natural; they are two different aspects of the cosmos, and so of the order of *physis*. Eros is the binding together of the two aspects. This binding takes place within human nature. Man is accordingly the expression of the bifurcation in nature, an expression that constitutes the bond itself.

Without man, there would be no cosmos but only a universe. Man is for Plato the measure of all things in the sense that Eros uses human nature to measure the cosmic order. Eros founds human nature in philosophy. In Aristotle, on the contrary, there are no daimons or intermediaries of this sort. The cosmic gods are indifferent to mankind. Even if one thinks of the active intellect, or of *noesis tes noeseos*, as the bond of the cosmos, *nous* is a *dynamis*, not a daimon. The power of *nous* is actualized in the species-form, not in the individual soul. There is no counterpart in Aristotle to Plato's poetical descriptions of the blessedness of the individual philosophical soul. The blessedness of Aristotle's *bios theoretikos* lies in pure contemplation, and so in the disappearance of the individual soul within the pure eidetic activity of the active intellect.

What then does Aristotle mean when he says that all men desire by nature to know? The only example he gives is that of the senses, which he says we esteem for their own sake, and in particular the sense of sight, whether or not action is contemplated. Aristotle goes on to derive memory from sensation and from this, experience, which gives rise to art (*techné*) and calculative reasoning (*logismos*). The impression is thus generated that philosophy arises as a consequence of the gradual perfection of our natural faculties.

There is of course a distinction in Aristotle between the human and the divine; but human being is no longer understood as the expression of a bifurcation within nature, and so the "desire" (*oreksis*) to know is no

longer the cosmic bond of Eros. As we have just seen, if there is a cosmic bond, it is *nous*, not *oreksis*, and the *nous* of god, not the passive intellect of mankind, and certainly not human desires, sensations, fantasies, moods, and so on.

It should not be forgotten that there is in Plato a strong tendency to conceive of philosophy as a preparation for dying (*Phaedo*) or as total obliviousness to the human as human (*Theaetetus*); more generally, there is a tendency to conceive of philosophy as the striving for extinction of human awareness in a pure vision of Platonic Ideas. This is the Platonic basis for Aristotle's doctrine of *theoria*, or the thinking of pure forms. In another context, one would have to decide the ultimate significance of Plato's poetic celebration of the blessedness of the philosophical life. According to Plato, human beings are incapable of wisdom. Aristotle is not so modest; he speaks of his "first philosophy" or knowledge of the highest principles and causes as wisdom (*sophia*).

Whatever may be Plato's final opinion, this much is clear. In Aristotle, human beings are capable of wisdom; the gods are not jealous, as Aristotle puts it. This means that human beings may live the life of the gods, or of the god of the philosophers: our humanity may be overcome in the common accessibility of *noesis tes noeseos*, of thinking thinking itself. In other words, we do not become divine by engaging in thinking *about* thinking, as for example by constructing psychological or epistemological doctrines. Divinity is thinking itself, the activity of pure thinking, which we achieve in the actualizing of forms.

I want to make one more remark about Aristotle. There is no Aristotelian psychology, and thus no epistemology, because thinking has no structure or form. One can of course describe the consequences of thinking, or analyze the steps taken by thinking after these steps have been accomplished. But thinking is not the steps that it takes, just as it is not the form of what it thinks. Thinking is possible only because it is formless, and so can assume the form of whatever it thinks. Thinking is not a privation; it is *nothing* that can become anything.

This is not a scholarly interpretation of Plato and Aristotle, and I leave it at the following observation. One could say that since for Aristotle the desire to know is natural, philosophy is accordingly founded by nature. So too is wisdom, or the satisfaction of that desire. The bifurcation in nature, vividly present in Plato, is muted or absent in Aristotle. For Plato, the cosmos is the highest, deepest, and most comprehensive expression of our desire. *But this desire cannot be satisfied.* This is why philosophy is for him a way of life; there is no separation for Plato between the *bios theoretikos* and the *bios praktikos*. To philosophize is necessarily to live as a human being who strives to become divine. For Aristotle, on the other hand, the cosmos is not the expression of human desire but the sign

of its satisfaction. To understand this is to live the theoretical life, or to cease to be merely human.

I come back now to the question of the foundation. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel objects to what one can call the Platonic thesis that it is impossible to love what one does not know. If this objection is taken literally, it means, not that philosophy must eventually be replaced by wisdom, but that philosophy is already wisdom. A Hegelian could reply as follows: philosophy is potential wisdom. We initially know only imperfectly what we love; as our love deepens, so too does our knowledge of the beloved. This argument is not entirely convincing, as reflection upon our own love affairs makes clear. Knowledge of the beloved may become radically more imperfect as familiarity increases.

It would be more plausible to maintain that the actualization of potential wisdom runs the risk of begging the question: we end up with a detailed rationalization of what we desired, and so believed ourselves to know in the first place. To say this, however, is to grant part of the force of the Hegelian contention. There is something incorrigible about desire, whether understood as love or friendship. My thirst is a craving for liquid of a certain kind; I may know nothing of the chemical composition of a suitable liquid, and drink poison by mistake. Nevertheless, I did not desire the poison, but (let us say) water.

In the case of love for another human being, the example is even more vivid. The person I desire may be unsuitable for me; should my love be returned, the results could be disastrous. But one cannot simply say that I love the wrong person. I have not made a mistake about which person I love; my error lies in a lack of understanding of the character of that person. In the *Philebus*, Socrates argues that there are false pleasures, namely, those that arise from an illusion or an object which we have erroneously identified. But this argument assimilates opinion (*doksa*) to pleasure; the error lies in the opinion about the pleasure, not in the pleasure itself. Someone can explain to me that I love the wrong person, and I can accept this judgment even while continuing to be possessed by that love.

For reasons of his own, Socrates wishes to "rationalize" pleasure as much as possible. That is to say, he wishes to subordinate pleasure to judgment or opinion. But love is not an opinion; strictly speaking, it is not even a pleasure, or not merely a pleasure, both because it includes pain and because it is something much more than pleasure or pain. Whatever else love may be, it is need, and a need that is founded by, even though it does not originate in, the beloved. More precisely: in our example, love is the need of one human being for another. But this need, although it originates within, and even defines, the lover, does not

activate itself. I must "fall in love" or "be overcome by love."

These examples suggest an important inference. The love of knowledge is not knowledge, any more than the love of wisdom is wisdom. And yet, just as the lover is defined or founded by the nature of his beloved, so too the lover of knowledge is founded by knowledge and the lover of wisdom by wisdom. The philosopher, as founded by wisdom, is wise, albeit not in the same sense as the Aristotelian or Hegelian sage. This is what Socrates means when he says in the *Philebus* (16c1ff) that the road (*hodos*), on which everything we possess by *techné* has been discovered, is a gift from the gods, thanks to some Prometheus, who has cast it down to us together with an extremely bright fire. This fire lights up the road and thus permits us to make our technical discoveries. But the fire is not itself *techné*.

A similar point is made by Heraclitus (Diels, Fr. 18): "if he does not hope, he will not discover what is un hoped for, since it will be indiscernible and inaccessible." From the contemporary psychologistic standpoint, this is a license to wish-fulfilment. Heraclitus, however, is not referring to wishes, nor is he licensing self-deception. Hope is a light that illuminates, not a shadow that blinds. The philosopher does not hope for some predetermined object or the gratification of a particular desire. If I may combine the images from Plato and Heraclitus, the philosopher is the man who hopes to see what will be found on the road of *techné*.

The complex image of a divine gift, fire, and a road containing technical discoveries, is an expression of the founding of philosophy. By *techné* we must understand all attempts to discern the natures of things that proceed through calculation and analysis: through counting and measuring, distinguishing, assessing, and by extension, through the construction of conceptual schemes and doctrines. In the *Philebus* passage, Socrates explains the "road" of *techné* as the counting of the eidetic elements in formal compounds. This road is very beautiful, and Socrates refers to himself as its "lover" (*erastes*: 16b5-6). We can easily connect this passage to the discussion of Eros in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Love is the response of the soul to the natural beauty of intelligibility. It is a desire for the formal structure that the soul itself lacks.

As is notorious, formal structure is often referred to in the Platonic dialogues by the term *idea* or *eidós*. Can we therefore say that Plato is a "foundationalist," in the sense that he posits the Ideas as the completely accessible, entirely secure, and incorrigible foundation for knowledge? I have already shown that such an assertion is unwarranted. The thesis of "foundationalism," when applied to thinkers like Plato, betrays the worst sort of academic vulgarity. Texts are brutalized in the service of technical constructions; subtlety and nuance are ground to dust in the gears of ideological sloganeering.

"Antifoundationalism" of this sort, which purports to rescue us from

the reifications and subjective prejudices of foundationalism, is itself unconscious foundationalism; only now the foundation is radical contingency, hopelessness, unfounded transience, or chaos. The "foundationalist" Platonism of the primacy of vision is replaced by the anti-Platonist foundationalism of blindness. We are said to be free because we can no longer see the obstacles in our path. We are free because we cannot see the path itself.

All this is based upon a complete misunderstanding of the Platonic dialogues, but more importantly, upon a misunderstanding of the nature of the philosopher. Socrates was not primarily involved in the investigation of the Ideas; he came upon the hypothesis of the Ideas (*Phaedo* 100a3) in the course of investigating himself. Socrates wishes to know whether he is indeed the wisest Athenian, as was claimed by the Delphic oracle (*Apology* 21a5ff); he wishes to know whether he is a violent beast or a gentle and divine creature (*Phaedrus* 229e5ff). To give one last example, the stated purpose of the conversation with Theaetetus is not to determine the nature of knowledge, but to discover whether the soul of the young mathematician resembles that of the philosopher, as does his body (*Theaetetus* 145b1ff).

The sense of these passages is contained in a fragment from Heraclitus: "I sought for myself" (*edizesamen emeauton*: Diels, 101). The verb *edizesamen* is in the middle voice of *dizo*, "to be in doubt." This doubt as to his own nature leads the philosopher to investigate himself. One will object that doubt has nothing to do with Eros; but this objection is false. Doubt is not a shadow that blinds but a light that reveals; the philosopher is detached from the darkness of everyday life by the illumination of his need. Eros, the fire of Prometheus, the oracle at Delphi: all these images are the same. A force from outside enters into the soul and founds us in our need to discover who we are. I note in passing that this force from outside could also be wonder (*thauma*) at the beauty and intelligibility of the heavenly motions or cosmic order.

It would be easy enough to show in detail that there is no basis in the Platonic dialogues for speaking of a "theory" of Ideas in the modern sense of a discursive account of their natures, and so no basis to refer to the Ideas as the foundation of philosophy. I have done this elsewhere at some length and will not repeat myself here.<sup>1</sup> Let me instead make the point in my own voice. What Plato calls "Ideas" may be the foundation of the cosmos, but they are certainly not the foundation of philosophy. Philosophy is a human activity, not a "theory" or conceptual construction. The activity of philosophy is the expression of our need, not simply for knowledge, but for the satisfaction of our most fundamental desire. In the language of the ancients, the philosopher strives for blessedness or godhood. But blessedness is not identical with a pure *Wesensschau*, or

with the extinction of the self in the noetic apprehension of Platonic Ideas. The blessed man is transported to the Happy Isles or, to employ an image of Nietzsche, to the land of the Hyperboreans, who dwell far to the North, unreachable by land or by sea; in other words, outside of history and the multiplicity of human perspectives. The perspective of the Hyperborean is synoptic: it does not change the perspectivist nature of human existence but makes it fully intelligible.

One might have a perfect knowledge of the Platonic Ideas and still not be blessed; a knowledge of the structure of intelligibility is not enough to find the way to the land of the Hyperboreans. For this, we require hope in the sense of Heraclitus; what is not hoped for must remain indiscernible and inaccessible (*aporon*). Ours is an age in which all talk of hope or divine illumination is relegated to the sphere of religion at best and superstition at worst. This is as true of literature as it is of philosophy; those who turn from philosophy to literature in order to find a deeper understanding of human nature must accordingly fail, so long as their perceptions are veiled by late modern despair.

"We are the eyelids of defeated caves." This line from Allen Tate's poem "The Meaning of Death" expresses beautifully and succinctly the anti-foundationalism of post-philosophy. The eye of the soul is veiled by the eyelid of the perspective of the decadent city, which Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* calls the city of the Motley Cow. More precisely: in the Socratic allegory, the cave represents the polis; but the eye of the soul is not veiled by the eyelid of defeat. A transformation of the soul is still possible: philosophy is possible. The city can thus serve as the foundation for its own transcendence.

The city of the Motley Cow, on the other hand, looks up to the tightrope walker, whom it mistakes for the superman. Zarathustra can voyage between the Blessed Isles and the decadent city in the vessel of his own spirit; but this coming and going is not the same as the exit of the philosopher into the sunlight and his return to assist his fellow citizens toward spiritual emancipation. Zarathustra is able to communicate his teaching at best only to his animals, or to the spirit of gravity, or to some metaphorical representation of the restricted understanding of late-modern Europe. As to his disciples, these are regularly repudiated.

The crossroad of past and future, represented by the Instant of the gateway of time, is Nietzsche's version of the Socratic cave, with its exit toward the sunlight. Zarathustra stands outside the gateway and attempts to explain its significance to the dwarf-figure of the spirit of gravity. This attempt is a failure; both dwarf and gateway disappear and are replaced by a shepherd who lies strangling on a black snake that has entered into his mouth while he slept and has bitten deep into his throat. Zarathustra sees a parable of hope; the shepherd heeds his cry and bites off the head of the

black snake. Having done so, the shepherd is transformed into a no longer human, radiant, laughing prefiguration of what Zarathustra longs for: the transfiguration of mankind by its conquest of the nihilistic implications of the doctrine of the eternal return.

But this is a vision of longing; Zarathustra did not actually step into the gateway, in the sense that it represents, not simply the general structure of time, but the active appropriation of the future by the spirit of overcoming. And the vision is related, not to the residents of the city of the Motley Cow, but to the crew of the ship that sails to and from the Blessed Isles. As recounted by the dramatic circumstances of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the prophet's enterprise is a political failure. The philosophy of the future cannot take place within the city, which has room only for professors and inverted cripples who resemble, or rather are, giant eyes or ears.

In Plato, philosophy is founded within the city by an illumination from beyond it. For Nietzsche, philosophy is founded on mountain peaks, or among the Hyperboreans, or on the Blessed Isles, but it can no longer enter the city: what is outside the city has lost its founding force, except as a vision or expression of hope of a future epoch. It is within the city of the Motley Cow that epistemology and ontology arise as fantasms of philosophy. The eyelid closes over the defeated cave. Hope is extinguished in the quarrel between foundationalists and antifoundationalists.

Epistemology and ontology are technical artifacts that serve as eyelids in the specific sense that they cut us off from knowing and being by the very claim to render them securely accessible. To say instead that philosophy is founded by an illumination from outside is not to engage in mystical rhetoric, but to leave open the path to diverse forms of knowing and being. Security cannot be purchased in philosophy by a narrowing of the eyes. Those who think otherwise have been led to conceive of philosophy in light of a squint-eyed image of science. According to this image, science advances by putting nature to the torture, that is, by forcing her to answer questions which we have formulated. But the genuine force of the image lies in our capacity to formulate questions, and hence procedures and methods that are appropriate to the phenomena; it does not lie in our adherence to a method, nor can philosophical force be derived from adherence to a doctrine of knowledge or being.

To this extent, I am in agreement with the antifoundationalists, but not for their reasons. It is one thing to remove spectacles that have been ground to the wrong prescription, but something else again to open one's eyes. Let me repeat: philosophy founds us; we do not found philosophy. And neither do we abolish it. What we can do is hope.

And we *can* hope: this is the crucial point. Hope is not a private indulgence in edifying wishes or daydreams but the human response to

the problematic nature of existence. I must decide how to live and how to die, not because I am an ego cogitans that grounds its own certainty in the projection of a perspective, but because I am constituted by the bifurcation in nature between mortal and immortal. I am founded as the assertion of the problem of human life.

Of course, I can also despair; otherwise, I could not hope. Anti-foundationalism is in my opinion something beyond despair; one thinks here of Nietzsche's last men, who are confident of the progressive illumination of their dissolution within contingency, as though the energy released by that dissolution replaces the Enlightenment of the modern age. For the foundationalist, there is no problem so long as we adhere to the established, presumably incorrigible criteria of knowledge. For the antifoundationalist, there is no problem because there are no incorrigible criteria; more radically, there is no privileged bifurcation of nature. There is no nature, no continuity, but at each point, only the bifurcation of discontinuity.

Antifoundationalism is closely associated with such postmodernist movements as deconstruction, genealogical hermeneutics, post-Heideggerian critiques of metaphysics as the doctrine of *das Seiende* as *Anwesenheit*, and so too of the implicit replacement of being by Being, understood as concealment, process, departure, and difference.

Postmodernism is the age of post-history, post-anthropology, and post-philosophy. In fact, of course, there is no postmodern age; if there were, it would be chaos. Postmodernists do not live in accord with their own principles, nor could they. They hold together the ostensible world of radical contingency with the usual devices of power politics, academic fashion, ideological rhetoric, and technicist love of scholastic verbal constructions.

This is hypocrisy, and it may well be despicable. But there is something of crucial importance to be learned from hypocrisy. The hypocrite dissimulates because he is forced to do so by the nature of reality. Antifoundationalism is thus the simulacrum of foundationalism. But simulacra exist: they are *onta*. Perhaps the next act of philosophical founding will be to regain the old Platonic understanding of the nature of fantasm. Let me close with one cautionary word: this understanding is neither ontology nor epistemology but rather the description of human existence as rooted firmly in the inexplicable yet everywhere visible relation of original and image.

1. See my *Plato's Sophist* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London: 1983).





# PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT FOUNDATIONS

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## Introduction: The Specter of Relativism

The issue of foundationalism is currently the subject of a great deal of discussion in philosophical circles. In particular, the stance taken by a number of “antifoundationalists” continues to provoke strong opposition. Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida are cases in point. When one pauses for a moment to reflect on this state of affairs, however, there is something rather curious about it. Surely, one is inclined to think, the issue of foundationalism is, in a sense, a dead issue. After all, foundationalism is an essentially Cartesian project, and who would seriously want any longer to hold up Descartes as a model for philosophical thinking? Is there still anyone who seriously believes that by means of philosophical speculation it is possible to discover a cosmic Archimedean point, an absolute foundation, a *fundamentum inconcussum*, on which all of our epistemic endeavors could be definitively “grounded”? Does anyone even believe that an absolute, unimpeachable grounding is necessary - and that, accordingly, it is a worthwhile goal for philosophy? The empirical sciences have long since renounced any such metaphysical quest for absolute, apodictic *certainty* -- and they are none the worse off for having done so. So why should “antifoundationalism” provoke such widespread opposition?

It seems to me that perhaps the crux of the matter is that while almost

no one is prepared to defend any longer a strong foundationalist position, *à la* Descartes, a great many people fear nevertheless that what appears to be the diametrical opposite of foundationalism, namely, antifoundationalism, can only lead to that great, unspeakable horror: *relativism*. Relativism is the object of a great deal of fear because it is thought to lead in turn (by "relativizing" them) to the loss of all meaning, all truth, and all value, i.e., to *nihilism*. Herein lies, I suspect, the main reason for the hostile reaction to such outspoken antifoundationalists as Rorty and Derrida.

For my part, while I would concede that the positions elaborated by both Rorty and Derrida are indeed relativistic and even nihilistic (protestations on their part to such a charge notwithstanding), I do not believe that antifoundationalism, as such, necessarily entails relativism. This is in any event the thesis I wish to argue for in this paper. One of the principal arguments of those who continue to defend some form of foundationalism (they could perhaps best be referred to as "anti-antifoundationalists") appears to be that if we give up all foundationalist conceptions of truth (truth as "correspondence to reality," capital-*T* truth), we are left with merely a discordant host of conflicting "opinions" on the part of individuals -- and thus with no truth at all, since if "truth" has any real meaning, it cannot be whatever one wants it to be, something purely "subjective;" there have to be, they say, "objective constraints." Similarly, foundationalists often argue that if one holds that ethical values cannot be "grounded" ontologically, one inevitably ends up advocating some form of ruinous "decisionism," i.e., a form of moral relativism which denies any sort of *universal* status to values, and thus any real moral force to them at all. These are of course arguments which have been bandied about in one form or another ever since the time of the Sophists (and the anti-Sophists). The specter of relativism, it must be said, has long been the preferred means whereby philosophical absolutists have sought to, as Montaigne would say, "*faire peur aux enfants*."

Perhaps, though, as a number of "postmodern" writers have suggested (William James being one of the first of these), it is time that a concerted effort be made to exorcise the ghosts of metaphysics from our philosophical discourse. If the examples of Rorty and Derrida are anything to go by, however, something more than pure and simple antifoundationalism seems to be called for if this is to be accomplished. For as the case of these two writers demonstrates, one can all too easily fall into the trap of perpetuating metaphysical ways of thinking in the very attempt at overcoming metaphysics. By that I mean perpetuating, if only in an unconscious way, the oppositional, either/or categories which are constitutive of the metaphysical enterprise itself. Foundationalists argue, in a typically metaphysical fashion, that *either* truth-claims must somehow

be “grounded” in reality *or* else everything becomes “relative.” When, accordingly, antifoundationalists like Rorty and Derrida simply reverse the priorities, substituting cultural “ethnocentrism” and *différance* (the indefinite deferral of truth and meaning) for the universal truth-claims of traditional philosophy (indeed, in announcing in one way or another the “end of philosophy”), they reinforce the worse fears of the foundationalists (their “Cartesian anxiety,” in Richard Bernstein’s very apt phrase)<sup>1</sup>: The rejection of foundationalism can lead only to relativism. Thus the antiuniversalist glorification of “particularism” on the part of some antifoundationalists cannot be said to be a viable substitute for the metaphysical principle of identity (rightly deemed by them to be a source of oppression).<sup>2</sup>

Can one do away with metaphysical foundations - and yet still do philosophy, in some meaningful sense of the term (i.e., and not be reduced to entertaining, as Rorty says, “a merely ‘literary’ conception of philosophy”)?<sup>3</sup> I would like to argue that one can, that in fact philosophy’s traditional claim to *universality* becomes a much more defensible claim when it is resolutely divorced from all appeals to “foundations.” In what follows I would like to sketch out some of the main features of what might most fittingly be called a *post* foundational approach to the issues of truth and value, i.e., a postmetaphysical position which is *neither* foundationalist *nor* relativist.

## 1. Truth

In general, *modern* philosophy (which was obsessed with modern science, considering it to be the indisputable paradigm of all genuine knowledge) was, as Rorty puts it, an “epistemologically centered” enterprise<sup>4</sup>, i.e., an attempt to discover those foundational items in consciousness (clear and distinct ideas, sense data, or whatever) which can be said to “refer” to the “real” world and on the basis of which an “objective” knowledge of the world can somehow be arrived at. By contrast *postmodern* philosophy (which considers that science is but one interpretation, among others, of the world and that whatever truth-value it may have stems not from its “correspondence to reality” but from its technological use-value) is language-centered, i.e., is an attempt to explore the linguistic dimensions of human understanding itself. The shift from “modern” to “postmodern” is thus a shift in paradigms, a shift from a philosophy of consciousness to a philosophy of language. For postmodern philosophy, to understand something is not, as modernism insisted, to form mental “representations” of it (the traditional correspondence notion of truth which, it may be noted, continues to live on as the guiding metaphysical

presupposition of AI research); understanding is, rather, a matter of actively *interpreting* our world experience -- by means, precisely, of language. For postmodernism, human understanding is linguistic and interpretive through and through. A good illustration of this is the position defended by philosophical (or phenomenological) *hermeneutics*.

"Why," Hans-Georg Gadamer asked in a famous essay of his, "has the problem of language come to occupy the same central position in current philosophical discussions that the concept of thought, or 'thought thinking itself,' held in philosophy a century and a half ago?"<sup>5</sup> The answer: "Language is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world." Such could be said to be the basic premise of hermeneutics. For Gadamer, all human experience of the world is essentially linguistic.<sup>6</sup> Human linguisticity is accordingly a "universal phenomenon," and hermeneutics, defined as the study of human understanding in all its modes, is a study of how what we call the world exists for us by means of language. For hermeneutics language is not simply, as modernism believed, a tool, "a mere means of communication."<sup>7</sup> Rather, between word and object there exists an "intimate unity."<sup>8</sup> Thus, as Gadamer provocatively stated: "Being that can be understood is language." Or, expressed somewhat differently: "that which comes into language is not something that is pre-given before language; rather it receives in the word its own definition."<sup>9</sup>

Rorty has expressed somewhat similar thoughts (at one point in his writing career he even used the term "hermeneutics" to refer to his own position). Speaking of "the anti-Platonist insistence on the ubiquity of language," Rorty in fact cites the remark of Gadamer quoted above: "Human experience is essentially linguistic." Objecting to the notion that language is a mere medium between Subject and Object or a tool whose "adequacy" can be assessed in some "objective" manner, Rorty says:

The latter suggestion presupposes that there is some way of breaking out of language in order to compare it with something else. But there is no way to think about either the world or our purposes except by using our language. . . . [O]ne cannot see language-as-a-whole in relation to something else to which it applies, or for which it is a means to an end.<sup>10</sup>

Like Gadamer, Rorty takes the ubiquity of language to signal the essential *finitude* of human experience. (It may be noted that a philosophy which takes seriously the finitude of the human condition cannot but be antifoundationalist - to which could be added a remark of Merleau-Ponty: "No philosophy can afford to be ignorant of the problem of finitude under pain of failing to understand itself as philosophy"<sup>11</sup>)

However, unlike Gadamer, Rorty proceeds from this to conclusions of a relativistic nature (he in fact faults Gadamer for being a "weak textualist"<sup>12</sup>). Siding with Derrida (a "strong textualist") over against Gadamer, Rorty in effect endorses Derrida's notorious claim: *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, there is nothing outside of textuality, outside of language.<sup>13</sup> This in effect amounts to saying: "There are no truths, only rival interpretations." This is precisely the sort of thing that has given antifoundationalism a bad name ("relativism") and has aroused the ire of the anti-antifoundationalists who mistakenly assume that the postmodern emphasis on linguisticity and interpretation necessarily entails the abandonment of any commitment to truth.

When in response to all this the anti-antifoundationalist objects that it is simply not possible to dispense with a belief in truth, the postmodern hermeneuticist is, as a matter of fact, inclined to agree. What the hermeneuticist *disagrees* with is the foundationalist idea that for truth to exist there must be some sort of "extralinguistic" reality that can be "accessed" and can thus serve as an "objective" criterion against which the "correctness" of our language can be measured. For such a notion presupposes that, as Rorty says, "there is some way of breaking out of language in order to compare it with something else." But, as Rorty very correctly observes: "there is no way to think about either the world or our purposes except by using our language." One can no more step outside of language so as to compare it with what it supposedly "refers" to than one can step outside of one's own consciousness so as to compare it with the "reality" it is supposed to "mirror." This is as undeniable a fact of our experience as one could wish for (and one which emphatically underscores the finitude of our condition). It is, if you like, a *truth* - and a most basic one at that.

The foundationalist critic might retaliate however by saying: "There is one sense in which this is trivially true."<sup>14</sup> It is not clear, though, just what dismissing the matter in this way is supposed to accomplish. Descartes' "I think" is also, in analytic jargon, "trivially true" - and yet, "trivial" though it may be, it is fraught with far-ranging consequences. Having in any event sought to skirt the issue in this way, the critic will then go on to assert that, although our theories about the world are (as he allows) expressed in language, they are nevertheless not about language, they are about things; so it does not follow (he argues) that the truth of our theories is human, something linguistic. In other words, what is important is not language but the reality language "refers" to. The message is clear: We must not allow ourselves to get caught up in language but must *instead* rely on the "real world," on "nature's own vocabulary" (to use Rorty's put-down expression).

To this the postfoundationalist can only reply: When in the ordinary

course of events we talk, by means of language, about things, we indeed do not suppose that we talking only about language. If anything is "trivially true," that most certainly is. But from that it most certainly does not follow that the truth of what we believe we are saying about things is determined by the things themselves, as the foundationalist would have us believe. Truth, as James would say, is something that "happens" to a proposition when it is verified by experience. Propositions, however, presuppose a speaker who proposes them, and the fact of the matter (unfortunate or not) is that things do not speak, and, *a fortiori*, do not "speak for themselves." Only humans can speak for them, and thus, were it not for human language, there is nothing in particular that things could be said to be in the first place. The foundationalist's argument for a language-independent criterion of truth amounts in the end to no more than what rhetoric or the theory of argumentation has traditionally referred to as *petitio principii* or begging the question (as Sextus Empiricus long ago pointed out, this is one of the stock tricks of the foundationalist trade).

Contrary to the impression created by antifoundationalists like Rorty and Derrida, the *post*-foundationalist thesis as to the *Sprachlichkeit der Welt* or the linguisticity of experience does *not* mean that we are imprisoned in language or that everything is *nothing but* language ("There is nothing outside of language"). A linguistic reductionism of this sort would indeed entail relativism. But relativism follows from the "linguistic thesis" only if, while maintaining it, one continues to subscribe to the metaphysical conceptuality of the foundationalists themselves, such that one feels obliged to opt *either* for language *or* for "reality." The postfoundationalist thesis is not that language is all there is but, rather, that all that is and can be for us is by means of language. There is a strict parallel here between language and consciousness, as phenomenology understands the latter. For phenomenology, consciousness is not one thing standing alongside or over against another thing called the "world," such that to be conscious would mean that one was conscious only of one's own consciousness and not of the world of which one was conscious; as Sartre pointed out, the essence of consciousness is that it is consciousness-*of-its-object*, *of-the-world*. So likewise for phenomenological hermeneutics, language, in the ordinary course of events, is not just about itself; it is about that *of which* it speaks, i.e., the "world." The world is what language *means*, it is the *meaning of language*. As Gadamer might say, between language and the world there is a mutual belonging. Or as I have remarked on another occasion, "language is the way in which, as humans, we *experience* what we call reality, that is, the way in which *reality* exists for us."<sup>15</sup>

The foundationalist demand that our theories or language be accurately

matched up with something extralinguistic in order to be deemed true is not only a demand that is impossible to realize (since there is no way to think about the world except by using our language), it is also meaningless (it is meaningless to prescribe as a criterion something which can never be realized in point of fact). Thus in its quest for unassailable *certainty*, foundationalism actually makes of truth a meaningless notion. On the other hand, a nonfoundationalist conception of truth cannot, if it is true, provide us with certainty in our interpretations of what is - but certainty, it insists, is not at all a necessary condition for truth (contrary to a long-standing Cartesian prejudice). For something to be true (or true enough for any legitimate purpose we might have in mind), it need not be eternally and unalterably True.

The point that I wish to make is that even if our theories about what is may be "groundless" *in the foundationalist sense of the term*, it does not follow that for that reason they are necessarily "arbitrary and tendentious," a matter of mere subjective preference, as, it must be admitted, many of the antifoundationalists so imply. Philosophy can be without-foundations and yet not be "free-floating," in a Derridean sense (a "bottomless chessboard"<sup>16</sup>). In other words, giving up on foundations doesn't have to mean giving up on *constraints*. John B. Thompson makes this point nicely in responding to those postmodernists who, having for good reason abandoned the quest for certainty, go on from there to assert that "there are no valid criteria of justification and that all we have are multiple interpretations, competing with one another, playing off against one another." He writes: "We can reject the quest for certainty without abandoning the attempt to elucidate the conditions under which we can make reasonable judgements about the plausibility or implausibility of an interpretation, or the justness or otherwise of an institution."<sup>17</sup>

Consider for a moment the example of quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics is one of the most rigorous of scientific disciplines, and it is supremely adept at doing what science is supposed to do, namely, make useful "predictions." And yet quantum physicists have accepted the fact that their discipline doesn't tell them anything about "reality," in the traditional, foundationalist sense of the term. As one writer remarks, speaking of the supporters of the standard ("Copenhagen") interpretation of quantum mechanics:

They . . . claim that the very precise formalism of the theory is not to be taken seriously as a picture of actual "reality." They often assert, accordingly, that the whole question of quantum reality is a nonquestion. One should not think of the theory as providing us with a picture of actuality, they argue, but merely as giving us a calculational procedure that accurately provides the correct mathematical probabilities for the different possible outcomes of experiments. This, they say, is all that we should ask of



a theory and not ask questions about "reality." We do not need an understanding of the "actual" nature of the world; it is amply sufficient for our theory to make accurate "predictions" - something that quantum mechanics is indeed supremely good at.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps philosophers and the practitioners of the other human disciplines could learn an important lesson from the quantum physicists. If, in regard to any given discipline, a theory "works" (according to the criteria appropriate to that discipline), what more does one need? Is this not all that we should ask of the theory, and not, as the physicists say, "questions about 'reality'"? When, as in quantum mechanics, a theory works well, is this not sufficient grounds for deeming it "true"? Just what, exactly, does it add to say that in addition to being true in this sense, the theory also adequately "represents" reality?<sup>19</sup> To be sure, philosophy and the human disciplines are not (or should not be) concerned mainly with providing calculational procedures capable of generating predictions in the natural science sense of the term. The criteria for truthfulness in these disciplines are of a different sort. Since (according to the hermeneutical postulate) these are *interpretive* disciplines, there must be - if relativism ("All interpretations are on a par") is to be avoided - means for determining which interpretive theories work better than other, conflicting ones. Before addressing this crucial question having to do with criteria or constraints, however, let me appeal to an analogy in order better to indicate what, as far as interpretive theories go, "workability" consists in.

The analogy I have in mind is that of *money*. A monetary system is a functional, effective system if the currency in question (dollars, say) can readily be *exchanged* for other things, such as goods and services, or, for that matter, other currencies and if, in addition, the currency retains its exchange-value over significant periods of time (i.e., is not prey to rapid inflation) and, when held, can generate more money through interest. If, like the dollar, a currency can do this, it has real value (it is a "hard" currency); if, like the ruble, it cannot, it has no or little value *qua* money. In the latter case, the currency is not something people will have any great interest in accumulating for its own sake (since it cannot be used for much of anything else), and thus it fails the crucial test for what is true money. Note that, as this example seeks to make clear, it is the exchange-value of money which constitutes its real value. There is no need for an effective, viable monetary system to be backed up by something "substantial," something "real," such as gold or silver.

Now linguistic entities like words and theories are functional equivalents, in the "marketplace of ideas," to money in the marketplace of goods (money, it should be noted, is itself a *semiotic* entity). The important question, in assessing the truth-value of a linguistic construct (such as a theory), is not whether it is backed up by "reality" but whether

it can be redeemed, cashed in, exchanged for other truth-values and whether it can generate increased truth-value, such that, as Merleau-Ponty would say, truth little by little "capitalizes on itself [*se capitalise*]." <sup>20</sup> An effective, functioning "regime of truth" no more needs to rely on some sort of "gold standard" than does an effective, functioning monetary regime. <sup>21</sup> As James (who had a lot to say about the cash value of ideas) remarked: "Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs 'pass,' so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass so long as nobody refuses them." <sup>22</sup> Of course, as James immediately went on to say, this system of credit works only so long as what he referred to as "verification" is possible somewhere, "without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever." What exactly does that mean?

For the most part we accept our truths on credit, as James says (or on "authority," as Gadamer would say), but at some point it must be possible to redeem ("verify" or "validate") these semantic bank-notes (the central postulate of Derrida's deconstructive enterprise is that they can *never* be so redeemed). This is where the matter of *constraints* comes into play. In order to count as valid (true), an interpretation must be such that it can be "cashed in." No ontological gold standard is necessary in this regard, however, only a sufficient "cash-basis." In other words, it is not the "reality" of the foundationalists that serves to underwrite the truth-value of our interpretations; it is, rather, our own *lived experience*. The crucial test for any interpretation is the degree to which it actually enables us to get a better purchase on our experience, come to a better understanding of it -- of the world, other people, ourselves -- and, likewise, the degree to which it enables us to get a better handle on our practices. In other words, an interpretation will be held to be true, i.e., have understanding-value, if it serves to *illuminate* our experience and helps us to *cope* with the world. To the degree that an interpretation performs these functions, to that precise degree it is *true*. Our lived, shared human experience (what Husserl called the lifeworld) is the universal measure (*metron, kriterion*) of what is true (which is why, as we shall see, truth is inseparable from solidarity). <sup>23</sup>

What is to be done, however, in the case where two or more rival interpretations present themselves as candidates for our epistemic adherence? Obviously, if relativism is to be avoided, something more is required; there must be criteria of one sort or another which can enable us to make a responsible choice among meaningful interpretations in such a way as to determine which among them is more nearly right, reasonable, appropriate, relevant, apt, etc. Such criteria do in fact exist, *and they are strictly nonfoundational ones*. The important thing to note in this regard is that in interpretational disputes no one can legitimately trump their

opponent by simply exclaiming: "My interpretation is the true one, because it corresponds to reality itself." That, indeed, is merely begging the question (and is thus not a legitimate argumentative tactic). When an interpretation is challenged, one cannot compare the interpretation with "reality itself," *since what that is is itself a subject of interpretation*. The most one can do is to compare the interpretation with *other interpretations*<sup>24</sup>

And at any given time some interpretations will be better than others - not because they more nearly "correspond to reality" (whatever that might mean) but for the simple reason that, with regard to the modes of argumentation sanctioned in a given discipline, they are more persuasive, which is to say, more reasonable than others. Reasonableness is just what any community of scientists or interpreters is continually in the process of assessing. The argumentative rules of the discipline in question are what provide the constraints on discourse which are necessary if any utterance is legitimately to lay claim to truth, and these constraints are fully *objective* -- not, of course, in the naive foundationalist sense that they are "nature's own" but in the real sense that they are dependent on *intersubjective* consensus and not merely on personal whim. Interpretation, the act of searching for meaning in a text or a social or cultural order, is thus not an arbitrary affair. It is most definitely not the case that in interpretation "anything goes." As Gadamer insists: "meanings cannot be understood in an arbitrary way. . . . Thus there is a criterion here also. . . . This places hermeneutical work on a firm basis."<sup>25</sup> Our interpretations can have a firm "basis" without for all that being "grounded," in the foundationalist sense. Why, as Gadamer asks, should we feel a need to justify in a foundationalist way "what has always supported us"?<sup>26</sup>

An interpretation which successfully meets the kind of test I've described can legitimately be said to be *true* -- for the time being, at least. No interpretation can ever be said to be True in the mystical sense that foundationalists ascribe to this term (noumenal, ahistorical, unchanging, and so on) -- for the simple reason that it is impossible, in principle, to predict what rival interpretations might emerge in the future and what persuasive power they might have. A given interpretation or interpretational framework will nevertheless *remain* true if when confronted with new challengers it can successfully expand in such a way as to accommodate the objections directed against it, demonstrating thereby its superior comprehensive powers.<sup>27</sup>

If on a "linguistic" or "interpretational" (i.e., postmetaphysical) account of things, nothing can ever be said to be True in the foundationalist sense of the term, I hope nevertheless that I have managed to indicate that our interpretations of things need not *necessarily* be "arbitrary and tendentious" -- and thus need be *neither* foundationalist *nor* relativist.

There is of course a sense, though, in which everything is relative, and what I have said so far is no exception to this (which doesn't make it any less true). If one adopts a weak definition of relativism, one which maintains that the statements (truth-claims) that people make are *relative* to their contexts (historical, cultural, etc.), then relativism is unquestionably true, since no one can say anything that is not "relative" to their time and place (or, to express the matter somewhat differently, one's time and place set limits to what one can say). It is after all inconceivable that Galileo, let alone Aristotle, should have come up with the General Theory of Relativity. And it would not have been possible for Augustine to have drawn from the use he made of the *Cogito* the subjectivistic sorts of conclusions that Descartes drew from his experiments with the *Cogito*.<sup>28</sup> This weak form of relativism does not, however, justify relativism in the strong sense of the term. By that I mean a theory which maintains, not only that all truth-claims are *context-relative* (which they are), but, in addition, that they are also *context-dependent* - such that the truth-claims of people from different cultures would be purely and simply "incommensurable."

Although Rorty engages in some convoluted verbal acrobatics in his attempt to shake off the "relativist" label, his position is effectively relativistic, for the simple reason that he *does* adopt a version of the "context-dependent" thesis. This is precisely why he will not allow a universal, critical role to philosophy (such that we could legitimately criticize other cultures for their failures to adhere to certain truths that we consider "self-evident", such as: "All men are created equal and are endowed...with certain unalienable rights," etc., etc.). The reason why Rorty, in escaping from foundationalism (or what he calls "realism"), does not for all that manage to escape from relativism is because, as I have already suggested, he still tends to think along metaphysical lines. This was already apparent in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.<sup>29</sup> The fact that he there managed to effect to some degree his "hermeneutical turn" did not prevent him in the end from adhering to a form of materialistic behaviorism which had all the appearances of being a kind of metaphysical opposite to the modernistic mentalism he so effectively criticized.

This sort of crypto-metaphysics persists in his treatment of language. As I have already indicated, Rorty tends to view language and "reality" as terms *between which* one must choose; Rorty's version of the "linguistic thesis" maintains (in a way similar to Derrida) that because we cannot escape from the realm of human linguisticity (textuality), for that reason we are forever cut off from "reality." This is most definitely not the position advocated by hermeneutics, which attempts to elaborate a decisively postmetaphysical position in this regard.

The analogy between language and consciousness (in the phenomenological sense of the term) can once again be of help in clarifying the hermeneutical position. In explicit opposition to the subjectivism of modern philosophy, phenomenology maintains that consciousness is *not* something inside of which the knowing subject ("the little man inside the man") is locked up. As I have already pointed out, for phenomenology, to be conscious is to be conscious-of-the-world (consciousness is a mode of being-in-the-world). Phenomenology explicitly seeks to overcome one of the most basic of metaphysical oppositions, the inside/outside opposition. One tactic it employs to this end is that of internally subverting the opposition itself. Thus, for instance, phenomenology maintains that consciousness is an absolutely unique mode of being (totally unlike natural being) in that consciousness is something *the inside of which is outside of itself* Sartre, in an early text on the phenomenological notion of intentionality ("consciousness is consciousness-of. . ."), interpreted this Husserlian notion to mean that:

Consciousness has been purified. It is light like a strong wind; there is no longer anything inside of it apart from a movement to escape from itself, a slipping outside itself. If, *per impossibile*, you were to enter "inside" a consciousness, you would be seized by a whirlwind and thrown outside, next to the tree, in the dust. For consciousness has no "inside." It is nothing other than the outside of itself, and it is thus absolute flight, this refusal to be substance that constitutes it as consciousness. . . . Everything is outside, even ourselves -- outside, in the world, amid others. It is not in I know not what inner retreat that we discover ourselves; it is on the road, in the city, in the midst of the crowd, thing among things, man among men.<sup>30</sup>

This is what led Sartre to say things like: "Consciousness is not what it is, and is what it is not" (a *façon de parler* which has been an endless source of sardonic delight for analytic types).

Now the situation is much the same in the case of language, as phenomenological hermeneutics views the latter. Unlike a material thing, language has no inside. It has no inside in that what is "inside" it, namely, its "meaning," is precisely what is supposed to be outside it, namely, "reality" (since "reality" is precisely what language "means"). This is what Gadamer means when he asserts that human language (as opposed to artificial languages -- to which Gödel's theorem applies) is *infinite*.<sup>31</sup> Natural languages are infinite in that they have *no outer limits*, there is nothing that, with sufficient ingenuity, a natural language cannot be made to say (natural languages, in other words, are their own metalanguages).<sup>32</sup> Being infinite in this sense, the language that we speak is thus not something that could possibly cut us off from other people (or cultures) or the world. This of course means that language is most definitely not a

prison (or, if you like, a “padded cell”) in which we are forever confined.<sup>33</sup> And it is precisely *for this reason* that Gadamer can assert that the “linguistic thesis,” as hermeneutics understands it, in no way entails relativism. As Gadamer writes:

Understanding is language-bound [or: language-relative]. But his assertion does not lead us into any kind of linguistic relativism. It is indeed true that we live within a language, but language is not a system of signals that we send off with the aid of a telegraphic key when we enter the office or transmission station [this, it may be noted, is the way that that modern form of metaphysics, AI theory, understands language, and, as can be seen, it is bound up with a very modernistic, nonphenomenological conception of consciousness]. That is not speaking, for it does not have the infinity of the act that is linguistically creative and world experiencing. While we live wholly within a language, the fact that we do so does not constitute linguistic relativism because there is absolutely no captivity within a language -- not even within our native language. . . . Any language in which we live is infinite in this sense, and it is completely mistaken to infer that reason is fragmented because there are various languages. Just the opposite is the case. Precisely through our finitude, the particularity of our being, which is evident even in the variety of languages, the infinite dialogue is opened in the direction of the truth that we are.<sup>34</sup>

This is a very rich text. Let us take particular note of a few of the things it says. One thing to be noted is how Gadamer insists that *reason* is not fragmented because of the undeniable fact of linguistic multiplicity. This, however, is precisely what Rorty effectively maintains. Not only does Rorty (rather scandalously) advocate “a conception of rationality as criterionless muddling through,” he also, and very emphatically, urges us “to throw out the last residues of the notion of ‘trans-cultural rationality.’” Hermeneutics, in contrast, most definitely does not believe that an antifoundationalist position obliges one to reject a belief in “trans-cultural rationality.”<sup>35</sup> The obligation that a genuinely postfoundationalist position *does* impose on us is that of redefining what it means to be “rational.” Rorty is quite right in rejecting (or, as he would say, “deconstructing”)<sup>36</sup> the foundationalist notion that to be rational means acting in conformity to some universal, self-same “essence” that all human beings are supposed to possess in common, like some kind of biological attribute, viz., that “faculty” called Reason. But this is not the only way to understand rationality. Hermeneutics maintains a more modest conception of rationality which more or less equates it with “reasonableness.”<sup>37</sup> To be rational in this sense (“communicative rationality”) designates the attempt to seek mutual understanding and possible agreement or consensus with others (and others from different cultures) by means of dialogue.<sup>38</sup> Hermeneuticists believe in “trans-

cultural rationality" precisely because they believe that such mutual understanding or agreement is always *possible*, given the requisite good will. People *can* be rational, if they so choose.<sup>39</sup> (It may be noted in passing how on this view of things the rational and the ethical are intimately related -- another instance of how hermeneutics, as a resolute form of postmetaphysical thought, seeks to overcome traditional oppositions.)

Another thing to be especially noted in Gadamer's text is his reference to "particularity." One of the most outstanding features of much postmodern thought is its emphasis on "particularism" (or "localism"). This, of course, is a prominent theme in Rorty, who unabashedly advocates a form of "ethnocentrism." And Rorty is again typical of a prominent strain in postmodernism in that he believes that a recognition of "particularity" necessarily entails a rejection of philosophy's traditional emphasis on *universality*. But, here again, hermeneutics refuses to let itself be drawn into the oppositional game. Hermeneutics sees no reason why a philosophical recognition of "particularity" ("relativity" in the weak sense) should oblige one to abandon a commitment to universalism (i.e., should oblige one to adhere to relativism in the strong sense). To do so, would, *ipso facto*, mean abandoning philosophy (the "end of philosophy"). It would mean the end of philosophy, since philosophy is, by its own definition, the theory and practice of *reason*, and reason (*logos*, *ratio*), as the defining trait of the human *qua* human (*zoon logon ekon*, *animal rationale*), is, by necessity, *universal*. As in the case of rationality, hermeneutics seeks, not to abandon, but to reconceptualize the notion of universality.

Both Rorty and Gadamer place great importance on the notion of *solidarity*. For Gadamer, solidarity "is the decisive condition and basis of all social reason."<sup>40</sup> Thus for him "solidarity" is the name for that form of postmetaphysical or postfoundationalist *universality* which is achieved by means of communicative rationality. Rorty, however, persists in conceptualizing solidarity in a typical metaphysical way, in that he opposes solidarity to universality. More specifically, he attacks the idea of the foundationalists ("realists," as he calls them) that solidarity has to be grounded in "objectivity," i.e., in something "universal."<sup>41</sup> He quite correctly rejects the notion that "procedures of justification of belief" need to be "natural," but he goes on from this to assert that they are "merely local," "merely social." The key word here is, of course, "merely." Rorty, in a typically metaphysical, reductionist fashion, seeks "to reduce objectivity to solidarity" -- to reduce universalism to localism.

As in the case of rationality, hermeneutics, in contrast, seeks not to abandon philosophy's traditional commitment to universality but to reconceptualize it in a genuinely nonmetaphysical way. One of the earliest

attempts at this sort of reconceptualization can be found in the work of Merleau-Ponty, who was himself a most notable antifoundationalist.<sup>42</sup> In opposition to the then received view, Merleau-Ponty insisted that the "germ of universality" (as it called it) lies not in some foundational nature underlying human being-in-the-world but "ahead of us. . . in the dialogue into which our experience of other people throws us by means of a movement not all of whose sources are known to us."<sup>43</sup> Because he saw no need to "ground" universality in metaphysical or foundationalist essentialism (i.e., in what Rorty calls "objectivity," an objective "nature" common to all human beings), he argued, accordingly, that universality need not be opposed to particularity. He was, in fact, quite insistent on this. Anticipating the hermeneutical emphasis on *communicative* rationality, Merleau-Ponty argued that universality does not have to do with "a pure concept which would be identical for every mind" but "is rather the call which a *situated* [emph. added] thought addresses to other thoughts, equally *situated* [emph. added], and to which each responds with its own resources."<sup>44</sup> In a decidedly postfoundationalist fashion, Merleau-Ponty asserted: "We do not arrive at the universal by abandoning our particularity."<sup>45</sup>

The universality defended by hermeneutics is thus not "essentialist" or "foundationalist." To employ Merleau-Ponty's suggestive terminology, the universal in question is not an "overarching universal" but "a sort of lateral universal."<sup>46</sup> More recently, Calvin O. Schrag has referred to it not as a universality at all but as a *transversality*.<sup>47</sup> It is this sort of universality-within-relativity (particularity) that Gadamer alludes to when (in the text cited above) he says: "Precisely through our finitude, the particularity of our being, which is evident even in the variety of languages, the infinite dialogue is opened in the direction of the *truth* [emph. added] that we are." Unlike the Rortyan antifoundationalist who "does not have a theory of truth" ("much less," he thus argues, "a relativistic one")<sup>48</sup> the hermeneuticist *does* have a theory of truth - and it is clearly a universalist one, though not, to be sure, of a foundationalist or metaphysical sort.

## 2. Values

It is perhaps not without significance that Merleau-Ponty accosted "the problem of philosophical universality" and defended "a sort of oblique universality" in the context of a discussion of the relation between Western philosophy and non-Western cultures.<sup>49</sup> For it is precisely the much debated issue of "other cultures" that has to a considerable extent fueled the recent antiuniversalist advocacy of relativism. "Cultural



incommensurability" is one thing that anthropological research is supposed to have clearly demonstrated. Because different belief- and value-systems are supposed to be "incommensurable," any adherence to universalism in the matter of values is held to be a form of cultural imperialism. Thus, although Rorty subscribes to the basic Western, Enlightenment values of liberalism, he refuses to grant these a universal status (let alone dignify them with the name of "human rights"), since to do so might give the appearance that he also endorsed that form of "cultural imperialism" which has now come to be called "Eurocentrism." Rorty's "frankly ethnocentric" stance,<sup>50</sup> his "lonely provincialism,"<sup>51</sup> is the result of his attempt to be politically correct with respect to the antifoundationalist dogma of cultural incommensurability. Although Rorty believes in values such as freedom and tolerance, he is not about to recommend (as a philosophical principle, a "principle of reason," as Gadamer would say) that peoples in other cultures should be free and enjoy tolerance, lest he himself be accused of being culturally intolerant.

But just what does it mean to speak of incommensurability in regard to different cultures? If "incommensurability" is taken in a weak sense to mean that the beliefs people hold (as to what is true, what is of value) are *relative* to their time and place (their "culture") then, as I have already suggested, there is no issue here, since, in the weak sense of the term, *everything* is relative. This is something that is, as the analyst would say, "trivially true." Does it follow from this, however, that various cultural values cannot be compared in some significant sense ("trans-cultural rationality")? It does not necessarily so follow. It all depends on what one means by "commensurable." If to be commensurable is taken to mean that the values operative in different cultures can be measured or ranked according to some univocal, hierarchical standard of comparison, by means of some kind of epistemological algorithm (the foundationalist sense of "commensurable"), then commensurability (the philosophical search for "universal commensuration") must be rejected and incommensurability (antiphilosophy) defended in its place. But there is no reason, the hermeneutical postfoundationalist would argue, why the impossibility of commensuration in the algorithmic sense should serve as a warrant for relativism in the strong sense of the term and, in particular, for condemning as "Eurocentric" and hegemonic the attempt to defend the *universal* validity of liberal values (and the notion of universal human rights).

It seems to me that those who feel the need to defend incommensurability (in the relativistic sense of the term) do so under the influence of an unanalyzed presupposition which perhaps owes something to the former vogue of structuralism, viz., the assumption that, like Saussure's "*langue*," cultures are "wholes" that are defined solely in terms

of their own "internal relations." If cultures are "holistic" in this sense, then it would follow that the values held by one culture cannot meaningfully be compared with those held by another culture. Even more, it would follow that any attempt to criticize the practices of one culture or society in light of values held by another is fundamentally illegitimate. The notion that a culture, being "holistic," can be understood properly only on its own terms leads directly to a kind of relativism in that it rules out the legitimacy of a (philosophical) critique of cultural or societal practices in the light of universal values. If this is what understanding is taken to mean, then, as the French would say, *Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. Incommensurability, on this view of things, rules out the possibility of any sort of philosophical critique of what effectively is.

The fact of the matter is, however, that a postfoundational hermeneutics finds illegitimate the idea at work here, namely, the idea that a critique must be *either* external (and thus illegitimate, according to the "holistic" view) *or* internal (and thus something much less than radical -- purely "relativistic," in point of fact). Relativism would be viable as a theory only if the traditional inside/outside distinction were itself valid or meaningful in regard to cultures, but hermeneutics insists that it isn't. Cultures no more have an "inside" and an "outside" than do other such *geistig* "things" as consciousness (subjectivity) and (natural) language. "Things" like subjectivity, language, and culture are essentially "relational entities." Like human beings in general (who, when need be, can communicate with any other human being), human cultures are essentially (as it were) related to all other cultures. There is no culture which cannot "communicate" with any other culture (which cultures communicate with which other cultures and how they do so is merely a matter of empirical fact). The exchange of ideas (as to what is true, what is of value) between cultures is at least as primordial a phenomenon as the exchange of material goods between them (and, if the record of world history is anything to go by, these two types of exchanges generally parallel one another).<sup>52</sup>

Thus, while a given value may be said to have originated "within" a particular culture, it cannot be maintained that its validity is necessarily *limited* to that culture. Just as a given idea which first finds expression within a particular language can subsequently be taken up in another language and become in this way part of its own repertory, so likewise a value first articulated in one culture can be adopted as its own by, in principle, any other culture (again, the history of human kind demonstrates that the history of the various human cultures is nothing other than the history of their intermittent, ongoing, or delayed interactions with one another). Thus, when the members of one culture appeal to values taken over from another culture in order to criticize practices

current in their own, these values become, by that very fact, part of their culture (which they have thereby managed to expand). Consider the example of democracy. While democratic values may be said to be of Western origin and, in that sense, foreign to, say, Chinese culture (to its Confucian heritage), to the degree that they are appealed to in an attempt to effect far-reaching changes in Chinese society (as they have been by those active in the Chinese Democracy Movement) they become central values in an expanded and renewed Chinese culture. This is a perfect instance of what could be called *trans-cultural communicative rationality*.

Thus while values are *cultural-emergent* (and, in this sense, cultural-relative), they are not necessarily *cultural-dependent*. Perhaps the best example of a value which, although it may have first been articulated in one culture, nevertheless claims for itself universal (trans-cultural) validity is the value of *freedom*. A value such as this is most certainly not metaphysical or foundationalist, i.e., ahistorical or eternal; it is most definitely *historical*, in that it first emerged at a certain time and place (ancient Greece). And, like all things "historical," it is also *contingent* in that, as in the case of the Greek idea of democracy (the "Greek Enlightenment"), there was no "reason," in the nature of things, why it should have emerged in the first place. To say this is not, however, to say that it is "contingent" in Rorty's historicist sense of the term, i.e., *purely* arbitrary and "ethnocentric," limited in its validity to the culture and place of its origin, a *mere* "fortunate happenstance creation" ("sheer contingency").<sup>53</sup> The fact that the beliefs and values that people hold are cultural and historical doesn't itself preclude them from being also of *transcultural* and *transhistorical* significance.

It is in fact not *philosophically* (i.e., rationally) possible to maintain, like Rorty, that freedom is nothing more than a "story" (a "local narrative," as it were) that we in the West have been telling ourselves and which, as a matter of pure contingency, we happen to find congenial. Rorty's "frankly ethnocentric" position is frankly illogical. Sartre once very pertinently observed:

In wanting freedom, we discover that it depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that the freedom of others depends on our own. . . . I cannot aim at freedom for myself unless I aim at it equally for others.<sup>54</sup>

Sartre's statement suggests a way of conceiving of *solidarity* which contrasts totally with Rorty's antiuniversalist way of viewing it. Solidarity *can* be viewed in a merely ethnocentric way, as the communality of those bound together by the pursuit of certain locally specific goals or by a common cultural or religious heritage. But there is also a way - a universalist way - of viewing it which makes it relevant to the postmodern,

*global* civilization which is now emerging throughout the world.<sup>55</sup> As regards freedom, one can say along with the Polish Solidarity activists: "There is no freedom without solidarity."<sup>56</sup> What, for our purposes (interpreting Sartre), this should be taken to mean is that if one desires freedom for oneself, one necessarily desires it for all others, since (as liberal theory has always maintained) *one can be free as an individual only by being a member of a social order (societas, "Gesellschaft") that has as its institutional (or constitutional) raison d'être the "equal freedom of all."* In this sense, solidarity designates a situation of mutual dependency wherein it is in the interest of *each* that a certain common way of life that benefits *all* ("the common good") be established and maintained. As a general principle of reason, this is a valid intra-culturally (for all the members of a given society) as it is inter-culturally (for all the peoples of the world). When solidarity is conceptualized in this universalist fashion (as designating something more than merely a shared ethos or *Sittlichkeit*), then, as Habermas observes, it "loses its merely particular meaning, in which it is limited to the internal relationships of a collectivity that is ethnocentrically isolated from other groups."<sup>57</sup>

There is no freedom without solidarity: Once having been articulated in a particular culture, the value of freedom makes a claim on all other cultures. The only thing limiting the universal applicability (validity) of this value is the imaginative powers of those of other cultures who would seek to implement it in their own cultural customs and mores. (It should go without saying that since the universality of a meta- or transcultural value like freedom is "grounded" not in some metaphysical "human nature" but in the actual dynamics of intersubjective, communicatively rational praxis, the cross-cultural "application" of this value is always a matter of creative *interpretation*. There can be no single, algorithmic-like formula [universality, in the foundationalist sense] for the implementation of values like freedom and democracy -- which of course means that their achievement is, like the search for truth itself, a never-ending task.)

Not only is freedom in this way a universal value, there is also a sense in which freedom is an *absolute* value. It is absolute, not in any metaphysical or foundationalist sense, but in that, having once been recognized, it is impossible that it should thereafter ever be overtly denied (as a value). Freedom -- and, more specifically, freedom of speech and opinion -- cannot *rationaly* be rejected inasmuch as it is itself the operational presupposition of communicative rationality, such that it is necessarily, albeit implicitly, affirmed by anyone engaging in communicative rationality, anyone seeking genuine, uncoerced understanding and mutual recognition. This is to say that no one can deny communicative freedom without also sacrificing all claims to being rational on his or her own part, without, that is, cutting the argumentative ground out from under his or

her own feet. This is something that no one will willingly do in a discursive situation, indeed, something that one *cannot* do - so long, that is, as one seeks recognition as a dialogical partner (one can, of course, always choose to be a masochist, to not be so recognized). The denial of freedom is thus an argumentative impossibility. To put the matter somewhat differently, the validity of freedom as a *value* or norm stems from the *fact* that the demands of freedom are (as rhetorical theory has shown)<sup>58</sup> structural requirements of the communicative process itself and are thus binding on anyone seeking recognition through dialogue: no one can evade these binding requirements without retreating from the realm of discourse itself and without renouncing membership in the community of "all rational beings" (self-destructively abandoning thereby any hope of winning recognition from others of the rightness of his or her own position). Thus, although there is no reason why, in the nature of things, people *should* behave in a rational or reasonable fashion (as Protagoras, the first great advocate of democracy, insisted, it often takes a struggle against nature for people to realize what is best in their nature), to the degree that people nevertheless *do* act reasonably, to that very degree they are affirming -- in their practice (praxially) -- the supreme value of freedom, since freedom is both the presupposition and the implication of their behaving in a communicatively rational fashion.

In other words, although freedom can be (and often is) denied in fact (by means of violence), it cannot be denied by means of peaceful discussion or rational argumentation aiming at mutual understanding.<sup>59</sup> The point was put nicely and with admirable simplicity a number of decades ago by that outstanding liberal economist, Frank H. Knight. Observing that the essence of liberalism, i.e., the belief in the supreme value of freedom, "is the reliance on rational agreement or mutual consent for the determination of policy," he stated that the only "proof" required for the validity of the liberal position "is that we are discussing it and its acceptance is a presupposition of discussion, since discussion is the essence of the position itself." Thus, the validity of the value of freedom is, as Knight said, "undiscussable," i.e., indisputable, undeniable.<sup>60</sup>

To conclude this discussion, I should perhaps respond to a question most likely to be raised at this point: If there are values which are *not* culture-dependent, just what *are* they dependent upon? From what I have said, it follows that a value such as freedom depends on nothing more than what Gadamer would call the "hermeneutical experience" itself, i.e., on the attempt on the part of people to arrive at mutual understanding by means of peaceful dialogue. Freedom can be argued for with all the necessary rigor, and can indeed be held to be universal and absolute, without there being any need to "ground" this value in "nature," in a

foundationalist fashion -- whether nature be conceived of in a modernist (mechanistic-causal) fashion or in a more traditional, Aristotelian way, as a hierarchical and teleological ordering of natural goods. The only "foundation" needed for this and other related values is human praxis itself. The ultimate basis for trans-cultural values is not some cosmic moral order but the simple fact that, as "speaking animals," humans are capable, when they put their minds to it, of engaging in communicative rationality and, in so doing, of entering into possible contact with any and all other humans.

A position such as this *neither* commits one to some form of provincial ethnocentrism *nor* does it require one, as Rorty says of the foundationalist position, "to detach oneself from any particular community and look down at it from a more universal standpoint."<sup>61</sup> It only requires of us that we exist properly as *humans*, in accordance with the dynamics of communicative rationality, engaging in what Karl Jaspers (an early exponent of communicative rationality) referred to as "boundless communication."<sup>62</sup> To the degree that we do so, to the degree, that is, that we seek mutual understanding with those from other cultures by means of dialogue, we are not imposing on them values which are merely our own but are acting in accordance with liberal values of universal relevance. For to recognize that freedom is a universal, cross-cultural value is to recognize that people everywhere have a right to their own opinions and a right to determine what is right for them (so long as they respect the reciprocally equal right of others in this regard). Freedom is something that belongs to no one or no culture in particular; if it is a value for some, it is a value for everyone. It is certainly not the private property of, as Rorty would say, (conflating different self-descriptions of his) "we Western, postmodern, bourgeois liberals."<sup>63</sup>

### Conclusion: Hermeneutical Liberalism

It might be objected that the position I have sought to outline in this paper is not politically correct in that it seeks to promote as *universal* values (such as rationality and freedom), values which are in fact merely *local*, peculiar to Western culture, and that it is thus but another form of "Eurocentrism." Talk of universality (so the objection goes) is not to be trusted, since it tends simply to generalize local, historical conditions. Such an objection would be misplaced. It is an objection that would more appropriately be addressed to various foundationalist attempts to ground universal norms and values in "nature" -- for what "nature" is is something that is relative to one's interpretations of it, and these are not only cultural-relative but cultural-dependent as well. It is an undeniable

fact of experience that people at different times and places entertain different ideas about what is "really real." However, the fact that people are self-interpreting and world-interpreting animals of this sort is *not* something that is merely relative. As Gadamer might say, "this thesis undoubtedly includes no historical relativity, but seeks absolute validity" -- even though "a hermeneutical consciousness [i.e., an awareness of the universality of interpretation] exists only under specific historical conditions."<sup>64</sup>

If it is true, as hermeneutics maintains, that human experience is essentially linguistic, if, that is, the most basic, *experiential* fact about human beings everywhere is that they are "speaking animals," it is incumbent upon philosophical reflection to draw the appropriate, equally universal conclusions. The conclusions that concern us here are these: People from different backgrounds can relate to one another in, basically, one of two ways: either by the exercise of brute force or by specifically human means, by means, that is, of discourse, seeking to persuade rather than coerce. Now as Paul Ricoeur has insisted, violence and discourse are mutually exclusive: "Violence is always the interruption of discourse; discourse is always the interruption of violence."<sup>65</sup> Between violence and discourse it is necessary to choose. If one chooses to act in a properly human way, privileging discourse over violence, one is, by that very fact, committing oneself -- in actual practice -- to certain universal human values, to, in particular, the notion that it is by means of communicative rationality that conflicts of interest between persons and cultures *ought* to be resolved (i.e., to the idea that this is indeed the only properly *human* way to do so).<sup>66</sup> The philosophical attempt to explicate (lay out, interpret) the normativity that is embodied in communicatively rational praxis (the normativity that is both an implicate of and an emergent from this praxis) would, in this way, amount to the elaboration of what could be called a *postfoundational* or *hermeneutical liberalism*. Such a liberalism would itself amount to a *postmetaphysical humanism*, to, that is, a philosophical defense of universal human rights -- rights which would be "grounded" not in a metaphysical "nature" (as classical liberalism sought to do) but in human praxis itself, appealing to nothing more than the dictates of communicative rationality, that most human of all human activities.<sup>67</sup> Rationality is neither "tradition-bound" nor does it involve adopting a "neutral" standpoint of a super-cultural or super-historical sort. The actual locus of rationality is nothing other than what Frank Knight called the "discussion community"<sup>68</sup> or what Merleau-Ponty referred to as "the communicative world."<sup>69</sup> It is thus like the circle of Nicholas of Cusa whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. It is, indeed, both "decentered" and all-inclusive.

A postmodern liberalism of this sort would, I maintain, provide the only

viable alternative to metaphysical or foundationalist universalism, on the one hand, which always results in the marginalization of what is humanly or culturally other, and, on the other hand, antifoundationalist or ethnocentric communitarianism, which, in sacrificing the universal for the sake of the local, leads inevitably to the end of philosophy itself (and, as a direct consequence, to the end of that most distinctly philosophical of notions, the notion that there exists something like *a* humanity). A hermeneutical liberalism seeks (to borrow a phrase from Calvin Schrag) to chart a course "between the Scylla of a hegemonic and ahistorical universalism and the Charybdis of a lawless, self-effacing particularism and enervated historicism."<sup>70</sup> The task it sets itself is that of carrying on the liberal project of the Enlightenment, the "project of modernity" (as Habermas has referred to it) in a decidedly postmodern and postfoundationalist fashion -in such a way that it can assist in the current struggles of peoples everywhere throughout the world for greater freedom and democracy. Hermeneutical liberalism commits itself to, as Gadamer might say, awakening the "consciousness of solidarity of a humanity that slowly begins to know itself as humanity."<sup>71</sup> It is, I think, no exaggeration to say that, in regard to the global civilization now taking shape, the fate of philosophy, of its claim to universality, and the fate of humanity, of freedom and democracy in the world, are inextricably bound up with one another. To despair of philosophy would be to despair of democracy, and, as Jaspers insisted: "To despair of the democratic ideal is to despair of man."<sup>72</sup>

1. See Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

2. As Manfred Frank, among others, has pointed out:

[O]ne does not escape metaphysics and its unicity simply by inverting its premises and turning the privileging of the identity principle into the privileging of multiplicity. Such an abstract opposition is always already metaphysical and does not escape the dialectic of that irrevocable reciprocity that allows neither of the two moments to pose as the totality. Even multiplicity, conceived as an abstract contrastive concept to that of unity, would, if the thought were tenable, have the character of a principle and would be an idea (*Einbindung*) that would not understand itself (*What is Neostucturalism?* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989 p. 351]).

3. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 84.

4. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 315.

5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" in



*Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 3.

6. See "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection" *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 19. The following could be taken as a succinct statement on Gadamer's part of his "linguistic thesis": "language is the universal medium in which understanding itself is realised. The mode of realisation of understanding is interpretation. . . . All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language" (*Truth and Method* [New York: Seabury Press, 1975], p. 350).

7. See *Gadamer, Truth and Method*, p. 404.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 365.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 432.

10. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. xviii-xx.

11. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 38.

12. See *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 153.

13. See *ibid.*, p. 96.

14. The critic in question whose remarks I am here quoting or paraphrasing is Anthony Gottlieb, in his review of Rorty's *Philosophical Papers*, vols. 1 & 2, *The New York Times Book Review*, June 2, 1991, p. 30.

15. See my *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 165. Gadamer says: "Reality does not happen 'behind the back' of language; . . . reality happens precisely *within* language" ("On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," p. 35).

16. See Jacques Derrida, "Difference" in *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David Allison (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 154.

17. John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 26-7.

18. Roger Penrose, "The Biggest Enigma," *New York Review of Books*, March 28, 1991, p. 37. As Penrose observes, the predictive power of quantum mechanics enables it to provide explanations for:

the stability of atoms and solid materials; for phase changes such as melting, freezing, and boiling; for the colors of heated materials, including a detailed description of the puzzling phenomenon of spectral lines; for low temperature superconductivity and superfluidity; and for the behavior of lasers, transistors, and television screens, not to mention the whole of chemistry and much of biology and genetics.

19. Cf. in this regard the following remarks of Donald McCloskey:

The very idea of Truth -- with a capital *T*; something beyond what is merely persuasive to all concerned -- is a fifth wheel, inoperative except that it occasionally comes loose and hits a bystander. If we decide that the quantity theory of money or the marginal productivity theory of distribution is persuasive, interesting, useful, reasonable, appealing, acceptable, we do not also need to know that it is True. Its persuasiveness, interest, usefulness, and so forth come from particular arguments. . . . These are particular arguments, good or bad. After making them, there is no point in asking a last, summarizing question: "Well, is it True?" It's whatever it is -- pervasive, interesting, useful, and so forth (*The Rhetoric of Economics* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985], p. 46).

20. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 9.

21. In an attempt to elucidate what the truth-value of linguistic interpretation consists in, I have compared interpretive constructs with money; for a detailed analysis which proceeds in the opposite direction, seeking to clarify the nature of money by viewing it in a hermeneutical context, see Steven G. Horwitz, *The Private Basis of Monetary Order: An Evolutionary Approach to Money and the Market Process* (Ph.D. dissertation, George Mason University, 1989). Horwitz remarks:

The point of departure for the analogy between money and language is to recognize that both mediate social processes; money is the "medium of exchange" for Menger and many others, while language is the "medium of experience" for Gadamer and others in the Continental tradition. Just as language allows us to understand, through our prejudices, the linguistically-constituted thoughts of others, so does money allow us to draw out and interpret the tastes, preferences and values of others (pp. 167-68).

Horwitz also develops an analogy between *text* and *market* (the "the market is a text too"), showing how both are hermeneutical or interpretational entities - and thus how economics itself is a hermeneutical discipline (see pp. 185-89).

22. William James, "Pragmatism" in *William James: Writings 1902-1910* (New York: The Library of America, 1987), pp. 576-77.

23. For an excellent, phenomenological account of how interpretations of lived experiences are "adjusted" to them in such a way as to constitute the truth of these experiences, see Eugene T. Gendlin, "Experiential Phenomenology" in M. Natanson, ed., *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973). Gendlin formulates the appropriate hermeneutical criterion for assessing the truth-value of textual interpretations (and of interpretations of that text which is experience) in the following suggestive way:

When one explicates a difficult text, it is not enough to take off from some line and spin interesting interpretation; one must return to the text and see if the interpretation sheds light on the other lines in the text, whether it solves or shifts difficulties. If it has no such effects, then the interpretation of the given line was simply a digression, interesting for its own sake perhaps, but not attributable to this text (p. 318).

For a complementary treatment of this hermeneutical issue from a psychoanalytical standpoint, see Roy Schaffer, *Language and Insight* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

24. See in regard to this matter my "The Practice of Theory, the Theory of Practice: A Protreptic," keynote address to the seventh annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Philosophy, Kingston, Ontario, May 27-29, 1991. Forthcoming in *Critical Review*.

25. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 238. See also my "Method in Interpretation" in *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*. Gadamer's remark may be fittingly contrasted with the following remarks of Rorty: "[T]here is nothing beyond vocabularies which serves as a criterion of choice between them." "[T]here is nothing which validates a person's or a culture's final vocabulary" (*Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 80, 197).

26. See *Truth and Method*, p. xxiv.

27. Cf. in this regard Lakatos' distinction between progressive and degenerative research programs.

28. It is impossible that Augustine should have elaborated a thoroughgoing form of subjectivism, since subjectivity, in the modern sense of the term (as a realm of self-subsistent being closed in upon itself), had not yet been invented (this was, precisely, one of the accomplishments of Descartes). See in this regard my "Flesh As Otherness" in Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty* (Evanston, Ill.: North-western University Press, 1990).

All truths are relative (in the weak sense) if, as hermeneutics maintains, understanding arises always in the form of answers to specific questions, as Jean Grondin remarks:

Hermeneutical truth always takes the form of a *response*, that is, to the question that perplexes the interpreter and that leads him or her to interpret a text. It goes without saying that the question is "relative" to its situation without being arbitrary. Relativity means here that the truth can be recognized as such only because it enlightens us, it illuminates us. The meaning discovered by interpretation is the one that comes to shed light on an obscurity, to respond to a question. The interpreter is constitutively invested in what is to be understood. There is no truth in itself if one means thereby a truth independent of the questions and expectations of human beings ("Hermeneutics and Relativism" in Kathleen Wright, ed., *Festivals of Interpretation: Essays on Hans-Georg Gadamer's Work* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990], p. 48).

In his article Grondin goes on to argue that relativity in this weak sense does not mean that all truths need to be lacking in "objectivity".

29. Richard Bernstein has also criticized Rorty for failing to escape from the Either/Or's of traditional philosophy. He writes:

There is something fundamentally wrong with where Rorty leaves us. . . . Much of this book [*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*] is about the obsessions of philosophers and the pictures that hold them captive. But there is a sense in which Rorty himself is obsessed. It is almost as if he can't quite "let go" and accept the force of his own critique. It is as if Rorty himself has been more deeply touched by what he is attacking than he realizes. Rorty keeps pointing to and hinting at an alternative to the foundationalism that has preoccupied modern philosophy without ever fully exploring this alternative. Earlier I suggested that one way of reading Rorty is to interpret him as trying to help us to set aside the Cartesian anxiety -- the Cartesian Either/Or -- that underlies so much of modern philosophy. But there is a variation of this Either/Or that haunts this book -- Either we are *ineluctably* tempted by foundational metaphors and the desperate attempt to escape from history *or* we must frankly recognize that philosophy itself is at best a form of "kibitzing." . . . Rorty himself is still not liberated from the types of obsessions which he claims have plagued most modern philosophers. . . . He himself is obsessed with the obsessions of philosophers ("Philosophy In the Conversation of Mankind," in Robert Hollinger, ed., *Hermeneutics and Praxis* [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985], pp. 77, 79, 85).

For her part Rebecca Comay observes: "In simply jettisoning the idea of universality -- instead of interrogating it and wresting it free of its essentialist trappings -- Rorty tacitly

accepts all the terms of classical rationalism" ("Interrupting the Conversation: Notes on Rorty" in Evan Simpson, ed., *Anti-Foundationalism and Practical Reasoning: Conversations Between Hermeneutics and Analysis* [Edmonton, Alberta: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1987], pp. 111, 113.

30. Jean-Paul Sartre, "*Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: l'intentionnalité*" in *La Transcendance de L'ego* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1966), pp. 111, 113.

31. See *Truth and Method*, p. 363.

32. A "metaphilosophical" point. If "proof" is demanded for what I've said about the unlimited character of language, the fact that I've said it should be proof enough. The fact that one can, in and by means of a natural language, reflect on the limitations of that language demonstrates that that language can serve as its own metalanguage. To paraphrase Hegel, the act of speaking about the limits of what can be said is at once the act of going beyond those limits. (A further point. The prefix "meta" adds nothing to the word "philosophical," since "philosophy" means reflection on any possible thing whatsoever, including, therefore, itself. Metaphilosophy is not something "beyond" philosophy; what comes "after" philosophy is-- should one decide to reflect on it -- yet more philosophy. Like (natural) language itself, philosophy knows no outer limits. Indeed, philosophy is nothing other than consciousness that language has of its own infinitely reflexive, questioning power; it is language which knows itself *as* unlimited, *as* universal.)

33. Derrida speaks of "the padded interior of the 'symbolic.'" See his *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 86.

34. Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," pp. 15-16.

35. Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?," in John Rajchman and Cornel West, eds., *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 11, 15. Rorty's rejection of transcultural rationality and his endorsement of "ethnocentrism" amount to an effective "fragmentation of reason" since what "attach[ing] a special privilege to our own community" means for him is that only "one's *ethnos* comprises those who share enough of one's beliefs to make fruitful conversation possible" ("Solidarity or Objectivity?," pp. 12-13). The attempt to engage in cross-cultural rationality is thus, for Rorty, a waste of time. The most he can allow for is that we might somehow manage to expand our own particular community in such a way as to absorb others into it. Rorty's ethnocentrism is "the ethnocentrism of a 'we' ('we liberals') which is dedicated to enlarging itself, to creating an even larger and more variegated *ethnos*" (*Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 198).

36. See *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 172.

37. See in this regard my "*Pour une dérationnalisation de la raison*" in Theodore Geraets, *La rationalité aujourd'hui/Rationality To-Day* (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1979). For an expanded presentation of the hermeneutical conception of rationality see my more recent *The Logic of Liberty* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), ch. 10.

38. Jean Grondin describes the matter thus:

It [hermeneutics] eschews the accusation of total relativism by taking into account the reliance of hermeneutical truth on communication. This openness to dialogue results from the recognition of human finitude. Conscious of the cultural and historical limitations of our beliefs, we engage in dialogue to share our experience and, at times, to seek orientation. In the unfolding of conversation, some of our opinions can be put to the test. Dialogical arguing is a central feature of hermeneutical rationality. This rationality is the one founded on the binding force that accompanies the better argument on some issue. The rationality of beliefs lies in the fact that they can be dialogically founded and that they remain open to

criticism. . . . This is why hermeneutical truth lays claim to universality ("Hermeneutical Truth and its Historical Presuppositions: A Possible Bridge between Analysis and Hermeneutics" in *Anti-Foundationalism and Practical Reasoning*, p. 56).

39. Thus, to say that human beings possess a *faculty* called "reason" should not lead us into hypostatizing reason in an essentialist, metaphysical fashion; it simply amounts to saying that humans can or are able to act in a reasonable way (i.e., to speak in more substantive terms, this is something that they have the ability or the "faculty" to do).
40. Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), p. 87.
41. See "Solidarity or Objectivity?," p. 5.
42. See in this regard my "Merleau-Ponty Alive," paper presented at the seminar on "Sozialphilosophie und Lebenswelt, M. Merleau-Ponty," Inter-University Center, Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, March-April, 1991. Forthcoming in *Man and World*.
43. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. H.L. Dreyfus and P.A. Dreyfus (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 93.
44. Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 8.
45. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 92. Speaking explicitly from a postmodern and postfoundational standpoint, Chantal Mouffe recently stated: "Universalism is not rejected but particularized; what is needed is a new kind of articulation between the universal and the particular" ("Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern," in Andrew Ross, ed., *Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988], p. 36).
46. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. R.C. McCleary (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 120.
47. See Calvin O. Schrag, "Rationality between Modernity and Postmodernity" in Stephen K. White, ed., *Life-World and Politics: Between Modernity and Postmodernity* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), as well as his book, *The Transversal Rationality of Praxis: A Response to the Postmodern Challenge* (forthcoming from Indiana University Press).
48. See Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?," p. 6.
49. See Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 139.
50. See Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity" in Richard J. Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), p. 166.
51. See Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?," p. 12.
52. On the essential "openness" of languages and cultures to one another. see *Truth and Method*, p. 405:

The linguistic world in which we live is not a barrier that prevents knowledge of being in itself, but fundamentally embraces everything in which our insight can be enlarged and deepened. It is true that those who are brought up in a particular linguistic and cultural tradition see the world in a different way from those who belong to other traditions. It is true that the historical 'worlds' that succeed one another in the course of history are different from one another and from the world of today; but it is always, in whatever tradition we consider it, a human, i.e., a linguistically constituted world that presents itself to us. Every such world, as linguistically constituted, is always open, of itself, to every possible insight and hence for every expansion of its own world picture, and accordingly available to others.

53. See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 68, 22 (see also p. 189).

54. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1964), p. 83: "[E]n voulant la liberté, nous découvrons qu'elle dépend entièrement de la liberté des autres, et que la liberté des autres dépend de la nôtre....je ne puis prendre ma liberté pour but, que si je prends également celles des autres pour but."

55. In an earlier paper, "Philosophy and the Pursuit of World Peace," *Dialectics and Humanism* (Poland), 20, nos. 2 and 3, 1984, I sought to defend such a notion of solidarity by arguing that "there can be values which are ultimate and genuinely universal, values which, while not being suppressive of particular cultural and ideational values and conceptions as to what constitutes the 'good life,' would yet be independent of and, so to speak, transcendental in regard to them." I would now prefer to speak of these metavalues as being "transversal" rather than "transcendental," following in this regard the lead of Calvin Schrag who employs the term "transversality" to refer to "a convergence without coincidence, an interplay without synthesis, an appropriation without totalization, and a universalization that allows for difference" (see Schrag, *The Transversal Rationality of Praxis*, ch. 6, sec. 2).

56. *Nie ma volnosc bez solidarnosci* was a phrase serving as the masthead of the opposition Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

57. Jurgen Habermas, "Justice and Solidarity" in Michael Kelly, ed., *Hermeneutics and Critical Theory in Ethics and Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), p. 47.

58. I am thinking in particular of the "*nouvelle rhétorique*" of Chaim Perelman. For a detailed analysis of the relation between hermeneutics and rhetoric, see my "The New Philosophy of Rhetoric," *Texte: Revue de critique et de théorie littéraire* (Toronto: Editions Trintexte), 8/9, 1989, pp. 247-77.

59. This is not to say that people cannot, by means of seemingly rational argument, be tricked into surrendering their freedom for one reason or another. This (the perversion of rational discourse) is, in fact, generally the means by which socialist governments come into power (as opposed to authoritarian governments of a more traditional sort, which generally rely on intimidation and brute force).

60. Frank H. Knight, *Freedom and Reform* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1982), pp. 476, 474. For a presentation of Knight's views of communicative rationality, see my *The Logic of Liberty*, pp. 234-39.

The position I am here seeking to defend resembles to a considerable extent the one defended by Karl-Otto Apel (although it was arrived at by a quite different philosophical route than the one followed by Apel). Apel likewise maintains that the norms implicit in the communicative process cannot be denied by the participants in it without (as he calls it) "pragmatic [or performative] self-contradiction." My position, however, differs in important ways from that of Apel (and of Habermas as well). In particular, it eschews the kind of *transcendental foundationalism* pursued by Apel who seeks to "ground" (Apel speaks of *Letztbegründung*) communicative norms teleologically in an "ideal communication community." (The criticism that hermeneutics would address to this way of attempting to understand the actual -- in terms of an ideal end-state -- is that it perpetuates metaphysical and foundationalist [and thus, also, utopian] ways of thinking.) For a representative statement of Apel's position, see his "Is the Ethics of the Ideal Communication Community a Utopia?," in Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr, eds., *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).

61. Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?," p. 13.

62. See Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Mankind*, trans. E.B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 221.

63. Rorty is the kind of self-contented Westerner that Alexander Solzhenitsyn, speaking in the name of the oppressed peoples of the world, was addressing when he admonished his fellow humans in the West in the following terms:

I understand that you love freedom, but in our crowded world you have to pay a tax for freedom. You cannot love freedom for yourselves alone and quietly agree to a situation where the majority of humanity, spread over the greater part of the globe, is subjected to violence and oppression. . . . No! Freedom is indivisible and one has to take a moral attitude toward it (*Warning to the West* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976], pp. 72, 111).

64. See *Truth and Method*, p. xxi.

65. Paul Ricoeur, *Main Trends in Philosophy* (New York: Holmes and Maier, 1979), p. 226.

66. It should be noted that, for these values to be effective and "real," it is not required that the participants in the communicative process share an explicit *agreement* as to just exactly what they consist in and how they are to be interpreted, i.e., they do not need to be *theorized* in order to be *operative*. While these values may have received a theoretical articulation in the course of Western civilization, the praxis of which they are the theory is not itself the exclusive trait of any one culture in particular. As with people, so with cultures: while some may not know *what* rationality is (how to articulate it theoretically), they all pretty much know how to *be* rational when they have to.

It may further be noted that there exists a means whereby someone may, *without self-contradiction*, "deny" the values (of mutual freedom and respect) that, I have argued, are necessarily implicated in the communicative process, i.e., may refuse to recognize the communicative demand to treat other human beings in a properly *human* way: This is by simply refusing to recognize that these others are indeed human (as, e.g., in the case of slaves -- *with* whom one does not *discuss* matters but *to* whom one merely issues *orders*, as one would with an animal). As Knight observed, the refusal of dialogue (and the ethical demands it carries with it) "is justified only to the extent that those subject to it [one sided control] are explicitly denied the full status of human beings" (*Freedom and Reform*, p. 266; see also my *The Logic of Liberty*, p. 223).

67. For a detailed argument to the effect that the structural implications of communicative rationality are, in and of themselves, fully sufficient to legitimate philosophically basic liberal values and human rights and that nothing outside of these discursive practices is needed to "ground" them in a "substantive" way, see my *The Logic of Liberty*, ch. 11.

68. Knight, *Freedom and Reform*, p. 255.

69. See Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 19.

70. Schrag, *The Transversal Rationality of Praxis*, Introduction.

71. *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 86.

72. *The Future of Mankind*, p. 299.

# PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE FOUNDATIONALISM DEBATE

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Two themes central to Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, the phenomenological reduction and the intentionality of conscious experience, along with certain details of Husserl's view of empirical knowledge, provide a basis for situating phenomenology in current debates about foundationalism. Phenomenology is often thought to be foundationalist because Husserl claims that philosophy is a transcendental discipline which achieves apodictic insights about experience. This paper will argue that discussions of foundationalism lead inescapably to transcendental issues and that phenomenology, albeit apodictic and transcendental, is a non-foundationalist discipline which nevertheless has a central and constructive cultural role to play.

## 1. Philosophical and Critical Reflection.

The phenomenological reduction is a methodological performance, a shift of attention, by which we enter the philosophical attitude. This attitude is contrasted to what Husserl calls the "natural attitude." In the natural attitude we attend directly and straightforwardly to the world and the objects therein, and we aim at those ends (cognitive, practical, and so forth) belonging to everyday, natural life. The shift to the philosophical attitude is characterized by Husserl as a reduction because we suspend our participation in what he calls the "general thesis of the natural



attitude," i.e. we suspend (but do not negate) our initial and naïve acceptance of the actuality of the experienced world and the veridicality of our experiences.<sup>1</sup> Truthful experiences, and consequently the testing, strengthening or weakening, and confirming or disconfirming of the initial veridicality of experience, are the telos of activities undertaken in the natural attitude. The attainment of this natural end requires, therefore, the criticism of naïve experience.

"Natural" criticism, however, is different from philosophical criticism. Natural criticism also involves a change of attitude, a shift of attention to the logical domain. This shift of attention is most obviously motivated by the possibility of doubt. We might, for example, provisionally withdraw our acceptance of the truth of what is expressed in a declarative sentence; in doing so, we focus instead on the logical content of the sentence, its judgmental or propositional sense.<sup>2</sup> In this critical attitude we can identify reasons for accepting or rejecting the judgment in question, i.e. we can — as the logician does — construct, consider, and evaluate arguments for or against the position asserted in the judgment. However, our concern is ordinarily with overcoming doubt and establishing the truth of the original judgment, i.e. with determining the "fit" or "agreement" (leaving these terms for the moment undefined) between the logical content of our experience and the experienced objectivity itself.

The critical attitude, therefore, has a twofold concern reflected in deductive logic's distinction between validity and soundness: the consideration of arguments and the determination of truth. For the latter, the former alone is insufficient, since arguments remain in the domain of logical content and do not themselves address the "fit" between the logical content of the experience and the experienced objectivity.<sup>3</sup> The critical attitude, then, must be distinguished from the purely logical attitude; the critical attitude involves both logical and epistemological concerns. The critical thinker operates in the two-dimensional area opened by the distinction between sense (or content) and object. In naïve natural experience, our undoubted experience is concerned solely with objects; when doubt arises, we enter the critical attitude and its concern with the interplay of sense and object, but with the aim of returning to the natural and straightforward concern with objects.

In the philosophical attitude, on the other hand, we attend to transcendental consciousness, to consciousness as intentional experience. The claim that consciousness is intentional experience means simply that consciousness is always the consciousness *of* (an object). To attend to consciousness as intentional experience is to reflect on that whole which is the intentional correlation between the experience (of an object) and its intended object (precisely as experienced). Any analysis of intentional experience — indeed any account of knowledge — must clarify the

relations between (1) the experiencing, (2) the experienced object itself, and (3) the experienced object precisely *as* experienced. Our experience is always the experience of an object, but that object is experienced in a determinate manner, with a determinate content. Hence, the experienced object precisely as experienced has often been conceived as a psychic or logical content.

Whereas critical reflection occurs in the interplay between sense and object and is undertaken in order to determine the truthfulness of our experience, philosophical reflection is undertaken in order to identify and describe the structures and forms embedded in the various types of intentional experience, one of which is that all experience is filled with a determinate content. Indeed, the distinctions between sense and object and between these two and the experience itself are properly understood only from within the philosophical attitude and its reflection upon intentional experience.<sup>4</sup> The philosophical thinker, in other words, works in the three-dimensional area opened by the distinction between the experiencing, the experienced object itself, and that object simply as experienced (i.e. the content or sense of the experience). From this perspective the philosopher can speak of what it is for a judgmental experience to be truthful, i.e. for the judgmental content of a judging act to "fit" the judged state of affairs.

## 2. Varieties of Foundationalism

Foundationalism is a position formed at the same intersection of concerns which characterizes the critical attitude. It is born of the concern to defeat skepticism by securing the foundations of knowledge, the basic truths upon which all other knowledge will rest. The skeptical challenge to knowledge depends upon a distinction between appearance and reality and claims that only appearances are knowable. This challenge produces two responses: (1) the claim that an objective reality beyond "subjective" appearances is knowable, and (2) the search for secure foundational cognitions or beliefs regarding immediately experienced content, upon which is to be based knowledge of the objectively real.

More narrowly, foundationalism is a position regarding not knowledge as such but its justification. This more narrowly construed foundationalism arises out of the concern to avoid two evils in the order of justification, viz. circularity and an infinite regress, both of which, it is argued, would leave knowledge ultimately ungrounded and open the door to skepticism. Insofar as the narrower foundationalism is concerned with justification, and insofar as justification is thought to be truth-conducive, the account of justificatory argument must eventually be related to

accounts of truth and the attempt to defeat skepticism.<sup>5</sup> For foundationalist positions of both the broader and narrower sort I shall use the expression "epistemological foundationalism."<sup>6</sup>

Foundationalism, however, is also a position arising out of metaphysical concerns regarding the relation of philosophy to non-philosophical experience. This type of foundationalism views philosophy as a foundational discipline not because non-philosophical truths are inferentially justified by appeal to philosophical premises but because philosophical truths are *about* other kinds of experience or knowledge. They enable us, so it is claimed, to determine whether or not a truth is genuinely a scientific truth, whether or not a work is genuinely a work of art, whether or not an act is genuinely moral (as opposed to non-moral), and to determine how the scientific, the aesthetic, and the moral are related to one another.<sup>7</sup> Philosophical knowledge, in other words, is the knowledge of (a) those criteria in terms of which we determine the legitimacy of various experiences or candidates for knowledge and (b) those principles in terms of which we specify the proper relations between different kinds of experiences and different kinds of knowledge. For this sort of foundationalism I shall use the expression "transcendental foundationalism."<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Modern Epistemologies and Phenomenology

Since epistemological foundationalism is born of the philosophical motivation to defeat skeptical doubts and to secure or conduce to truth, discussions thereof occur largely within the confines of the distinction between sense and object disclosed by the adoption of the critical attitude. However, since the philosophical attitude has a more encompassing concern, it is possible from within that attitude to recognize that discussions of foundationalism fail to conceive adequately the intentionality of experience and thereby fail to clarify adequately both the relation between experienced content and the experienced objectivity and that between justificatory arguments and the experience of truth. That this is in fact so is one of the claims of this paper.

Most discussions of epistemological foundationalism are also carried on within the modern understanding of the distinction between subject and object and the related distinction between the inner and the outer. Most discussions of epistemological foundationalism assume — as do modern epistemologies generally — that (1) the immediate object of experience is not the experienced objectivity itself but the experienced content, (2) the experienced content is in some sense a real part of the subject or the subject's experiencing act, and (3) as such, the experienced content is

ontologically distinct from the experienced objectivity. Modern epistemologies, in other words, are guilty of a reductionism, (i) they reduce the immediate object of our experience from the experienced object itself to the experienced content, and (ii) they conceive this content as a psychic content. They "subjectivize" the (outer) object by making its "objective content" a part of the experiencing agent's "subjective" or "psychic" (inner) life. Even a philosopher such as Frege who rejects the psychologizing thesis expressed in (2) views the experienced content as belonging to a third realm of sense (logical content) ontologically distinct from experienced objectivities themselves.<sup>9</sup> Hence, most discussions of epistemological foundationalism focus almost exclusively on the infallible self-evidence or at least the self-justification of the content of certain experiences. Moreover, they generally adopt the view that the relation between the experienced content and the experienced object is to be explained by an external relation (e.g. causation, presentation, representation, or projection) or left unexplained. Finally, most do not explicitly consider in detail the experiencing activity itself.

The phenomenologist, however, rejects the modern view of the subject-object distinction, and phenomenological reflection yields a significantly different account of the relations between experience, experienced content, and experienced object. The phenomenological reduction is not a reductionism, the philosopher reflects on the intentional correlation between subject and object. Subject and object are not two independent wholes externally related, but parts of a more encompassing whole, viz. transcendental consciousness, the consciousness of an object. Hence, it is not primarily the externalized distinctions between content and object, or subject and object, or inner and outer which will provide the key to Husserl's answer to skepticism and his views on foundationalism.

Husserl distinguishes instead the real and intentional contents of experience. However, the experienced or intentional content of experience is not "psychologized" or "logicized;" it is not ontologically distinct from the experienced objectivity itself. The intentional object is the *intended* object *as* intended; conversely, the intended object is the identity presented in a manifold of intentional objects, where the intentional object (the intended object as intended, as presenting itself in a determinate manner) is understood more simply as a presentation of the (intended) object. Hence, the intended object is an identity in a manifold of presentations.

If, for example, we consider a single, concrete, temporally extended experience, e.g. listening to John Adams' *Fearful Symmetries*, its intentional object is the intended objectivity precisely as intended, *Fearful Symmetries* as performed and heard. However, if we consider separate

phases of experience within the temporally extended experience, then each phase of the experience has its own intentional object, the presently played notes as presently heard in the context of the surrounding, no-longer and not-yet sounding notes (ultimately all the notes comprised by the work). Since each phase intends an object in a determinate manner of givenness, for each phase there is an intended objectivity as intended, i.e. an intentional object. Thus, the intended object of the concrete experience is the identity, the composition *Fearful Symmetries* itself, present in the temporally extended manifold of notes heard in context, which are the intentional objects of the various phases of the experience. Finally, if we consider multiple, concrete experiences of the same object, each experience has its own intentional object, its intended objectivity just as intended. But the intended object itself is the identity present in each and all of these intentional objects; Adams' *Fearful Symmetries* is (at least) the identity presenting itself in its written score and in its various (and varied) performances.

As an identity present in multi-leveled manifolds of presentation, the intended objectivity itself is neither the totality of its presentations, nor some subset thereof, nor any single presentation thereof. By virtue of the associational patterns and horizontal references which are a structural part of any experience, any single experience or experiential phase incorporates a manifold, and the object of the experience is the identity revealing itself therein. The intended object is, therefore, present, by virtue of these horizontal references, in each part of the manifold and in the manifold as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

The response to skepticism implied by this view of intentionality might appear too strong. If the intentional content is ontologically identical with the intended objectivity itself, how are we to explain non-veridical appearances and falsity? It is a second Husserlian distinction, that between empty and full intentions (as opposed to the modern distinction between subjective content and object), which provides the resources to answer this question. Our attention (except, perhaps, for perceptual attention) can be directed to objects whether or not those objects are present to us here and now (although even in perception we must distinguish between those aspects of an object which are actually sensed — say, the opening bars of *Fearful Symmetries* or this side of a door — and those which are not actually sensed — say, the remainder of the musical composition or the other side of the door). To intend an object when it is not present in the here and now is emptily to intend the object. The object of an empty intention, however, is the worldly objectivity itself and not a mental content. The worldly objectivity as (emptily) intended in the experience is the intentional object of the experience, but that worldly objectivity as intended *is* the existent worldly

objectivity itself in a particular manner of presentation. It is the worldly objectivity in one of its *possible* presentations.

The full intention, on the other hand, is directed to the object actually present in the here and now. Full intentions are intuitions, involving to some degree and in some measure a sensuous and perceptual aspect.<sup>11</sup> An intuitive act can function as a fulfilling (or disappointing) intention, i.e. as an experience which fulfills (or disappoints) what is intended emptily. When the worldly objectivity is itself brought to an intuitive presence, what we previously and emptily thought about that objectivity is confirmed in a fulfilling intention or disconfirmed in a disappointing intention.

This does not, however, mean that all and only fulfilling intuitions are simple perceptions. A perception can be undertaken simply, without any reference to an empty intention; I can look around the room and note things without any reference to an empty intention seeking fulfillment. Or a simple perception can fulfill an expectation about how an object will look. However, a fulfilling intention is not always, or even usually, a simple perception. Simple perception underdetermines a state of affairs since perceived objects can be articulated in a variety of ways. An empty judgmental intending which articulates an object in a determinate manner can only be fulfilled by a full intention which presents the object in that same articulated manner, i.e. by what Husserl calls a "categorical intuition." In the categorical intuition fulfilling a judgment, the articulated state of affairs is intuitively present to consciousness in the same way it is articulated by the (empty) judging. In other words, we see not merely a white wall; rather, in seeing the white wall we see *that* it is white. As an intuitive act, the categorical intuition requires a sensuous or perceptual base — to see that the wall is white requires the perceptual base of seeing the white wall itself — but the categorical intuition is not exhausted by this base.

For Husserl, then, to experience truth is to experience the "covering" (*Deckung*) of the emptily intended objectivity by the intuitively present objectivity. The objectivity emptily intended and the objectivity intuitively present are experienced as coincident. In this manner, the full intention becomes a fulfilling intention. To experience the coincidence of empty and fulfilling intentions is to recognize that both intentions are directed to the *same* objectivity. In experiencing this coincidence, we experience truth; we recognize the identity of the posited and intuited objectivities (rather than the coherence of contents or the correspondence of a subjective content and an objectivity).

The coincidence established between the empty and fulfilling intentions need not always be perfect. Fulfillment is relative not only to the empty intention we seek to fulfill but to the practical interests and the

corresponding demands for exactness inherent in the kind of experience in question. So, for example, the more theoretical the experience, the more perfect the coincidence sought. But many of our ordinary experiences and interests are satisfied by less perfect instances of coincidence in which we can, in spite of the differences in the manner in which the object is presented by the different intentions, recognize the object as an identity in the manifold of empty and full intentions.

It is, therefore, the distinction between empty and full intentions which carries for Husserl the burden of explaining dubitable or false cognitions rather than the distinction between (subjective) appearance and object. The fact that an object appears to a subject in a determinate (and non-veridical) manner does not transform the object's so appearing into an appearance which is a subjective, psychic content or a third-realm, logical content. Truth and falsity are determined by the coincidence or lack thereof existing between empty and full intentions, and the experience of truth or falsity is the recognition of that coincidence or lack thereof such that we also recognize that the posited and intuited objectivities are or are not identical.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. Epistemological Foundationalism

In its most general sense epistemological foundationalism is a position regarding empirical knowledge which maintains that there exist some foundational cognitions or beliefs (1) which are either self-evident or self-justifying or, at the least, not evident or justified by reference to any other cognitions or beliefs and (2) upon which all other cognitions or beliefs are founded insofar as they can be derived therefrom by an acceptable method. Insofar as foundationalism is concerned with the justification of founded empirical knowledge, insofar as empirical knowledge is propositional, and insofar as foundationalism founds empirical knowledge on self-evident or self-justifying cognitions, the foundationalist (1) must either (a) allow that the foundational cognitions are themselves propositional and can serve as premises in justifying arguments, or (b) claim that the foundational cognitions are non-propositional and explain how propositional beliefs can be derived from non-propositional cognitions, and (2) if a foundationalist also claims that experienced content and experienced object are ontologically distinct, he or she must explain (or explain away) the relation between content and object so as to explain how empirical knowledge results from our immediate awareness of experienced content. We shall for the moment assume (1a).

Strong foundationalism claims that the foundational cognitions are

infallible, whereas moderate foundationalism does not.<sup>13</sup> An infallible cognition is one about whose truth it is impossible for the knower to be mistaken. Hence, for the strong foundationalist the foundational cognitions are self-evidently true. Finally, the infallibility of a foundational cognition implies its incorrigibility. An incorrigible cognition is one which is not subject to correction, and a cognition about which we cannot be mistaken is clearly not subject to correction.

Strong foundationalism's commitment to infallible foundational cognitions is sometimes — as in the case of Descartes and Lewis — couched in the language of “certainty” and “indubitability.”<sup>14</sup> Descartes, for example, discloses as a result of his methodic and methodological doubt what he takes to be the indubitable propositions (1) that he doubts and (2) that, as one who doubts, he is a thinking thing, a being who has ideas with both formal and objective reality. What is indubitably revealed to Descartes and given to philosophical reflection is, therefore, not the experienced objectivity about which he might be mistaken and which might not even exist, but his subjectivity, i.e. his experience along with its experienced, representational content. The truth of the content is not indubitably guaranteed, but that the idea has this content is guaranteed.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Lewis argues that our empirical knowledge rests on “apprehensions of direct and indubitable content of experience,” i.e. the direct experience of sensuous qualities or “qualia,” which are not the objective properties themselves but the directly given content of our sense experience.<sup>16</sup> Hence, what is apprehended with certainty is again subjectivity (in the modern sense), i.e. the sensory apprehension together with its experienced, presentational content. Thus, while it is by no means certain that I am perceiving water on the road before me, it is certain that I am perceiving what *looks* like water, what *appears* to be water. And in this respect at least, Lewis is like Descartes who secures the act of thinking along with its content.

Husserl too appeals to the indubitability of experiences while we are living through them. For Husserl what is disclosed in the indubitable grasp of an experience is both the experiencing act and the experienced object just as experienced, i.e. the intentional content of the experience or what he later calls the “noema.”<sup>17</sup> While Husserl's ontology of contents is significantly different from the modern understanding of content found in Descartes and Lewis, this difference makes no difference for claims of indubitability.

## 5. Epistemological Anti-Foundationalism

The basic objection to strong foundationalism concerns the relationship



between the attributed characteristics of indubitability and certainty and the asserted infallibility of foundational cognitions. Properly speaking, certainty belongs more to the knower than to the cognition; it is that property of a cognitive act such that the cognitive agent *S* has complete assurance in its truth. Such assurance, however, is presumably tied to the fact that there are no known or foreseeable reasons for *S* not to accept the truth of the cognition in question, i.e. it is tied to the cognition's indubitability for *S*. Consequently, the negation of a certain or indubitable cognition is *rationally* inconceivable to *S* (i.e. there is no rational motivation to consider negating the cognition), but such inconceivability to *S* does not entail the impossibility of the *S*'s being mistaken; it does not entail infallibility. Certainty and indubitability, in other words, do not entail that *S* cannot *be* mistaken but only that *S* has no *reason* to *think* he or she might be mistaken. Finally, whereas infallibility entails incorrigibility, certainty and indubitability do not; a cognition is incorrigible only when it is not subject to correction, but previously unknown and unforeseen reasons can newly provide legitimate bases for doubting and correcting a cognition previously thought certain and indubitable.<sup>18</sup> Hence, even if the foundational cognitions are certain or indubitable to *S*, this does not entail their infallibility and incorrigibility, and since this entailment is necessary for strong foundationalism to be maintained, strong foundationalism can safely be rejected.

Moreover, experience clearly reveals that *S*'s certain judgment that he or she is undergoing an experience of a particular type with a particular content is not indubitable. It is at best indubitable only in the weaker sense of there being no reasons for *S* to doubt the cognition in question; it is only subjectively indubitable. *S*, for example, might have no known reason for doubt and might make no attempt — and might even be psychologically incapable of making an attempt — to rule out the possibility that presently unknown but foreseeable reasons might raise a basis for doubt. But it is possible that the apparently certain and indubitable perceiving of an object is not truly a perceptual experience at all. The temporarily or permanently deranged person who is hallucinating might be certain, i.e. have no known reason to doubt and be unable to foresee any reason to doubt, that he or she is perceiving what looks like a green monster. Experiences involving various forms of psychological repression or masking behaviors provide additional examples of experiences which are certain for *S* but only apparently or subjectively indubitable.

Experiencing agents are, then, not always correct about the nature of their own certain and "indubitable" experiences. Precisely because the world, the knowing agents therein, and the objects they know are realities *for us*, we are sometimes in a better position to judge the true character

of a person's experience than the person undergoing the experience. The certainty and "indubitability" of such experiences to the one having the experiences are no guarantee even of the truth, much less the infallibility, of  $S$ 's beliefs about such experiences and their presentational or representational content. Hence,  $S$  cannot be assured of the truth of any cognitions founded on such foundational cognitions.

The difficulties in thinking that particular cognitions with their experienced contents are indubitable make it impossible to think that foundational cognitions, if there are any, would always even be *true*. We need, therefore, to divorce ourselves for the moment from the teleological concern with truth, which cannot always be secured even by supposedly foundational cognitions, and limit our discussion to the purely logical domain and to those versions of moderate foundationalism which claim only that there are foundational cognitions whose justification is non-inferential.

Our moderate foundationalist, however, is susceptible to the charge that within the purely logical domain the justification of beliefs always proceeds by way of giving reasons. Hence, every belief will be justified by appeal to other beliefs. Consequently, there are no foundational beliefs which are self-justifying in the sense that they do not depend on other beliefs for their justification. Bonjour states this argument, which he calls "the basic antifoundationalist argument," as follows:<sup>19</sup>

(1) Suppose that there are basic [foundational] empirical beliefs (a) which are epistemically justified, and (b) whose justification does not depend on that of any further empirical beliefs.

(2) For a belief to be epistemically justified requires that there be a reason why it is likely to be true.

(3) For a belief to be epistemically justified for a particular person requires that this person be himself in cognitive possession of such a reason.

(4) The only way to be in cognitive possession of such a reason is to believe *with justification* the premises from which it follows that the belief is likely to be true.

(5) The premises of such a justifying argument for an empirical belief cannot be entirely *a priori*; at least one such premise must be empirical.

(6) Therefore, the justification of a supposed basic empirical belief must depend on the justification of at least one other empirical belief, contradicting (1).

(7) It follows that there can be no basic empirical beliefs.

The controversial premises in this argument are (3) and (4). Premise (3) states the internalist view of justification, viz. that the justifying reasons be believed or known by  $S$ . Externalist accounts of justification, on the

other hand, seek to preserve foundationalism by denying premise (3), claiming instead that a justifying reason for at least a non-inferential belief is present (a) whenever a nomological relation exists between the believer and the world such that the satisfaction of that relation yields a true belief that  $p$  and justifies  $S$  in believing that  $p$ , even though  $S$  has no awareness of this (nomological) reason or (b) whenever  $S$  follows a reliable process in coming to believe that  $p$ , even though  $S$  might be unaware of the reliability of this process. The advantage of externalism is that it more intimately unites the concerns with justification and truth than the internalist account which is concerned exclusively with justification.

This advantage, however, is more than canceled by two disadvantages. First, externalism fails adequately to account for the difference between truly believing and knowing. Although this problem exists for externalism whatever definition of knowledge is accepted, we can illustrate it in the context of the justified-true-belief definition of knowledge. According to that definition,  $S$  knows that  $p$  only if (a)  $p$  is true; (b)  $S$  believes that  $p$ , and (c)  $S$  is justified in believing that  $p$ . Externalism's understanding of (c) transforms it from a statement about  $S$ 's condition of being justified, of  $S$ 's having reasons to believe that  $p$ , to a statement about  $p$ , that  $p$  is justified for  $S$  whether or not  $S$  is aware that it is justified. This last clause, however, indicates the difficulty with externalism, for  $S$  can know that  $p$  — i.e.  $S$  can truly believe with nomological or reliabilist justification that  $p$  — without any awareness that  $p$  is justified, even while in cognitive possession of reasons justifying the belief that  $q$ , when  $q$  is in fact false and logically incompatible with  $p$ . Nevertheless the externalist would, on the justified-true-belief account of knowledge, have to consider  $S$ 's irrational belief that  $p$  (irrational because  $S$  has reason to believe that  $q$ ) to be knowledge. The alternative, of course, is to continue to hold the externalist position while rejecting the justified-true-belief account of knowledge.<sup>20</sup> In this case, the anomaly present in the last example would no longer be a bar to claiming that  $S$  knows that  $p$  for the possession of knowledge would no longer depend necessarily on  $S$ 's being justified in believing that  $p$  but only, perhaps, on  $p$ 's being true. Such a view, however, could still not account for the subjective difference between merely believing (without justification) that  $p$  and knowing (without awareness of the reasons) that  $p$ .

The advantage of internalism, on the other hand, is that the subjective difference between truly believing and knowing is preserved and explained. For the internalist, an adequate account of knowledge includes the requirement that  $S$  be in cognitive possession of the reasons which make  $p$  true or likely to be true. This requirement does not mean that  $S$  must have explicit awareness of the reasons justifying the belief that  $p$ ,

but only that  $S$  have implicit awareness thereof sufficient to allow  $S$  to provide the reasons (at least imprecisely and vaguely) if he or she were asked to do so. More fundamentally, the advantage of internalism is that it responds to the intuition that  $S$ 's knowing that  $p$  involves  $S$ 's being in possession of the evidence, in this case the justifying reasons, supporting what he or she knows. But internalism so understood seems to generate the infinite regress in the order of justification which a foundationalist is concerned to stop, for  $S$  could always be asked to make explicit those justifying reasons.

The rejection of premise (4) of the basic antifoundationalist argument allows for the internalism of (3) while nevertheless stopping the infinite regress in the order of justifying reasons. Such a rejection requires either an appeal to a belief the mere holding of which immediately justifies its content or to basic, immediately self-warranting cognitions which are not themselves beliefs but are capable of justifying beliefs [(1b) above]. However, with respect to the second alternative, it is difficult to see how a non-propositional content would *logically justify* a propositional content. And with respect to the first alternative, we have already seen the difficulties in claiming that the experienced content of individual experiences is in any sense self-evidently true and thereby self-justifying. Hence, to appeal to self-justifying beliefs and to establish their character as self-justifying or self-warranting, and thereby foundational even if fallible, we would have to both identify some characteristic mark of these experiences and establish the self-warranting or self-justifying nature of the *class* of experiences possessing this characteristic mark.

Let us assume that we do identify a defining characteristic of self-justifying or self-warranting beliefs or cognitions. We would, then, in order to claim that a particular belief or cognition is foundational have to assert at least (i) that beliefs or cognitions of the relevant class are true or likely to be true, (ii) that a particular belief or cognition is a member of that class, and (iii) that we presently hold that particular belief or cognition. But these claims constitute a logical justification of the belief thought to be foundational. Either that justification involves empirical claims — as Bonjour claims it must<sup>21</sup> — in which case premise (5) of the basic anti-foundationalist argument is true and the so-called foundational beliefs are no longer foundational, or that justification is purely *a priori*, in which case either premise (5) of Bonjour's argument is false or we no longer have an instance of empirical justification. Now it is clear that empirical knowledge must be justified empirically, at least to some degree. The foundationalist, then, would seem to have no recourse left but to shift ground and to claim that the argument supporting the conclusion that a particular belief is foundational is an *a priori* argument, i.e. the foundationalist would seem to have no recourse but to assert a

kind of transcendental foundationalism in which the foundational beliefs are legitimating beliefs about classes of experience rather than beliefs about the experienced world which function as premises in justificatory arguments.

The (epistemological) foundationalist model of justification therefore fails. Strong foundationalism cannot sustain its claims to the infallibility of our awareness of our own experiences and their experienced content. Externalist moderate foundationalism cannot adequately distinguish between the subjective conditions present in true belief and knowledge and allows for the possibility that irrationally held beliefs constitute nomologically justified or reliable knowledge. And an internalist moderate foundationalism which appeals to self-justifying or self-warranting (inner) content as foundational must move toward a transcendental foundationalism in order to justify its claim that certain classes of experience are self-justifying or self-warranting. And, in order to establish its epistemological value, internalism must justify the claim that the self-justified or self-warranted (inner) content conduces to truth regarding (outer) objects.

The alternative to epistemological (justificatory) foundationalism, then, is either a transcendental (legitimizing) foundationalism or a coherentist model of justification.<sup>22</sup> A coherent system of beliefs all of which are reciprocally justified is not equivalent to a true system of beliefs, for there is no assurance that the logical content of such a system possesses the "fit" or "agreement" with intended objectivities which is characteristic of truth. Since justification is teleologically ordered toward knowledge and truth, we are left with a new justificatory question, the question about whether the pursuit of coherent systems is a worthwhile endeavor when the ultimate goal is empirical truth or, as BonJour puts it, the question about how to justify the claim that justification on a coherentist model leads to truth.<sup>23</sup>

The need for such a "metajustification," born of the sharp separation between an inner domain of logical content where justification is at issue and an outer domain of objects where truth is at issue, again points toward the transcendental justification of particular kinds of beliefs, viz. the system of beliefs achieved by coherentist justifications, and toward a transcendental foundationalism.

## 6. Transcendental Antifoundationalism

Epistemological foundationalism and the reactions thereto invariably point toward transcendental issues. Transcendental foundationalism is born of the same anti-skeptical motives as strong foundationalism and

departs from the same initial considerations. We have seen that beliefs about momentarily lived particular experiences and their contents, even if apparently indubitable, are neither infallible nor genuinely indubitable. Nor is it clear how empirical knowledge can be immediately derived from such beliefs. However, even as we might doubt particular experiences, we have no known or foreseeable reason to doubt that in general we experience an objective world. As long as I am experiencing, and even if particular experiences are non-veridical, it is nonetheless indubitable that I experience an intersubjective world of physical objects having sensible, causal, functional, and value properties; of imagined objects such as centaurs and unicorns; and of ideal objects such as geometrical figures and musical compositions. Moreover, it is indubitable that in general we accept the existence of such a world and the initial veridicality of our beliefs regarding it.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the general thesis of the natural attitude is indubitable, and this attitude embodies an ontological realism.<sup>25</sup>

The transcendental foundationalist claims that our natural experience of the world in general — rather than particular natural experiences — provides the basis for a transcendental reflection in which we disclose philosophical truths which are “foundational” relative to our empirical cognitions. On this view, individual empirical beliefs would not be argumentatively justified by appealing to non-empirical philosophical premises. Instead, philosophy would be a foundational discipline on which empirical disciplines and other conscious endeavors of the natural attitude would be legitimated by virtue of the fact that philosophy would identify the categories governing genuine instances of the various disciplines and types of conscious endeavors.

There are two approaches to transcendental reflection, which I shall call the “Kantian” and the “Husserlian.” The Kantian, which is foundationalist and is adumbrated in the preceding paragraph, departs from the material content of the world as experienced and argues to transcendental principles and forms which underlie that content insofar as their application to a manifold of sense-data produces representations of objects and empirical judgments embodying those principles and forms. Kant himself takes as his material starting point Newtonian physics and paradigmatically related theories, arguing to a particular set of transcendental categories of understanding, that set whose application is productive of Newtonian science. In this way Kant begs the question about the truth of Newtonian science. He is concerned solely to legitimate the categories operative in it by grounding them transcendently. Insofar as the Kantian approach to transcendental reflection departs from the content of our experience, it will always beg the question concerning the truth of the content given by particular experiences.

Husserl criticizes this Kantian approach to transcendental reflection as a form of "transcendental psychologism." The analogy is with the empiricistic and psychologistic views of logic criticized by both Frege and Husserl. The thrust of those criticisms was that the meanings expressed in language cannot be reduced to the psychological or psychic content of ideas; correlatively the laws of logic, which properly concern ideal relations among meanings, cannot be reduced to empirical laws governing the activity of thinking or the combination of acts of thinking. Psychologism is the reduction of the ideal, the objective, and the "outer" to the empirical, the subjective, and the "inner."

Kant is not a psychologist of this sort, but, according to Husserl, Kant makes a comparable mistake insofar as he reduces objective categories to the transcendental forms of thinking organizing psychic data, i.e. sensuous contents. More specifically, Kant identifies the categories said to underlie the logical forms of judgment as those underlying Newtonian mechanics, and reduces these categories to transcendental categories governing the activity of representing objects. The net result is that the objective has been internalized to the transcendental categories of understanding and the psychic data upon which they operate.

It is at this point that we return to our earlier remarks about the modern epistemological assumptions underlying most discussions of epistemological foundationalism. Kant's distinction between appearances and the thing-in-itself is located within the modern understanding of the subjective and the objective. It is the appearance that we know, not the thing-in-itself, and the relation between the appearance and the thing-in-itself is unspecified and unspecifiable. The appearance, furthermore, is a complex of psychic data organized according to transcendental rules. For Kant, then, the phenomenal object of knowledge is an experienced content, a complex of psychic representations.<sup>26</sup>

It is modern philosophy's understanding of this distinction between appearance and reality in terms of the externalized distinctions between subject and object and between experienced content and experienced object which creates the arena in which Descartes and Lewis and Kant can find common ground, in which internalist and externalist theories of justification can find meaning and application, and in which psychologism of either an empiricistic or transcendental sort can find a home. And so it appears, given the failures of epistemological foundationalism and the psychologism and question-begging character of a Kantian transcendental foundationalism, that the alternative to all forms of foundationalism is very likely to be a coherentist account, not merely of justification but also of truth, despite the well-known difficulties of pure, anti-realist, coherence theories of truth. Bonjour's antifoundationalism is philosophically interesting precisely because he wants to avoid this conclusion and

therefore superimposes on his coherentist account of justification a realistic correspondence theory of truth.<sup>27</sup> But the correspondence theory of truth also presupposes the modern understanding of the relation between subject and object or, more precisely, between an (inner) experienced psychic content and an (outer) known object. The justified belief and the known state of affairs are externally related, and, given the modern view that the immediate object of our experience is the experienced content rather than the experienced object, the question of how we ever come to be in a position to judge the correspondence between content and object remains a crucial issue for correspondence theories. The theory of intentionality herein adumbrated rejects the distinction assumed by the correspondence theory, while remaining non-foundationalist and preserving the ontological and epistemological realism embedded in the natural attitude.

### 7. Non-Foundational Realism: Justification and Evidence

The Husserlian approach to transcendental reflection differs from the Kantian. The Husserlian approach does not argue indirectly from the content of our empirical knowledge to the forms of objects' presentations. It instead identifies directly and describes the formal structures inherent both in the conscious activity in which objects present themselves and in the objects as so presenting themselves to our conscious activity. The thesis that consciousness is intentional and that in directing ourselves to (intended) objects we are aware of (intentional) objects in a particular manner of givenness (i.e. the intended object just as intended) is the first identification of such a structure.

The phenomenologist claims (1) that the intended and intentional objectivities are ontologically identical; (2) that they are distinguished by virtue of the difference between the natural and philosophical attitudes; and (3) that from within the philosophical attitude we recognize that the logical content and the experienced objectivity are also ontologically identical but distinguished by virtue of the difference between the natural and critical attitudes. Consequently, for the phenomenologist the concerns with justification and truth, while attitudinally distinguishable, can in the context of discussions of empirical knowledge never be wholly separated. The propositions justified by logical argument are judgmental intentions presenting presumptively existing worldly states of affairs in determinate manners of presentation. The teleology of such presentations is invariably to determine their truth, and this *telos* is achieved only to the extent that full intentions fulfill these judgmental intentions.

Moreover, the premises of such arguments are not formed in the



abstract; they are formed in an intentional encounter with the world.<sup>28</sup> Judgments articulate the presentational possibilities in objects which are presently or previously experienced in their actuality in perception. The judgment, then, is founded upon the perceptual givenness of an object. The founding of judgments upon perception does not, however, imply a foundationalism, for two reasons: (1) the truth of the judgment is not logically secured by a propositional assertion concerning perception and its experienced content, and (2) our perceptions are themselves associationally informed by judgments previously made both by ourselves and by others whose judgments are in various educational practices handed down to us as culture, as the inherited wisdom of the ages, as common knowledge, and so forth.

Let us consider the second point first. Abstracting for the moment from any associations which might inform our perceptions, we experience an object as a sensible thing.<sup>29</sup> The sensible determinations in the object define the range of possibilities initially available for judgments articulating the sensible properties of the object. Continued acquaintance with the object in its interactions with other objects provides the basis for additional judgments articulating the causal and substantial properties of the object (beyond its merely sensible ones). All these judgments subsequently inform future perceptions of the object, as do judgments made by others and passed on to us in the form of speech, writing, theory, and, in general, in our cultural inheritance. These transformed perceptions in turn present new possibilities for further judgmental articulation. Hence, perceptions of sensible material objects found in part judgments (insofar as the articulating activity is also necessary for the judgment), and judgments found in part subsequent perceptions of material objects (insofar as sensing is also necessary for the perception). There are no ultimately foundational experiences (say, perceptions) which are not subject to further clarification and emendation by those very experiences (e.g. judgments) which are originally founded upon the candidates for ultimately founding experiences (the perception). Hence, foundations present themselves in the form of a hermeneutic circle. The experience of parts (e.g. the purely sensible object, material objects, individuals) informs our experience of wholes (material objects, states of affairs, communities and societies), and the experience of the whole transforms our understanding of parts. Our experiences, in other words, have *founding* moments reciprocally related to one another but no *foundational* moments.

Returning, then, to the first point, we can see that these judgments, although grounded in perceptions, cannot be confirmed by appealing to a propositional content identifying the content perceived in the original perception, for any judging activity, which is required to the emergence of

propositional content, adds articulations not simply perceivable. Hence, the judgment is not confirmed by an argument deriving its premises from reports of perceptions and their simply perceived contents; it is confirmed instead by categorial intuitions, by intuitions which are themselves transformed by the judgments they seek to fulfill. Here is where truth and, since justification is teleologically ordered toward truth, here is where justification are ultimately located.

Since most discussions of foundationalism focus primarily, if not exclusively, on the self-evident truth of the (ontologically distinct) content of a foundational cognition or on the self-justifying character of a foundational belief, they misconceive evidence as applying exclusively to the content and its logical justification. Evidence is instead the evidencing of *objects*, the experiencing of objects in their actual, sensuously based presence. But this presence is the presence of the objectivity itself and not merely the presence of a psychic or logical content. In phenomenological terms, we can say that in the presence of the (intentional) content the (intended) object is itself presented as an identity in a manifold of presentational contents, one of which is at the moment given directly and sensuously, the others of which are given in horizontal associations with the presently sensed contents.

This view of intentionality and of the relation between intentional content and intended object not only yields a non-foundationalism but undercuts the basis upon which most discussions of foundationalism are constructed. Nevertheless, it also preserves the advantages of both internalist and externalist approaches to justification. First, it preserves the intuition that truth is somehow tied to objects rather than merely to the content of our experiences. Externalism achieves this by tying the experienced content to the experienced object such that the realization of a nomological relation or a reliable process yields a true content. Internalism as a theory of justification does not necessarily preserve this intuition, for it is coherent with anti-realist, coherentist accounts of justification and truth, although Bonjour's version of internalist anti-foundationalism does preserve it since it allies a coherentist account of justification with a correspondence account of truth.

Second, this view of intentionality preserves, as does externalism, the close connection between justification and truth. Externalism, however, obliterates the subjective difference between truly believing and knowing. Internalism, on the other hand, focusing so exclusively on justification and the cognitive possession of reasons (propositional content), preserves the distinction between believing and knowing but either completely identifies justification and truth (in a coherence theory of truth) or completely separates them (by superimposing a correspondence theory of truth). The present view of intentionality, however, teleologically ties justification to

truth while preserving the distinction between belief and knowledge. It achieves both these *desiderata* at once by virtue of its distinction between empty and full intentions. Empty intentions (not previously or presently fulfilled) correlate to belief; full (fulfilling) intentions yield knowledge. However, even mere beliefs, empty intendings of objectivities (not previously or presently fulfilled), do not belong solely to the realm of content, for the intending is directed to a (presumptively existent) worldly objectivity, although only in a particular and not yet fulfilled or disappointed mode of presentation.

Moreover, this view of intentionality, as does internalism, insists on the cognitive possession of reasons in order to think a belief justified; these reasons might include other propositions, but they might also include evidential presentations (e.g. categorial or theoretical intuitions) in which case the belief is recognized as not only justified but true.

Philosophy, in describing these forms of presentation and the forms of experience involved in the experience of truth does not itself decide between rival experiences, e.g. rival scientific theories; that is a task to be undertaken by qualified individuals in the natural and critical attitudes. Philosophy does tell us, however, that no natural experiences of the world are indubitable or infallible. Hence strong epistemological foundationalism is ruled out on phenomenological grounds. But even moderate epistemological foundationalism is ruled out on phenomenological grounds because philosophical reflection discloses the hermeneutical character of our experience. And since the phenomenologist does not decide between rival claims advanced in the natural and critical attitudes, a transcendental foundationalism which purports to determine that one rival is truth-producing and the other is not is also ruled out on phenomenological grounds. But if all this is true, it would seem that phenomenology has no relation to our natural and empirical pursuits other than to depart from them; it appears to be an activity carried on wholly within its own attitude and with its own interests, originally wed to but now divorced from and incapable of returning to our natural experience.

#### 8. Is a Non-Foundational Phenomenology an Arid Discipline?

The conclusion that phenomenology is arid is too hasty. We have seen that questions raised by skepticism and foundationalism, issues involved in the criticism of beliefs, and discussions of the nature and character of knowledge all point toward transcendental issues. Phenomenological claims about the structures of intentional experiences and of worldly objectivities as they are intended complete our natural and critical

experiences by both clarifying and enriching them. I shall attempt to illuminate this claim with two examples.

Phenomenology identifies indubitable truths about the nature of our intentional experiences and objects as experienced therein. These truths are indubitable in the proper sense, for Husserl's technique of imaginative variation, of systematically varying in imagination the components of a particular type of experience in order to determine which components belong to it necessarily, is a methodological technique to ensure that there are no known or *foreseeable* reasons to doubt the identified truth. As we have seen, however, the indubitability of such truths does not guarantee their infallibility. But to the extent that the method is properly and fully carried out, the possibility of there existing a reason for negating the asserted belief diminishes. However, since indubitability does not entail incorrigibility, it remains perfectly conceivable that in an ongoing philosophical reflection such truths will be corrected not by negation but by refinement and more precise qualification.

The philosophical truths identified by this method would, again within the limits imposed by the fallibility of philosophical claims, allow us to distinguish genuine from non-genuine examples of a particular type of experience, e.g. genuine sciences from pseudo-sciences, because we would describe those forms of intentionality belonging to any (known or imaginable) possible sciences. We would, however, upon recognizing, say, that both Newtonian and quantum mechanics are genuine instances of science, be unable to decide on philosophical grounds which theory is true. Moreover, this philosophical reflection on science would clarify for us the nature of scientific presentation (models and theories), the nature of scientific evidence, the relation of scientific theory to an observed world, the methods of science, and the purposes and goals of science. In so doing, this reflection would reveal to us that scientific theories are world-intending experiences which seek confirmation in "theoretical" intuitions. We would recognize that such intuitions are not the perceptual apprehensions of theory-neutral contents, but that they involve experimental and verificatory procedures undertaken in the light of the very theory whose confirmation we seek. Nevertheless, since it is the experientiable world itself which is the direct object of such world-intending experiences, and since it is the experientiable world itself which is the direct object of the fulfilling "theoretical" intuitions, the coincidence of the two, the degree to which the intuited world "covers" the merely intended world, is a ground for asserting the truth of the theory intuitively confirmed. What makes the case of incommensurable scientific theories difficult is that both theories claim intuitive confirmation. However, at this point issues concerning the degree of "fit" between theory and confirmation, issues concerning a theory's scope (hence, how

world-encompassing the intuitively fulfilling experience is), and issues concerning a theory's resourcefulness for opening up the possibility of new insights into the world (for making the world-intending theory more encompassing) come into play. While the theories (the empty intendings of the world) are plural and incommensurable, the world itself is one, and we can recognize which of the theoretical presentations thereof (the [one] intended world as [differently] intended) is more adequate in exhausting the phenomena.

Without, then, interfering in or prejudicing scientific judgment, philosophical reflection describes scientific experience and thereby gives scientists a new and deepened perspective on their own natural activity. Whereas science allows them to understand those worldly objectivities to which their scientific undertakings are directed, philosophical reflection makes them more aware of their own role in the fashioning and confirming of world-presentations. Moreover, philosophical reflection enables the non-scientist to understand and appreciate the character of scientific theories. And it enables both the scientist and the non-scientist to recognize more clearly the limitations of the scientific method and the scope of its proper applications. In this way, we better understand the relations between science and other, non-scientific experiences.

A second example concerns the moral dimension. Moral decision-making about individual cases and, to some extent, even the identification of moral principles and rules is an everyday, natural activity. Philosophical ethics is the reflection on the nature of and the intentional structures embedded in morally significant acting, moral evaluation, and moral judgment. And, to the degree that the identification of moral action's intentionalities permits, philosophical ethics identifies the most general goods, norms, and principles which derive directly from our being as rational and desiring intentional agents and which ought to govern our actions. There are several distinctions revealed by reflection on moral agency; morally significant actions are the point of intersection between reason and desire, ends and means (in the sense both of instrument and that which is chosen in the light of the end as conducive to that end), end and rule, rule and instance, act and consequence, intended end and realized effect, virtue and happiness. Philosophical reflection on these distinctions clarifies the nature of moral action, evaluation, and judgment, and makes us more aware as agents of the subtlety and nuances present in them. It also makes it possible for us to realize that an exclusive emphasis on any one of these (partial) dimensions of moral action as determinant of the moral worth of an action involves what Sokolowski, borrowing a phrase from Whitehead, calls the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness."<sup>30</sup> Utilitarianism in identifying effects as the determinant of moral worth, deontology in identifying the rule as the determinant of moral worth,

and a teleological ethic which ignores the moral status of what conduces to the end in its focus on the end itself all commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. But this fallacy is visible only from the philosophical attitude, and an awareness of it can enter our everyday moral decision-making only after we have come to understand our natural moral experience by virtue of, so to speak, a "detour" through philosophical reflection.

Philosophical reflection plays a continuing critical role in our culture by clarifying the nature of experience and revealing its many dimensions. Philosophical reflection also plays a continuing constructive role in our culture, for in disclosing the intentional structures at work in natural experiences it enriches those experiences by disclosing the manner in which objectivities present themselves therein and by revealing the ways in which our natural experience can mistake parts for the whole, e.g. in which science can be defined solely by reference to a certain style of verification apart from the other intentionalities operative therein, or in which the moral good can be defined exclusively in terms of the motives or effects of an action. Insofar as we can now recognize these characteristics of our own experiences and the possible ways in which they might naturally be misunderstood, philosophy accomplishes a non-foundational return to natural experience, contributing to the hermeneutic of everyday experience not by adding determinate content but by keeping us aware of and open to all the dimensions of our natural experience.

1. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie* (hereafter *Ideen I*), ed. by K. Schuhmann, Husserliana III/1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976) [*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, tr. by F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983)], §30.

2. Husserl discusses focusing on the judgmental content in *Formale und transzendente Logik: Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft* (hereafter *FTL*), ed. by Paul Janssen, Husserliana XVII (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974) [*Formal and Transcendental Logic*, tr. by D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969)], §§41-49. While Husserl never specifically compares the critical and philosophical attitudes, both of which involve a withdrawing from our natural engagement with things, the difference between them can be clearly inferred from a comparison between the texts in *FTL* cited here and other

texts, including *FTL* and *Ideen I*, in which Husserl speaks of the phenomenological reduction. For other discussions of these attitudinal changes, cf. Robert Sokolowski, *Presence and Absence: A Philosophical Investigation of Language and Being* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), ch. 13; and John J. Drummond, *Husserlian Intentionality and Non-Foundational Realism: Noema and Object* (hereafter *HINFR*), Contributions to Phenomenology 4 (Boston: Kluwer, 1990), §§9-10.

3. Cf. *FTL*, §51 for Husserl's distinction between two logics: consequence-logic and truth-logic.

4. Cf. *FTL*'s extended argument that the philosophy of logic leads to transcendental logic, i.e. to the transcendental philosophy of judgments and of logic.

5. Cf. Laurence Bonjour's statement of the twofold task of an epistemological theory: "to give an account of the standards of epistemic justification" and "to provide what I will call a *metajustification* for the proposed account by showing the proposed standards to be adequately truth-conducive;" *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 9.

6. For a survey of the varieties of epistemological foundationalism cf. Timm Triplett, "Recent Work on Foundationalism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1990): 93-116.

7. Richard Rorty criticizes the notion of philosophy as a foundational discipline in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); for his description of that notion, cf. pp. 131-39.

8. I have previously used this expression in contrast to "rationalistic" and "empiricistic" foundationalism; cf. "Modernism and Postmodernism: Bernstein or Husserl," *The Review of Metaphysics* 42 (1988): 279-83, and *HINFR*, §44. Both rationalistic and empiricistic foundationalism are versions of what I here call "epistemological foundationalism." I shall below distinguish variants of epistemological foundationalism on grounds other than, but compatible with, those used in these other *loci*.

9. Hence, what I have called the "Fregean" interpretation of Husserl's doctrine of the noema is a modern reading of Husserl, whereas I have proposed a reading of Husserl's theory of intentionality that diverges significantly from the modern understanding of the subject-object distinction; cf. *HINFR*, chaps. 3-8. The most important sources for the "Fregean" interpretation are Dagfinn Føllesdal, "Husserl's Notion of Noema," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 680-87; David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language* (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1984); and the essays in Hubert L. Dreyfus, ed., *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1984).

One need not be a modern to be a foundationalist. Both Platonic and Aristotelian dialectic, for example, yield self-certifying knowledge. Plato's forms and Aristotle's first principles are known, and recognized as necessarily true, in the very intuition of them, but it is not a mere content which is known; it is an intelligible reality itself which is known. For Plato, the knowledge of forms provides non-deductive support for our ordinary empirical beliefs. For Plato, our knowledge of sensibles is always opinion and subject to error; even the geometrical physics of the *Timaeus* yields only a *likely* story. For Aristotle, on the other hand, these foundational insights provide the premises for demonstrations whose deductive validity preserves for the conclusion the necessarily true character of the premises. Indeed, Aristotle's account of *nous* (intuitive reason or rational insight), i.e. the intuitive comprehension of the first principles, and his account of the demonstrative character of scientific knowledge, suggest that Aristotle is in this respect a strong "rationalistic" foundationalist. Aristotle is an interesting case, however, for his views (1) that scientific knowledge is grounded in sense-experience and "induction" therefrom, (2) that this sensory experience, at least the sensory experience of proper sensibles, is free from error (*De Anima* 418a, 427b), and (3) that intuitive comprehension built upon this

sensory knowledge and induction yields necessary truth suggest that Aristotle is an "empiricistic" foundationalist; cf. *Post. Anal.* 1.1-4; *Nic. Ethics* 6.3, 6.6-7; and *Metaph.* 1.1-2. Finally, Aristotle is an interesting case also because in everything he does he is sensitive to the need constantly to examine and to revise opinion; in his disciplinary investigations, in other words, he appears the opposite of the rationalist his more theoretical discussions about knowledge would lead us to believe he is and the dogmatist some would make of him.

10. For this view of horizational reference, cf. Drummond, *HINFR*, §§39-40.

11. Acts other than direct sensation and perception (e.g. some memorial acts, imaging acts, and hallucinations) sometimes appear to have sensuous contents; these can be distinguished, however, from acts truly possessing such contents on the basis of phenomenal changes which occur in perception relative to our bodily activities. Dots appearing before the eyes after pressing upon one's eyeballs do not, for example, expand in the visual field as I walk forward whereas the appearance of (the seen) door I am approaching does expand or "balloon" in size; I can, for another example, after approaching the door, reach and touch it, but cannot do so for the dots. Memorial acts can sometimes be fulfilling insofar as the memory is clear and they function as surrogate perceptions. In speaking with someone about an absent object, for example, I might be reminded of its position in a house: "You remember it; it's on the left as you enter the living room in my parent's house." This stimulation of memory can serve to produce a memorial image which can in certain contexts fulfill a judgment made about that object.

12. Although the intended objectivity is invariably the identity presenting itself in a manifold of presentations, the kind of identity appropriate for different kinds of acts and different kinds of objects will vary. So, for example, the identity appropriate for the perceived object, i.e. a material thing in space, is minimally the identity of a spatial individual but also an identity in a manifold of causal properties. The manifold presenting the spatial individual must conform to certain phenomenal requirements in order to be recognized as a spatial individual; cf. John J. Drummond, "On Seeing a Material Thing in Space: The Role of Kinaesthesia in Visual Perception," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 40 (1979): 23-31. And, since the causal properties of an object are articulated only in judgments, the identity of the material thing qua material is grasped both in the manifold of sensory appearances and in the manifold of judgments and categorial intuitions in which we recognize the actuality of the object's causal properties. Similarly, the world as empty presented in a scientific model is made evident in the experiments confirming that theoretical model, experiments which involve a sensory base (or at the least an extension of our sensory capabilities insofar as we use sense-extending instruments like the telescope or microscope or advanced technologies whose readable measurements can be correlated by certain rules to non-observable phenomena); this we might call a kind of "theoretical intuition." The scientifically known world, therefore, is the identity in the manifold of scientific model and experimental confirmation. Finally, a text, for example, is the identity in the manifold of drafts, manuscripts, printed copies, and interpretations. The notion of "identity," in short, must be relativized both to the kind of experience in question and the kind of objectivity experienced therein.

13. Some examples of moderate foundationalism can be found in James W. Cornman. "Foundational versus Nonfoundational Theories of Empirical Justification," reprinted in George S. Pappas and Marshall Swain, eds., *Essays on Knowledge and Justification* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 229-52; Mark Pastin, "Modest Foundationalism and Self-Warrant," in Pappas and Swain, pp. 279-88; and Alan H. Goldman, *Empirical Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

14. Cf., e.g., Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, tr. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (2 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), II: 12; and C. I. Lewis, *An Analysis of*



*Knowledge and Valuation* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1946), p. 182, 186-88. Some strong foundationalists are concerned to defeat every imaginable form of skepticism; hence they are committed not only to finding infallible foundations but to preserving infallibility at every stage in the development of a system of beliefs. While strong foundationalism logically requires only a *truth-preserving* or *truth-conducive* method for building knowledge, the anti-skeptical *spirit* of strong foundationalism is thought by this species of foundationalist, to require an *infallibility-preserving* method for building knowledge, for there is, it could be argued, little point in disclosing infallible origins only to reopen the door immediately to skeptical attacks by allowing a method for building upon these foundations beliefs less secure than their foundations. Indeed, Jonathan Dancy [cf. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 58], in a series of rhetorical questions, raises this issue as an objection against what he calls "classical" foundationalism.

A strong deductivist foundationalism, however, whether the source of its foundational beliefs characterizes it as "rationalistic" or "empiricistic" foundationalism (cf. n. 8), responds to Dancy's puzzle insofar as it seeks to preserve the idea of conclusive evidence throughout the system of beliefs. A strong deductivist foundationalism requires that the foundational beliefs function as premises in deductive arguments, for deduction at least provides a *method* which, when rightly applied, preserves the necessary truth, and therefore the infallibility, of its conclusions. Whether any actual strong deductivist foundationalism is successful in deriving a system of empirical beliefs from its foundational beliefs — or even whether anyone has asserted such a strong foundationalism — is not our present concern; our critique shall focus instead on the defining claim of all versions of strong foundationalism, viz. that there are infallible *foundational* beliefs.

We should recall that Dancy's objection is not directed to this strong deductivist foundationalism but to what he calls "classical" foundationalism, which is an "empiricistic" foundationalism of a non-deductivist sort. Indeed, it is Lewis that Dancy has in mind. For Lewis the foundational beliefs provide non-conclusive support for our founded empirical beliefs. Lewis' view — more reasonable as an account of our actual empirical knowledge than strong deductivist foundationalism — is not concerned to defend each empirical belief against the skeptic's challenge, but is concerned to defend the whole system of beliefs against challenge by securing its foundations, by showing that the foundational beliefs upon which the system is built are immune to challenge and that the method of derivation is truth-conducive, yielding beliefs *likely* to be true. In Lewis' classic formulation of the position, he claims that the *probability* of our empirical beliefs requires the *certainty* (i.e. infallibility) of their foundations; cf. Lewis, p. 180.

15. Cf. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 26.

16. Lewis, p. 182; cf. also p. 188.

17. Husserl introduces this term in *Ideen I*, cf. §88.

18. For another discussion of the notions of certainty, infallibility, indubitability, and incorrigibility, cf. William P. Alston, "Varieties of Privileged Access," *Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 249-85.

19. Bonjour, p. 32

20. Cf. Bonjour's criticism of externalism, pp. 41-57.

21. Bonjour, pp. 83ff.

22. Bonjour chooses the latter option; cf. chap. 5 for his explication of the concept of coherence.

23. Bonjour, pp. 157f.

24. This is, once again, Husserl's thesis of the natural attitude. Cf. Bonjour's notion of the "doxastic presumption" (pp. 101ff.), which is similar in that it involves a practical attitude

and practice toward our own experiences and a starting point for reflection.

25. Cf. John J. Drummond, "Realism *versus* Anti-Realism: A Husserlian Contribution," *Edmund Husserl and the Phenomenological Tradition: Essays in Phenomenology*, ed. by Robert Sokolowski (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), pp. 90ff.; and *HINFR*, §47.

26. Cf., e.g., Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), pp. 135ff., 161f.

27. Bonjour, chap. 8.

28. Cf. Bonjour's "observation requirement," pp. 141ff.

29. Husserl calls the purely sensible thing a phantom; cf. *Ding und Raum: Vorlesungen 1907*, ed. by Ulrich Claesges, Husserliana XVI (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), p. 343. Husserl's ultimate founding stratum for the presentation of material objects is hyletic data [cf. *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis: Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten 1918-1926*, ed. by Margot Fleischer, Husserliana XI (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), pp. 162ff.], but this is indefensible; cf. Aron Gurwitsch, *The Field of Consciousness* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1964), pp. 265-73; John J. Drummond, "On the Nature of Perceptual Appearances or is Husserl an Aristotelian," *The New Scholasticism* 52 (1978): 1-22; and *HINFR*, §27.

30. Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations: How Words Present Things* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 16-17.



# FOUNDATIONS, RATIONALITY, AND INTELLECTUAL RESPONSIBILITY: A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

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Classical American pragmatism -- that movement incorporating the thought of William James, John Dewey, Charles Peirce, C.I. Lewis, and G.H. Mead,<sup>1</sup> is well known for its emphasis both on scientific or experimental method and on human biological activity. Paradoxically, various ways in which these features have been appropriated by philosophers drawing on this tradition have resulted, on the one hand, in the view that its understanding of rationality is blatantly foundationalist and, on the other hand, that it is anti-foundationalist, historicist, and, at the extreme, heralds the end of metaphysics. However, a focus on the complexities of the pragmatic understanding of scientific experimentalism and biological activity will reveal them as the essential pragmatic tools for fashioning a paradigmatic novelty which is neither foundationalist nor antifoundationalist but rather undercuts the frameworks within which such alternatives make sense. In so doing, it in fact lays bare a new understanding of the nature of foundations and, concomitantly, a new understanding of rationality and intellectual responsibility.

The ensuing discussion will first turn briefly to the pragmatic understanding of scientific method as the structure of inquiry as such, exemplified by any and all experimental activity. Such an understanding avoids reductionistic tendencies to confuse or conflate scientific method and

scientific content; avoids formalistic attempts to confine scientific thinking within fixed rules and decision procedures, thus robbing scientific method of its speculative directions; and sets the stage for an understanding of knowledge in general which eludes the alternatives of foundationalism or antifoundationalism as well as related sets of traditional alternatives.

The beginning phase of scientific -- method not as a formalized deductive model, a metaphysical enterprise illicitly reifying scientific contents as supposed ultimate truths, or a causal analysis of humans and their environment<sup>2</sup> but as *lived experimental activity* -- exemplifies human creativity. Scientific creativity arises out of the matrix of ordinary experience and in turn refers back to it. Though the contents of an abstract scientific theory may be far removed from the qualitative aspects of everyday experience, such contents are not the found structures of some "ultimate reality of nature." Rather, they are abstractive transformations of lived experience, and the possibility of their coming to be as objects of scientific knowledge requires and is founded upon the qualitative experience of the scientist. As Mead observes, "the ultimate touchstone of reality is a piece of experience found in an unanalyzed world . . . . We can never retreat behind immediate experience to analyze elements that constitute the ultimate reality of all immediate experience, for whatever breath of reality these elements possess has been breathed into them by some unanalyzed experience."<sup>3</sup> In Dewey's terms, the refined products of scientific inquiry "inherit their full content of meaning within the context of actual experience."<sup>4</sup>

However, the return to the context of everyday or "lived" experience is never a brute return, for, as Dewey continues, "we cannot achieve recovery of primitive naivete. But there is attainable a cultivated naivete of eye, ear, and thought, one that can be acquired only through the discipline of severe thought."<sup>5</sup>

Such a return to everyday primary experience is approached through the systematic categories of scientific thought by which the richness of experience is fused with new meaning. Thus the technical knowing of second-level reflective experience and the "having" of perceptual experience each gain in meaning through the other.

Further, such creativity implies, for the pragmatist, a rejection of the "passive-spectator" view of knowledge and an introduction of the active, creative agent who, through meanings, helps structure the objects of knowledge, and who thus cannot be separated from the world in which such objects emerge. Thus James notes of scientific method that there is a big difference between verification, as the cause of the preservation of scientific conceptions, and creativity, as the cause of their production.<sup>6</sup> As Dewey emphasizes this noetic creativity in science, "What is known is

seen to be a product in which the act of observation plays a necessary role. Knowing is seen to be a participant in what is finally known." Both perception and the meaningful backdrop within which it occurs are shot through with the interactional unity between knower and known.<sup>7</sup> Without such a unity there is no scientific world and there are no scientific objects.

Such a creative noetic structuring of a world brings objects into an organizational focus from an indeterminate background, and, as constitutive of meanings as dispositional modes of response, yields purposive, teleological, or goal-oriented activity.<sup>8</sup> The system of meanings both sets the context for activity and rigorously limits the direction any activity takes, for such meaning structures are constituted by possibilities of acting toward a world.

Finally, the adequacy of meaning structures in grasping what is there, or in allowing what is there to reveal itself in a significant way, must be tested by consequences in experience. Initial feelings of assurance, initial insights, initial common assent, or any other origins of a theory do not determine its truth. Only if the experiences anticipated by the possibilities of experience contained within the meaning structures are progressively fulfilled -- though of course never completely and finally fulfilled -- can truth be claimed for the assertions made. Such unfolding of experience in conformity with projected anticipations represents a self-corrective rather than a building-block model of knowledge. The meanings or rules governing the organization of experiences are judged by their ability to turn a potentially indeterminate situation into a resolved or meaningfully experienced one. Thus Peirce stresses that scientific method is the only method of fixing belief, for it is the only method by which beliefs must be tested and corrected by what experience presents.<sup>9</sup>

The role of scientific method in understanding everyday experience within pragmatic philosophy is evinced in several brief but telling remarks. As Dewey observes, awareness, even in its most primordial state, "represents a general trend of scientific inquiry." It means things entering, via directed activity, into a condition of "differential -- or additive -- change."<sup>10</sup> Or, as he summarizes, "There is no difference in kind between the methods of science and those of the plain man."<sup>11</sup> Peirce emphasizes the same point in his claim that the creative interpretations of scientific endeavor shade into everyday perceptual claims without any sharp line of demarcation between them.<sup>12</sup> Or, in Mead's terms, scientific method is embedded in the simplest process of perception of things in the world.<sup>13</sup> Again, Lewis attempts to clarify the noetic creativity ingredient in scientific objects by turning to the understanding of "thinghood" within common sense.<sup>14</sup>

The use of the model of scientific method in understanding everyday

experience is in no way an attempt to assert that perceptual experience is really a highly intellectual affair. Rather, the opposite is more the case. Scientific objects are highly sophisticated and intellectualized ways of dealing with experience at a second level, but they are not the product of an isolated intellect. Rather, the total concrete human way of being, a way rooted in praxis, is involved in the very ordering of any level of awareness, and scientific knowledge partakes of the character of even the most rudimentary aspects by which a world of things emerges within experience. The abstractly manipulative and instrumental purposes attributed to science have their roots at the foundation of the very possibility of human experience in general.<sup>15</sup>

Pragmatism, in focusing on scientific method, provides a phenomenologically or experientially based description of the lived-through activity of scientists that yields the emergence of their objects. In so doing, it is focusing on the explicit enlarged version of the conditions by which anything can emerge within experience, from the most rudimentary awareness of everyday things to the most sophisticated objects of scientific knowledge. In providing a description of the lived experience within which the objects of science emerge, pragmatism uncovers the essential aspects of the emergence of any contents of awareness. The pursuit of scientific knowledge is an endeavor throughout which the essential characters of any knowing are "writ large". It partakes of the character of even the most rudimentary ways in which human activity involves anticipations of future experience to come.

A proper understanding of the lessons of scientific method reveals that nature, into which the human is placed, contains the qualitative fullness revealed in lived experience. In addition, the grasp of nature is permeated with the meaning structures by which humans and their world are interactionally or intentionally bound, at the levels of both common-sense experience and scientific reflection. Thus, scientific method itself reveals that purposive biological activity, in so far as it is the foundation of meaning, cannot be understood in terms of the scientific contents or scientific categories which presuppose it. Rather, it is the "lived through" biological activity of the human organism, and, as such, is capable of phenomenological description. Habits, dispositions, or tendencies are immediately experienced and pervade the very tone and structure of immediately grasped content, thus incorporating an intentional relationship which can be phenomenologically studied from within. There is a two-fold sense of purposive biological activity running throughout pragmatism, one ontological, the other epistemic/phenomenological, both of which are more fundamental than the biological conceived as the object of scientific analysis. There is an inseparable relationship between the human biological organism bound to a natural environment and the

human knower who through meanings constitutes a world. From the context of organism-environment interaction there emerge irreducible meanings within the structure of experience. Such meanings are irreducible to physical causal conditions or to psychological acts and processes; yet they emerge from the biological, when the biological is properly understood, for the content of human perception is inseparable from the structure of human behavior within its natural setting. Thus, Dewey and Mead each stress that meanings can be expressed both in terms of the ongoing conduct of the biological organism immersed in a natural universe and in terms of the phenomenological description of the appearance of what is meant.<sup>16</sup>

The significance of dispositions or habits, not as objective ontological categories but as epistemic/phenomenological categories, is that such "felt dispositions" provide a fixity and concreteness to objective meanings which outrun any indefinite number of experiences to which they give rise. This is precisely because felt dispositions and tendencies are felt continuities which outrun any indefinite series of "cuts" or particular activities to which they give rise. As Peirce observes concerning a certain "unboundedness" inherent in dispositional modes of response as a readiness to respond to more possibilities of experience than can ever be specified: because they are, as felt continuities, "immediately present but still embracing innumerable parts . . . a vague possibility of more than is present is directly felt."<sup>17</sup> Or, in Lewis' terms, such an absence of boundedness gives rise to our "sense of the experientially possible but not experientially now actual."<sup>18</sup>

The minimal experience always involves a durational flow, for it is filled with the rudimentary pulsations of the temporal structure of habit as anticipatory. The sense of the future involved in anticipatory activity is not an induction from past experience but is at the heart of experience in the durational present. Such a durational flow is essential for the pragmatic understanding of experience as experimental, for it involves an anticipation of a next experience to come, something for which we are waiting, an expectation set in motion by the temporal stretch of human activity. Embodied in the actuality of our meaning structures as habits of response, then, is a sense of a reality which transcends actual occasions of experience.

The temporally rooted structure of human behavior as anticipatory both requires and makes possible the creatively regulative features of meaning as habit. Such regulative features, as Dewey notes, are "no exclusive function of thought. Every biological function, every motor attitude, every vital impulse as the carrying vehicle of experience . . . is regulative in prospective reference; what we call expectation, anticipation, choice, are pregnant with this constitutive and organizing power."<sup>19</sup> This regulative



feature rooted in activity, he further stresses, "makes possible the subject-matter of perception not as a material cut out from an instantaneous field, but a material that designates the effects of our possible actions."<sup>20</sup>

Both the ontological and phenomenological dimensions of habit relate to a fundamental feature of pragmatic philosophy, the creative, interactive unity of humans with that which is independently there. Experience is this rich ongoing transactional unity, and only within the context of meanings which reflect such an interactional unity does anything emerge for conscious awareness. Experience is always experience within a world, and the things that come to awareness within the world, and the world itself -- as the outermost horizon of meaningful rapport with the independently real, as the encompassing frame of reference or field of interest of organism-environment interaction -- reflect as well this interactional unity. Lewis captures the import of this in his claim that, "It may be that between a sufficiently critical idealism and a sufficiently critical realism there are no issues save false issues which arise from the insidious fallacies of a copy theory of knowledge."<sup>21</sup> The position intended can be captured neither by the traditional epistemic alternatives of realism or idealism, nor by the more recent alternatives of realism or antirealism, and foundationalism or antifoundationalism. As Peirce so well summarizes, though "everything which is present to us is a phenomenal manifestation of ourselves," this "does not prevent its being a phenomenon of something without us, just a rainbow is at once manifestation of the sun and the rain."<sup>22</sup>

For all the pragmatists, the flux of life as it concretely occurs contains already a phenomenological dimension of human thrown-ness onto the universe through a vital intentionality constitutive of the nature of experience as experimental. Thus the being of humans in the natural universe and the knowing by humans of the natural universe are inseparably connected within the structure of experience.

Such a transactional unity is more than a postulate of abstract thought, for it has phenomenological dimensions. The interactive ontological unity of organism-environment transaction is reflected in the phenomenologically grasped features of experience. That which intrudes itself inexplicably into experience is not bare datum, but rather evidences itself as the over-againstness of a thick reality there for my activity. Thus Lewis asserts that independent factuality "does not need to be assumed nor to be proved, but only to be acknowledged",<sup>23</sup> while Dewey observes that experience "reaches down into nature; it has depth."<sup>24</sup> This description of the ontological dimension of experience is well evinced in Mead's claim that, in becoming an object, something has the character of "actually or potentially acting upon the organism from within itself." He calls this character that of having an inside.<sup>25</sup> Such an acting upon the organism

cannot be understood in terms of passive resistance, but as active resistance, resistance to our organic activity.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the phenomenological description of the characteristics found at the heart of experience itself reveals the incorporation within experience of an ontological dimension or ontological presence.

Pragmatism, in attempting to unite meanings freely created with the coercive thereness from which they have emerged, has at times emphasized the freely brought meanings, and at times what is coercively there. What must be emphasized and distinguished is the epistemic and ontological unity at the heart of experience as providing the corridor from one to the other. Such an interactional unity contains a two directional openness: the primordial openness of the character of experience itself opens in one direction toward the features of the human modes of grasping the independently real, and in the other direction towards the features of the independently real, for the character of experience emerges from an interaction of these two poles. In the interactional unity which constitutes our worldly experience, both poles are thus manifest: the independently there otherness onto which worldly experience opens, and the structure of the human way of being within whose purposive activity worldly experience emerges.

Abstract knowledge claims do not constitute our main access to the natural universe; concrete experience does. Yet the beginning infiltrations of meanings as embodied in human activity are immediately present in even the most rudimentary grasp within our natural embeddedness. Conversely, the semiotic relationships embodied in pragmatic meaning are not the products of the free play of linguistic signs, but rather are contoured within limits by the historically grounded dynamic forces operative in that within which we are embedded. It can be seen again that this position undercuts the dichotomy of foundationalism or antifoundationalism and, along with it, the closely related dichotomies of realism or antirealism and objectivism or relativism since each, in its own way, represents the alternatives of an absolute grounding of knowledge or skepticism. At the very heart of the temporal stretch of human behavior as anticipatory is a creativity, expressive of the experimental nature of experience, that is unified with that ontological presence while at the same time rendering its grasp in terms of any absolute grounding impossible. The unity denies the arbitrariness of antifoundationalism or antirealism or relativism. The temporally founded creativity denies the absoluteness of foundationalism or realism or objectivism. Experience, as an interactional unity of the poles of ontological presence and creative noetic activity, reflects characteristics of each but mirrors neither exactly.

The failure of philosophers to recognize this interactional "reflection" at the heart of all experience, and their resulting privileging either of the

ontologically real alone or of our selective activity alone, leads to the contemporary dichotomies of foundationalism-antifoundationalism, realism-antirealism, objectivism-relativism. And this failure involves also the failure to recognize that the categories of metaphysics must undercut the interactional unity of experience to get at the character of the independent pole such unity in part reflects. A further discussion of this natural ontological embeddedness in its primordial dimensions as the pathway to metaphysics, however, requires a return to the significance of scientific method.

If scientific method is indicative of the dynamics of all levels of intelligent activity, then it is indicative of the dynamics of philosophic activity, including metaphysical reflections. And, like science, philosophy involves a second-level system of meanings. Thus, in grasping the systematic interconnections with the structure of pragmatism, its assertions must be understood as arising from, yet going beyond in the sense of making meaningful through philosophic interpretation, the immediacies of lived experience. And, in turn, the test for the adequacy of such philosophic assertions must be found in their continual verification in lived experience. Thus, the pragmatic focus on scientific method, far from leading to an antispeculative position limited to a theory of meaning and truth, provides the direction for understanding the nature of a speculative metaphysics. As Dewey so succinctly notes in separating scientific method from scientific content in the development of philosophic systems, "The trouble then with the conclusions of philosophy is not in the least that they are the results of reflection and theorizing. It is rather that philosophers have borrowed from various sources the conclusions of special analyses, particularly of some ruling science of the day."<sup>27</sup>

It has been claimed that the dynamics of everyday experience reflect throughout the dynamics of scientific method. Just as "the object" of science is an abstraction from a richer or more concrete transactional experience and hence cannot be hypostatized as absolute, so the perceptual object is likewise an abstraction from a richer, more concrete experience and hence cannot be hypostatized as absolute. The things of the everyday world, like the objects of science, are unified in terms of their function, not in terms of some underlying essence.<sup>28</sup> In opposition to the foundationalist claim, the objects that come to awareness do not exist independently of or prior to human activity, nor can we work back in experience to a direct grasp of anything that is as it is prior to its emergence within the context of experimental activity. Yet, in opposition to the antifoundationalist claim, there is incorporated in human experience a concretely rich ontological presence which constrains the interpretive nets through which it can reveal itself as a world of objects. Thus Peirce can claim that "There is no *thing* which is in itself in the

sense of not being relative to the mind, though things which are relative to the mind doubtless *are*, apart from that relation."<sup>29</sup> Or, in a similar vein, he makes the seemingly paradoxical claim that "the object of final belief, which exists only in consequence of the belief, should itself produce the belief."<sup>30</sup>

The pragmatic characterization of the concrete matrix of activity which makes possible the dynamics by which the everyday perceived world emerges through the experimental activity of organism-environment interaction is a philosophic claim which helps fund with meaning the philosophical understanding of the dynamics of experience as experimental. Thus, Dewey's characterization of the concrete matrix of undifferentiated activity and James' world of pure experience, as well as his radical empiricism, are interpretive descriptions which direct the manner in which one actively gazes at everyday experience, which both emerge from and bring enriched meaningful understanding to everyday experience, and which are in turn verified by the textures of everyday experience. These features of the relation between the reflections of philosophy and its meaningful grasp of everyday experience are precisely the features previously revealed through the analysis of scientific method.

But the model of scientific method, combined with the phenomenologically grasped features of experience, indicate that a more speculative level can be reached that focuses not on the pervasive textures of experience at any of its levels, but on the pervasive features of the independently real in its character as independent of experience. This speculative endeavor, which is rooted in the previously analyzed levels of experience, and which will be seen to reflect the dynamics of scientific experimentalism, goes beyond experience to that independent element which enters into all experience. The categories of such a speculative metaphysics emerge as philosophically reflective structures or tools for delineating the interwoven pervasive textures of the concrete, independent reality which provides the concrete basis for, and which intrudes within, all experience. As second-level explanatory tools, they are a step more abstract than the second-level philosophic interpretive descriptions of primary experience. But that to which they are applied and within which they delineate is one step more concrete than primary experience, in the sense that it is the concrete basis for all levels of experiencing. It is that "thereness" upon which or within which the intentionality of purposive activity operates in giving rise to the interactional unity that is experience.

The passage from temporality as the basis of meaningful experience to process metaphysics as the basis for understanding its ontological character is operative in all the pragmatists. It is found in Lewis' claim that "The absolutely given is a specious present fading into the past and growing into the future with no genuine boundaries. The breaking of this

up . . . marks already the activity of an interested mind."<sup>31</sup> Or, as Mead states in similar fashion, "At the future edge of experience, things pass, their characters change and they go to pieces."<sup>32</sup> The role of human constitutive activity in transforming a processive, "independently there" matrix into structured things unified in terms of their function within a world is succinctly indicated in Dewey's claim that "structure is constancy of means, of things used for consequences, not of things taken by themselves absolutely."<sup>33</sup> Further, the "isolation of structure from the changes whose stable ordering it is, renders it mysterious -- something that is metaphysical in the popular sense of the word, a kind of ghostly queerness."<sup>34</sup> For all the pragmatists, the structures of things grasped by the knowing mind do not reach a reality more ultimate than the processive interactions of temporally founded experience, but rather, the lived-through grasp of felt temporality opening onto a processive universe is the very foundation for the emergence within experience of meaningful structure. The two directional openness of experience carries temporality from one pole to the other, from a phenomenology of worldly experience toward a process metaphysics. Thus, when James asks, "How far into the rest of nature may we have to go in order to get entirely beyond" the overflow characteristic of pure experience,<sup>35</sup> his answer is clear. One may "go into the heart of nature;" one may grasp the most pervasive textures of its most characteristic features and one will not get beyond its overflow. Humans are natural beings in interaction with a natural universe. And at the heart of nature is process. Conversely, process metaphysics reinforces the pragmatic understanding of knowledge, for as James observes, "when the whole universe seems only . . . to be still incomplete (else why its ceaseless changing?) why, of all things, should knowing be exempt?"<sup>36</sup>

Like any system of meanings, the categorial system of meanings that constitutes a metaphysical interpretation must arise out of the matrix of experience, provide an organizing perspective that directs the way we approach experience, and in turn must be verified by the intelligibility it introduces into the ongoing course of experience. As Peirce indicates, metaphysical endeavor is like "that of the special sciences," except that it "rests upon a kind of phenomena with which everyman's experience is so saturated that he usually pays no particular attention to them."<sup>37</sup>

Thus, James compares the method of science and metaphysics as ideal systems of thought yet allows for a disparity of content,<sup>38</sup> while Dewey points out that philosophy, like science, legitimately theorizes about experience, but can legitimately begin not with the contents of science, but with the "integrity of experience."<sup>39</sup>

Pragmatists as process metaphysicians are led, in accordance with the experimental model of gaining knowledge, to a "speculative, interpretive

description," via a speculative extrapolation from experience, of what that independent reality must be like in its character as independent if it is to give rise to the primordial level of experience and to "answer to" the meanings by which it reveals itself to us. And, it should be well noted here that there is a vast difference between past philosophers' illicit reification of common sense or scientific meanings and the pragmatists' speculative extrapolation from within experience of the pervasive tones and textures of the processive "thereness" which enters into all experience. Because of the nature of the categories as creative speculative extrapolations from experience, Peirce can claim both that his metaphysics is scientific and that it is "metaphorical."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the creativity of science itself can be said to contain a metaphorical dimension. The categories of metaphysics provide the illumination by which traits of "what is there" can come into focus. Such categories represent the persistent attempt to illuminate and articulate, through a creative scheme or explanatory structure, the processes and textures present within all experience.

It has been seen that the categorial contents of such a metaphysics are in no way intended as a grasp of being in some spectator vision. But they are also not merely hypothetically supposed at the beginning without our having some experiential awareness of them. Like all knowledge claims, these metaphysical claims elude the confines of the alternatives of foundationalism or antifoundationalism, of an absolute grounding of knowledge or skepticism, or, within this more specific context, of a metaphysics of presence or the demise of metaphysics. The second-level reflections of philosophy must be grounded in lived experience, and be constantly fed by this experience. Such an open system is explanation rooted in and answerable to lived experience, not the direct grasp of "being in itself." Though rooted in the lived level, it is never completely adequate to the lived level. It is open to change and development, just as all claims are open to change and development. Indeed, Peirce nowhere indicates that his categories are absolute or eternal and in fact states quite clearly that though his selection seems the most adequate, alternative series of categories are possible.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, though Lewis speaks of metaphysics as providing the presuppositions for an understanding of the knowledge situation, he notes that though a presupposition is logically prior, the ideal of necessity must be given up.<sup>42</sup>

Nor is such a presupposition known by some "higher" type of knowledge, but rather it is an interpretive structure that gains, within lived experience, "partial and inductive verification."<sup>43</sup>

Because of its openness, and the conditions within which it emerges, such a system must be recognized as tentative, not certain, and thus Peirce received "the pleasure of praise" from what "was meant for

blame," when "a critic said of me that I did not seem to be absolutely sure of my own conclusions."<sup>44</sup> Pragmatism, then, gives rise to a new understanding of metaphysical system as an open system or explanatory structure, and to a view of explanation rooted in, rather than opposed to, a history of evolving change.

It can be seen that worldly reality at all levels is inherently perspectival.<sup>45</sup> Not only are perspectives real within our world, but without them there is no world. Further, our world incorporates a perspectival pluralism, for differing ways of cutting into the indefinite processive richness of reality, or prescribing contours of a world, constitute differing perspectives within the world. However, such pluralism, when properly understood, should not lead to the view that varying groups are enclosed within self-contained, myopic, limiting frameworks or points of view, cutting off the possibility of rational dialogue. What prevents this is the ontological foundations of perspectival pluralism, a point which requires further development.

Because any perspectival pluralism is rooted in the rudimentary contours of experience, and because the character of these rudimentary contours of experience are temporally rooted in the structure of human behavior as anticipatory and the nature of experience as experimental, the rudimentary contours of world reveal a common human perspectival structuring in which these features are manifest and from which a plurality of perspectives can emerge. Thus, any particular perspective opens outward onto a commonly structured field, though the articulation and development of this field through the structures of emerging perspectives may take various forms. Such an openness prevents the closure of perspectives, for all perspectives are temporally rooted in the common conditions of their very possibility.

Any derived worlds are rooted ultimately in the spatio-temporal world of everyday experience, and the perspectival pluralism within this world is rooted, ultimately, in an inarticulate, vague, rudimentary world whose contours are set by the structure of perspective required by the temporal stretch of human behavior as anticipatory or experimental. Though "the world that is there"<sup>46</sup> which lends its constancy to questioning and to new resolutions of problematic situations is itself a meaningful organization of the independently real, and could conceivably have been structured differently, yet this conceivably different world could not be one which belied the fundamental features of human experience.

Because the independently real, as ontological presence within experience, enters directly into interaction with our creative categories or meanings and the possibilities they allow, coherence is not a sufficient criterion for truth. There is an ontological dimension to what appears within experience which limits our meaning projections in terms of

workability. But, true knowledge, even ideally true knowledge, could not be correspondence, for the nature of our creative link with the indefinite richness of the independently real makes the relation of correspondence literally senseless. A true belief works in anticipating possibilities of experience, but works not because it adequately copies, but because it adequately "cuts into" the independently real as a function of the world or conceptual contour or paradigmatic structure that makes the belief possible. The independently real, which provides the dimension of ontological presence within experience, answers our questions and determines the workability of our meaning structures, but what answers it gives are partially dependent on what questions we ask, and what meaning structures work are partially dependent upon the structures we bring. The very possibility of truth thus emerges from the backdrop of the transformation of the indefinite richness of the "independently there" into worldly encounter. Truth is relative to a context of interpretation, not because truth is relative, but because without an interpretive context the concept of truth is meaningless.

Truth is agreement of belief with reality, but it is agreement with worldly reality, a reality which we have partially made. True beliefs "conform," but they conform to the manner in which we have "transformed" an indefinite richness into worldly encounter. Some beliefs are true and some are false, and which are true and which are false is independent of us; we cannot make them so. However, without the making, without the creative noetic activity which structures a world, there can be no beliefs, true or false. True beliefs are true before they are actually verified, but the very possibility of verification emerges from the backdrop of the transformation of processive richness into worldly encounter. Truth changes in the sense that contexts, without which we cannot talk about empirical truth, change. What was true relative to a particular context does not change relative to that context; rather, contexts within which empirical truth functions change. We discover truths about our world only because we have first prescribed contours for our world.

The truths about our world, as empirical claims, are verified or falsified in the ongoing course of experience by "hard" evidence. Such verification is always incomplete, for there is always more experience to come which could lead to the recognition that what we claim as true is, in fact, false. Truth claims relative to an interpretive context are always subject to change, because empirical verification is always incomplete, but the truth of the claim relative to a context does not change. A belief shown false was never true, though the claim to truth may have been based on justifiable evidence when made. Indeed, when a community is operating within a common system of meanings on any one issue, then investigation can tend toward an "ideal limit" of convergence. The manner of adjust-



ment between a new perspective or novel interpretation of the facts and the perspective of the interpretation previously accepted within the community is resolved by verification in the ongoing course of experience based on factual evidence, however elusive such evidence may be.

However, the prescriptive contexts within which such empirical truth operates cannot be verified or falsified by experience, for they set the structures for what is to count for experience of a particular type. They are accepted or rejected according to criteria of workability in letting us deal meaningfully with experience, but workability in this case is not a question of simple empirical verification by the "hard evidence" of facts, even of facts subject to diverse interpretations. These meaningful contexts are prescriptive of the worldly contours which make possible the facts which serve as the verification of empirical claims and hence cannot themselves be empirically verified or falsified, though their usefulness as prescriptive tools for the delineation of empirical truths may be called into question on other grounds according to accepted pragmatic criteria of workability.

When a novel perspective brings a novel set of meanings by which to delineate facts, then the method yielding a process of adjustment<sup>47</sup> which constitutes the ongoing dynamics within a community is not so easily resolved. For there is no longer a question of testing varying interpretations of the facts but rather there are now different perceptions of what facts there are. There are not just different interpretations to account for the facts, but there are different facts. Discussions enacted for the sake of bringing about an adjustment must stem from a generalized stance of agreement concerning what standards are to be applied in making decisions among "incommensurable" frameworks for delineating "existing facts." Such standards may be difficult to elucidate, but as implicitly operative in the process of adjustment by which conflicting meaning systems are adjudicated, they can be elicited for clarification through reflective focus on what is operative in the process of adjudication within the community of inquirers.

Further, novel perspectives may at times emerge which are "incommensurable" not only with another a priori net for the catching of experience through the determination of what kind of facts exist in the world, but which also incorporate standards and criteria and solution goals, or kinds of problems important to resolve, which are "incommensurable" with those of another perspective. Thus, there are not only different facts, but different methods, standards and criteria for determining which system of facts should be accepted. In a sense, these divergent perspectives have carved out divergent worlds<sup>48</sup> -- be they divergent scientific worlds or divergent ways of life, encompassing not just differing facts but differing goals, differing problems of importance, differing criteria for resolving

differences and hence differing organs for bringing about a process of adjustment. This deepest level of incommensurability, which has been shown so clearly to lie embedded in the "structure of scientific revolutions"<sup>49</sup> is not different from the dynamics operative in lived experience, though in science, as the structure of experience "writ large" and made explicit, it is easier to dissect. Again it can be seen that the methodology of science reflects the methodology of all experience, but each is more complex than first glance might indicate.

Yet such incommensurable perspectives, whether in science or common sense, though in a sense structuring differing worlds, cannot, by the very nature of perspective as an open horizon, be closed to rational discussion for possibilities of adjustment within one community. It has been seen that the interpretation of facts must work in anticipating the ongoing course of experience through empirical verification based on "the evidence." Diverse perspectives for delineating facts must work, better or worse, in measuring up to the standards and criteria by which the community judges them and in solving the problems which the community takes as important. And, diverse perspectives which incorporate diverse standards, criteria, and significant problems to be resolved can be discussed in terms of the ability of these diverse standards, criteria, and significant problems to resolve the potentially problematic situation which the foundational world, as it emerges from primordial experience, must resolve. This workability is something which is articulated in various ways, which is reflectively incorporated in differing evaluational criteria,<sup>50</sup> and which, in its ultimate ineffability, is reflected in differing traditions, differing rituals, and the emergence of differing goals as points of urgent resolution. Yet, such diverse articulations stem from a vague, elusive but real sense of the temporal anticipatory stretch of human behavior and the need for its anticipatory pulsations to mesh with the pulsations of that processive concrete richness of reality from which it has emerged, within which it is embedded, and with which it must successfully interact.

Thus, throughout many levels, truth as pragmatic is both made and found. The so-called tensions within pragmatic thought between truth as made and truth as found, between truth as changing and truth as fixed, result from focusing on diverse aspects operative within the dynamics of pragmatic truth. We create the interpretative frameworks within which beliefs can emerge and be found true or false and within which investigation can tend toward an "ideal limit." The creative intelligence involved in radical changes and shifts of interpretive frameworks is influenced by socio-cultural conditions, but is ultimately founded not in a relativistic, perspectively closed historicism, but in an ontologically grounded, perspectively open temporalism.

In any community, the eliciting of new community organs for adjust-

ment in cases of incommensurability cannot be imposed from on high by eliciting the standards of a past which does not contain the organs of resolution, but must be created by calling on a sense of a more fundamental level of activity based on a history of adjustment which is in the process of formulating and developing itself and which will yield the new community organs of adjudication in the very process of emerging as a novel present which interprets its past as the condition of its meaningful emergence. If such new organs of adjudication do not emerge, then community has broken down. The understanding of a radically diverse way of life or way of making sense of things is, then, not to be found from above by imposing one's own reflective perspective upon such diversity, but rather from beneath, by penetrating through such differences to the sense of the various ways of making sense of the world as it emerges from the rudimentary experiential field as a primordial world of "being with" in the process of ongoing adjustment, deriving its essential characteristics from beings fundamentally alike confronting a common reality.

Through the ongoing process of adjustment and the significance of the emerging present, some arguments or reasons gain vitality while others go by the wayside. Though neither are proved right or wrong, we "get over" some, but yield to the force of others. Such a "getting over" or reinforcing is based on rational discussion guided by a vague, rudimentary sense of the inescapable criteria of workability. Though the abstract articulations of workability take diverse, at times incommensurable forms, the primitive sense of workability serves, ultimately, as the ineffable but inescapable and inexhaustible well-spring of vitality from which a community surges forth through rational discussion, leaving behind reasons and arguments which have become lifeless. In this way, over the course of time, incommensurable perspectives, though not proved right or wrong, are resolved by the weight of argument as reasons and practices are worked out in the ongoing course of inquiry.

No community is constricted by closed horizons either in terms of possibilities of penetrating to more fundamental levels of community or to wider breadth of community. Indeed such an either-or is itself a false dichotomy, for expansion in breadth is at once expansion in depth, since it has been seen both that all derived communities are rooted in and open onto the "community of communities" as it emerges from rudimentary experience and that, within any derived community, the adjustment of incommensurable perspectives at any level requires not an articulated imposition from "on high" but a deepening to a more fundamental level of community. Such an adjustment, it will be remembered, involves neither assimilation of perspectives, one to the other, nor fusion of each into an indistinguishable oneness, but an accomodation in which each creatively affects, and is affected by, the other through accepted organs of

adjudication of some sort.<sup>51</sup> The primordial world, then, as it emerges from rudimentary human experience, is a community of communities not in the sense that it contains many self-enclosed communities, but in the sense that it is that foundational community upon which the horizontal dimensions of all other communities ultimately open.

It has been seen that when a community of interpreters have a common network of meanings via which the "facts of experience" as relevant to a particular topic or issue can emerge, then investigation will indeed converge toward a common limit.<sup>52</sup> However, neither truth nor facts occur atomistically. And, when a segment of interpreters experiences different facts because of a different interpretative meaning network for cutting into the rich continuity of experience, then such convergence cannot occur. The criterion for adequately cutting into the indefinitely rich matrix of possibilities of experience is workability, but workability can be established only relative to some meaningful network by which experience is "caught." Thus there can be a plurality of interpretations among varying groups of interpreters on various topics. For each group, identifiable by varying nets or perspectives for the catching of experience, is variously structuring some contours of a world. But, as has been seen, even the lines of demarcation of distinct groups of interpreters can be difficult to discern, for such differing networks are embodied in differing attitudes of response and may be present when disagreeing interpreters think their differences can be resolved by "merely collecting the facts." Thus worldly pluralism is often hidden from view in the misplaced drive toward a common conclusion based on "the evidence."

In one sense there is not only a pluralism within the world, but an absolute pluralism of worlds, for it can be said that the world within which conscious belief, questioning and discussion emerge becomes many different worlds because of new meanings, shaping new worldly contours, that emerge from varying attitudes of response to emerging problematic contexts. In another sense, pluralism within the world emerges from the backdrop of a common world, for in its deepest sense, the questioning and doubting which changed the world could only occur within a context which did not change but lent the prereflective constancy and communality of its meaning to the meaningfulness of both the problem and its resolution. Thus, in a sense we restructure the world. Yet, in another sense we restructure only within the world.

At this point it may be objected that, in spite of an ontological grounding, the novelty and diversity of perspectival pluralism lead to the view that true progress in knowledge is impossible; there is no progress but only difference. This type of criticism again presupposes false dichotomies. Perspectival pluralism as incorporating, at its deepest level, the endless activity of ongoing adjustment rather than convergence toward

final completed truth, does not involve the stultifying self-enclosurement of a relativism in terms of arbitrary conceptual schemes or an historicism in terms of present happenstance. Rather, this pragmatic view houses an open perspectivalism in which perspectives open onto the common concrete ground of their possibility. It involves a temporalism in which the ontological rootedness of perspective emerges within the context of a past which presents itself in the richness of the possibilities and potentialities of a processive present oriented toward a novel and indefinite future in a process of ongoing adjustment. Historical rootedness is at once ontological rootedness, and the temporal dimensions of both enter into the perspectival awareness which constitutes present knowledge as conditioned by, but also as a conditioning factor of, the indefinite richness of reality,<sup>53</sup> worldly encounter, and a tradition which articulates and develops its characteristic features in particular ways. These dynamics hold for all knowledge, from the common sense claims of everyday experience to the second level reflections of science and philosophy. To claim that this view involves antifoundationalism, relativism and historicism, either for metaphysical claims or for knowledge in general, of which it is a kind, severs experience from its creative, interactive unity with, and openness upon, that which is independently there. Like all knowledge claims, the metaphysical claims of pragmatic philosophy are fallibilistic, perspectival, and temporal, but nonetheless ontologically situated.

Knowledge as cumulative and knowledge as changing do not lie in opposition, but rather knowledge as changing is also knowledge as cumulative, for any novel perspective emerges from a cumulative process or history of socializing adjustment which yields enrichment of intelligibility both of the old and of the new. However, to demand of such a cumulative process that it tend toward a final unchanging truth is to misunderstand the nature of the concrete, indefinitely rich processive reality, the nature of noetic activity, and the dynamic of worldly encounter within which both are unified. Further, to the extent that any perspective is reflective of its own conditions of possibility in its ontological and historical rootedness, it advances, for in such reflection it becomes conscious of the openness of its own horizon onto a primordial community of communities and hence becomes open to the adjudicating dialogue within which it finds its own intelligibility and enrichment.

To understand one's own stance on any issue is to understand its inherently perspectival approach in transforming the rich matrix of experiential possibilities into an orderly system of facts, and the illuminating contours which other perspectives can rightfully cast upon such richness. In coming to understand the perspectival pluralism and the dynamics of adjustment constitutive of community one can at the same time come to recognize the enrichment to be gained by understanding the

perspective of the other and, as importantly, to recognize the enrichment to be gained by understanding what is implicitly operative in one's own perspectival approach. It is the foundation for such a perspectival pluralism rather than for the drive toward unanimity in final knowledge which is to be found in the emergence of a world from primordial experience as the true community of communities.

Such a view does not destroy reason but rather brings rationality down to its foundations in existence. What is destroyed is the view of rationality either as having a "once and for all" hold on truth through the absolute-ness of foundations, or as being adrift in an anchorless flow. This deepening of rationality is precisely what grounds creative intelligence in its various endeavors, even in its highest flights of speculative creativity, if only one stays attuned to its demands and open to the alternative ways of articulating this attunement.

A true community, as by its very nature incorporating an ontologically grounded temporalism and perspectival pluralism requiring ongoing growth or horizontal expansion, is far from immune to the hazardous pitfalls and wrenching clashes which provide the material out of which ever deepening and expanding horizons are constituted. As Dewey emphasizes,

Life itself consists of phases in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things and then recovers unison with it . . . . And, in a growing life, the recovery is never mere return to a prior state, for it is enriched by the state of disparity and resistance through which it has successfully passed . . . . Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives.<sup>54</sup>

When there is lacking the reorganizing and ordering capabilities of intelligence, the imaginative grasp of authentic possibilities, the vitality of motivation, or sensitivity to the "felt" dimensions of existence, all of which are needed for ongoing reconstructive horizontal expansion, then irreconcilable factionalism results. A community, then, to maintain itself as a community, requires the recognition that intellectual responsibility is not fundamentally the transmission of information but rather development of the skills of experimental inquiry which, in the fullness of its proper functioning, incorporates all of the above capabilities. Thus, the development of intellectual responsibility requires an understanding of the educational process as concerned with the education of the whole person.

Education must provide the skills of experimental inquiry needed not just for the adequate exploration of specific subject matter within a given context, but for the possibility of the interrelated ongoing reconstruction and expansion of vision, including the reconstruction of the institutions

and practices of the community, and indeed, the very organs of adjudication for the communicative adjustments which make possible such ongoing reconstructions and expansions. To accomplish this goal, education must cultivate a deepening attunement to the "felt" dimensions of experience, to diverse ways of making sense of the world and the diverse frameworks this involves, and to the general pulse of human existence in which the diversity is ultimately rooted, and toward the expansion and development of which expansive reconstruction should be shaped. This in turn is not possible without an historical awareness which itself is not a passive recovery but a creative reconstruction of a present oriented toward a future. This creativity involves the function of the play of imagination, but this play can extend and reintegrate experience in productive ways only if it is not capricious but rather seizes upon real possibilities which a dynamic past has embedded in the changing present.

Such education of the whole person provides education for life in a true community, for it provides the tools for ongoing adjustment or accommodation between the new and the old, the precarious and the stable, the novel and the continuous, creativity and conformity, indeed, self and other. Further, it nourishes the common "end" which must characterize a community, even a highly pluralistic one, for it helps bring to fruition the universalizing ideal of ongoing self directed growth. This ideal, and the ongoing reconstruction it incorporates, involves the dynamics of experimental method embedded in the very life process, and the proper functioning of experimental method requires the proper nourishment of the whole person, for the proper functioning of experimental method is precisely the artful functioning of human experience in its entirety. The flourishing of this method through the educational nourishment of the full dimensions of human existence is crucial for the formation of the intellectual responsibility necessary for the ongoing dynamics constitutive of all communities, including the community of philosophic inquirers.

1. By the term 'pragmatism' in this essay is always intended the position of the classical American pragmatists. That these philosophers provide a unified perspective is assumed in this essay, but this claim is defended at some length in my book, *Speculative Pragmatism* (Amherst, Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986). Paperback edition, (Peru, Illinois: Open Court, 1990).

2. Causal connections are always expressed as relations among particular types of objects or events, and the nature of the events or objects being connected enters into the very understanding of the nature of the causal relationship sustained. This focus on scientific method as the method of causal analysis is thus still not purified of content and represents

a lingering influence of modern world-view thought. This brief sketch of the distinction between scientific method and scientific content within pragmatic philosophy, as well as the ensuing discussion of its understanding of scientific method, is examined and supported in some depth in *Speculative Pragmatism*.

3. G. H. Mead "The Definition of the Physical," *Mead: Selected Writings*, ed., A.J. Reck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964).
4. John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, vol.1 (1981), *The Philosophy of John Dewey: The Later Works*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981-), p. 37.
5. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, p. 37.
6. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. (1981), *The Works of William James*, ed. Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975-), 2pp. 1232-1234.
7. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, vol. 4 (1984), *The Later Works*, pp. 163-165.
8. For example, see James, *Principles of Psychology*, 2, p. 961; Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vols. 1-6, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1931-1935); vols. 7 and 8 ed. Arthur Burks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 7.498 (Hereafter cited using only two part conventional notation).
9. Peirce. 5.384.
10. Dewey, "Does Reality Possess Practical Character?," vol. 4 (1977). *The Philosophy of John Dewey. The Middle Works*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976 - 1982): pp. 137-138.
11. Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1916), p. 86.
12. Peirce, 5.181 (Peirce's technical term for such creative activity is abduction. This shading of scientific abductions into everyday perceptual claims is not a continuity of content organized but of method of organization.)
13. G. H. Mead, *Philosophy of the Act* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 25.
14. C. I. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order* (New York: Dover Publications, 1929), Appendix A, esp. pp. 395-397.
15. Science is detached from our world of common sense engagement because its objects are detached abstractions from it. Scientists, however, are significantly and actively engaged with their world of scientific objectivities, though such engagement is more deliberately controlled and more narrowly focused.
16. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 142; "The Experimental Theory of Knowledge," *The Middle Works*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976-1983), vol. 3, pp. 114-115. Mead, *Philosophy of the Act*, pp. 115-116.
17. Peirce, 6.138.
18. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1946), p. 17. Thus, even the most rudimentary conscious experience, according to Dewey, "contains within itself the element of suggestion or expectation." "The Existence of the World as a Logical Problem," *The Middle Works*, Vol. 8., p. 9.
19. Dewey, "Experience and Objective Idealism," *The Middle Works*, vol. 3, p. 136.
20. Dewey, "Perception and Organic Action," *The Middle Works*, vol. 7, p. 13. Thus Peirce notes that within such a temporal flow, "Feeling which has not yet emerged into immediate consciousness is already affectible and already affected. In fact this is habit by virtue of which an idea is brought up into present consciousness by a bond which had already been established between it and another idea while it was still in futuro" (6.141). As James states, we can hardly get hold of an impression at all in the absence of an anticipation of "what impressions there may possibly be." *Pragmatism*, (1975), *The Works of William James*, p. 119.



21. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order*, p. 194.
22. Peirce, 5.283.
23. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, p. 361.
24. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, pp. 12-13.
25. Mead, *Philosophy of the Present*, p. 137.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, p. 37.
28. For a good analysis of this point, see Dewey's discussion of "the table." *The Quest for Certainty*, pp. 189-190.
29. 5.311 (Emphasis added).
30. 7.340.
31. Lewis. *Mind and the World Order*, p. 58.
32. Mead, *Philosophy of the Act*, p. 345.
33. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, pp. 64-65.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
35. James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, (1977), *The Works of William James*, p. 129.
36. James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, (1976), *The Works of William James*, p. 37.
37. Peirce, 1.282; 6.2.
38. James, *Principles of Psychology*, 2, p. 671.
39. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, pp. 37, 19.
40. Peirce, 5.119. Peirce characterizes our knowledge of "the premises of nature" as an "imaginative" comparison with fundamental features of experience.
41. Peirce, 1.525; 1.526.
42. Lewis, "The Structure of Logic and Its Relation to Other Systems," *The Collected Papers of C. I. Lewis* ed. John Goheen and John Mothershead Jr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), p. 378.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Peirce, 1.10.
45. As was seen earlier, 'world' is not to be understood as a collection of "objectively existing objects" but as the encompassing frame of reference or field of interest of organism-environment interaction.
46. This phrase is taken from G. H. Mead's philosophy.
47. Such adjustment involves neither assimilation of perspectives, one to the other, nor fusion of each into an indistinguishable oneness, but an accommodation in which each creatively affects, and is affected by, the other through accepted organs of adjudication of some sort.
48. This is the most fundamental sense of incommensurability in Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Second Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).
49. *Ibid.*
50. Indeed, even incommensurable criteria for determining truth must be judged by their ability to work within the framework within which they emerge as criteria.
51. See endnote 47.
52. This convergence is emphasized by Peirce.
53. The self-directed organism incorporates being within this indefinitely rich reality as well as encounter with it through the intentionally grounded mediation of world. Worldly possibilities include both noetically based possibilities and possibilities of a processive, indefinitely rich universe. Human activity enters into the changes of both types of possibilities, for it belongs to both.
54. *Art As Experience*, pp. 19-20.

# DECONSTRUCTING FOUNDATIONALISM AND THE QUESTION OF PHILOSOPHY AS SYSTEMATIC SCIENCE

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Wittgenstein accurately characterized philosophy as that endeavor which is continually plagued by questions which bring it itself into question. Since at least Descartes, and up through Husserl and the logical positivists, philosophers have attempted to confront the scandal of philosophy's perennial foundational crises by attempting to transform philosophy into a rigorous science. Broadly speaking, these projects have been characterized as foundationalist, either epistemological or transcendental.<sup>1</sup> But just as every finished philosophical position since Parmenides has come under attack, modern attempts to transform philosophy from the love of knowing into actual knowing have also been subject to critique.

What is perhaps most distinctive about contemporary rejections of foundational philosophy is the self-understood radicality of these critiques. They claim not to be doing better what their predecessors had attempted, but rather to be putting an end to the philosophical tradition in general. What I aim to do in this paper is threefold: (1) to consider the basic character of some contemporary attempts to reject philosophy wholesale and to indicate certain difficulties with these attempts; (2) to suggest a method of criticizing traditional philosophy which avoids these difficulties; (3) to outline how such a method both coherently articulates what is valid in contemporary criticisms of philosophy and points the way to a different understanding of what philosophy as a rigorous or

systematic science might be.

### 1. The Contemporary Idea of Deconstruction

Since Nietzsche, philosophy has become increasingly preoccupied with meta-questions concerning both its status and its possibility as a meaningful endeavor. In more recent years, in the works of Heidegger, the later Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Habermas, Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida and Rorty, this meta-concern has been transformed into a concerted effort to analyze and to critically reject or "deconstruct" the traditional guiding ideal of philosophy: its aim to attain a standpoint of objective and autonomous reason and thereby to transform itself into the "queen of the sciences," a radical, absolute or presuppositionless foundational discipline which can speak for *the* truth.

The possibility of philosophy in this grand and traditional sense has been disparaged from several different perspectives. All might be said to share in common a belief in, and a desire to demonstrate, the unattainability of the radical self-grounding or self-legitimation which the traditional ideal of philosophy demands. In brief, the deconstructors hold that the philosophical pretension to an aperspectival, presuppositionless standpoint is an unwarranted conceit. Positively expressed, the differing attempts to deconstruct foundationalism variously strive to demonstrate that there are inherent, necessary and non-transcendable limits to thought. I shall call this the thesis of thought's finitude. It is further argued, with differing stresses and in differing ways, that these limits must be taken into account if philosophy, or post-philosophical thought, is to go about its business in a meaningful way.

This contemporary attack on philosophy's ideal of rigorous science takes the shape of a thoroughgoing rejection or deconstruction of foundational epistemology. In aiming to speak of the nature of truth itself and the conditions for its possibility -- a precondition for philosophy's claim to be a rigorous science -- epistemology claims to discover and ground the necessary conditions for the possibility of true knowing or discourse. And the capacity to do this successfully presupposes implicitly or explicitly that one has attained a meta-standpoint of unconditional knowing, a standpoint in which thought is fully transparent to itself, meaning that the epistemological ground or foundation is itself as fully legitimated or grounded as that which is to be founded upon it. Since the standpoint to which foundational philosophy must lay claim is the absolute standpoint from which the determinate character and legitimacy of philosophy as a rigorous foundational science would be articulated, and since epistemology is that endeavor in which claims to such a standpoint are both made and argued for, the attack on the ideal of philosophy as a rigorous science

has taken shape specifically as an attack on foundational epistemology.

Positively expressed, the antifoundationalist position asserts that the self-grounding standpoint of absolute knowing to which foundationalism must lay claim is unattainable, in that every standpoint of thought is necessarily one from amongst several possible perspectives, each of which is a limited standpoint unavoidably conditioned by determinative factors which can neither be made fully transparent nor transcended. Such factors might consist in the overdetermined character of the given natural languages in which philosophical thought is articulated. Or, expressing the antifoundationalist position in Heideggerian fashion, it is claimed that the correspondence model of truth -- which foundational epistemology presupposes and which promises knowledge as a full revelation and a complete mirroring of what is -- is illusory in that every truth-telling or disclosure is also a concealment. Each event of presencing presupposes, as a condition of its possibility, a correlative absencing or concealing. Truth as dis-closure (*a-letheia*) always retains within itself an ineluctable reservoir of closedness or obscurity (*lethe*).

What does the antifoundationalist position have to do with *systematic philosophy*? Systematic philosophy claims to provide a mode of discourse which is unconditional and absolute in the sense that what comes to be established in this discourse is thoroughly determined by the discourse itself. As self-determining discourse, systematic philosophy articulates the position of autonomous rationality. On the face of it, both the positive and negative points made by antifoundationalism would seem to suggest that, if anti-foundationalism is correct, systematic philosophy is impossible. This would seem to be the case because, as self-determining, systematic philosophy lays claim to a standpoint of thought which is presuppositionless and from out of which all of the system are generated in a fully immanent manner. Systematicity in systematic philosophy means, first and foremost, this internal immanent or self-generative feature, and the alleged autonomy and rigor of systematic philosophy -- its claim to being science -- is a function of this immanency, an immanency the condition of the possibility of which is the attainment of a presuppositionless starting point.

The apparently complete incompatibility between systematic philosophy and antifoundationalism arises from the linking of such a presuppositionless starting point with the completion of a project of foundational epistemology. Philosophy as a rigorous systematic science is seen as requiring presuppositionlessness and immanency -- which it does -- and it is assumed by antifoundationalists that the systematic standpoint can only be attained in and through the completion of a project of foundational epistemology which has as its outcome the attainment of a standpoint of self-grounding or self-legitimizing thought or reason. This would

purportedly function as a determinate standpoint from which the systematic philosopher lays claim to having uncovered and grounded the conditions for the possibility of knowledge *uberhaupt*. The favorite historical example -- and the *bête noir*-- of the antifoundationalists is, of course, Hegel's system.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the view which sees systematic philosophy as wedded to foundationalism and as falling along with it holds that "presuppositionlessness" must and can only consist in a position in which the determinate factors constitutive of knowledge are clearly defined and fully legitimated. (Such that, these factors having thus been shown to be the necessary preconditions for thought, they are 'absolutes' and not presuppositions in the negative sense of the word.)

I shall argue, however, that presuppositionlessness need not -- indeed cannot -- be construed in this manner. Thus I shall contend that a genuine systematic philosophy which does have a presuppositionless beginning point does not claim to have attained this by successfully completing the project of foundational epistemology in the manner envisioned by antifoundationalists. I shall argue, to use the closing words of Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, that ". . . a new form of systematic philosophy. . . which has nothing whatever to do with epistemology but which nevertheless makes normal philosophical enquiry possible"<sup>3</sup> is possible. Furthermore: I aim to show not only that such a systematic philosophy is possible, but also that its possibility is not only compatible with, but itself presupposes, a deconstruction of foundationalism. In making that point I shall contend that there is an essential difference between a systematic -- that is, a thoroughly immanent -- deconstruction or critique of foundational epistemology and an ad hoc deconstruction. My contentions will be (1) that systematic deconstruction makes clear the extent to which a non-foundational systematic philosophy is possible, (2) that it makes possible a coherent, non-paradoxical articulation of the finite character of thought and (3) that in so doing it thereby avoids various difficulties found in ad hoc deconstructions. In criticizing ad hoc attempts at deconstruction and in arguing the superiority of systematic deconstruction I shall contend that a major failing of ad hoc deconstructivists consists in the paradoxical or self-referential character of their assertions that thought is finite and not susceptible to transparent self-legitimation. I shall argue that, as a consequence of this paradoxicality, ad hoc deconstructionists are unable to decisively undermine the foundationalist perspective. Lastly, as it is clear that a systematic philosophy which does not begin with epistemological foundations but rather with a systematically deconstructive critique of foundationalism would be something different from what one would expect of philosophy as a rigorous science, I will conclude with a few

remarks concerning what I take the nature of such a scientific system of philosophy to be.

## 2. The Problematic Character of Ad Hoc Deconstructions of Foundationalism.

One way of focusing on the difficulty with ad hoc rejections of foundationalism is by examining the complex character of the issue of dogmatism as it is perceived and addressed both by foundationalists and antifoundationalists. This is an important issue because one of the guiding motivations for both foundationalism and antifoundationalism is a desire to avoid dogmatism, broadly understood as the unfounded assumption that a particular point of view is unequivocally right. For foundationalists, dogmatism can only be avoided by foundational epistemology. For the antifoundationalist, however, it is rather foundationalism itself which leads to dogmatism. By looking more closely at this issue we can see (1) how and why it is that ad hoc deconstructions of foundationalism fail as decisive critiques of foundationalism and (2) why a systematic deconstruction is called for if the claim that foundationalism ought to be rejected is to be substantiated.

That one aim of foundationalism is to transcend dogmatism is clear from the works of Descartes, the founding father of foundationalist epistemology and from the work of his followers in modern philosophy who continued and transformed his project. Foundational epistemology's original position regarding dogmatism can be expressed as follows. If the definitive conditions for knowledge are not first established and grounded by means of a preliminary investigation into the nature and limits of knowing, then when we go about the business of making knowledge claims we cannot be certain that we are operating properly. The project of foundational epistemology is needed so that the twin specters of radical skepticism and dogmatism can be laid to rest. For our assumption that we are going about things in the proper way may be unjustified. We may have deceived ourselves (or we may be being deceived) into thinking that we are coming to know the truth when we in fact are not. Mere assumptions concerning the rightness and legitimacy of how we go about the business of knowing must be viewed as so many dogmatic assertions, as unjustified assumptions, resting on faith, tradition, convention or whatever. They amount to untenable appeals to authority and they are not to be accepted until they pass certification by the tribunal of reason. Foundational epistemology achieves this end in two steps. First, it determines whether knowledge as such is possible or impossible. Having determined the possibility of knowledge, it then supplies a method allowing the

systematic verification or falsification of our beliefs, enabling us to create a rationally reconstructed, autonomous and self-grounding culture.<sup>4</sup>

From this perspective, reason is a "natural light."<sup>5</sup> This image is powerful, important, and seductive. In raising the specter of radical skepticism as a possibility for which the absolute certainty provided by foundationalism is the only antidote, the foundationalists shaped a view of reason, mind, understanding or consciousness as a fully self-illuminative faculty. Only if mind or reason can attain to full transparency concerning itself -- knowing its own workings as the instrument or medium of knowledge -- can the knowledge conditions which constitute its operations be fully justified and grounded and the twin specters of radical skepticism and blind dogmatism be exorcised. This justification and exorcism entail a view of reason as an instrument, faculty, or medium which can only perform this justificatory task insofar as it is itself capable of full self-justification as the epistemologically critical and justifying instrument. Self-justification is required since anything left unjustified -- merely assumed as true -- would compromise the whole endeavor. Thus foundational epistemology requires a moment of absolute self-transparency in which reason's own operating conditions are known and validated in an unconditional, unquestionable, indubitable fashion. Indeed, one can view the entire development of modern epistemology as a search for that moment of fully self-certain, self-transparent, unconditional, absolute knowing. And one can further see this search as rooted in the assumption, later to be brought into question by the anti-foundationalists -- that the mind or reason knows nothing better than itself and can attain to full clarity concerning the conditions of its own possibility.

What distinguishes the foundationalist view of dogmatism from the antifoundationalist view is the former's linking of dogmatism with the possibility of radical skepticism. For the foundationalist, radical skepticism -- the possibility that we could be wrong about everything -- is a philosophically genuine possibility which can only be met by an absolute certainty attained through the self-investigation of reason. Given the specter of radical skepticism, from the standpoint of the foundationalist, any and all positions which are not rooted in and justified by a successful foundational epistemology are *eo ipso* unjustified, uncertain, and dogmatic, insofar as they claim to be anything more than unjustified and uncertain.

From the point of view of the antifoundationalist, radical skepticism is itself only a by-product of the seductive vision of absolute certainty and self-transparent reason to which the foundationalist is mistakenly attached. As a corollary of the belief in an absolute certainty, the threat, if not the possibility, of radical skepticism is held to disappear once it is

made clear that the absolute certainty is unattainable in principle. The antifoundationalist assures us that if absolute certainty cannot be attained, then absolute uncertainty makes no sense, since they are correlative terms. In addition, foundationalism's false claims to absolute certainty amount to dogmatism in pretending to provide an unequivocal, exclusive standpoint from which the truth can be established. With the demonstration that absolute self-grounding certainty is an illusion, the Gang of Four which contemporary deconstructionists are accused of nurturing and which they dismiss -- radical skepticism, relativism, nihilism and dogmatism -- are said to be liquidated.

The difficulty of the contemporary antifoundationalists' ad hoc attempts to deconstruct foundationalism by showing that absolute truth or absolute certainty is impossible lies, as the label "ad hoc" suggests, in the manner in which these critiques of foundational epistemology are carried out. The essence of the the problem is the internal inconsistency of the anti-foundationalist position. The problem here concerns the status of the discourse in which, and the status of the standpoint from which, one attacks foundationalism.

The antifoundationalist wishes to assert that the aperspectival, ahistorical metaposition -- the standpoint of absolute self-grounding knowing -- which the foundationalist aims to attain is an impossibility *in principle*. Correlatively, the antifoundationalist desires to show that *all* human knowing is finite and burdened by inherent limitations which, although they can be philosophically articulated and illuminated cannot, nevertheless, be removed or transcended. According to antifoundationalists, we have something like a basic insight into or self awareness of these limits, one which can be philosophically accounted for.<sup>6</sup> It is only the seductions of the powers of reflection which lead us into the illusion that they can be gone beyond. The difficulty for the antifoundationalist concerns the character and status of these claims and the implicit position or standpoint from which they are promulgated.

For one thing, the claim that an absolute standpoint is unattainable *in principle* and that efforts to attain it are thus mistaken and doomed to failure from the start is itself an absolute claim. For the assertion that not only has no one yet succeeded in successfully articulating an absolute philosophy, but that it is in principle impossible to do so, is itself an apparently ahistorical claim to an insight into the true nature and possibility of truth and knowledge.

Undoubtedly, what the antifoundationalist *says* is that unconditional truth claims are not possible, but this claim is itself an unconditionally true meta-assertion about the nature of truth. From the standpoint of the foundationalist, the antifoundationalist has a right to be skeptical about the possibility of attaining an absolute standpoint through a foundational



project. But she has no legitimate grounds to dismiss the project out of hand. Correlatively, the antifoundationalist's positive assertions concerning finitude also appear as claims which are being made from an absolute, aperspectival standpoint. One might say that the antifoundationalist is in a difficult position both in regard to what she wishes to assert and in regard to the position from which she makes her antifoundationalist claims. Antifoundationalism seems to succumb necessarily to the self-referential inconsistency of making absolute claims against absolutism and to be denying the possibility of an absolute perspective on the truth from a perspective which itself is absolute. From the standpoint of the foundationalist, the antifoundationalist's unequivocal claims concerning the impossibility of attaining an absolute standpoint can only appear as question-begging and dogmatic. For in the foundationalist's eyes, the antifoundationalist is going about making unconditional claims about the nature of truth and the conditions and limitations of its possibility -- something the foundationalist claims to do also - *without* going through the effort of justifying the standpoint from which such claims can rightly be made.

What is the antifoundationalist response to all this? Sophisticated anti-foundationalists such as Gadamer and Rorty seem to be aware of the opening to charges of paradox and inconsistency which their positions put them in, but not to be especially troubled by it.<sup>7</sup> If the foundationalist can respond to their attacks on foundationalism by raising meta-questions and meta-issues concerning antifoundationalism, the antifoundationalist can respond in kind, although with a certain twist. The kind of meta level response which the antifoundationalist can make has its *locus classicus* in the earlier Wittgenstein's notion that certain things which cannot be said -- or cannot be said coherently without violating fundamental limiting principles of discourse -- can nevertheless be shown. The antifoundationalist response might go like this:

It may appear that antifoundationalist claims are unconditional and absolute claims concerning the nature of truth and the possibility of knowledge; the language of the foundational tradition in which they must be asserted produces this appearance. But it is the very nature of the limited or finite character of human knowing and speaking that they convey this appearance when addressing their own nature. The very meta-level problems which are brought to bear against antifoundationalism reveal the truth of antifoundationalism in that they *show* at the meta-level what cannot be articulated without this self-referential inconsistency. This self-referential inconsistency is not a problem, but rather a revelation of thought's inescapably limited character, a revelation which appears whenever thought focuses on its own nature. It serves to indicate the impossibility of our ever being able to provide a

transcendental grounding for the definitive conditions of finitude, and this disclosure is perfectly consistent with our position. For it is just the impossibility of any such grounding which we are interested in articulating. A consistent antifoundationalism could not do what foundationalism demands, so we are being consistent with our position in refusing to attempt to do so. The charges of paradox raised against antifoundationalism are finally of no importance simply because what foundationalism sees as a paradox to be removed or avoided the antifoundationalist recognizes as evidence for the point he wishes to make: the opacity, the non-transparency of knowledge and truth conditions and the impossibility of attaining a standpoint from which they can be talked about in a fully adequate manner. In addition, in charging antifoundationalism with question-begging and dogmatism it is the foundationalist -- from the perspective of antifoundationalism -- who is truly begging the question and being dogmatic. For these charges against antifoundationalism can only be made -- since they only make sense if foundationalism is a real possibility -- by someone who does not see beyond the confines of the foundationalist paradigm. Thus it is the foundationalist who is begging the question and being dogmatic in refusing to be open to the radical questioning of the possibility of foundational philosophy itself. The foundationalist is willing to be a radical skeptic about everything except the necessity of foundationalism. In demanding that the paradoxes of self-reference be successfully dealt with by us, you are demanding that we resolve problems which foundational epistemology cannot resolve itself, problems which our position holds cannot be resolved as their irresolvability is itself indicative of our thesis concerning the finite, non-groundable character of knowing. And in demanding that we ground and justify our antifoundationalist position you are asking us to play your game and to accomplish something which foundational epistemology has not been able to accomplish, and which we claim cannot be accomplished with success. Thus our failure to meet your demands is not indicative of a problem in our position, but of the truth of what we assert about the nature of knowing.

To which the foundationalist might respond: You are trying to modify your position without owning up the consequences of such a modification. The counter charges of question-begging and dogmatism will not work. Foundationalism can admit that as yet no one has succeeded in completing the project; indeed, foundationalism is open to bringing the possibility of foundationalism itself into question, for our demand that a standpoint of justification be sought brings everything into question. But antifoundationalism is not content with making the historically accurate observation that no one has yet succeeded in successfully carrying out the

foundational project. Rather, antifoundationalism wishes to dogmatically assert that foundationalism is impossible in principle, that it is a way of understanding the nature and the goal of philosophy which is fundamentally mistaken. Of course antifoundationalism refuses to engage in the foundational activity which would ground the legitimacy of its 'insights' into the absolute character of finitude. Were the antifoundationalist to do this he would see that he is engaged in much the same project as we are. But unless the antifoundationalist brings his own position into question, the charge of dogmatism is correct. And if antifoundationalism admits that its own position is and remains ungrounded, then anti-foundationalism has no basis on which to make unequivocal claims about the possibility of foundational philosophy. If antifoundationalism will admit that the impossibility or errancy of foundationalism cannot be demonstrated from a justified position, then it must also admit that the possibility or impossibility, the meaningfulness or non-meaningfulness of foundational philosophy is an open question, which is all that foundationalism asks. The paradoxes of the antifoundationalist position 'show' nothing else but the fundamental wrongheadedness of the antifoundationalist position itself.

Standing back from this dialogue, we might say at this juncture that the foundationalist - antifoundationalist debate has reached a standoff, and that these two positions on the character and possibility of philosophy are separated by an unbridgeable gap. It seems that each occupies a position from which neither can finally speak to the other, for *each* is looking at the philosophical world in a way which is diametrically opposed to the other's, and which precludes the possibility of finding a common ground upon which their differences can be resolved. Each side approaches the question of what philosophy is, and ought to do, in such a fashion that their respective visions are incommensurable.

The foundationalist will not be swayed from the fundamental and definitive demand that no truth claims -- and especially truth claims about the nature and possibility of truth claims -- can be regarded as adequate unless the standpoint from which such claims are made is justified. The foundationalist article of faith is that reason's demands for such justification are self-evident and unavoidable. Consequently, from the foundationalist point of view, the demands of finitude, while seemingly obvious in being grounded in basic facts about human nature, are contestable insofar as the commonsensical standpoint which asserts them remains ungrounded, and insofar as these demands run counter to the idea of rational accountability. Any critical project can only touch the foundationalist position insofar as it recognizes the demands of reason. To fail to do so is, for the foundationalist, simply to step outside the bounds of philosophical discourse

The antifoundationalist will not be swayed from the fundamental and definitive view that no truth claims -- and especially truth claims about the nature and possibility of truth claims -- can ever be fully justified or grounded. The antifoundationalist article of faith is that the self-evidence of human finitude precludes the possibility of absolute self-grounding. Consequently, from the antifoundationalist point of view, the demands of reflective reason, while seductive, are illusory, and any attempt to attack this principle can only touch the antifoundationalist position insofar as it recognizes the limits of finitude.

Seeing that foundationalism recognizes the demands of reason as primary and antifoundationalism recognizes the constraints of finitude as primary might lead one to the view that there is no possible rational resolution of the controversy. And thus one might conclude that no final demonstration of the correctness or incorrectness of either position is possible, because they have incommensurable criteria concerning what counts as a demonstration. Looking at the matter in this way one might feel that only a quasi-religious, or quasi-psychoanalytic, conversion from one standpoint to the other is possible; a conversion which consists just in 'coming to see things aright' however this is construed, in the spirit of the later Wittgenstein.

Now *this* meta-perspective on the issue might seem most amenable to the antifoundationalist. In fact, an antifoundationalist might hold that if the foundationalist can be brought to agree with this meta-perspective on their differences, then the issue would be resolved in the favor of antifoundationalism. One could imagine a sophisticated antifoundationalist saying: "Of course I cannot demonstrate to you that you are wrong in a manner that you find acceptable, for you can always respond to what I say and to what I bring forth as evidence with a demand that I justify the standpoint or the discourse in which or from which I make my claims. And you cannot demonstrate to me that I am wrong in a manner which I find acceptable. But that's the whole point. Just this incommensurability *shows* that the ideal of an absolute meta-perspective of knowing which could reconcile such differences is unattainable." To which the foundationalist can respond, once again, that while such a standpoint has not been reached, this in no way proves that it cannot be reached. This meta-perspective on the issue will only appear to the foundationalist who does not 'see' that he is 'bewitched' by a 'pseudoproblem' as question-begging.

What is to be done? *Can* anything be done to resolve this situation or is it truly an impasse? From the point of view of systematic philosophy something can be done. Systematic philosophy holds that a common ground for resolution is attainable in that *antifoundationalism's demand for the recognition of finitude and foundationalism's demand for radical*

*justification can be accommodated.* Both a demonstration of finitude which avoids paradox and an articulation of a self-grounding standpoint which is non-foundational are attainable. The key to this reconciliation, the effort which literally effects both of these seemingly antithetical goals, lies in a *systematic* consideration of the foundational project. I have labeled this a systematic deconstruction of that project in anticipation of its negative outcome for foundationalism, but in fact its results will be equally negative and positive for both foundationalism and anti-foundationalism. The systematic consideration which follows will reveal that *antifoundationalism is right in that our way of knowing is inescapably finite, but wrong in assuming that no other way of knowing is conceivable.* Correlatively, it will show that *foundationalism is right in that a presuppositionless and hence self-grounding standpoint is attainable, but wrong in seeing this standpoint as providing foundations for cognition.* This systematic (and deconstructive) consideration of foundationalism will also be critical of antifoundationalism in that it will show that a consistent recognition of the finitude of our mode of knowing is incompatible with the claim that this mode of knowing is absolute in its finitude: the antifoundationalist view that no other mode of knowing is possible cannot be reconciled with its assertion of the finite character of our mode of knowing. It will be critical of foundationalism by showing that a realization of a presuppositionless standpoint is incompatible with the establishment of foundations of cognition: the foundationalist view that a self-grounding science must begin with determinate conditions for cognition cannot be reconciled with its own realization that such a science must begin without presuppositions.

The way in which a systematic consideration of foundationalism operates is to apply the principles and criteria of foundationalism to the foundational project itself. What I have labeled ad hoc deconstructions fail because they assume the correctness of a position antithetical to foundationalism, and thus apply criteria to it which beg the question at issue. Thus foundationalists can always dismiss antifoundationalist critiques as beside the point. To approach foundationalism systematically however, is to approach its prospects for success as, initially, an open possibility. If foundationalism is to be shown defective this must be demonstrated immanently: the demands laid upon foundationalism and the criteria by which it is judged must be its own. What are foundationalism's basic principles and criteria, and how does their application to the foundationalist project lead to its own immanent deconstruction?

### 3. The Systematic Consideration of Foundationalism.

Foundationalism demands that we do not presuppose our capacity to know the truth, but rather that we first establish it by means of a preliminary investigation into the nature of cognition, one which will demonstrate that and how knowledge is attainable. Foundationalism holds that cognition is something which is in need of being investigated because it could go wrong. It further holds that cognition is capable of being investigated in such a way that this tendency toward error can be redressed by laying out the rules for cognition's proper exercise. In holding this, foundationalism commits itself to understanding cognition in terms of a determinate relationship between knowledge and object. Cognition must involve a relation, for if we are going to speak of our being right and wrong, we must have a standard for correctness and something we compare to that standard. On the one hand we must be able to specify knowledge, and on the other that which it is purportedly knowledge of -- the object as standard of judgment -- if cognition is going to be understood in the manner of foundationalism: as capable of having the conditions under which it both meets and fails to meet a standard specified by an epistemological or transcendental investigation. In addition, the cognitive relation must be understood as something which is capable of analysis in general terms -- all instances of cognition must involve certain uniform conditions -- if an investigation into it is to result in the kind of foundational knowledge which will serve as a useful prophylactic against error.

In accord with these requirements, foundationalism understands the relation between knowledge and object in terms of the correspondence model: an idea -- or, if we make the linguistic turn, a proposition -- is true when it corresponds to an objective state of affairs. Just how knowledge and the standard are more specifically conceived makes no essential difference to the character of the foundational project. In line with Descartes' classic distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, we may construe knowledge and standard as falling into two separate ontological domains, with the standard as an object understood as existing external to an inner dimension of mental awareness in which it is represented. Or, as has become fashionable in more recent times, we may attempt to avoid the problem of bridging inner and outer which "externalists" confront by going "internal": refusing to regard knowledge and its object as fundamentally different in character, seeing them rather as distinct components of a larger, ontologically seamless unity (such as the pragmatists' "nature") The reason that the particular ontological specification of knowledge and standard/object makes no difference -- the reason that it is irrelevant for foundational purposes whether they are both conceived as ontologically the same or as different -- is simply

because all versions of foundationalism minimally require an *ineliminable* epistemic difference: Foundationalism minimally demands that the standard be construed as something which is determined as what it is independently of the knowledge which is to be measured against it, irrespective of whether the character of the determination as independent is construed as following from an ontological difference or not. If the standard is not so construed -- as independently determined -- there can be no question of an objective test of the knowledge against the standard. (If the domain of that which is to be tested were permitted to determine the standard against which the test is made, objectivity would be sacrificed. A ruler cannot be an objective measure of its own correctness.) Knowledge and standard may both be ontologically ideational, as with Berkeley, or they may both be ontologically natural, as with the pragmatists; but only so long as the standard is construed as determined independently of the knowledge being measured against it (whether it is said to be so determined by God, or by nature, or whatever) does the possibility for a test exist.

Once this epistemic difference which is required for testing is allowed, the foundationalists' central difficulty of comparing knowledge and object without compromising the validity of the standard as an independently determined measure arises. That is, if we grant the epistemic difference needed for genuine testing -- that the standard is determined as what it is prior to and apart from the knowledge of it -- the difficulty of showing that knowledge and standard correspond arises whether or not knowledge and object are ontologically different or not. The attempt to fashion an "internalist" foundationalism as a response to "externalist" difficulties cashes out as the introduction of a distinction without a difference. For the foundational act of comparing knowledge and standard requires that the standard be epistemically distinct in order to be a genuine standard, but also epistemically the same (of the status of something knowable) in order to be something against which knowledge can be compared. But as soon as the standard becomes epistemically knowable -- that is, as soon as it comes to be known in the act of making the comparison -- its status as an objective standard against which knowledge claims are to be tested is fatally compromised. For once the standard is known, the foundationalist no longer has a guarantee that it is determined as what it is objectively, independent of the foundational knowing act. As this intimates, and as I shall discuss in more detail below, the failure of foundationalism is that it requires itself to satisfy test conditions which cannot possibly be met without compromising the conception of knowledge which it presupposes.

Foundationalism's goals are to show that there is a specific mode of knowing which satisfies this correspondence relation and to specify the general conditions (pertaining to knowledge, objects, and their relation)

which make this satisfaction possible.

It is when we think through what must be required for foundationalism to succeed that we discover how and why it cannot succeed in grounding its understanding of cognition. In order to demonstrate correspondence, foundationalism must violate or suspend the very assumption that gets the project going: that cognition consists in a determinate relation between its purported knowledge and an object. To put it differently, demonstrating correspondence means attaining to a state of affairs in which what must be presupposed to carry out the demonstration can no longer be presupposed, so that what foundationalism was going to "found" disappears in the very act of founding it. In short, if foundationalism's demands are to be met, the conditions for its possibility must be violated; the foundational project displays an immanently generated internal incoherence that requires its rejection, and allows us to do so without any need on our part to claim any sort of quasi-foundational, absolute knowledge, as is the case with the ad hoc antifoundationalists. How so?

To establish that and how a truth-affording relation between (what is purportedly) knowledge and object is possible, foundationalism must demonstrate correspondence between the candidate for knowledge and the object. It must show that "knowledge" and object are identical in content, in order to establish that the purported knowledge is true, is genuine knowledge; and it must, at the same time, preserve the distinction between knowledge and object: Demonstrating that we have achieved a successful comparison means that the entities being compared must also be distinct from one another, for without the difference, we have no comparison. In addition, without the preservation of a difference between knowledge and its object we have no knowledge to speak of (at least insofar as knowledge is understood in the manner presupposed by foundationalism.) Additionally (as noted above) only if the difference between knowledge and object is preserved in the foundational act can it be shown that the knowledge in question is objective, is knowledge *of* the object, and not a mere subjective projection or fantasy. So what foundationalism must establish is a state of affairs in which knowledge and object are at one and the same time in a relation of identity (to demonstrate truth) and difference (to insure that a comparison has been achieved; to insure knowledge, for knowledge is a relation and must have distinct relata; and to insure the objectivity of knowledge). In short, this state of affairs requires identity and difference at one and the same time, for if at one moment (or in one foundational act) identity is established, and at another difference, we cannot be certain that the knowledge identified at the one moment and distinguished at the next are the same.

The problem, however, is that if we have simultaneous identity-



and-difference, we no longer have anything that can be picked out and identified as "knowledge," on the one hand, and as the "object" on the other. The state of identity-and-difference between knowledge and object which must be required in order to found knowledge is one in which "knowledge" and "object" disappear, for insofar as *both* are identical and different at once, they are neither the same nor different.<sup>8</sup> Or, to put the problem another way, we no longer have a determinate relation here, and foundationalism presupposes that knowledge involves a determinate relation as one in which knowledge and its object are always distinguishable from one another. The fatal problem for foundationalism is that both the identity of knowledge and object and the difference must, but cannot, be attained at one and the same time, if this model of knowledge is to be grounded. They cannot be attained, because attaining them eliminates the model; they must be attained, because if they are not the possibility of truth as correspondence remains in question. Put in another way: foundationalism cannot show both that its knowledge is true and that it is knowledge of an object; it can attain certainty about truth at the price of objectivity, or objectivity at the price of certainty about its truth, but not both.

#### 4. The Possibility of Systematic Philosophy

Because the very conditions required for foundationalism to succeed have led to the suspension of the model of knowledge which foundationalism sought to ground, this systematic thinking through of foundationalism demonstrates the failure of foundationalism according to its own criteria. Thus it is a thoroughly immanent critique; thus, unlike ad hoc anti-foundationalism it does not beg the question by presupposing an alternative non-foundational model of knowledge.

If a systematic consideration of the foundationalist project succeeds in effecting the antifoundationalist critique without the problems of ad hoc antifoundationalism, how does it also open the way to a systematic science? Put differently, how is the consideration also a partial success for foundationalism and a partial failure for antifoundationalism? It is a partial failure for antifoundationalism in the sense that it is a critique of antifoundationalism's (inconsistent) pretensions to absolutism. Both foundationalism and antifoundationalism presuppose the same model of cognition, the subjectivist model which presupposes that knowledge is always of a determinate other given independently of cognition. Foundationalism presupposes this model in its attempt to establish correspondence; antifoundationalism presupposes it in its assertion that knowledge is inescapably finite because it is grounded in conditions which cannot be rendered transparent. The immanently generated collapse of

the subjectivist model reveals that it is finite because it cannot ground itself, but it also shows that one cannot successfully claim, as the anti-foundationalists inconsistently wish to claim, that knowing must be understood in terms of this model. If the subjectivist/foundationalist model cannot show how knowledge understood in its terms is legitimate, then it cannot be claimed (as *both* foundationalists and antifoundationalists wish to claim) that this is the only conceivable model for cognition. And thus, foundationalism's self-effected failure to ground its model of cognition is also a partial success for foundationalism because it opens the way to a conception of cognition which is arguably self-grounding. How so?

The specific failure of the foundational - antifoundational model lay in presupposing a determinate difference between knowledge and object. If, as we've seen, this model of cognition collapses when the conditions for its self-grounding are fulfilled, then perhaps this also indicates that the way to attain a self-grounding mode of cognition lies just in specifically rejecting that model. That is, perhaps if we begin by deliberately refusing to presuppose any determinate relationship between cognition and its object, a mode of consideration may ensue in which both come to be determined at once. This discourse could then be arguably self-grounding in the sense that nothing *determinate* from outside of the consideration is present to externally determine what comes to be established in it. If that were the case, philosophy as a systematic science would arguably be possible because the demand that this discourse be unconditional or autonomous -- not founded on anything externally determined -- would allow for the possibility of a strictly immanent determination of the categories of the discourse.

While attaining foundationalism's goal of self-grounding, this systematic science would still be compatible with a *consistent* antifoundationalism for two reasons. For one thing, the very possibility of this systematic discourse would have been conditioned by the self-engendered collapse of the assumption that all discourse must be other-determined, founded on something given as determinate. The collapse of foundationalism is the collapse of this assumption in its failure to ground itself. Insofar as systematic discourse is made possible by the prior suspension of this assumption, systematic self-grounding science would not abrogate the antifoundational insistence that all cognition is in some way conditioned or contextual, made possible by factors external to the cognition itself. Rather, it would articulate the only coherent sense in which this thesis can be maintained: Systematic discourse is conditioned because it has been made possible by the self-refutation of the assumption about cognition which insists that all cognition must begin with something determinate. (Foundationalism asserts that it is the conditions of

cognition themselves which are always given *and determinative* of whatever might be thought; antifoundationalism asserts the same thing, with the qualification that these conditions are opaque. Systematic philosophy asserts that it is conditioned -- in the sense of "having been made possible" -- by the self-suspension as a foundational principle for philosophy of this foundationalist - antifoundationalist thesis that thought must always be conditioned -- in the sense of "predetermined" -- by something already given.) Secondly, this systematic discourse would also be consistent with antifoundationalism because, being based on a thoroughgoing rejection of the unconditional validity of the subjectivist model, it cannot claim to achieve those ends which are part of this model's definition of knowledge. The model which has been suspended defined knowledge as always being knowledge of something given to cognition: "knowledge" was thus taken to be fundamentally descriptive in character, an account of something present to cognition. As based on a rejection of this model, systematic discourse would make no pretension to supplant descriptive discourse by offering itself as a perfected form of such discourse. Systematic philosophy does not claim to describe the given world in any of the manifold senses in which traditional philosophy has construed that task; hence systematic philosophy is radically non-metaphysical. However, it does claim to supplant descriptive discourse insofar as it waxes metaphysical by purporting to be unconditional.

Thus, systematic discourse parts company both with foundationalism, which sought a mode of discourse which would be unconditionally authoritative and determinative for all other modes of discourse, and with antifoundationalism, which explicitly or implicitly postulates a relativism in which all modes of discourse are equal.

1. In terms of the investigation and the criticisms of foundationalism presented here, the difference between epistemology and transcendental philosophy is not essential. For an assessment of the difference see my essay "Davidson's Transcendental Arguments," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (1991): 345 - 360.

2. For a consideration of the issues discussed in this essay in the context of Hegel's system, see my "Reason and the Problem of Modernity," *The Philosophical Forum* 27 (1987): 275 - 303.

3. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 394.

4. The issue of how these latter goals may be attained without a foundational philosophy is developed at some length in "Reason and the Problem of Modernity."
5. See Descartes' Third Meditation.
6. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. & trans., David Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 172.
7. See Rorty, "Epistemological Behaviorism and the De-Transcendentalization of Analytic Philosophy," in *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, Robert Hollinger, ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); *Philosophy And The Mirror Of Nature*, p. 371 - 372; Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 36; *Truth And Method*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 309.
8. To hold that they are identical in terms of content, but also simultaneously distinct as "knowledge" on the one hand and "object" on the other will not suffice. To preserve that distinction, the nature of the difference must be articulated; there must be some determinate difference, either ontological or formal. But once such a determinate difference is established, the requisite moment of identity is lost: If knowledge and object are in some respect(s) different, the foundationalist can no longer be sure that knowledge corresponds to the object as it is objectively, independent of the knowing act. As long as some determinate difference is allowed, the foundationalist cannot claim that knowledge captures the object as it truly is as determined independently of the knowing act. He would only be entitled to claim that the knowledge in question is knowledge of things as they appear, not as they are in themselves.



## THE OWL OF MINERVA

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# HEGEL'S REMEDY FOR THE IMPASSE OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

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## 1. The Impasse of Contemporary Philosophy

In recent years there has been a growing convergence between the two mainstreams of contemporary philosophy, the so-called analytic and continental schools of thought.<sup>1</sup> Despite their divergent styles, they have reached common diagnoses of past philosophical problems, proposed common cures, and finally begun to acknowledge the kindred character of their respective enterprises. The emerging dialogue, however, has revealed not that truth resides in consensus, but that philosophy today has reached a common impasse.

Be it analytic or continental, contemporary philosophical inquiry has sought to surmount the dilemmas of traditional metaphysics and transcendental thought with two complementary projects that cannot help but fall victim to the very problem they seek to avoid. These corollary approaches are represented in the analytic tradition by ideal and ordinary language philosophies, just as they are represented in continental circles, on one pole, by structuralism and the pragmatic semiotics of Apel and Habermas, and, on the other, by hermeneutic philosophy. In each case, the chosen strategy follows from the awareness that philosophy can neither make unmediated truth claims about reality, directly describing the given, as traditional metaphysics had attempted, nor begin by characterizing some transcendental subject through which the limits of true knowing are established.

On the one hand, philosophy cannot directly ask, "What is?" due to the problematic character of any immediate reference to reality. Such reference claims truth for a content whose givenness is alleged. However, the presumed givenness of this content precludes appeal to any higher principle to adjudicate between it and any other content for which immediate being is claimed. Recourse to any such standard would introduce a mediating factor undermining the putative immediate givenness of any term to which it is applied. As a consequence, each competing content can have nothing supporting it but the claim that it is, an assumption as groundless as any other arbitrary assertion. Owing to its putative immediacy, each determinate truth claim thus can only be but a mere stipulation. This dilemma cannot be surmounted by attempting to show that some given content operates as a first principle of reality from which all else is derived and ordered. Any such attempt only reproduces the same problem on another level by leaving the content of the putative first principle itself just as immediately given as whatever standards of derivation and completeness that are employed to certify its grounding role. Once again, the metaphysical appeal to the given remains unsusceptible of any justification.

Recognizing these metaphysical problems, contemporary analytic and continental philosophy has acknowledged the necessity of foregoing all immediate reference to reality and has chosen instead to investigate how truth claims are made. In making this turn to consider not reality, but the conditions of reference to reality, both schools have recognized the problem of doing so in the manner of Kantian transcendental philosophy, which appears to make immediate reference of its own to both the conditions of experience and the conditions of the object of experience. On the one hand, Kant is taken to task for metaphysically stipulating the character of the transcendental structure by conceiving it as a noumenal self determined through such unfounded devices as a metaphysical deduction of the categories, which simply adopts, with certain unargued modifications, the typology of judgment of received tradition. On the other hand, Kant is equally criticized for determining the object of experience with respect to a thing-in-itself, which is not transcendently constituted, but metaphysically referred to as something immediately given *in res*.

To avoid these lapses into unmediated metaphysical reference, the two contemporary schools have attempted to conceive the conditions of making truth claims without referring either to any thing-in-itself or any acts of a transcendental subject. Instead of construing the object of knowing as the appearance of something outside knowing from which intuitions are received, they have taken the object of knowing to be something completely constituted by and within the very structure of referring itself. On the other hand, instead of conceiving any transcenden-

tal structure as a noumenal self hidden from knowing as much as any thing-in-itself, they have taken the practice of referring to be that in terms of which all reference is to be understood. Of course, this practice can be considered either to have an intrinsic universal character or else to be overdetermined, taking shape according to the particular context in which it occurs. Consequently, the process of referring in which all truth claims are constituted here gets alternately conceived as either an ideal structure of speech or as the given usage of a natural language.

On this basis the analytic tradition has made its linguistic turn and pursued the corollary strategies of ideal and ordinary language philosophy, wherein all questions of truth are reduced to questions of how truth claims are determined through linguistic practice, be it overdetermined or not.

For its part, recent continental philosophy has followed an analogous path. On the one hand, it has developed its own versions of ideal language philosophy, formulating it both as a theory of communicative competence that specifies the ideal speech situation under which legitimate discourse is possible and as a universal structuralism that uncovers the hidden forms of signifying by which meaning gets constituted. On the other hand, the continental tradition has offered its own analogue for ordinary language philosophy, hermeneutic philosophy. Under its banner, the irreducible condition of true knowing has been construed to be the contextually bound situation of interpretation, wherein discourse is predetermined by the given system of reference in which it operates. However this system is specified, the resulting historicity of knowing offers the same overdetermined transcendental framework presented by analytic ordinary language philosophy.

On the face of it, both versions of the convergent analytic and continental approaches seem to escape the particular difficulties of the thing-in-itself and the noumenal self. By making the practice of discourse what constitutes both the object of knowing and the knowledge of that object, they avoid any immediate reference to either subjective or objective reality.

Nevertheless, in so doing, they have hardly removed the central dilemma of transcendental argument, which is by no means a special affliction of the Kantian formulation, but concerns the status of the entire transcendental inquiry itself. In a word, what the two contemporary schools have failed to resolve is the problem of legitimating the discourse they themselves exercise in asserting the primacy of their chosen systems of reference. It matters not whether their system of reference be specified as an ideal or ordinary linguistic practice, or as semiotic structure, communicative competence, or the hermeneutic situation. Whatever its guise, the constitutive structure of reference remains a metaphysical stipulation so long as the discourse specifying it is not itself already



constituted in terms of that structure.

The dilemma is simple enough. If the indicated framework of referring be the condition of all truth claims, then the philosopher's own characterization of that framework can claim no truth unless a further condition be met. Namely, this thematization by the philosopher must proceed according to the same critically established conditions of the referring it investigates. For this to occur, the "metalanguage" of the philosopher must lose its metalinguistic transcendence and coincide with the discourse whose constitutive structures are being uncovered. To avoid any metaphysical reference to the transcendental structure itself, the philosophical practice of the ideal or ordinary language philosopher must thus become fully self-referential, which means that the truth claiming under consideration must perform its own critique.

What leaves analytic and continental thought at a common impasse is that the required equalization of transcendental argument with its object actually eliminates the very framework for doing transcendental philosophy of any sort, regardless of whether it makes the conditions of knowing a noumenal self, an ideal speech situation or an overdetermined hermeneutic context. This becomes manifest once one observes what happens when the discourse of transcendental inquiry becomes self-critical, forsaking all immediate metaphysical reference by becoming one and the same as the structure of referring under investigation.

To begin with, what transcendental discourse itself generically performs is a knowing of true knowing in terms of the conditions that make truth claims possible and give them their proper limit. The controversy between the different proponents of transcendental philosophy does not concern this general task, but rather the specific content assigned to knowing and the constitutive structure of its referring. Consequently, whatever its particular shape, if transcendental discourse is to exercise true knowing instead of an unfounded metaphysical stipulation, then it must relate to its subject matter just as true knowing relates to its object. Since transcendental discourse comprises a knowing of true knowing, it can validly embody the structure of true knowing, its object, only if the transcendental investigation, the knowing of true knowing, is the same as what it knows. For this to be true, true knowing must itself be a knowing of true knowing.

The achievement of this, however, removes not only the distinction between transcendental discourse and the knowing under critique, but also the distinction between knowing and its object, or between referring and its referent. Namely, if true knowing is itself a knowing of true knowing, then what knowing refers to is identical to knowing's relation to its object.

What makes this outcome of fatal consequence is that transcendental discourse can only be undertaken if knowing can be differentiated from its

particular object. Only then can knowing be considered apart, independently of any specific knowledge, that is, independently of any objective reference. Yet if knowing is indistinguishable from what it knows, then, to use Kant's terminology, knowing cannot be examined prior to experience. As a result, when transcendental philosophy makes itself self-referential, eliminating all distinction between itself and the knowing it investigates, the accompanying equalization of knowing and its object eliminates the very possibility of transcendental discourse itself. By being driven to this result, transcendental inquiry testifies to the bankruptcy of its own enterprise. Since the analytic and continental schools have held on to its program, while merely substituting linguistic practice for noumenal subjectivity, the self-elimination of transcendental argument signals their common failure.

## 2. The Alternative of A Non-Transcendental Phenomenology

If this outcome indicates that philosophy can begin no more with any reference to knowing than with any reference to reality, it does not leave thought bound to the impasse of contemporary philosophy. In fact, the philosophical tradition has already offered an alternative to metaphysics and transcendental argument, an alternative that presents an all too neglected strategy for overcoming their difficulties and pursuing a systematic philosophy of an entirely different order. The original proponent of this alternative is Hegel and in the Introduction to his *Phenomenology of Spirit* he sketches out its basic strategy. In face of the dilemmas of contemporary thought, this strategy warrants reconsideration now more than ever, irrespectively of whether Hegel actually succeeded in carrying it out.

Needless to say, Hegel has commonly been interpreted as the final representative of the metaphysical tradition, who makes the last grandiose attempt to reach absolute knowledge of things as they are in themselves with a theory of subject-object identity.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, his approach is actually no such relic of the past, but as contemporary as can be.

Contrary to received opinion, Hegel begins by considering precisely that impasse at which today's thought has arrived. Confronting the failure of metaphysical and transcendental philosophies, Hegel asks how philosophy can begin at all. Their examples have shown that philosophy cannot begin with any immediate truth claims about either reality or knowing. This seems to leave one option open: that one begin with no given content whatsoever by casting aside all assumptions and resolving to think independently of any unmediated references to reality or any transcendental structures. Hegel recognizes, however, that such a resolve could not help but be a mere subjective postulate if philosophy began immediately

with it.<sup>3</sup> Doing so would tacitly presuppose both the primacy of contentless indeterminacy and the primacy of that non-metaphysical, non-transcendental knowing that here presumably begins without any specific knowledge. In effect, this immediate resolve to think without assumption would assume prior to philosophical investigation that philosophy is properly presuppositionless knowing.

To avoid this recursion to metaphysical truth claims, Hegel offers the radical alternative of a non-transcendental phenomenology. It is conceived as an explicitly *positive* science observing what occurs to the project of foundational knowing common to metaphysics and transcendental argument when foundational cognition tests its own fundamental claims. What is at stake is whether this investigation, where the knowing under view does its own critique, can result in some threshold where knowledge claims can be made free from the pitfalls of metaphysical reference and transcendental constitution. If phenomenology can arrive at such a result, then, independently of all subjective resolve, a starting point will lie secured for a new type of philosophy that takes nothing for granted.

In line with this strategy, Hegel gives phenomenology its specific method and subject matter in direct challenge to the basic problem of metaphysics and transcendental philosophy. Their inquiries have shown how no immediate truth can be legitimately claimed by any knowing whose object or knowledge has some definite predetermined content. What Hegel therefore proposes is that, instead of making truth claims, one begin by stipulating knowing that claims truth for its knowledge by appeal to some given, and then observe how this explicitly presupposed subject matter develops itself by making and testing truth claims of its own. In this way, a wholly immanent critique can be undertaken of the strategy of knowing that justifies its claims by appeal to some foundation, be it construed as some factor *in res* or a transcendental condition.

In these terms, Hegel presents a phenomenological inquiry that is not only non-metaphysical in the traditional sense, but radically non-transcendental as well. Since this phenomenology will simply observe a structure of foundational knowing that it openly takes for granted as a given content, its investigation avoids metaphysics by making no claims concerning either the unqualified reality of its subject matter or the truth of the claims made by the subject matter itself. Unlike so many of his subsequent interpreters, Hegel is well aware of the problem that would arise if phenomenology did make such assertions, claiming either that it presents the true doctrine of knowing as it is in itself or that the truth claims made by its subject matter were those generic to knowing per se. If phenomenology followed that course, it would be but another version of transcendental philosophy, making the indefensible metaphysical assumption that it was itself rigorous science, laying bare the true underlying structure of all discourse. This is the fate of Husserlian phenomenology,

which remains transcendental by claiming presuppositionlessness for its own observation, dogmatically assuming that all knowing must have the shape of intentionality as it is stipulated by Husserl.

By contrast, the phenomenology that Hegel here proposes forgoes all such unqualified assertion by openly accepting the limits of positive science. Stipulating the content it observes, this phenomenology appropriately admits that what claims do emerge are not truths in themselves, definitive of either reality or knowing. The observed truth claims are rather only beliefs generated by the subject matter, a subject matter that is itself ascribed no ontological or transcendental status, but merely taken for granted as a version of knowing posited by the phenomenologist herself.

Nevertheless, non-transcendental phenomenology is a very special positive science because its given object has the unique character of making its own truth claims and also testing them by itself. In so doing, the structure of knowing stipulated by phenomenology gives itself successive shapes of knowing, each with a different knowledge claim and a different standard of truth. Thereby the subject matter determines its own development, unlike in other positive sciences where the act of the investigator must be relied upon to introduce every new content. Consequently, the method of the positive science of phenomenology has the peculiar character of being what Hegel aptly calls a pure observation,<sup>4</sup> pure in that the phenomenological investigator need not interfere with the self-examination of the subject matter. For this reason, phenomenology has a singularly non-arbitrary character, even though it is only a positive science. Despite its stipulated subject matter, phenomenological discourse is ruled by the internal necessity that whatever content comes into view does so not by any intervention of the phenomenologist, but by being generated from nothing but the bare structure of knowing taken up at the start.

In the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel indicates how these generic features all follow from the character of the given subject matter which the positive science of phenomenology begins observing. Hegel calls this presupposed content the structure of consciousness.<sup>5</sup> Although he will later attempt to confirm in his *Philosophy of Spirit* that consciousness is defined by the representational model of knowing that phenomenology addresses as a posit, the introduction of conscious knowing here involves no further claim than that it denotes the cognitive structure that phenomenology stipulates for itself. The structure of consciousness thus denotes simply knowing that claims truth for its knowledge, referring its putative cognition to some given as the standard of its validity. Such a structure provides the appropriate subject matter if one is to forgo making all immediate truth claims and instead observe a given structure that makes them on its own.

As accordingly stipulated by phenomenology, this structure consists in knowing that refers to what it knows as something both in relation to it and determined in itself independently of that relation.

These two aspects, which Hegel terms the being-for-consciousness and the being-in-itself of the object,<sup>6</sup> are necessary if the knowing under consideration is to make truth claims. Only with their distinction from one another can knowing have knowledge of what is not merely a subjective posit but putatively determined in its own right. Consequently, the knowing that phenomenology observes has this dual structure where, on the one hand, knowing's relation to its object is its knowledge, whereas, on the other hand, the truth of that knowledge is the known object taken by itself as that to which the knowledge refers.

Granted this characterization, it still might appear a contradiction in terms for knowing to refer to what is not merely in relation to it, but in itself independent of that relation. This problem poses no difficulty at all, however, just given the structure of the knowing under observation. Since this truth-claiming knowing consists in the polar relation of knowledge and truth, of what is *for* it and what is *to* it, what is in itself actually falls within knowing as one of its constitutive contrast terms.

For this important reason, as Hegel duly notes,<sup>7</sup> testing the truth of knowing's knowledge requires no introduction of any criterion of validity by the phenomenologist. If that were necessary, phenomenology would end up having to make metaphysical claims concerning what is the criterion of truth. This reversion to metaphysics need not arise precisely because the given structure of knowing not only claims truth for its knowledge, but contains within itself the standard by which its knowledge can be verified. This criterion of truth is none other than the constituent pole of in-itselfness, which is to knowing as that to which its knowledge should correspond. Since knowledge is knowing's relation to this content, the standard of truth for this knowledge is concomitantly given for knowing as its referent.

If this removes the traditional metaphysical problem of providing a criterion of truth, which is tantamount to gaining access to what is in itself, it also removes the transcendental problem of determining true knowing, which is the object of transcendental knowledge. That dilemma falls away as well, since phenomenology is equally relieved of having to apply the criterion of truth and thereby uphold some specific principle of method. As Hegel observes,<sup>8</sup> this difficulty is also overcome because knowing claims truth for its knowledge only by referring its knowledge to what it knows. In making truth claims, knowing considers not just what it knows, but *both* what it refers to and what its own knowledge is. Since knowledge and its referent are accordingly linked together for knowing as the corresponding terms of its own relation, knowing not only supplies the truth criterion of its knowledge. It further compares its knowledge

with this its referent and only recognizes the truth of its cognition through this comparison.

Nevertheless, given the stipulated structure of knowing, the comparison of the standard of truth and knowledge cannot sustain certainty. Once knowing has its two constituents before it, relating them one to another, its truth criterion is not in itself any longer, as something given independently of cognition, but something for knowing, determined in virtue of how it appears within cognition. As a result, knowing finds that what it refers to is not the factor in itself that it took to be its standard of truth. Rather, the object of reference is that criterion *in* its relation for knowing, as it stands defined in the referring underway. By virtue of nothing but its own constitutive truth testing, knowing thus ends up before a new referent, consisting in the being-for-knowing of the former standard of its knowledge. Of course, when what is taken to be in itself gets transformed, the corresponding knowledge cannot remain the same. Since knowledge is knowing's relation to its referent, once the referent changes, so does the knowledge.

In this dual manner, then, the stipulated structure of knowing undergoes what Hegel terms an inversion of consciousness,<sup>9</sup> independently generating a whole new shape for itself with entirely revised poles of truth and knowledge. The referent of knowing has here changed from being what was putatively in itself to become the givenness of this truth as it fell within knowing.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the corresponding knowledge has changed from being knowing's relation to what was formerly in itself to become knowing's relation to the transformed object.

Nevertheless, to the degree that this emergence of a new shape of knowing has not eliminated consciousness' basic bi-polar structure of referent and reference, the process of knowing's truth testing does not halt. In so far as the new correlative contents *are* differentiated and compared together as the constitutive truth and knowledge of a new shape of knowing, the same inversion process automatically proceeds anew. Since, as Hegel observes,<sup>11</sup> the knowledge of the new object stands contrasted to its object in order to be knowledge for which truth is claimed in the criteriological, foundational, representational mode of consciousness, the referent once again falls within knowing as something for its consideration. Accordingly, the referent is no longer what is just in itself, but rather what appears to be in itself within and for knowing.

As is evident, the process of inversion will go on unabated so long as knowing persists in claiming truth for its knowledge in the manner of distinguishing what it knows from its relation to it. It matters not whether the referent be construed as sense data, the noumenal essence of sensible appearance, an element of an encompassing conceptual scheme in coherence with which its meaning is determined, a text awaiting interpretation within a hermeneutic circle, or a stimulus causally affecting

the behavior of a naturalized cognition. So long as referent and reference are differentiated, with reference relating to an independent factor of any sort, knowing exhibits the structure of consciousness, where the putative standard of truth remains caught in a double bind. On the one hand, the truth criterion, the "in itself," can verify knowledge only by figuring as a transcendent given, enjoying some independence from knowing's relation to it, whereas on the other hand, this same standard can only be appealed to in terms of how it appears immanently within the horizon of knowing. As a result, the standard of truth cannot help but be transformed into a knowledge claim in need of its own truth criterion, setting in motion anew the same tension and the same self-mutation.

It is this unstable, self-transforming relation of transcendence and immanence defining the stipulated structure of knowing that affords phenomenology a method unique among the positive sciences. Due to its process of inversion, the given subject matter of phenomenology stands apart from other objects of positive science not just by making truth claims and verifying its knowledge, but by further determining itself, continually generating new shapes of knowing through the workings of its basic structure. Because the self-examination of knowing produces the development of its own different shapes, whose succession provides what phenomenology considers, the phenomenologist introduces neither any truth criteria or procedures to verify the knowledge of knowing, nor any content at all other than the basic structure stipulated at the start. Non-transcendental phenomenology thus has no need to engage in the arbitrary assertions of eidetic variation, with its dogmatic appeals to the self-evidence of inner intuition to generate new content for some transcendently privileged structure of intentionality. Instead, the phenomenologist here has nothing left to do but to observe the subject matter as it is given and allow it to develop by itself without any outside interference. Exercising this passive observation, phenomenology attains a non-arbitrary, scientific character of its own so far as all it considers emerges through the inversions of knowing that necessarily follow from the structure stipulated at the outset.

Accordingly, phenomenology must begin with a shape of knowing containing nothing more than the structure of foundational knowing itself. The starting point therefore consists in a knowing where what is known to be true has no other content than that it is in itself, that it is a given factor to which knowing refers, while the corresponding knowledge has no other content than that it is a relation to what is given. This entails a shape of knowing whose truth criterion is being and being alone, and whose knowledge is but an immediate certainty of what is. Hegel begins the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with just such a knowing, calling it the shape of consciousness of sense-certainty.<sup>12</sup>

As for what follows, this is already mandated by the phenomenological

method: all further content must derive from inversions of knowing succeeding from this rudimentary shape, whose certainty of being will entail an inversion of its own. Of course, this general guideline by no means indicates the actual content of the ensuing succession of shapes. Indeed, whether or not Hegel has accurately described them is a question yet unanswered by Hegel scholarship, which by and large ignores the non-transcendental character of the discourse and treats the description of each shape as if it constituted a true doctrine about the knowing and corresponding objects under view.

Nevertheless, how the succession must come to an end, if at all, can be foreseen from the process of inversion that provides the motor of development. Given how the inversion process is determined through the stipulated structure of knowing, there is only one way that the generation of new shapes of knowing can cease. This is if the referent of knowledge becomes identical to knowing's relation to it. If that happens, then the truth of knowledge no longer becomes something else by getting referred to as something for knowing during knowing's comparison of its truth and knowledge. Since the referent has here acquired the same structure as knowing's relation to it, to grasp it in its relation to knowing is to consider it as it is in itself. Consequently, the content of truth has become completely indistinguishable from that of knowledge, leaving no further comparison to be made.

*If* such a shape does arise through the successive inversions of consciousness proceeding from sense-certainty, then and only then does the whole process of inversions grind to a halt. Because this process is unique and non-arbitrary, with a definite starting point and a continuous unitary development, Hegel can rightly suggest that the emergence of a shape of knowing where truth and knowledge coincide would signal the completed development of the totality of shapes of knowing.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, phenomenology would here face its final object, exhausting its own investigation by having observed in the preceding movement every possible manner of making immediate truth claims by referring to what is in itself.

What this leaves is not at all some subject-object identity with absolute knowledge of things as they are in themselves, as Hegel interpreters since Marx and Kierkegaard have commonly maintained. Instead of entailing any such return to metaphysics, the one possible terminus of phenomenology offers a radically novel result, permitting a complete break with the dilemmas of metaphysical and transcendental philosophy that continue to leave contemporary thought at an impasse.



### 3. The End of Phenomenology and The Starting Point of A Systematic Philosophy Without Foundations

The nature of this breakthrough has been obscured by the fact that Hegel does call the concluding shape of phenomenology "Absolute Knowing,"<sup>14</sup> which has unfortunately led many readers to interpret it as the privileged form of philosophical knowing that conceives what truly is. However, if, as Hegel explicitly argues in the *Science of Logic*,<sup>15</sup> phenomenology were to end up presenting a doctrine of true knowing within its own distinct positive science, it would fall into the familiar mistake of stipulating the concept of philosophy prior to the doing of philosophy. This mistake is committed the moment true knowing is rooted in any determinate standpoint. Once this move is taken, as it inveterately is by all transcendental thinkers no matter how they characterize the conditions of knowing, truth is made dependent upon an epistemological foundation that can never be legitimated in its own right, given how all valid claims are assumed to emanate from it.

The true significance of "Absolute Knowing" is better understood by considering what character it must have to be the concluding shape of phenomenology. In the first place, if the stipulated structure of knowing does develop from an immediate certainty of being into a shape where the distinction between truth and knowledge falls away, then much more has occurred than the passing of one shape into another. With the rise of a shape where referring and its referent become one and the same, consciousness has arrived at the point where it itself is forced to recognize that the domain of what is given to it is actually no more than its own posit. With the realm of the given thereby rendered indistinguishable from the reflection of knowing, the entire process of truth-claiming constituting the structure of consciousness immediately collapses. For once such "Absolute Knowing" is achieved, where truth and knowledge can no longer be differentiated, there is nothing left for knowing to distinguish from its own subjective referring as something in itself to which any *objective* knowledge could correspond. Consequently, there can not be any *relation* to a referent, let alone any possibility of claiming truth for such a relation. Without something in itself to which knowing can relate and contrast itself in the dual manner constitutive of the foundational, criteriological, representational knowing that Hegel calls consciousness, knowing can claim no truth for its knowledge. This does not signify a supplanting of truth with "warranted belief" or any such version of justification where the standard for adjudicating knowledge claims has a conventional, posited character. These "naturalized" or historically defined criteria remain versions of foundational knowing since referent and reference remain distinct. "Absolute Knowing," by contrast, presents a much more radical outcome. With its equalization of truth and knowledge, where reference has nothing distinct to which to refer, there is

simply nothing to be known, nor any knowledge to be held. Consequently, once knowing and what it knows become indistinguishable, there arises no absolute knowledge of what is in itself. What results is rather a complete elimination of truth and knowledge themselves, as they are construed in defining the framework of foundational, criteriological, or representational cognition. As Hegel observes, absolute knowing is really no knowing at all, but the dissolution of the structure of consciousness,<sup>16</sup> a dissolution that occurs wholly through the efforts of the foundational model of knowing to test its claims and undertake its own critique.

By arriving at this shape of absolute knowing, where there is nothing given to refer to, nor any referring to perform, knowing that claims truth for its knowledge by appeal to an independent referent collapses into literally nothing. Nevertheless, as much as all contrast is removed and no determinate truth claims remain, the one possible conclusion of phenomenology immediately comprises a new point of departure free of the constraints of either metaphysical, transcendental, or phenomenological discourse.

To begin with, since the stipulated structure of foundational knowing has eliminated itself, phenomenology has lost the specific subject matter on which its investigation depends. So deprived of its constitutive object, phenomenology's pure observation is accordingly annulled. Since nothing determinate is left, there is no given subject matter with which any new positive science could proceed to take its place.

Furthermore, since no truth claims remain either about the objects of knowledge or about knowing itself, metaphysical and transcendental discourses have no room for themselves either. With no given about which absolute claims might be made nor any determinate structure of knowing to which authority could be conferred, the metaphysical and transcendental options are set aside.

What there is is neither something in itself nor something in relation to some shape of knowing, but the totally undifferentiated, indeterminate unity into which truth and knowledge have collapsed. As Hegel properly recognizes,<sup>17</sup> absolute knowing's elimination of all knowledge of an in itself has resulted in being, that is, simple indeterminacy, freed of all transcendental conditions and claims to immediate truth. Contrary to prevalent interpretation, this is not being *in res*, the absolute, God before creation, a category of reason, or some transcendently constituted horizon. Rather, as Hegel repeats time and again,<sup>18</sup> it is utterly unqualified, unanalyzable indeterminacy, which is all that remains when all reference to the given and all correspondingly determinate referring are set aside as a defining framework for arriving at truth.

Although such being is a result of the possible self-elimination of the stipulated structure of foundational knowing, as well as of the phenomenology observing it, its genesis in no way conditions or mediates

it. Rather, being is indeterminate and immediate precisely by issuing from a self-annulling mediation. By developing itself to Absolute Knowing, phenomenology serves this introductory role as a process that eliminates itself as a presupposition the moment being emerges from it. Because being here arises with no relation to anything else nor any distinction within itself, there is nothing about it which refers back to any preceding ground or derivation. For this reason, being is really no result at all, but a pure beginning taking nothing for granted nor anticipating anything-further.<sup>19</sup>

Paradoxical as it may appear, this sheer indeterminacy is what enables being to provide a remedy for the common impasse of contemporary philosophy. If determinations of any sort were to develop from being without any outside interference, they would comprise the content of a discourse presupposing neither method nor subject matter. Taking nothing for granted, this development of determinations would be immune from the dilemmas of traditional metaphysics and transcendental philosophy, as well as from the relativity of positive science.

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel attempts to inaugurate presupposition-less systematic philosophy precisely by showing how determinations do emerge from being. Although it might appear inexplicable how anything could arise from such complete indeterminacy, the bare outline of Hegel's argument certainly suggests a possibility.

As should by now be evident, being can be considered as it emerges from phenomenology only if nothing else be admitted. If any other factor were at hand, either as an antecedent ground or a coeval contrast term, the indeterminacy of being would be violated, together with the exclusion of all reference to givens and determinate standpoints from which being has resulted. Therefore, since no other resource can be admitted, any further determination must follow from being by itself, independently of any external positing of either method or subject matter. Conversely, since this being has no internal distinctions or external relations, it cannot be a ground or cause or determiner of anything, nor can anything arise from it that involves relations or difference to something determinate. Thus, if any other content is to develop out of being, it can only arise utterly groundlessly and be just as undifferentiated and unmediated as being itself.

Although this indicates that nothing can arise from being, Hegel recognizes that nothing does indeed arise from being without any ground at all. As he observes, in so far as being is neither something in itself nor a category of reason, but entirely indeterminate, it is *immediately* nothing, just as nothing is *immediately* the same absence of all form and content comprising being.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the indeterminacy of being, far from precluding further determination, actually immediately gives rise to a contrast that is no contrast at all, one of being that is nothing and nothing

that is being, where each is the groundless emergence of the other.

Indeed, this transition from being to nothing immediately cancels itself as a transition since what emerges from being is really no different than being. Nevertheless, as Hegel recognizes, being has given rise to something other than itself. This is the process of becoming within which being and nothing continually and without intermediary resolve themselves into one another.<sup>21</sup>

If this emergence of becoming suggests how being can be a beginning of presuppositionless determination, of determinacy liberated from the assumption of the foundational framework of consciousness, it also indicates the character of the possible conclusion of the ensuing development. Since what develops from being-nothing-becoming does so without any introjection of given content, be it through reference to what is in itself or what is assumed to constitute true or warranted knowing, the succession of determinations must be an immanent development. In other words, the development from being must be determined through nothing but itself and thereby be self-developing. However, because here the self-development begins with nothing determinate, it is not the self-determination of some content. Such was the case in phenomenology's observation of the self-development of the given structure of consciousness. What proceeds from being is rather self-determination *per se*.

Hegel draws the necessary conclusion: what determines itself from being can only be manifest at the end of the development. Only then has the self-determination fully determined its subject, which is, of course, the development itself in its totality. Thus, being does not comprise the abiding substrate of development, acquiring ever new determination for itself. Being instead actually emerges as the beginning of what finally results only at the conclusion of the development, for at that point that of which being is a beginning first comes into view.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, what the presuppositionless development from being is a development *of* is left open till the end. Nevertheless, its character can be anticipated in virtue of what is required to bring the self-determination to a close. Since the advance is immanent in character, if the development from being is to come to any conclusion, this can not be certified by any external criterion of completeness or any outside reflection upon the preceding succession of determinations. Instead, the development must itself arrive at a determination that is so structured as to present the interconnection of all the preceding determinations and do so in such a way that they are related together as component elements of a self-determined totality that is both their result and encompassing unity. Such a determination allows the development to close with itself because it not only incorporates all the emergent content within a completed whole, but does so from within the development itself. Accordingly, this

final content not only incorporates everything preceding, but renders the development of which it is a part the very process of that incorporation.

However, precisely by being this retrospective ordering of all that has preceded, an ordering in which every content stands as a stage in the concluded self-development containing them all, the last determination is the totality of determinations itself. Hegel calls this final determination the Absolute Idea and appropriately describes how it comprises the resultant self-ordering whole by incorporating all the preceding categories as constituents of its own self-determination.<sup>23</sup> As such, it is the actual subject of the development following from being, comprising what each and every category is a determination of. Consequently, Hegel can rightly say that being is implicitly the Absolute Idea.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, since the totality of the Absolute Idea provides the ordering principle of its own developed content, it also comprises the method by which all the categories are determined. This is why Hegel can call the Absolute Idea the method of presuppositionless determination.<sup>25</sup>

It can be the method since truth and justification no longer fall apart as they do when the validity of knowledge claims depends upon conformity with an independently given standard, as in the foundational knowing of consciousness. Wherever truth and justification remain distinct, the justificatory process is rendered something outside truth and thereby invalid and incapable of providing any legitimating sanction. This is the basic pitfall of any foundationalism. For if some factor or procedure provides justification for what is to count as true, that justificatory principle cannot enjoy the truth it confers upon knowledge claims since it is given prior to and separately from what it validates. To escape this discrepancy between what it is to possess truth and what it is to confer truth, the justificatory process would have to be determined in accord with itself, which is to say that it would have to be self-determined. In that case, however, its truth would be united with its justification and the distinction of privileged foundation and legitimated knowledge claims would be overcome in the same way in which the attainment of "absolute knowing" eliminates the opposition of consciousness residing in the differentiation of the moments of "in itselfness" and "for itselfness".<sup>26</sup> The positive fulfillment of such a unification of truth and justification is exhibited in the Absolute Idea, whose determinacy owes its truth to itself since what it is is determined by nothing other than itself. The self-grounding process by which presuppositionless determinacy unfolds is thereby nothing other than the self-legitimizing account by which truth rests upon itself in express departure from the incoherent dogmatic appeals to extraneously given criteria, conceptual schemes, cultural contexts and the like plaguing the foundation-ridden efforts of so much thought past and present.

If Hegel's strategy be taken seriously and there be granted a

presuppositionless development from being, then both its method and subject matter will emerge at the end of the development, instead of being presupposed at the start in the ill-fated manner of positive science, metaphysics, and transcendental philosophy. Whether such a discourse can break through the impasse of contemporary analytic and continental thought must remain an open question until a properly completed phenomenology secures a starting point of being from which follows a completed development of determinacy giving non-metaphysical, non-transcendental philosophy its mandate.

Certainly the predicament of present day philosophy testifies to how it has yet to be shown whether the tasks of phenomenology and of the systematic philosophy without foundations it might introduce have actually been fulfilled by Hegel or any one else. Nevertheless, this same predicament poses the challenge of making these tasks the central problems of philosophy today, while leaving the well-worn path of transcendental argument a thing of the past.

1. This paper is a revised version of an essay delivered under the title, "Hegel's Answer To The Impasse of Contemporary Philosophy," in October, 1980 at the 6th Biennial Meeting of the Hegel Society of America, held at Trent University, Peterborough, Canada.
2. It is the young Schelling who better fits this description.
3. G.W.F. Hegel, *Logic* (Part I of *The Encyclopedia of The Philosophical Sciences* {1830}), trans. by William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), paragraph 78, pp. 111-112.
4. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 141.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 149 ff.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 137, 145.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 789 ff.
15. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. by A.V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), pp. 75-77.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 82 ff.
19. For a more extended discussion of how phenomenology can introduce the starting point of foundation-free philosophy without strapping it with a mediation, see "The Route To Foundation-Free Systematic Philosophy," in Richard Dien Winfield, *Overcoming Foundations: Studies In Systematic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 26-31.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 71 ff.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 825 ff.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 829, 838.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 838 ff.
26. For further discussions of the dilemma afflicting any distinction of truth and justification, see Robert Bruce Berman, *Categorical Justification: Normative Argumentation In Hegel's Practical Philosophy* (Ph.D. Dissertation, New School For Social Research, 1983), Chapters 1 and 2; and Richard Dien Winfield, *Reason and Justice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), Chapters 6 and 7.

# SELF-REFERENTIAL ARGUMENTS IN PHILOSOPHY

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## 1.

Does philosophy have an identity, method, and subject matter enabling one to differentiate it from the sciences and from other activities such as politics, literature, poetry, art, and so on? Can it have results that are distinctly its own? The history of philosophy records many efforts to isolate the method, subject matter, and results of philosophy. Their results, however, seem at first glance to have been ephemeral: time and time again philosophy has been uprooted and transformed. Philosophy -- or supposedly central branches of it such as metaphysics -- has been declared dead on numerous occasions (by Hume, Comte, Wittgenstein, to name just three authors of such declarations). But the idea of a distinctly philosophical method won't go away; over the past two hundred years alone it has reappeared as the study of transcendental subjectivity, logical form, "marks of the mental," ordinary language, scientific method, and so on.

Today, however, philosophy as an autonomous discipline faces perhaps its greatest crisis, embodied in the recent critiques of foundationalism. Partly as a result of the reawakened interest in the history of philosophy, showing how the discipline has changed through time; partly due to the new interest in cultural diversity and in listening to the voices of those alleging disenfranchisement by the central strains of western philosophy;



and partly to the gradual convergence of fields like artificial intelligence, computer science, and the neurosciences into an all-embracing science of cognition; scientific philosophers, political activists, and purveyors of *differance* have again declared philosophy dead and are presently dividing up the spoils.

In this paper I wish to re-examine several recent results of a controversial but widely-used form of metaphysical argument -- or more precisely, class of arguments -- which has kept resurfacing throughout the history of philosophy despite the changes philosophy has undergone. These arguments all involve reflexivity or self-reference in one form or another. It is the apparently perennial nature of this class of arguments, I will finally suggest, that keep alive hope of identifying both a distinct method and distinct results that are deserving of being called philosophical knowledge. Indeed, if the argument of this paper is cogent, such knowledge already exists and has since Aristotle; we just haven't been looking for it in the right ways or in the right places.

Specifically, these arguments conclude that certain philosophical theses are self-referentially inconsistent (incoherent), or in some similar way self-refuting. Versions of them have been directed against a surprisingly wide array of modern philosophical positions, including epistemological relativism,<sup>1</sup> determinism,<sup>2</sup> behaviorism,<sup>3</sup> representative realism,<sup>4</sup> evolutionary epistemology,<sup>5</sup> ontological relativity,<sup>6</sup> antifoundationalism,<sup>7</sup> skepticism,<sup>8</sup> deconstructionism and other "postmodern critiques of reason,"<sup>9</sup> Quine's thesis that "no statements are immune to revision,"<sup>10</sup> Whorf's thesis of linguistic relativity,<sup>11</sup> the "strong thesis" in sociology of knowledge,<sup>12</sup> versions of cognitivism holding that the world is a construction of the brain,<sup>13</sup> eliminative materialism,<sup>14</sup> and many others.

How much can such arguments accomplish? Do they succeed at decisively refuting their targets? Answers to these questions vary from a determined Yes to an equally determined No. The former come from philosophers holding that the positions at stake have genuine reflexive properties whose consequences must be taken seriously; by virtue of the kind of generality they take as their subject domain they have direct implications for themselves: for their own truth, knowability, assertability, or rational justifiability. Such philosophers are then in a position to uphold the self-referential argument as a distinctively philosophical strategy productive of results as definitive as those in mathematics and geometry. Those who deny the validity of self-referential arguments employ strategies ranging from a denial that reflexive properties really exist to the claim that reflexivity exists but for one reason or another doesn't provide the basis for refuting its targets. My aim in this paper will be to defend the first of these views from the criticisms employed by the latter. The conclusion is bound to be provocative and controversial; for I have come to believe that self-referential strategies, if carried out

properly, can be productive of genuine philosophical knowledge - knowledge, that is, which cannot be had in any of the special sciences *qua* sciences, and may, in fact, post limits on what the sciences may discover the world (or the objects in their special subject domains) to be like. Philosophy will be seen to have both a method and results of its own, a genuine place in our epistemic "division of labor" apart from the mere analysis of language and the results of the sciences or simply "keeping the conversation of the West going."

Let us consider some examples.

## 2.

*Example 1.* The best known self-referential argument is that which has commonly been directed against various forms of epistemological relativism. Harvey Siegel recently developed a version of this argument,<sup>15</sup> which in one form or another dates back at least as far as Socrates' effort to refute Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*. The version I will present here owes more to Siegel than anyone else; it goes as follows:

Let  $p$  be any declarative statement. In that case, epistemological relativism asserts that the truth or justifiability of  $p$  is relative to the central propositions of the conceptual framework (scheme, model, paradigm, etc.) in which  $p$  is most at home, especially those expressing this framework's standards for evaluating truth and justifiability; there is no framework-independent way of evaluating the truth or justifiability of  $p$ .

Now epistemological relativism certainly seems to be a thesis about *all* declarative statements. For a statement to be an exception to this general formulation of epistemological relativism would mean that its truth or justifiability is framework-independent; this would contradict epistemological relativism and confirm instead epistemological absolutism. So epistemological relativism's domain of reference must be all declarative statements. In that case, the position is clearly self-referring. For epistemological relativism is itself a logically ordered sequence of declarative statements (about the general nature of truth, knowledge, and justification). As the mathematical logician Frederick B. Fitch wrote, "If a theory [or statement] is included within its own subject matter, we say that it is a *self-referential* theory."<sup>16</sup> Epistemological relativism then applies to itself, and must have the properties it predicates of all declarative propositions or be self-referentially inconsistent; Fitch went on to observe that "If a self-referential theory T implies that T has [some] property P, and if T does not have the property P, then we will call T self-referentially inconsistent."<sup>17</sup>

To find out whether or not epistemological relativism is self-referentially inconsistent, let us formulate the immediate consequence of its self-reference: The truth or justifiability of epistemological relativism is relative to the conceptual framework (scheme, model, paradigm, etc.) in which it appears; there is no framework-independent way of evaluating epistemological relativism regarding its truth or justifiability. In other words, if we begin by assuming the truth of epistemological relativism, we reach the result that its truth is relative to the conceptual framework in which it appears (presumably a philosophical one). It will follow that since epistemological relativism's truth is itself relative, there is at least one conceptual framework in which epistemological relativism is false. For were it true for all frameworks it would be true absolutely and be in the embarrassing position of straightforwardly being its own counterexample; its self-refutation would be absolute. But to say that epistemological relativism is false in at *least one framework* is to say that in this framework epistemological absolutism is true. But if we take epistemological absolutism seriously, it becomes simply redundant to say that it is true in at least one framework. For absolutism's content does not relativize truth or justifiability to conceptual frameworks. So if epistemological absolutism is true in at least one framework, it is true *tout court*, and it will follow that epistemological relativism is not merely false in at least one framework but false *tout court* (frameworks where epistemological relativism was central will also be false *tout court*).

To sum up, if epistemological relativism is assumed to be true, then epistemological relativism is false. It cannot have the properties it predicates of all declarative propositions and hence of itself. Therefore epistemological relativism is self-referentially inconsistent, and therefore false. Those philosophers who reject it are right to do so.

*Example 2.* W. V. Quine's celebrated claim that "No statement is immune to revision" was shown by Carl R. Kordig to have similar difficulties.<sup>18</sup> The context of Quine's statement is, of course, the following classic passage:

The totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs . . . is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only at the edges. . . . A conflict with experience at the periphery occasions readjustments in the interior of the field. . . . Reevaluation of some statements entails reevaluation of others, because of their logical interconnectedness -- the logical laws being in turn simply further statements of the system, certain further elements of the field. . . .

. . . Any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system. Even a statement very close to the periphery can be held true in the face of recalcitrant experience by pleading hallucination or by amending certain statements of the kind called

logical laws. Conversely, by the same token, no statement is immune to revision.<sup>19</sup>

Let us label this final statement Q (for Quine). The appropriate question then is: Is Q immune to revision or isn't it? It seems clear that Quine intends Q to refer to the totality of statements; after all, he says so in the first sentence. Besides, without such universality there could easily be statements outside its domain which are immune to revision and would constitute counterexamples. And if Q refers to all statements, it includes itself in its domain of reference; otherwise it would again be its own counterexample. So it follows that Q is not immune to revision. For Quine, to revise Q would be to change its truth value. So it is possible that Q could be discovered to be false; we might find a counterexample if we looked hard enough.

The introduction of a modality here requires a different formulation than was used for epistemological relativism; instead of conceptual frameworks let us adopt the conventions of *possible world semantics*. In that case, to say that *possibly* Q is false is to say that there is at least one possible world where there are agents capable of formulating Q and in which Q is false. It is *necessary* that there be some such possible world, for otherwise Q would be true in all possible worlds (true necessarily, that is), and this again would make Q immune to revision: again, it would be its own counterexample.<sup>20</sup> Consequently we are forced to say that in at least one possible world, Q is false. In other words, in this world, at least one statement -- not-Q -- is immune to revision. But to say that not-Q is immune to revision in at least one possible world is to say that in this world, the truth of not-Q is necessary and not merely contingent. And to say that a statement is necessarily true is not to restrict its truth to a given possible world or set of possible worlds but rather to say that it is true in *all* possible worlds. So at this point, the reference to *at least one possible world* drops out as redundant, as did the reference to frameworks in the statement, epistemological absolutism is true in at least one framework, and for the same reason. So if Q is assumed to be true, then Q is false. We reach the result that Quine's "No statement is immune to revision" is self-referentially inconsistent, and hence necessarily false. Some statement is immune to revision, *tout court*. Aristotle's Principle of Contradiction has most frequently been offered as the prime candidate for such a statement.<sup>21</sup>

*Example 3.* Eliminative materialism (sometimes called the "disappearance theory of the mind") is the most recent and widely discussed theory which has occasionally been charged with self-referential inconsistency. Eliminative materialism consists of the following theses: (1) Our commonsense

conception of mental states including beliefs, knowledge, and other intentional states or propositional attitudes, is an empirical theoretical framework and not a set of givens; the friends of eliminative materialism call this framework is *folk psychology*. (2) Folk psychology is a radically false framework, so false that a completed neuroscience of cognition can expect to eliminate the entities it postulates rather than reduce them to particular brain states or explicate them as functional states. In other words, according to eliminative materialism, beliefs, knowledge, and other intentional states or propositional attitudes are not givens but postulates of folk psychology, and therefore need play no more a role in a completed cognitive science than does, say, phlogiston play in modern chemistry or the impetus in modern dynamics. Since intentional states and propositional attitudes are part of the conceptual framework of folk psychology, if this framework goes, they go with it.

The argument for the self-referential inconsistency of eliminative materialism is somewhat more complicated than for the above two cases. With epistemological relativism and Quine's "No statement is immune to revision," self-referential inconsistency resulted from the positions' own internal logic; their inconsistency was *semantic*. The charge against eliminative materialism holds not that it is inconsistent in this way but rather inconsistent with principles which must be accepted as necessary conditions of rational discourse, conditions for the assertibility, meaningfulness, and rational justifiability of any theory whatsoever. In other words, the content of eliminative materialism conflicts with some of its own presuppositions; its alleged inconsistency is *pragmatic*. A different version of the argument is possible for every condition of discourse; to simply matters, I will focus on *rational justifiability* as a typical condition of discourse aimed at establishing declarative statements and *belief* as a typical propositional attitude. The argument, then, goes essentially as follows:

All scientific theories stand in need of rational justifiability, and this presupposes that they be the kind of things that can be rationally justified. Eliminative materialism, then, as a purported theory or research program for cognitive science, must be the sort of thing that can be rationally justified. But eliminative materialism can be rationally justified only if, at the very least, it can be made worthy of belief as the best theory available given the scientific evidence. A theory can be made worthy of belief only if there really are beliefs. So let us assume that eliminative materialism is true (i.e., that it depicts our cognitive life as it really is, as opposed to what folk psychologists says it is). If eliminative materialism is true, then there really are no beliefs, any more than there was a natural kind called phlogiston which is imparted to the air in every case of combustion or an impetus which pushes an object along in every case of uniform rectilinear motion. But in that case, given that there are no beliefs, it is actually

mistaken to hold that theories can be made worthy of belief. If no theory can be made worthy of belief, then no theory can really be rationally justified. Hence eliminative materialism cannot be rationally justified. We reach the result that if we assume eliminative materialism to be true, eliminative materialism cannot be rationally justified, even in principle. Result: if our theory permits the derivation of results that conflict with the possibility of ever rationally justifying any theory, then something is seriously wrong with the theory and it is appropriate to reject it as false (if not actually meaningless). As R. G. Swinburne put it in a review of the most elaborate defense of eliminative materialism, Paul Churchland's *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*,<sup>22</sup>

If knowledge and justified belief are not to be had, Churchland does not have them and so his conclusions cannot be regarded as worthy of our belief. The general moral to be drawn from this is that the inanimate universe cannot be understood by someone who is no more than a very complicated part of it.<sup>23</sup>

Eliminative materialism, too, then, is self-referentially inconsistent in a pragmatic sense, and should rightly be rejected as describing a logically impossible state of affairs.

These three examples, then, direct self-referential arguments at theories in three basic subject domains: *epistemology*, the *philosophy of language*, and *cognitive science*. Epistemology, they assert, takes as its subject matter knowledge-claims but also consists of knowledge-claims, with the latter being a subset of the former. Likewise, claims about language are formulated -- how else? -- in language, and so must share any properties ascribed to all language. Regarding cognition, we must remember that any general theories about cognition are products of cognition; cognitive science is in this way self-referential. A completed cognitive science, then, cannot discover just anything about cognition. It could not discover, for example, that human beings are for whatever reason incapable of believing, discovering, or knowing factual truth. For this would constitute a belief, discovery, or factual truth, and the position would be defeated from within. So in this sense, philosophical argument limits cognitive science. To declare that cognition has no products (beliefs, factual knowledge) may be actually unintelligible; it would have the absurd consequence that cognitive science itself does not exist!

### 3.

Responses to such arguments fall into five isolable categories: (1) a chuckling dismissal at what is perceived to be substanceless dialectical

cleverness; (2) rejection on the grounds that the kind of reflexivity of form required by self-referential arguments does not really exist, and so such arguments cannot really get started; (3) rejection on the grounds that they are successful only against simplistic or artificially formalized versions of their targets: although such reflexivity might exist it is not to be found in any reasonable version of the position targeted; (4) rejection on the grounds that they beg the question against their targets, taking for granted theses which go hand in hand with a substantive theory the self-referential argument assumes and which is optional, not necessary; and (5) admission that self-referential arguments occasionally are successful, but fail to accomplish anything positive or useful except mere avoidance of contradiction.

Regarding (1), Henry W. Johnstone wrote:

To the chuckle we need not reply. It is the response of the unreflective man when confronted with any reflective analysis, and in fact represents his adjustment to an intellectual environment rather than a responsible argument.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly we will say no more about it here. Strategy (2) is considerably more challenging. The most famous version of (2) began with Russell's realization that reflexivity of form lies at the heart of many logical and set-theoretical paradoxes. One of the most important strategies for getting rid of the paradoxes has therefore consisted of efforts to ban reflexivity of form from both philosophy and mathematics with a Theory of Types.<sup>25</sup> Russell saw that self-referential universal affirmative propositions about all propositions would include themselves in their own domain of reference, believed this to be the source of paradox. Therefore:

Whatever we suppose to be the totality of propositions, statements about this totality generate new propositions which, on pain of contradiction, must lie outside the totality. It is useless to enlarge the totality, for that equally enlarges the scope of statements about the totality. Hence there must be no totality of propositions, and "all propositions" must be a meaningless phrase.<sup>26</sup>

This identical situation applied to propositions about "all sets," "all relations," "all definitions," etc. He concluded with the following rule:

Whatever involves all of a collection must not be one of the collection; or, conversely. If, provided a certain collection had a total, it would have members only definable in terms of that total, then the said collection had no total.<sup>27</sup>

Or, to put the matter more bluntly, self-referential propositions are

simply nonsensical. But then how are we to handle propositions such as, "All propositions about matters of fact are either true or false," which certainly seems to be (1) about all propositions and (2) true, not senseless.<sup>28</sup> Here the Ramified Theory of Types came to the rescue; propositions of this sort, in order to exclude themselves from their own domain of reference, would be said to be of a higher *type* than those included in their scope. Russell defined a type as "the range of significance of a propositional function,"<sup>29</sup> thus limiting its generality to a specific domain. Reflexivity of form could be avoided, then, with the "vicious-circle principle":

No totality can contain members defined in terms of itself. . . . Thus whatever contains an apparent variable must be of a different type from the possible value of that variable; we will say that it is of a higher type.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Ramified Theory of Types, then, we can distinguish a hierarchy of order among propositions and propositional functions. The lowest type consists of the totality of individual propositions, elementary propositions of the subject-predicate form containing no variables. A new totality can be formed by generalizing propositions about individuals, given that the class of individuals and the class of propositions are mutually exclusive. This yields the totality of *first order* propositions, the second type. Another way of saying this would be to say that first order propositions are universals about nonlinguistic entities, and since to be reflexive they would have to be about at least some linguistic entities they are trivially non-reflexive. Propositions of the form, "All propositions are x," refer to this totality, but are still nonreflexive since they are really truncated ways of saying, "All *first order* propositions are x." In that case, such propositions form a new totality of *second order* propositions, the third type which takes as its domain all first order propositions but none of any higher type. This process distinguishes successive types according to the general rule that no proposition or propositional function can contain a quantifier ranging over propositions or propositional functions of the same or of higher type than itself.<sup>31</sup> The result is that propositions such as "This sentence is false," or "All sentences are uncertain," or "This set is a member of itself," are not genuine propositions since they violate this rule. Hence according to the Ramified Theory of Types genuine reflexivity of form cannot exist; and self-referential argument, which depends on a special case of reflexivity of form, cannot get off the ground:

The  $n + 1$ th logical type will consist of propositions of order  $n$ , which will be such as contain propositions of order  $n - 1$ , but of no higher order, as apparent variables. The types so obtained are mutually exclusive, and thus no reflexive fallacies are possible so long as we remember that an apparent



variable must always be confined within some one type.<sup>32</sup>

In this case, the arguments for the self-referential inconsistency of epistemological relativism, "No statement is immune to revision," and eliminative materialism, will all be invalidated since the application of each of these positions to itself (or to conditions of its own rational justifiability) will be vitiated.

It is worth noting, first, that the Ramified Theory of Types does not succeed in exorcizing paradox since not all versions of paradox depend on self-reference. For example, the following well-known case depends on what might be called circular reference:

- (1) Sentence (2) is false.
- (2) Sentence (1) is true.

Second, it might be added that not all forms of self-reference generate paradox. Consider:

- (3) This sentence is in English.
- (4) All the sentences in this paper are carefully considered.

These are not paradox-generating and so are entirely innocuous. This suggests that banning self-reference to avoid paradox amounts to philosophical overkill. Far better to avoid paradox by eliminating paradoxical (because self-destroying) sentences piecemeal.

These observations, though, don't go to the heart of the matter. Paul Weiss, in an unjustly neglected paper, was the first to show in detail what happens as soon as we turn our attention to the machinery of the Ramified Theory of Types itself and pose the question of its place in the hierarchy it proposes. Weiss formulated the problem as a classic dilemma:

- 1. [The Ramified Theory of Types] is either about all propositions or it is not.
  - A. If it were about all propositions it would violate the Theory of Types and be meaningless and self-contradictory.
  - B. If it were not about all propositions, it would not be universally applicable. To state it, its limitations of application would have to be specified. One cannot say that there is a different theory of types for each order of the hierarchy, for the propositions about the hierarchies introduces the difficulty over again.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, the Ramified Theory of Types faced a self-referential dilemma before it could get off the ground. It alleged to describe logical features of the entire hierarchy of sensible propositions, but it is itself formulated in propositions (how else could it be formulated?). Hence it becomes not too difficult to show that the propositions comprising the

Ramified Theory of Types can have no type whatever, and so must be meaningless by one of the Theory's own criteria of meaningfulness (which was that every meaningful proposition can be assigned a type).

Assume that the propositions comprising the Ramified Theory of Types are of type  $n$  (where  $n$  can be any natural number greater than two). In this case, given the above rule, the Theory of Types cannot include in its domain any propositions of type  $n$ , or any of type  $n + 1$  or higher, since then it would be in violation of its own edicts. But in that case, it is at least possible that some propositions of this or of higher types are self-referential, and it will not have banished self-reference. To eliminate the possibility of self-reference from the totality of type  $n$  propositions, the Theory of Types will have to move up to type  $n + 1$ . But then the same difficulty arises for this order of proposition, and for the next, and so on; the result is a vicious infinite regress. The dilemma, then, is this: the Ramified Theory of Types cannot ban self-reference without violating its own principles and applying to the totality of propositions, and by applying to this totality it would apply to itself and hence be self-referential after all, in violation of its own edicts; conversely, a hypothetically successful Ramified Theory of Types (successful, that is, at banning self-reference) could have no type at all, and hence again be in violation of its own principles (that every meaningful proposition has a type). To say, as some have, that if one accepts the Theory of Types one does not allow criticisms of this sort to arise because one never refers to propositions in the required unrestricted sense,<sup>34</sup> is clearly to beg the question. Prior to the establishment of the Theory of Types there is no reason for the restriction on the generality of propositions. Or, as Fitch observed at the conclusion of a similar argument,

the ramified theory of types cannot assign a type to the meaning of the word "type," and yet it must do so if the theory applies to all meanings. In a similar way, no "order" can be assigned to a proposition which is about all propositions, hence no order can be assigned to the proposition which states the ramified theory of types.<sup>35</sup>

Consequently the Theory of Types cannot be considered successful in banning self-reference from philosophy; it is not a legitimate objection to self-referential argument, and we will have to be wary of type-based strategies which attempt to get around self-referential efforts. The contention that there are propositions, theories, etc., which are included in their own scope seems unavoidable, and Objection (2) above is answered.

## 4.

In other words, reflexivity of form seems vindicated and, indeed, ineliminable. Self-referential arguments are therefore at least possible. But it may yet be the case that they fail for other reasons. Objection (3) held that self-referential arguments are only effective against highly formalized and oversimplified versions of the positions at stake; so, even if successful, they are successful only against strawmen.

Paul Feyerabend, for example, claims to have articulated a version of Protagorean relativism which avoids self-refutation.<sup>36</sup> Feyerabend maintains that the argument against epistemological relativism went awry at the start by treating the position as a set of abstract propositions and arriving at a position easy to refute. His claim is that neither Protagoras nor any other serious relativist has ever had anything so precise in mind as that, the first philosopher to make this mistake being none other than Plato himself. In the *Theaetetus* Plato consistently has Socrates interpret Protagoras' relativistic remarks as abstract, well-formed propositions with definite logical consequences. According to Feyerabend, what we may call (for lack of a better term) *rhetorical* relativism "is not about concepts . . . but about human relations. It deals with problems that arise when different cultures, or individuals with different habits and tastes, collide."<sup>37</sup> Accordingly rhetorical relativism does not consist of abstract statements (abstract in the sense that they are meaningful apart from the particular context in which they are presented). Its statements:

are not 'universal truths'; they are statements which I, as one member of the tribe of Western intellectuals, present to the rest of the tribe (together with appropriate arguments) to make them doubt the objectivity and, in some forms, also the feasibility of the idea of objective truth.<sup>38</sup>

Relativists who try to utter 'universal truths' (e.g., anyone who would defend relativism as a thesis in epistemology) therefore misconstrue their own position and come up for typically Feyerabendian abuse:

Strangely enough there are relativists who . . . do not merely want to air their own opinions . . . they want to make general and -- god help us! -- 'objective' statements about the nature of knowledge and truth.

But if objectivism while perhaps acceptable as a particular point of view cannot claim objective superiority over other ideas, then the objective way of posing problems and presenting results is not the right way for the relativist to adopt. A relativist who deserves his name will then have to refrain from making assertions about the nature of reality, truth, and knowledge, and will have to keep to specifics instead.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, no relativist paying attention to what he is doing will allow his position to be formulated as we did epistemological relativism. His concerns are quite different. He wishes not to establish truths, either his own or anyone else's, but to undermine the claims others make to

truth, as a way of undercutting the intellectual authoritarianism which usually follows such claims. For all of Feyerabend's fun, games, and "dadaism," his work has a serious side; his broader aim is to help protect non-Western cultures and non-scientific traditions from being overwhelmed by what he regards as Western rationalistic and scientific imperialism.<sup>40</sup> Since the basis of these ideologies is one form or another of epistemological absolutism (what Feyerabend calls objectivism), if absolutism can be undercut the real targets fall with them. Rhetorical relativism, unlike the epistemological thesis, is not self-refuting since it has none of the definite logical consequences self-refutation requires; it presents no precise, general position for refutation because it questions both the possibility and desirability of precise, general positions.

But has Feyerabend really avoided self-refutation? If we pay close attention to what is going on, I think we will see that he has not. Self-refutation, as we already suggested, may result from circumstances other than pure, semantic self-referential inconsistency; it can arise on pragmatic grounds as well. Let us consider Feyerabend's own presentation of rhetorical relativism, including his declarations of his aims and of the restrictive nature of his propositions. There is good reason, I will argue, for suspecting that the very fact of this presentation forces him into a position at least as awkward as the epistemological thesis, the result being what we might call self-defeat. The passage begun above continues:

Debating with objectivists, [the relativist] may of course use objectivist methods and assumptions; however, his purpose will not be to establish universally acceptable truths . . . but to embarrass the opponent. He is simply trying to defeat the objectivist with his own weapons. Relativistic arguments are always *ad hominem*; their beauty lies in the fact that the homines addressed, being constrained by their code of intellectual honesty, must consider them and, if they are good (in their sense), accept them as objectively valid.<sup>41</sup>

So rhetorical relativism is addressed to those who accept absolutism, and is couched in terms which its adherents ought to understand and (if the rhetoric is successful) ought to find compelling. But if absolutists find grounds for not regarding rhetorical relativism as a serious or cogent thesis or its conclusions as true (as the *former* understand these terms), then the *ad hominem* backfires. Rhetorical relativism is left in the position of being, on its own terms, ignorable. Is Feyerabend in such a position? I believe he is. He has just told his readers openly that what matters for the success of his position is not the truth of its conclusions but the efficacy of its rhetoric. Since absolutists are interested in truth (again, as *they* understand the term), what more do they need?! Rhetorical relativism can achieve its aim only by offering absolutists a

compelling argument in absolutist terms; but absolutists will not be persuaded if there is *direct textual evidence* that they would be hoodwinked by taking the position seriously. The absolutist, contrary to Feyerabend, seems perfectly justified in treating rhetorical relativism, and perhaps all similar positions, as being clever but uninteresting wordplay; reasons for taking them seriously on their own terms just aren't there.<sup>42</sup> Should Feyerabend appeal to absolutists' "code of intellectual honesty," all they need do is retort that allowing themselves to be hoodwinked is not part of this code. So Feyerabend may avoid the semantic self-refutation of epistemological relativism, but his position is still pragmatically self-defeating: the full statement of the aims of the position undercuts whatever reason we may have for taking it seriously. Of course, Feyerabend could simply refrain from declaring such intentions. But then his position risks reverting back to old-fashioned epistemological relativism (or a position indistinguishable from it to his readers). It seems that in the case of rhetorical relativism, the position's self-referential properties have resulted not so much in falsehood as pointlessness. The absolute skeptic can utter the equivalent of "No one knows anything" and fall into self-refutation, or else clam up altogether; likewise, the advocate of rhetorical relativism, rather like an Erik Satie composition, is as ignorable as he is listenable. We can elect to go about our business as systematic philosophers as if he isn't even there.<sup>43</sup> This, I submit, takes care of Strategy (3).

## 5.

Objection (4) held that self-referential arguments, if not directed against strawmen, simply beg the question against their targets. Jack W. Meiland, for example, has argued that self-referential arguments against epistemological relativism beg the question against the relativist by assuming an absolutist conception of truth. Meiland argues that the self-refutation of relativism

is a myth which must be laid to rest. It *would* be inconsistent for the relativist to say both that all doctrines are relatively true and that relativism is not relatively true but instead is absolutely true. However, the careful relativist would not and need not say this. He would either say that all doctrines except relativism (and perhaps its competitors on the metalevel) are relatively true or false, or else he would say that his own doctrine of relativism is relatively true too. And saying that relativism is only relatively true does not produce inconsistency.<sup>44</sup>

It is clear that the first of the proposed strategies will not work; for it invokes an epistemic Theory of Types to make a distinction between "first order" doctrines whose subject domains are nonlinguistic and noncogni-

tive states of affairs and “second order” doctrines such as relativism and absolutism whose subject domains are first order doctrines and the conditions of their acceptability, or justifiability, with these two classes being mutually exclusive. And then, all we need ask is the position of Meiland’s meta-meta-level, and we have the same regress as we saw above.

Meiland no doubt realized this and opted for the second, which was to declare relativism true only relatively and try to cash out a notion of relative truth that itself can avoid inconsistency.<sup>45</sup> He did not, in my view, succeed, and for the reasons given above where we showed that the making the truth of relativism relative to a given conceptual framework results in its being compatible with relativism’s falsehood in some other framework (in fact, requires its falsehood in at least one framework); here, Meiland might argue, is where the absolutist conception of truth enters the picture. Can we do without it? Meiland’s strategy was to cash out “p is true in W” as “p is true-in-W,” where W is some conceptual framework.

[The hyphens] are extremely important. For they show that the relativist is not talking about truth but instead about truth-for-W. Thus, one can no more reasonably ask what ‘true’ means in the expression true-for-W than one can ask what ‘cat’ means in the word ‘cattle.’ ‘True-for-W denotes a special three-term relation which does not include the two-term relation of absolute truth as a distinct part.<sup>46</sup>

This, as it turns out, will not work either. Meiland believes he has isolated a three-term relation which will express a coherent relativist notion of truth. Presumably, then, the three items being related are statements, conceptual frameworks (W’s), and the actual world. But as Siegel wondered,

What . . . is the status of the world on the three-term conception? Is it clearly distinguishable from the other two relata? Unfortunately, the answer is no. On the relativist conception, the world is not distinguishable . . . What are related by the alleged three-term relation are statements and the world-relative-to-W. . . . On the relativist conception, the world cannot be conceived as independent of W; if it is so conceived, the relativist conception collapses into an absolutist one, for it is granted that there is a way the world is, independent of statements and of W’s. This is precisely what the relativist must deny, however.<sup>47</sup>

So on Meiland’s conception, the actual world simply drops out. *It* can never be known or talked about; what can be known or talked about is the world (or some part of it) as conceived by the community which believes W, thus blurring the distinction between the world and W.<sup>48</sup> So the formulation of relative truth as a three-way relation contains the seeds of its own destruction no less than did epistemological relativism, in our original formulation. If we can talk about the world as one thing and

conceptual frameworks as another, then why not just talk about the world (or some part of it) and treat frameworks as, perhaps, psychological or sociological entities with no necessary epistemic significance? Meiland, it seems, has no other option than to drop his third relation to the world and speak of truth as framework-relative, period. But in this case epistemological relativism collapses into full-blown conceptual idealism. I conclude that truth-for-W is as logically impossible as epistemological relativism itself, and hence hardly fitting as a means by which to rescue the position from self-refutation. The only clear formulation of true-in-W might read something like *believed to be true by those who believe W*. But this latter notion is trivial; it amounts to the commonplace observation that different peoples have different beliefs, or that different communities of scientists have promoted different and conflicting research programs at different times. Relative truth, to be at all credible, must be articulated in such a way that it does not collapse into absolute truth; otherwise the notion is as self-contradictory as epistemological relativism. Meiland failed to avoid this basic dilemma.

Friends of eliminative materialism have retorted that the argument from self-referential inconsistency is question-begging. Here the response looks to be, at first glance, considerably more formidable since eliminative materialism is a more complex position and has been defended with a great deal of skill. Andrew D. Cling recently systematized the self-referential line of argument sketched above as follows:

1. Eliminative materialism (EM) can be articulated and defended.
2. EM can be articulated and defended only if it can be justified, only if it is the sort of thing which can be justified.
3. EM can be justified only if it can be made worthy of belief.
4. A theory can be made worthy of belief only if there are beliefs.
5. EM is true (assumption for *reductio*).
6. There are no beliefs. (from 5)
7. No theory can be made worth of belief. (from 4, 6)
8. EM cannot be justified. (from 3, 7)
9. EM cannot be articulated and defended (from 2, 8)
10. If EM is true, then EM both can and cannot be articulated and defended. (from 5-9, 1)
11. EM is not true. (from 10)<sup>49</sup>

Cling calls this the argument from justificatory presuppositions.<sup>50</sup> He smokes out (4) as the argument's most controversial link. According to Cling,

(4) is a strange sort of statement. (4) claims that the possession by a theory

of a certain normative property, belief worthiness, in some way requires the truth of certain descriptive psychological statements to the effect that beliefs exist. . . . What [this] says is that a theory's possession of the capacity to be justified depends upon the existence of states individuated within the descriptive confines of what may turn out to be an idiosyncratic account of human cognition and behavior.<sup>51</sup>

In other words, the self-referential criticism begs the question by presupposing the reality of beliefs as a condition for justifying a theory; it presupposes a central tenet of folk psychology, the theory at issue.

However, as Cling also notes (and Churchland before him), for eliminative materialism to eliminate beliefs and other propositional attitudes it is imperative that it provide an alternative account of justification which makes no use of such entities but does all the work beliefs do. Here is where the trouble starts; for the question invariably arises, not, Does the criticism of eliminative materialism presuppose the reality of beliefs? but, Must it *necessarily* presuppose the reality of beliefs? Cling argues that the position can get by without beliefs.

Why can't we say simply that a theory is worthy of belief only if it is more likely than not to be true in light of the evidence? Here there is no explicit reference to beliefs at all. On this way of looking at things, talk of the belief-worthiness of a theory does not commit us straightaway to any particular way of describing beings who theorize. Which account we do adopt is left up to such things as predictive and explanatory power.<sup>52</sup>

This, though, is puzzling. It suggests we are to make a hard and fast distinction between *belief* and *belief-worthiness* in such a way that the first is a folk psychological concept and the second at home in eliminative materialism? In this view, what adjudicates theories is whether they are "more likely than not to be true in light of the evidence." But it is human beings, "beings who theorize," who decide this; theories do not adjudicate themselves, after all. This suggests it will be impossible to separate human beings, their decisions, and whatever forms the basis of these decisions, from the adjudication process. The friend of eliminative materialism might assert, dogmatically, that eliminative materialism is not a matter of belief at all but of scientific truth. But to my knowledge no one has taken this route, nor would they; even for Churchland, eliminative materialism's most formidable defender, eliminative materialism is the just the most reasonable research program available for cognitive science, not something he or anyone else can claim to have shown to be true. But this is just a roundabout way of saying that eliminative materialism, taken at face value, is a candidate for our allegiance. It is, in other words, a body of *belief*, a candidate for *belief-worthiness*. To say that we have cashed out *belief-worthiness* in a manner making no reference to *belief* hence obscures instead of clarifies.



At this point, the friend of eliminative materialism might employ a different strategy. He might argue that what is being eliminated is not *all* forms with propositional content, just distinctively *mental* ones. He might then be in a position to say, not that he *believes* eliminative materialism to be worthy of pursuit but that he *believes\** eliminative materialism to be worthy of pursuit, where *believes\** functions as a placeholder for something to be articulated more fully within a more developed neuroscience. That the friend of eliminative materialism might find this a credible strategy is indicated by Peter Smith's remarks to the effect that the friend of eliminative materialism

does not believe his thesis; for by his light there are no beliefs. [And] this only leads to paradox when taken together with the claim that he is asserting his thesis -- and our materialist rejects this too. His position is rather that he is asserting\* a proposition which he believes\*. Thus our materialist can consistently describe his situation, echoing from outside the framework of folk psychology the insider's description of what is going on, while continuing to insist that beliefs\* are no more to be identified with beliefs than states of demoniacal possession\* (i.e., what are in fact hallucinatory psychoses) really are states of possession.<sup>53</sup>

In this case, what we need is an account of the ways in which beliefs\* differ from beliefs in addition to the trivial one that the former is a "nonmentalist" neuroscientific concept and the latter a "mentalist" folk psychological one. Now it would be unfair to place too high a burden on eliminative materialism at this point; for *belief\** cannot very well be given a detailed explication in the absence of facts about the brain as yet undiscovered and within a theoretical framework as yet undeveloped. But I suspect that the relation holding between members of the pair *beliefs/beliefs\** will be different from that between the pairs *demon possession/psychotic states* and *instances of phlogiston being imparted to air/instances of oxygen being taken up from air*, etc. For as Cling notes, eliminative materialism does not propose to eliminate all propositional content as modern psychiatry eliminated all demons and chemistry eliminated all chemical principles.

Eliminative materialism does not entail the claim that there are no states with propositional content, it only entails the thesis that there are no mental states with propositional content.<sup>54</sup>

But this only serves to increase our puzzlement. Unfortunately there is not sufficient space here to explore the issue of just what is eliminated when an out-of-date theory is replaced by a successor.<sup>55</sup> But we can make some admittedly cursory remarks, as a prelude to a more detailed investigation. During the time of the chemical revolution of the late eighteenth century, at issue (for Lavoisier, anyway) was the adequacy of a certain theory of combustion which postulated a specific natural kind.

phlogiston, as the key to explaining every instance of combustion (as well as other natural phenomena such as the common properties possessed by all metals). The chemical revolution eliminated phlogiston as a referring term; it certainly did not eliminate the observable phenomenon, combustion. Likewise, as psychiatric science advanced it eliminated demons (or demonic possession) as a referring term; it did not eliminate the states which demons (or demonic possession) had been invoked to explain.<sup>56</sup>

I submit that the situation with beliefs is very similar. That we have a mental life in some sense of this expression is no less observable than that there is combustion: all who are parties to this debate can observe their own, pre-analytic mental lives for themselves by direct introspection. How we explain or offer a scientific account of that mental life is a different matter (one where introspection may not be of much help, any more than direct observation gives us the microstructural properties of physical and chemical processes such as combustion). If all eliminative materialism purports to do is eliminate the view that beliefs and other mental phenomena consist of mysterious, nonphysical entities inside our heads (perhaps made of some kind of Cartesian "mental stuff" or perhaps just not capable of a physicalist account) then its success would hardly be a new or groundbreaking achievement for few philosophers and practically no cognitive scientists believe we have a "mental life" in this sense. But if we can elaborate a more up-to-date theory of what beliefs are; if, say, we propose that they are manifestations of complex neurophysiological (i.e., essentially material) processes capable of storing information in a referential manner,<sup>57</sup> then we have a notion that does the work of our traditional concept of belief but without Cartesian or some other dualistic ontology. But it is clear that we have not eliminated beliefs, only the outdated ontology; for were we to eliminate beliefs *per se*, we would have a notion incapable of doing the above work.<sup>58</sup> In short, the friends of eliminative materialism have conflated two separate things, our everyday *experience* of belief, and dualistic or neodualistic ways of *understanding* this phenomenon. The latter we can part company with and avoid pragmatic self-referential inconsistency; not so with the former.

This kind of argument, I will submit, should also enable us to grapple with one of the Churchlands' primary efforts to defuse self-referential criticisms of eliminative materialism. Churchland, in defending his position from the charge of self-referential inconsistency, drew the following analogy between the self-referential argument against eliminative materialism and that which a hypothetical philosopher might have made against *vitalism* a century ago (he actually credits his wife and colleague Patricia Smith Churchland for having originated the analogy):

The anti-vitalist says that there is no such thing as vital spirit. But this claim is self-refuting. The speaker can expect to be taken seriously only if his claim cannot. For if the claim is true, then the speaker does not have vital spirit and must be dead. But if he is dead, then his statement is a meaningless string of noises, devoid of reason and truth.<sup>59</sup>

This argument, meant to be taken as obviously invalid, would eliminate the self-referential argument against eliminative materialism by logical refutation, and at first glance, quite powerfully. For clearly no one today asserts that possessing a vital spirit is a condition of (or explanation of) being alive. And it is this analogy, between having a vital spirit as a condition of being alive and having beliefs as a condition of being able to justify or meaningfully assert one's theories, that eliminative materialism's defenders want to press. Will the analogy work? The vitalist would have maintained that the sentence, "I am alive although there is no vital spirit," is self-contradictory. In other words, *being alive* and *having vital spirit*, were, according to the vitalist, synonymous and coreferential. Interpreting the terms this way would make the antivitalist's argument as sound as the ones against epistemological relativism and "No statement is immune to revision." But this interpretation would be odd, given that the former refers and the latter does not. Let us ask, though, what task was the concept *vital spirit* intended to perform? This seems clear: to explain the observed phenomenon of life prior to the arrival of concepts revealing life's chemical and biological conditions. So we cannot conflate the observed phenomenon *life* with concepts invoked to explain it. If we do so, we can substitute into the above statement and end up with the equivalent of, "I am alive, but I am not alive," which is obviously self-contradictory. So when we dropped *vital spirit* from our vocabulary we did not at the same time eliminate the concept *life*; to eliminate the former was not to eliminate the latter. Thus, "I am alive although there is no vital spirit," is consistent. Is this the case with *belief*? The critic of the eliminative materialist's equivalent sentence is (put in the new vocabulary with its placeholder), "I believe\* *p* although there are no beliefs." Is this statement self-contradictory? To find out, we must pinpoint which of the two senses of *belief* are meant. Given the Cartesian (or neo-Cartesian) usage, there will be no inconsistency; this will not be the case for the pretheoretical usage. Or to put the matter another way, belief\* does not eliminate pretheoretical belief but only the Cartesian (or neoCartesian) theory of belief (of our mental life generally); it incorporates and explains pretheoretical belief in the way earlier, less radical forms of materialism purported to do. In this case, the statement "I believe\* *p* although there are no beliefs," will indeed be self-contradictory if the pretheoretical sense of belief is meant; the theoretical *belief*\* must, of necessity, contain and explain the phenomenon of *belief*, not eliminate it. Thus the *reductio* of the self-referential criticism proposed by the Churchlands rests on a confusion of theoretical and nontheoretical notions, and so does not

succeed. The issue, in their terms, is not whether the friend of folk psychology begs the question against eliminative materialism but rather whether he is *forced* by the internal logic of the debate to "beg the question." For one of the implications of this result is that certain concepts eliminative materialists locate in what they call the theoretical framework of folk psychology (e.g., knowledge, belief) may well turn out to be pragmatic necessities. There may be no other intelligible way of describing our cognitive lives as "beings who theorize;" in this case, cognitive science will be faced with the choice of accomodating this by virtue of its status as a product of human cognition or fall into pragmatic inconsistency. There are indeed descriptions which are barred to rational forms of cognitive science, one of which is that there isn't really any such thing as belief (in its pretheoretical sense, without the asterisk). This will mean that Objection (4) is answered.

## 6.

At this point it might appear that the critics of self-referential argument in philosophy are, if not in full retreat, at least on the defensive. But they have one last gambit to play. Objection (5) did not deny that self-referential arguments occasionally score direct hits; it suggested that nothing useful or positive is accomplished by their doing so: if we arrive at the view that some version of epistemological absolutism must be true we have not added anything scientifically concrete to our knowledge of the world; by concluding that "some statement is immune to revision" we have not identified *what* statement is immune to revision (other than this statement itself); the claim that beliefs are necessary does not give us an adequate account of what beliefs really are, neurologically speaking, nor does it tell us how they ought to be fitted into an adequate science of cognition; indeed, one of the genuine merits of eliminative materialism has been to show us that we still lack such an account. In summary, self-referential arguments accomplish nothing more than avoiding contradiction. As J. L. Mackie argues at the conclusion of his formal analysis of self-refutations,

We might be tempted to believe that there is a special form of philosophical argument which enables us to establish positive conclusions by showing that certain contrary statements would be self-refuting. This would go against empiricism, for if any view would literally refute itself, its denial would be a necessary truth. However, our analysis shows that this challenge to empiricism evaporates on closer inspection.<sup>60</sup>

Mackie's statement is extremely valuable for its identification of what is really at stake here: *empiricism*. If we consider the structure of each of

the positions above, their shared commitment to empiricism as a theory of the origins of knowledge should be evident. The defender of epistemological relativism (or similar positions) frequently relies, for example, on the empirical observation that different peoples and different scientific communities have used different methods and standards and sometimes described their observations in quite different ways from those of our own communities, noting that although this by itself is not a refutation of absolutism it at least makes sense of relativism. Feyerabend, for example, draws liberally on episodes from the history of science; he also makes use of the findings of anthropological linguists such as B. L. Whorf, and his arguments occasionally even include forays into art history.<sup>61</sup> He has, moreover, explicitly labelled his views as empiricist.<sup>62</sup> Quine's position, while different from that of the logical empiricism he criticized and rejected, is still empiricist in the broader sense that it relies on such entities as "sensory stimuli" and "surface irritations" as the means by which the truth-values of those propositions describing phenomena at the periphery of our "web of belief" are revised.<sup>63</sup> And the friend of eliminative materialism is clear about his commitment to empiricism as a component of his confidence that neuroscience will eventually do away with such philosophical disciplines as epistemology. Eliminative materialism is, in fact, just the latest in a long line of philosophical theses resulting from the assumption that empirical science has the final word in matters cognitive (a thesis sometimes called *scientism*). I will submit that commitment to increasingly radical forms of empiricism by modern philosophers beginning with Hume and extending to Feyerabend, Quine, and eliminative materialists (and, often, by scientists as well<sup>64</sup>), is the main reason why self-referential arguments are generally regarded as wrongheaded. For self-referential arguments are not empirical; they are (contrary to Cling) a species of *a priori* argument. While not taking issue with specific, concrete scientific findings (which, as everybody knows, always underdetermine theory), they reach the result that there are certain empirical states of affairs which science could not, even in principle, discover to hold, because the propositions describing them are necessarily false -- either false in all possible worlds or false in all those worlds where there exist beings capable of formulating and rationally defending them. In short, self-referential arguments rest on an apriorist epistemology and philosophy of logic; this puts them quite at odds with the most influential doctrines of the twentieth century.

Be that as it may, it does not answer Mackie's central challenge, which is to produce some positive results of self-referential arguments in philosophy. Here we must be careful. We must realize that although the self-referential argument places logical/conceptual limits on what science can discover, in no other sense does it compete with science.<sup>65</sup> If anything, a more detailed study of self-referential relations than can be attempted

in a paper of this length should be able to clarify the differences which emerge between philosophy and the sciences given apriorism. For while the sciences are domain-specific and their results discovered empirically, the results of self-referential argument in philosophy are highly general and discovered *a priori*; they do not yield concrete scientific results but rather help delineate the forms to which scientific results (and, indeed, all other cognitive enterprises) must conform. Can we isolate such accomplishments at high levels of generality? I believe we already have, and that the results should shed light on the dispute between foundationalists and antifoundationalists.

In Section 2, we reached the result that "Some statement is immune to revision" is necessarily true (true in all possible worlds); at the end of that section we proposed Aristotle's Principle of Contradiction, "that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect . . ."66 as the most likely first candidate for a statement immune to revision. In twentieth century philosophy, particularly among logical positivists, it has been standard to treat the Principle of Contradiction as having no empirical consequences but rather as being a tautologous combination of signs -- a formal or linguistic convention rather than a metaphysical law of reality. A. J. Ayer wrote that "the principles of logic . . . are universally true because we never allow them to be anything else."67 But to call a definition, theory, or logical principle a convention -- to say of it that "we allow it" to be such and such or "do not allow it" to do such and such - is to imply that "we" could have stipulated otherwise, i.e., that we could have devised a logical system with no Principle of Contradiction, and in which there are results that ignore the Principle of Contradiction. (Some might even say that Hegel's system does just that.)

This, however, has bizarre consequences. If we assume that the Principle of Contradiction applies only to certain combinations of signs formulated and used by human beings, then does it not follow that genuinely contradictory but no less *real* states of affairs are possible? Consider a proposition such as "It is the case both that there are houses on Elm Street and that there are no houses on Elm Street." Conventionalism in logic (and Quinean universal revisionism) would permit it to be true in at least one possible world that there both are and are no objects of a particular kind in a specific place.<sup>68</sup> But this is clearly absurd! Were someone to claim that he had observed or even conceived of some such state of affairs, he would be considered joking or insane (most likely the former, since not even the clinically insane hallucinate contradictory states of affairs). So whatever else we might say, the Principle of Contradiction seems not to be a convention we could revise on the basis of recalcitrant experience.

Aristotle himself gave what at least one commentator has concluded is

the best argument ever devised both for why the Principle of Contradiction could not be otherwise and for why we are justified in taking it as a law of reality.<sup>69</sup> Aristotle's argument consisted of demonstrating the unintelligibility of any denial of the principle of contradiction (and, hence, of any logical system which claims to dispense with it). Aristotle pointed out that any significant particular utterance, e.g., "All humans are rational animals," presupposes that one definite kind of thing is meant by the word *humans* and another definite thing is meant by the categories *rational* and *animals*. To presuppose such is to acknowledge the Principle of Contradiction; not to presuppose it would imply that these words could have arbitrarily different meanings on one and the same occasion, the result being a breakdown of intelligible discourse.<sup>70</sup> As Aristotle himself said,

If . . . one were to say that the word has an infinite number of meanings, obviously speech would be impossible; for not to have one meaning is to have no meaning, and if words have no meaning our reasoning with one another, and indeed ourselves, has been annihilated, for it is impossible to think of anything if we do not think of one thing.<sup>71</sup>

So the argument boils down to the following: in order for language to be meaningful or communicative at all, it must have definite content; and in order for it to have definite content it must have noncontradictory content; hence any meaningful and communicative use of language presupposes the Principle of Contradiction.

This, of course, is not a "proof" that the Principle of Contradiction is a law of reality; it is what Aristotle called a negative demonstration and hence is dialectic. As a 'first principle,' the Principle of Contradiction is presupposed in the very concept of a proof; were it subject to proof, it would not be a 'first principle.' So it might seem, again, that the Aristotelian argument just begs the question. However, we have no alternative except to use the Principle of Contradiction in its own defense. So in a sense, any defense of the Principle of Contradiction is indeed circular. But if any intelligible use of language presupposes the Principle of Contradiction, then clearly any attempt to philosophize in its defense will necessarily presuppose it; circularity is unavoidable. It is, however, not fallacious, since it is not part of an attempt to prove the Principle of Contradiction true. The dialectic shows, if any thing, that we cannot imagine what things would be like if it were false! We can, of course, utter sentences like, "It is the case both that there are houses on Elm Street and that there are no houses on Elm Street." But we cannot conceive of a factual situation they would describe. This seems to establish it as immune to revision, and put us on the road to answering Mackie's challenge. We do not merely avoid contradiction but can state affirmatively that no possible worlds contain contradictions.

## 7.

Since this may still not seem like much of an achievement, it is worth concluding by going back and reiterating the rest of our results in the context of their implications for philosophy as a genuine cognitive enterprise. If the various lines of argument throughout this paper are cogent, we have demonstrated that some statements and theories are semantically self-referential (contain themselves in their domain of reference); certain others are pragmatically self-referential (contain in their domain of reference the necessary conditions of their own meaningfulness, assertibility, rational justifiability). Both must not yield consequences which conflict with the assumption of their truth; if they do, they must be rejected as self-referentially inconsistent. Type-based strategies designed to avoid self-reference quickly get entangled in the very difficulties they are designed to avoid, as no "type" can be assigned to the propositions in which these strategies themselves are formulated. That the Theory of Types is false is, therefore, immune to revision. If self-reference is combined with the above rejection of conventionalism about the Principle of Contradiction, we reach the more specific result that self-referentially inconsistent statements and theories actually purport to describe states of affairs which are necessarily false, cannot hold in any possible world (or, in some cases, cannot hold in any possible world which also contains agents capable of formulating and rationally defending them). Their denials describe states of affairs which, conversely, must hold necessarily. Steven J. Bartlett recently stated that "A postulate is self-validating if its denial will result in self-referential inconsistency."<sup>72</sup> The denial of epistemological absolutism is epistemological relativism; since the latter was found to be self-referentially inconsistent, the former is validated. The denial of the claim that no statement is immune to revision was likewise found to be self-referentially inconsistent; so it must be the case that some statements are immune to revision, and that this statement itself is immune to revision. The denial of the contention that there really are beliefs, however we explicate them, resulted in pragmatic inconsistency. So it must be the case that beliefs are ineliminable, and that -- however we come to understand them scientifically -- "There are beliefs" is also immune to revision.

Actually, if the strands of argument comprising this paper are sound, they suggest new and potentially quite fruitful directions for philosophical research on the part of philosophers dissatisfied with the state of affairs sketched at the outset of this paper, with "continuing the conversation of the West" (as Richard Rorty puts it)<sup>73</sup> -- or just with their standard status as linguistic/conceptual underlaborers. These results suggest the possibility that foundationalism, despite having taken some hard knocks over the past few years, is still very much alive and kicking. For what is validated,



for example, in the validation of epistemological absolutism is the view, quite startling in an age of historicism, relativism, and "playful nihilism," that genuine knowledge and justification do not depend on one's culture, conceptual framework, model, theory, paradigm, or some other contingent factor. It does not follow from this, of course, that cultural differences, conceptual frameworks, models, paradigms, etc., do not exist or do not influence the beliefs, actions and practices of scientists and others, for quite obviously they do and are often confused with the actual world. However, my contention will be that these phenomena are best understood psychologically and sociologically, not logically or epistemologically.<sup>74</sup> They may influence one's thought and, up to a point, one's perceptions - but as a matter of logic, they can be transcended (a fact without which intellectual change and progress of whatever sort would obviously not be possible). Cognitive/epistemic determinism is, in short, false, and necessarily so; that we may, in principle, transcend whatever framework in which we find ourselves working is another statement immune to revision. In an age where social theorists are so quick to assume quite dogmatically that one's race, gender, class, upbringing, etc., all function in some combination as determinants on the thinking of the individual,<sup>75</sup> this seems to me a discovery of the first importance.

We stated that "some statements are immune to revision" is necessary because its denial is self-referentially inconsistent. This, I submit, suggests an important aim for philosophy: *the attempt to identify and improve our understanding of logical necessities holding in language, thought, and reality*. The domain of philosophy differs from the domains of the sciences in that the sciences are domain-specific, whereas philosophy seeks laws and concepts which apply across the board to all domains. It cannot of course prove to the satisfaction of all skeptics that such laws and concepts exist to be discovered, for, again, the concept of a proof in whatever sense we choose requires them. But I am assuming (and perhaps liberalizing my basic Aristotelianism with a pinch of Peirce<sup>76</sup>) that the mere possibility of doubt is not a positive reason for doubt, and so argue that philosophers can work under the reasonable belief that such laws and concepts exist to be discovered. These laws will be expressed as statements which are irrevocable in the sense that their denials will sometimes result in self-referential inconsistency and sometimes simply in nonsense. In this case, there is a sense in which philosophy "stands above" or outside of science in just the way denied by Quine, and can be made foundational in just the sense denied by Rorty. Beyond this, of course, philosophy does not legislate specific methods and content to the sciences; it is up to scientists to discover and apply the methods most suitable to their particular domains. As for content, it will be true (and immune to revision) that a scientific discipline cannot discover just anything about its subject domain; for philosophy sets the logical-

conceptual boundaries of the world science can discover. There will be a clear-cut division of labor between the two, with plenty of work for everybody.<sup>77</sup>

Two concluding remarks are in order. (1) I do not claim to have done more than scratch the surface here. At the outset I mentioned, but due to space limits could not explore, self-referential arguments against a variety of positions in addition to those considered here. Ultimately a comprehensive account of the different forms of self-reference and their consequences for the various branches of philosophy and those areas of science directly connected to human beings (cognitive science and the so-called social sciences) will be needed, as well as those cognitive conditions which make reference of any sort possible.<sup>78</sup>

(2) These ideas, as I also noted at the outset, are admittedly not new; in fact, they go back to Plato and have been preserved or developed in one form or another by many twentieth century philosophers of a variety of persuasions: Weiss, Fitch, Kordig, Bartlett, Siegel, and many others. But these voices have been all but drowned out by the postmodern chorus of historicism, relativism, and antifoundationalism. One of the motive forces of this investigation has been this writer's growing concern that these paths can lead nowhere except to the further weakening of philosophy as a discipline: increasing its level of overspecialization, vulnerability to irrationalist ideologies and special interest groups (militant feminists come to mind), and the ultimate irrelevance for which academic philosophy is sometimes justifiably criticized. Philosophy, many have argued plausibly, should have as one of its larger aims the critical evaluation of culturally significant worldviews with the ultimate aim of achieving personal and social *wisdom*.<sup>79</sup> but in our century it has failed in this mission. Philosophy as a discipline has in recent years suffered a loss of nerve. Professional philosophers do not like to use such an expression, but many would not deny its aptness. I find it interesting and significant that this problem began around the time positivism, empiricism and scientism became the dominant views in epistemology (while emotivism and other forms of noncognitivism became the corresponding dominant modes of thought in meta-ethics). Hence it concerns me little that others have walked the conceptual paths I am walking now if these paths have the potential to lead our discipline out of crisis and offer it a new identity.<sup>80</sup>

1. Examples of self-referential arguments against relativism are legion. For a couple of recent examples see Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 17 (1974), pp. 5-20; Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 119-24; Harvey Siegel, "Relativism, Truth and Incoherence," *Synthese* 68 (1986): 225-59.
2. See e.g., James N. Jordan, "Determinism's Dilemma," *Review of Metaphysics* 23 (1969): 48-66; Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., Germain Grisez and Olat Tolleisen, "Determinism, Freedom, and Self-Referential Arguments," *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1972), pp. 3-37; IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976). Boyle, et al., also cite a team of predecessors and do an admirable job of organizing the relevant literature.
3. Formulated almost immediately upon the appearance of J. B. Watson's views by Arthur O. Lovejoy in "The Paradox of the Thinking Behaviorist," *Philosophical Review* 31 (1922): 135-47.
4. Stephen Wilcox and Stuart Katz, "Can Indirect Realism Be Demonstrated in the Psychological Laboratory?" *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 14 (1984): 149-57.
5. Carl R. Kordig, "Self-Reference and Philosophy," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1983), pp. 207-16.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-11.
7. See my "Rorty's Foundationalism," *Reason Papers* 14 (1989): 130-36, and the literature cited there.
8. See my "The Skeptic's Dilemma," *Reason Papers* 14 (1989): 143-46.
9. See James L. Marsh, "Strategies of Evasion: The Paradox of Self-Referentiality and the Post-Modern Critique of Rationality," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 29 (1989): 339-49.
10. Carl R. Kordig, "Some Statements Are Immune to Revision," *The New Scholasticism* 55 (1981): 69-76.
11. See Lewis S. Feuer, "Sociological Aspects of the Relation Between Language and Philosophy," *Philosophy of Science* 20 (1953), esp. pp. 95-96; Franklin H. Fairbank, "An Examination of the Conceptions of Benjamin Whorf in the Light of Theories of Perception and Cognition," in *Language in Culture*, ed. Harry Hoijer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), esp. pp. 53-55; cf. also the remarks in Davidson, op. cit.
12. See e.g., Barry Gruenberg, "The Problem of Reflexivity in the Sociology of Science," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 8 (1978): 321-343.
13. Stuart Katz and Gordon Frost, "The Origins of Knowledge in Two Theories of Brain: The Cognitive Paradox Revealed," *Behaviorism* 7 (1979): 35-44.
14. Cf. Nicholas Everitt, "A Problem for the Eliminative Materialist," *Mind* 90 (1981), pp. 428-34; R. G. Swinburn, review of Paul Churchland's *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*, *Philosophy* 55 (1980): 273-75; Lynne Rudder Baker, "Cognitive Suicide," in *Contents of Thought*, eds. R. H. Grimm and D. D. Merrill (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), pp. 1-30; cf. also her *Saving Beliefs: A Critique of Physicalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), esp. ch. 7.
15. Op. cit., n. 1.
16. Frederick B. Fitch, "Self Reference in Philosophy," *Mind* 55 (1946): 65; reprinted in his *Symbolic Logic: An Introduction* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1952), Appendix C, p. 218. Emphasis his.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
18. Cf. Kordig, "Some Statements Are Immune to Revision," esp. pp. 75-76, op. cit., n. 10.
19. Willard Van Orman Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953, 1961), pp. 42-43.

20. We might add, paradoxically, that it is also necessary, in our terms, that there be some such world in order to conform to Quine's rejection of the very idea of necessary truth - suggesting that one cannot consistently reject necessary truth.
21. See Section 6 for details.
22. Paul M. Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind* (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
23. Swinburnh, op. cit., n. 14, p. 274.
24. Henry W. Johnstone, "Philosophy and *Argumentum ad Hominem*," reprinted in his *Validity and Rhetoric in Philosophical Argument* (University Park, PA: The Dialogue Press, 1978), p. 5.
25. See Bertrand Russell's classic article, "Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types," *American Journal of Mathematics* 30 (1908): 222-62.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
28. I am, of course, leaving aside the possibility of 'three-valued logics' such as 'quantum logic' which purport to dispense with the law of the excluded middle; at any rate, the possibility of alternative logics does not affect the main argument of this section, for even if we decided that self-referentially inconsistent theories and propositions had some truth value other than true or false, they would still not be true.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 236-38. For a good secondary summary cf. Irving Copi, *The Theory of Logical Types* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).
32. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
33. Paul Weiss, "The Theory of Types," *Mind* 37 (1928): 339. Similar points are made by Frederic B. Fitch, "Self-Reference in Philosophy," op. cit., and "Remarks on the Theory of Types," *Mind* 56 (1947): 184.
34. Cf. Andrzej Mostowski, "Review of Fitch's 'Self Reference in Philosophy,'" *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 11 (1946): 95-96; cf. Fitch's reply "Remarks on the Theory of Types," *ibid.*
35. Fitch, "Self-Reference in Philosophy," op. cit., p. 71.
36. Paul Feyerabend, *Farewell to Reason* (London: Verso, 1987), esp. ch. 1, "Notes on Relativism," pp. 19-89.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 78. Actually, readers of earlier Feyerabendiana (e.g., Part Three of *Science and a Free Society* [London: New Left Books, 1978] which is entitled "Conversations With Illiterates") will consider this excessively mild.
40. Cf. *Farewell to Reason*, op. cit., pp. 1-17, 273-79, as well as Part Two of *Science in a Free Society*, *ibid.*, and ch. 18 of *Against Method* (London: New Left Books, 1975).
41. *Farewell to Reason*, op. cit., p. 78.
42. It seems to me that Stanley Fish's recent anti-foundationalist rhetoric is in a situation almost identical to that of Feyerabend; cf. his tome *Doing What Comes Naturally* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1989). I submit that if Fish were really "doing what comes naturally" he would give up deconstructionist jargon immediately and go back to talking about the World Series. For whatever else we may say of it, going on and on for hundreds of pages about language is not "natural" (in Fish's sense of this word, assuming he has one). Natural language is about tables and chairs, dogs and cats, people, the World Series, sunsets, wars, hurricanes, final exams, and other such; only in rare circumstances do our linguistic usages become self-referential and reflect on its own structure and "natural" properties. When this happens, we are by definition no longer using language "naturally".

43. Cf. my "The Skeptic's Dilemma," op. cit., n. 8. This article was a response to Professor Davis's criticism of my earlier "Rorty's Foundationalism," op. cit., n. 7. (cf. William H. Davis, "In My Opinion That's Your Opinion: Is Rorty a Foundationalist?" *Reason Papers* 14 (1989): 137-42. Professor Davis had wondered why an antifoundationalist (or deconstructionist or relativist) could not speak the language of foundationalists (or absolutists), inviting them to open their eyes to the history of ideas and survey the "strife of systems" (p. 138). This misses the point; for obviously he can speak any language he wants. But if the antifoundationalist's (or deconstructionist's or relativist's) conclusions are meant to be taken seriously, then why should we believe his description of discourse? On what grounds can discourse be "transparent" to the eye of the antifoundationalist (or deconstructionist or relativist) if, as he maintains, there are no privileged vocabularies (which, self-referentially, would include vocabularies about discourse)?
44. Jack W. Meiland, "On the Paradox of Cognitive Relativism," *Metaphilosophy* 11 (1980): 121. Emphasis his.
45. Jack W. Meiland, "Concepts of Relative Truth," *The Monist* 60 (1977): 568-82.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 574.
47. Siegel, "Relativism, Truth and Incoherence," op. cit., p. 234.
48. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 256, n. 30.
49. Andrew D. Cling, "Eliminative Materialism and Self-Referential Inconsistency," *Philosophical Studies* 56 (1989), esp. pp. 58-59. This valuable article gives similar logical reconstructions for both meaningfulness and assertibility as conditions of scientific discourse, all in accordance with a general schematic for constructive self-referential arguments.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Peter Smith, "Eliminative Materialism - A Reply to Everitt," *Mind* 91 (1982): 439.
54. Cling, op. cit., p.71
55. I intend to take this issue up in more detail in my "Eliminative Materialism and the Incommensurability Thesis," in progress.
56. Some philosophers, friends of eliminative materialism among them, might object at this point by reiterating that part of their argument is that there are no theory-neutral observations; as Norwood Russell Hanson insisted, following Duhem, Wittgenstein and Ryle before him, all scientific observations are "theory-laden," (*Patterns of Discovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958)) or fully theoretical (Paul Feyerabend, "An Attempt At a Realistic Theory of Observation," *Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society, New Series* 58 (1958): 143-70). But critics of the theory-ladenness thesis have made clear that if taken literally or interpreted in too strong a form it would have the result that no theory can ever be criticized on the basis of observations, and that each scientist (or scientific community) would be effectively isolated in the "world" created by his theoretical system. This would give the friend of eliminative materialism no foothold in folk psychology from which to launch the criticisms he wants, much less establish pragmatic consistency. See Israel Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967) or Carl R. Kordig "The Theory-Ladenness of Observation," *Review of Metaphysics* 24 (1971): 448-84.
57. This notion is, of necessity, vague; part of the problem is that we don't really know as of yet how our brains store information and relate it to the world outside our nervous systems; we simply have to wait for neuroscience to catch up to whatever philosophical speculations we have. My sense is that the friends of eliminative materialism, contrary to what they say, have not been willing to wait: for clearly eliminative materialism is not a scientific thesis but a philosophical research program embedded in a distinct philosophy of science (for details cf. my "Eliminative Materialism and the Incommensurability Thesis," op. cit.).

58. An argument similar to this was presented by Richard Bernstein in "The Challenge of Scientific Materialism," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (1968): 252-75, in criticism of the two seminal articles articulating the "disappearance theory of the mind," Paul Feyerabend, "Materialism and the Mind-Body Problem," *Review of Metaphysics* 17 (1963): 49-66, and Richard Rorty, "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy and Categories," *Review of Metaphysics* 19 (1965): 24-54.
59. Paul Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes," *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 89-90. Emphasis in original. Cf. also Patricia Smith Churchland, "Is Determinism Self-Refuting?" *Mind* 90 (1981): 99-101.
60. J. L. Mackie, "Self-Refutation: A Formal Analysis," *Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1964): 203.
61. Cf. for example his main tract *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: New Left Books, 1975), ch. 17. This intricate, and highly intriguing chapter, intended to illustrate the alleged incommensurability of cross-cultural discourses, makes use of all of these and others besides.
62. Cf. his "Putnam on Incommensurability," reprinted in *Farewell to Reason*, op. cit., p. 267.
63. Cf. his *Word and Object* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), chs. 1 and 2.
64. One thinks here in particular of the defenders of the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics.
65. For example, the self-referential argument against eliminativematerialism above may have established that we cannot eliminate beliefs; but it did not give us a theory of beliefs and other intentional states. That is a task of cognitive science (in which the philosopher, of course, is free to participate). A good place to start putting together an appropriate theoretical framework, I will suggest, might be a number of articles by the biologist and neuroscientist R. W. Sperry, particularly "A Modified Concept of Consciousness," *Psychological Review* 76 (1969): 532-36; "An Objective Approach to Subjective Experience: Further Explanation of a Hypothesis," *Psychological Review* 77 (1970): 585-90; "Mental Phenomena as Causal Determinants in Brain Function," in *Consciousness and the Brain*, eds. G. Globus, G. Maxwell and I. Savodnik (New York: Plenum Press, 1976); "Changing Concepts of Consciousness and Free Will," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 20 (1976): 9-19; et al. A close study of the implications of Sperry's research findings for analytical philosophy of mind and cognitive science has not to my knowledge been attempted but I suspect that such a study would reveal that philosophy's materialists (whether reductive, functionalistic or eliminative) have all been barking up the wrong tree.
66. *Metaphysics*, IV, 1005b, in *Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W. D. Ross (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 736.
67. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd. ed., (New York: Dover Books, 1946), p. 77.
68. We are assuming, of course, that both tokens of *house* and of *Elm Street* are tokens of the same type, and so refer to the same items and place in both occurrences; otherwise the given statement will not really be contradictory but will only maintain an *appearance* of contradiction.
69. See Douglas B. Rasmussen. "Aristotle and the Defense of the Law of Contradiction." *The Personalist* 54 (1973): 149-62.
70. I do not deny or overlook the fact that it is now commonplace among deconstructionists in particular to hold correctly that in a non-trivial sense words indeed do mean different things to different people on the same occasion of use. But it is also worth noting that deconstructionists, rather like Feyerabendian relativism, present us with a position so slippery that it manages to avoid systematic criticism with evasions like. "If you have attempted a systematic exposition and criticism this shows that you haven't

really understood deconstruction." Deconstructionism is, however, also notorious for having presented a jargon-laden no-man's-land of impenetrability - perhaps in unintentional confirmation of Aristotle's view.

71. Aristotle, op. cit., 1006b, 5, p. 738.

72. Steven J. Bartlett, "The Idea of a Metalogic of Reference," *Methodology and Science* 9 (1976): 89.

73. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), Part Three.

74. This is not to say that philosophers can safely dispense with investigating them; they cannot.

75. Cf. Chapters Eight, Ten and Eleven of my book *Civil Wrongs: The Errors and Consequences of Affirmative Action* (under consideration for publication), or the paper "Why Philosophers Should Not Support 'Multiculturalism'", in preparation.

76. C. S. Peirce offers his argument against Cartesian certainty as a criterion for knowledge in "Some Consequences of the Four Incapacities," in J. Buchler, ed., *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover Books, 1940, 1955), esp. pp. 228-29.

77. I owe this way of putting the matter to Tibor Machan (private conversation).

78. Steven J. Bartlett has made some strides in the latter direction; cf. his "Varieties of Self-Reference," in *Self-Reference: Reflections on Reflexivity*, eds. Steven J. Bartlett and Peter Suber (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), pp. 5-29.

79. Cf. e.g., John Kekes, *The Nature of Philosophy* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980); for related views see Nicholas Maxwell, *From Knowledge To Wisdom: A Revolution in the Aims and Methods of Science* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1984) and Mary Midgley, *Wisdom, Information and Wonder: What Is Knowledge For?* (London: Routledge, 1989).

80. I am grateful to Greg Johnson for comments which led to significant improvements in the final version of this paper.

# EVIDENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

David Kelley

It is possible to be in Duluth without knowing you are in Duluth. You might be lost. It is possible to speak prose without knowing you are speaking prose. You may be unaware of your verbal prowess. It is possible to be angry without knowing that you are angry. Denial is a robust human practice.

But is it possible to know something without knowing that you know it? It's easy to see how one might unknowingly be in any of the other conditions. We are not omniscient, and facts do not reveal themselves to us automatically, even facts about ourselves. But knowledge is a cognitive state, and one might expect it to exhibit a little more transparency. Can one be aware of a fact and be unaware of one's awareness?

This question is a hardy perennial in epistemology. In recent years the debate has shifted to a related but narrower question suggested by the traditional definition of knowledge as justified true belief. Justification is required to distinguish knowledge from a lucky guess that happens to be right; a justified belief is one supported by evidence, by reasons. So the narrower question is: can one be justified in believing a proposition  $p$  without knowing that one is justified? Or narrower still: can one be justified in believing  $p$  without being justified in believing one is justified? The opposing answers to this question bring out two rival conceptions of justification and of the nature of epistemological principles.

On the *externalist* conception, justification means being in a position to know. Knowledge differs from a lucky guess in that the knower stands in the appropriate relationship to the fact which is known. It is this relationship that makes a belief nonaccidental, non-arbitrary, hence justified. Whether or not one is in this relationship is a matter of fact. It does not depend on the knowledge of one's cognitive situation. Epistemological principles identify the nature of the appropriate relationship to the world, and thus the necessary conditions for



justification. To be justified, one's cognitive state must satisfy these conditions, but this may occur without the reflective knowledge that one has satisfied them. There may be no reflective knowledge at all on the subject's part. "Justification" is a term that can be applied to a knower from the outside, so to speak.

The opposing view, *internalism*, is rooted in a conception of justification as rationality. Justification is a normative concept, which applies to our thinking insofar as it is voluntary and self-directed. We need epistemological standards that tell us what conclusions we ought to draw from a given body of evidence, and what evidence we ought to have to back up a given conclusion. But ought implies can. The standards must be applicable by the subject who is obliged to use them. They must be applicable from the inside, which is where the subject is. Any epistemological rule that is relevant to the justification of a given belief, therefore, must be such that the subject can determine, within the cognitive context in which he is entertaining that belief, whether or not the belief satisfies the principle. If a person is justified in believing  $p$ , it's in virtue of rules whose application to  $p$  is evident to the person, and he is accordingly justified in believing that he is justified.

Both externalism and internalism have a certain intuitive appeal. Yet each of them, taken by itself and carried to its logical extreme, lands us in a quandary. In the next section, I will review the essential problems that arise on each side. In the following section I will show how the problems may be avoided by adopting the Objectivist theory of knowledge that was originated by Ayn Rand.

## 1.

Descartes is the arch-internalist in the history of philosophy. We can see his project in the *Meditations* as the attempt to establish both a basic truth and the basic criterion of truth at a single stroke. To meet the skeptical challenge, Descartes offers the *Cogito* as a truth that is immune from doubt. When he later reflects on this truth, he asserts that what makes it indubitable is that he clearly and distinctly conceives it. In other words, what justifies Descartes in believing that he is conscious is the clarity and distinctness of the idea that he is conscious, together with the epistemological rule that clear and distinct ideas should be accepted.

This rule is applicable from the inside: the subject can determine which of his ideas are clear and distinct by inspecting the ideas themselves. Moreover, Descartes seems to be saying at the beginning of Meditation III that the validity of the rule can also be established from the inside. The status of clarity and distinctness as criteria of truth, he suggests, is self-evident. So it is possible from the inside not only to apply the rule,

but also to know that it is the right rule to apply. In this way, the nature of the justification Descartes has for believing that he is conscious guarantees that he is justified in believing that that belief is justified.

Descartes' search for a self-evident criterion of truth is motivated by the desire to put knowledge on a secure foundation, in the face of a skeptical attack. In contemporary terms, Descartes is a foundationalist -- at two levels. Substantively, the claim "I am conscious" is a basic proposition: it can be known without presuppositions; it is justified without any need for inference or support from other propositions. Methodologically, the epistemological principle "Clear and distinct ideas are true" is also basic. It does not need to be tested against any larger body of truths, or based on information about the nature and operations of our cognitive faculties.

As a result, Descartes is claiming to be non-inferentially justified not only in believing that he is conscious, but also in believing that that belief is justified. The meta-level knowledge has the same foundational status as the first-order knowledge. This double-decked foundationalism provides Descartes with a strongly normative epistemology. If epistemological principles are self-evident, they provide an Archimedean point from which we can evaluate the entire body of our knowledge. Science, mathematics, theology, history -- all must appear before this ultimate court of appeal before they can be accepted.

Abstracting from the details of Descartes' argument, we can see his position as an attempt to combine foundationalism with a strong form of internalism. The package may be formulated in terms of three theses:

- i) Certain propositions may justifiably be accepted on some basis other than inference.
- ii) The acceptance of a proposition  $p$  is justified in accordance with some epistemological rule  $R$  only if the subject has determined that accepting  $p$  does comply with  $R$ .
- iii) The acceptance of  $p$  is justified by  $R$  only if the subject is justified in accepting  $R$  as a rule of justification.

Thesis (i) is the central claim of foundationalism, thesis (ii) of internalism. Thesis (iii) is what makes Descartes a strong internalist, as well as a strong foundationalist. It implies that for there to be basic propositions, there must also be basic rules of justification, the acceptance of which need not be based on inference from other knowledge. The belief that thesis (iii) can be satisfied in conjunction with (i) is what gives Descartes' position its sweeping normative character. It implies that epistemological rules are prior to all other knowledge, and may thus serve as a final court of appeal for all knowledge claims.

Is it possible to accept his package in its entirety? Descartes himself

does not seem content to treat the criterion of clarity and distinctness as self-evident, for he goes on to seek a validation of the standard in God's veracity. "I must examine whether there is a God, and if so, whether He can be a deceiver; without knowing this, I seem unable to be quite certain of anything else."<sup>1</sup> Descartes' subsequent effort to prove God's existence relies on a number of premises organized as an inference, and this poses an obvious problem. If the meta-level belief that clear and distinct ideas should be accepted is justified by inference, and if the meta-level belief must be justified before any first-order belief is justified, then no first-order belief can be basic. Is this sort of problem inherent in the theses themselves, or is it an artifact of Descartes' system? Could we do better by replacing his rationalism with empiricism? Contemporary epistemologists generally agree that the problem is inescapable. The package is inherently unstable, and we must choose between foundationalism and internalism. Let us consider briefly how this antinomy has played itself out.

Most foundationalists have embraced some form of *reliabilism*, which holds that certain perceptual judgments about physical objects present to the senses are justified non-inferentially by the fact of being produced by reliable cognitive processes. When I look at a chair, the light it reflects stimulates my eyes, setting off a neural process that results in the judgment "That's a chair." In normal circumstances I would not be led to make this judgment unless there actually is a chair before me -- i.e., I would not make the judgment unless it were true. The causal mechanisms track the perceptual environment in a way that makes them reliable.<sup>2</sup>

It is irrelevant for reliabilism whether I know that my judgment was produced by such a process. I need not have any belief at all about the causes of my belief. What justifies the judgment is not some reason for thinking the process to be reliable, but the actual fact of its reliability. Reliabilism is thus an externalist theory of justification, justification from a third-person perspective. The epistemologist as an outside observer can assess the truth or falsity of the subject's perceptual judgment, and the reliability of the process that produced it. But the subject himself need know none of this. All that matters is that he actually be in the appropriate causal relation to the object of his judgment.<sup>3</sup>

It is at precisely this point, of course, that internalists object. If the subject is not aware of how his belief arose, if he knows nothing of the nature or reliability of the process that produced it, then from his standpoint the belief is arbitrary and unfounded. It has the same epistemological status as a conviction based on whim, hunch, or dogma. A person cannot be justified if the origins of his belief are entirely opaque to him. "Part of one's epistemic duty," argues Laurence Bonjour, "is to reflect critically upon one's beliefs, and such critical reflection precludes

believing things to which one has, to one's knowledge, no reliable means of epistemic access."<sup>4</sup>

The reliabilist picture, according to internalists, must therefore be modified, with results that require us to abandon foundationalism. For example, Bonjour argues that in order to be justified, a candidate basic belief would have to have some property *K* which makes it the kind of belief likely to be true. The property might be that the belief is about a physical object in the person's immediate environment, and that the belief is produced by the use of his senses operating in normal conditions. This is a reliable process. But the person could not rationally accept the belief, Bonjour claims, unless he did so in light of the fact that it has this property.

If such a belief is justified, therefore, the justification is inferential, the inference having the form:

Belief <i>B</i> has property <i>K</i>	
Beliefs of type <i>K</i> are likely to be true	
Therefore, <i>B</i> is likely to be true <sup>5</sup>	

Note that the second premise in this inference is a general epistemological rule of justification. The inferential pattern of justification arises from the requirement that the person apply this general rule to his own case. In other words, Bonjour's argument rests on thesis (ii), which requires that the subject actually determine that his belief satisfies the relevant epistemological rules.

Thesis (iii), which says that the subject must be *justified* in believing the rules he applies, has also been used to attack foundationalism. To know that a certain process of belief-formation is reliable, i.e., that the beliefs it produces are normally true, we must rely on inductive evidence. We must identify past instances of beliefs produced by that process, and establish that all or most of them have been true. If the subject himself must do this, as internalism requires, then all justification is circular. Any perceptual judgment about the environment is justified inferentially by a general rule regarding the reliability of perceptual judgments, and any such rule is justified inferentially by induction from perceptual judgments. We are driven to the coherence theory as the only possible account of justification.<sup>6</sup>

If we adopt externalism, no such problem arises. The inductive evidence for the reliability of a certain process is part of the background knowledge of the epistemologist, something he brings to bear from the outside on the situation of a cognitive subject. This inductive data may consist of common sense observations about the operations of the senses. It may also include material from cognitive psychology and sensory physiology, as

well as evolutionary theories about selection mechanisms favoring reliable cognitive processes.

Where does this knowledge come from? Presumably it has a foundational structure; the epistemologist is a knower like any other. If we trace the epistemologist's theoretical beliefs about justification back to their sources, we come to a level of belief at which he is in the position of the lay subject: his belief may in fact be the outcome of a reliable process, but he does not yet know this. Such beliefs must be accepted before any knowledge about the principles of justification may be established. At this level, all we can say is that we have certain beliefs. We can describe these beliefs, and we can describe how they give rise eventually to meta-level theories about the process of first-order belief formation. Having accepted certain first-order beliefs as true, we can explain the emergence of higher-order theories about which processes normally produce true beliefs. But we can never *justify* the initial acceptance of the causally basic beliefs.<sup>7</sup> The normative standards we derive operate within a wider background of belief that must simply be taken for granted.

Epistemology is thus naturalized, in the spirit of Hume. As a skeptic, Hume rejects the normative project of validating our knowledge. Instead, he adopts the descriptive project of identifying the psychological mechanisms that lead us to believe the things we do. The belief that a cause necessitates an effect, for example, is merely a reflection of the strength of a habit of expectation induced by repeated conjunctions of events. Similarly, Quine argues that there is no hope of establishing the rationality of our beliefs about the world on the basis of some foundational method or standard. Instead, we should use what we have learned from psychology to describe the processes by which we construct a picture of the world in response to sensory stimulation. Quine notes that this naturalized approach involves a switch in priority: "The old epistemology aspired to contain, in a sense, natural science; it would construct it somehow from sense data. Epistemology in its new setting, conversely, is contained in natural science, as a chapter of psychology."<sup>8</sup> It does not provide a fundamental standard by which *all* knowledge may be evaluated.

In contemporary epistemology, then, we are offered a choice between naturalism and the coherence theory. The choice is set by the common agreement that no epistemological principle is self-evident. To validate such a principle, we must know that that the cognitive processes and methods it prescribes will give us true beliefs. To know this, we must have an antecedent stock of true beliefs against which to test the principle. To preserve the foundational structure of knowledge, we must simply accept those antecedent beliefs as true, without requiring a justification for them, and thus embrace naturalism. If we do require a justification for them, we

must appeal to epistemological principles that rest on those very beliefs, and thus embrace a coherence theory of justification. On both views, our knowledge taken as a whole has a free-floating character. For naturalism, this results from the denial that justification goes all the way down. From our standpoint as knowers, our basic beliefs are a matter of happenstance. For the coherence theory, the free-floating character comes from the view of justification as a matter of the internal relationship among beliefs, rather than their relationship to the world. In both cases, our confidence in what we think we know is undercut by the consideration that had we started with a different stock of antecedent beliefs, we could have arrived at -- and been able to justify -- a different set of conclusions.

## 2.

I believe it is possible to avoid this free-floating character altogether. It is possible to formulate a foundationalist theory that is not naturalistic, and thus incorporates enough of internalism to assure us from the inside of our cognitive contact with the world, without committing us to any form of coherentism. The approach I have in mind is based on Ayn Rand's Objectivist theory of knowledge, and I have developed it in detail elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> The basic principle of this approach is the primacy of existence: that the objects of knowledge exist independently of the subject, and that our cognitive faculties cannot in any fundamental sense originate their own contents. This principle, I have argued, is self-evident; it is the identification of what is given in our perceptual awareness of the environment. Thus cognition is not constitutive in the Kantian sense. But neither is it diaphanous. Cognition is a biological function performed by systems that have definite identities which affect the form in which we grasp objects and facts in the world.<sup>10</sup> In what follows, I will briefly review the outlines of this approach, and then turn to the questions that concern us here: what is the basis of the epistemological rules governing the justification of belief? and in what sense, if any, must a cognitive subject actually employ these rules in order to be justified?

All of our knowledge rests on the evidence of the senses. Though issues of justification arise only for propositional contents that can be expressed as assertions, there is a more basic level of cognition, a purely perceptual level. A perception, as distinct from a perceptual judgment, is the direct awareness of an object present to the senses. The essence of this awareness is the discrimination of the object from its background. The objects we discriminate exist independently of our awareness of them, and we are aware of them as independent; their independence is given as part of the content of the awareness. Perception is a form of contact with the world, a real relation between subject and object, between the perceiver

and what he perceives.

Perceptual awareness is not transparent. For us to perceive an object, it must appear to us, and certain aspects of the way it appears are determined by the specific nature of our sensory apparatus and of the conditions in which it operates. There is no "right" way for an object to appear, by comparison with which we can say that other ways of appearing are false or illusory. Conversely, any mode of appearance that allows us to discriminate the object, or a given attribute, is a mode of awareness of that object or attribute. Even in unusual conditions, where we have experiences that we describe as illusions, the illusory character is the likelihood that we will make the wrong *conceptual* identification of what we perceive. But the perception itself is not false; it is the awareness of some object in an unusual form. There is no issue of truth or falsity at the perceptual level, and consequently no issue of justification.<sup>11</sup>

Concepts are formed by grouping objects into categories on the basis of perceived similarities and differences among them. We abstract a common attribute from the different degrees in which that attribute exists concretely in the objects. This allows us to treat an entire class of things as a single cognitive unit. It allows us to recognize a new object as an instance of a category with which we are already familiar, and to apply to that object the knowledge we have already acquired about things of that category.<sup>12</sup> Both the formation and the application of concepts are integrative processes subject to error. At the conceptual level, our awareness of the world takes a propositional form, and such propositions may be true or false. The acceptance of a proposition must therefore be based on evidence that justifies us in judging the proposition true, and we need standards to determine how to assess evidence properly.

A perceptual judgment is based directly on perceptual awareness. We see an object and are visually aware of certain of its attributes. The perceptual judgment identifies the object conceptually, in light of those attributes. Thus the judgment is justified by an antecedent awareness of the object, but this mode of justification is noninferential because that antecedent awareness is not propositional.<sup>13</sup> Perceptual judgments perform the epistemological function of putting the evidence of the senses into propositional form, and they serve in turn as premises from which further conclusions can be drawn. From there on up, reasoning and justification are inferential.

With this broad framework in place, let us now consider the status of epistemological principles. To understand their bases, use, and normative reach, we need to draw a distinction that is most easily seen in connection with inference.

To know a fact inferentially is to know it by means of its relationship with other facts. Those other facts are the evidence for the conclusion. I

judge that a certain stone will chip easily because it is slate. The fact that it is slate, together with the general fact that slate chips easily, constitutes my evidence. The form of my inference is deductive:

All slate chips easily

This stone is slate

This stone will chip easily

The two premises state facts. These facts are related to the conclusion through the logical principle: if all M are P, and S is an M, then S is P. Like the premises, this principle states a fact: the fact that contradictions are not possible. It identifies the nature of the relationship -- let us call it the evidential relationship -- that exists among the facts asserted by the premises and conclusion.

These facts, and the relationship among them, exist regardless of whether I know them or not. If I am not aware of these facts, then of course my conclusion is unfounded; I am not justified in accepting it. What justifies my acceptance of the conclusion is therefore not the evidence *per se*, but my awareness of the evidence. The concept of *evidence* refers to facts, regarded in light of their relationships to other facts we wish to ascertain. The concept of *justification* refers to our cognitive position vis-à-vis those facts.

We must distinguish accordingly between two kinds of epistemological rule. Rules of *evidence* tell us what sort of evidence is relevant to what sort of conclusion, by identifying the various types of evidential relationships among facts. Such rules include the principles of logic, inductive and deductive, as well as various specialized principles, such as the legal rules governing testimonial evidence. Rules of *justification* specify what a person's cognitive state must be if he is to be justified in accepting a conclusion. The most general of these rules is that one must be aware of evidence that supports the conclusion adequately. Other rules specify in more detail the form this awareness must take. For example, it is not enough to know the evidential facts if this knowledge is buried in memory and not actually used to support the conclusion. Again, a person is not justified if he has suppressed contrary evidence -- even if the conclusion is in fact true and is adequately supported by the evidence he cites.

Notice that rules of evidence do not make any essential reference to a person's knowledge, beliefs, or any other cognitive fact. They state relations among facts in the world; they are not reflective or meta-level principles. They do not depend on the specific nature of our faculties. Knowers with radically different faculties would still be bound by the laws



of identity, non-contradiction, and causality, and the canons of deduction and induction that are based on these laws. Rules of justification, on the other hand, do make essential reference to the person's cognitive state. That is precisely their function. The validity of these rules, accordingly, is derived from the nature and operation of our cognitive faculties. The reason we must rely on the awareness of evidence to support a given conclusion, for example, is that we cannot determine its truth or falsity by direct perception. That is a fact about the range of our perceptual capacity. Again, the reason we must not ignore contrary evidence, even when we have abundant confirming evidence, is that we are neither infallible nor omniscient; the only reliable method for pursuing truth is to integrate as fully as possible the entire context of our knowledge.

The distinction between the two types of rule applies also to perceptual justification. In this case we are dealing not with the inference of one fact from others, but with the transition from a perceptual to a conceptual mode of awareness of the same fact. When I look at a table and form the judgment "This is brown," the judgment refers to the very thing I see, and it identifies in conceptual form the very color I am aware of perceptually. It is therefore tempting to say that the perceptual judgment does nothing more than formulate the cognitive content of the percept -- i.e., that we say just what we see, that the evidential relation between the content of the percept and the content of the judgment is one of identity. But this is not quite right. The judgment goes beyond the immediate content of the percept by assimilating the particular determinate color I perceive to the range of colors conceptualized as brown, on the basis of its similarity to other determinate shades within that range. Thus the evidential relation is one of similarity, and the general evidential principle is that the specific attribute perceived must be relevantly similar to the other instances of the concept being predicated.

What about the rules of justification? In *The Evidence of the Senses*, I discussed several rules specifying the nature of the perceptual contact with the object that we must have in order to be justified in forming a perceptual judgment. For one thing, we must perceptually discriminate the object that the judgment is about; we must actually pick out the object from its background, and not merely have it before us in our visual field. Again, we must perceive the object in the form of an appearance that is normal for the perception of F things, where F is the concept being predicated in the judgment. In addition, we are bound by the general epistemological requirement that we take account of contrary evidence -- in this case, evidence that the conditions of perception are abnormal. All of these are rules of justification because they make essential reference to the perceiver's cognitive state, and are based on facts about the way our cognitive capacities function.<sup>14</sup>

What are the implications of this theory, then, for the relation between foundationalism and internalism? In light of the discussion so far, it is clear that we may accept the first of the theses we attributed to Descartes: the foundationalist thesis that certain propositions may justifiably be accepted on some basis other than inference. Perceptual judgments play this role. What about the remaining two theses, which express Descartes' internalism? Thesis (ii) is that a subject is justified in accordance with an epistemological rule only if he applies that rule to his own case. Thesis (iii) adds that the subject must understand the basis of the rule; he must be justified in accepting it as a rule. To evaluate these claims, we must examine the bearing they have on the two types of epistemological rules we have distinguished.

*Rules of evidence.* It seems clear that for a subject to be justified in accepting a given proposition, he must have some grasp of the evidential relationship on which it is based. For example, he must grasp the connection between the conclusion that this stone will chip easily and the facts that this stone is slate and that all slate chips easily. If he knew the premises to be true but saw no relation between them and the conclusion, then his acceptance of the conclusion would be arbitrary. Similarly at the perceptual level. If the subject sees the table and its color, but is completely unaware of the similarity between that color and other shades of brown, he would not be justified in accepting the judgment that the table is brown.

Yet it seems impossible to know the principles of logical inference as they are formulated in logic texts, or understand the general relationship of similarity that exists among the instances of a concept, until one has acquired a good deal of other knowledge. These evidential principles are highly abstract. If grasping the connection between evidence and conclusion in a specific case requires the conscious application of these principles, there is no way we could grasp the connection at the foundational level. To remain foundationalists, we would have to embrace naturalism and hold that at the outset we simply do proceed cognitively in a certain way, and only later acquire the ability to explain -- descriptively, not normatively -- why we did so. On the other hand, to retain the view that justification requires a grasp of the relevant evidential relationships, we would have to hold that justification is possible only within a network that includes higher-order knowledge, and we would thus be driven to the coherence theory.

But the grasp of evidential relationships does not require the conscious application of evidential principles. This is obvious in the case of perceptual judgments. To recognize the table as brown, one does not need the concept of similarity; the actual similarity in color between the table and other brown things can be perceived.<sup>15</sup> What about inference,

where the evidential relations are identified by logic? On the realist view I outlined above, logical principles are the abstract identification of certain concrete relationships that actually exist, independently of us, among specific sets of facts in the world. We can grasp these relationships in the concrete long before we learn the abstract formulations. Students in logic, for example, typically have some difficulty mastering the classical forms of categorical syllogisms and the rules for their validity. But they have no trouble seeing that if all slate chips easily, then if this stone is slate it will chip easily. The logical relationship among these propositions is so obvious that the conclusion hardly seems to them a distinct proposition. And when they do learn the validity of the abstract form, they experience it as something they knew all along.

At root, what it is that they "knew all along" is that contradictions are impossible: that to exist is to have a non-contradictory identity. This fact is true of existence as such. It does not depend on the specific attributes a thing has. Nor does knowledge of the fact depend on prior knowledge of any specific attributes, much less on knowledge of the way our faculties operate. To understand the laws of identity and non-contradiction in their abstract forms, one must reach a certain level of conceptual sophistication. But the basis for recognizing the truth of the laws is available at any level, so long as one is aware of something. The truth of the laws is implicit even in perceptual awareness, which necessarily involves discrimination: to perceive is to be aware of an A distinct from its non-A background.

In regard to rules of evidence, then, we may accept the spirit if not the letter of theses (ii) and (iii). At the foundational level, we do not consciously apply the rules, nor can we articulate their bases. But we are aware of the evidential relationships that make these rules valid, and our judgments, to the extent that they are justified, rest on that awareness. We may thus avoid naturalism as well as the coherence theory.

*Rules of justification.* The principle of the primacy of existence implies that the primary focus of awareness is outward, on the world. We must perceive external objects and their properties before we can turn our attention to the fact that we perceive them. "A consciousness conscious of nothing but itself," Ayn Rand observed, "is a contradiction in terms: before it could identify itself as consciousness, it had to be conscious of something."<sup>16</sup> The implication is that rules of justification cannot be understood or applied in any sense at the foundational level. These rules make essential reference to our cognitive state in relation to the evidence for a judgment; their validity rests on facts about the nature and operations of our faculties. We must use our faculties to acquire some knowledge of the world before we can acquire meta-level knowledge about their nature and proper use.

The rule that we must take account of evidence that conditions of perception are abnormal presupposes the ability to distinguish normal from abnormal conditions, which presupposes knowledge of the fact that certain physical factors affect the way things appear; and this last is a causal generalization that rests on a host of prior observations about things. Even the most general rule of justification -- that we must have evidence to support our judgments -- rests on the fact that our judgments are fallible. To know this we must know something about the ways in which our cognitive contact with the world can be broken.

In regard to rules of justification, therefore, we must reject the spirit as well as the letter of internalism. The rules specify the conditions that must obtain if one is to be justified in accepting a proposition. If those conditions obtain, then one is justified, regardless of whether one knows that one is. What matters is that one's cognitive state satisfies the rules, not that one knows, or is justified in believing, that the rules are satisfied. If in fact I have adequate evidence for a judgment, and am aware of the relationship between the evidence and the content of the judgment, and have not excluded contrary evidence from consideration, then I have done everything necessary to put myself in a position to know. I have grounded my judgment in the facts, regardless of whether I have the meta-level knowledge necessary to describe what I have done and prove *that* I am justified. A child of six can know perfectly well that his bicycle won't work, by inference from the fact that the wheel is bent, even though he is entirely innocent of epistemological knowledge and does not even possess the concepts of "justification," "evidence," "inference," or "truth."

At the level of perceptual judgments, the relevant rules would not be formulated or applied consciously even by an adult. Indeed, they hardly count as rules, since the cognitive operations they prescribe occur almost entirely automatically. Consider the rule that one must perceptually discriminate the object to which the judgment refers. In a typical perceptual judgment such as "This is a chair," the reference of the demonstrative subject is actually determined by one's perceptual attention; there is no chance here that the rule could be violated.<sup>17</sup> It is only as knowledge expands beyond this level that we need to become epistemologically self-conscious. As we begin to integrate evidence on a wider scale, building conclusion on conclusion, the possibilities for error multiply, and we need to ask ourselves: Do I really know that what I am taking to be evidence is true? Is there anything else I know that bears on this issue? Do I have evidence that further evidence is available? Am I biased toward this conclusion? And even at this level, the reason for monitoring ourselves is to ensure that our judgments satisfy the applicable standards of justification. It is the satisfaction of the standards that counts. The purpose of thinking is to acquire knowledge, to find out what the facts

are. Success is measured by results, not by the degree or sincerity of our

efforts.

In this respect, therefore, Descartes' project is ill-conceived. There is no need to apply and validate rules of justification at the foundational level; and there is no possibility that we could do so, because there is no way we could identify the nature of our cognitive faculties or their liabilities to error until we have already acquired a good deal of knowledge about the external environment. But this does not mean that we must abandon Descartes' normative goal: a justification of knowledge that goes all the way down, a set of epistemological standards to which all knowledge is subject. We need not accept the counsel of despair proposed by naturalism.

We do not begin as knowers with beliefs whose truth we must posit, without warrant, before we can develop standards for the reliability of belief-forming processes. We begin with the direct perceptual awareness of objects and their attributes; we notice similarities that allow us to form and apply concepts; and we are implicitly aware of the ontological facts that the principles of logic identify. Since we are capable of grasping facts, we are in a position to recognize errors when they occur, and thus recognize the fact of our fallibility. Since we are capable of identifying the nature of things in the world, we are capable of identifying the nature of our own faculties as things in the world, and of learning how to minimize the dangers of their malfunctioning. At each stage, from perception to concepts to the rules of evidence to the rules of justification, our conclusions are fully grounded in and justified by what came before. We cannot go back psychologically, taking with us only our epistemological principles, and actually relearn everything anew. But we can look back epistemologically, using the principles we have learned, and evaluate the whole structure of knowledge in a fully normative and noncircular way.

1. Meditation III, in *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans., Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), p. 78. Note that this statement comes at the end of a paragraph in which Descartes allows that God could deceive him even regarding his own existence.

2. Reliabilism was initially formulated by David Armstrong in *Belief, Truth and Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

3. Cf. William Alston, "Has Foundationalism Been Refuted?" *Philosophical Studies* 29 (1976): 287-305, and "Two Types of Foundationalism," *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976): 165-85. On the relation of externalism to reliabilism, see Alvin Goldman, "The Internalist Conception of Justification," in Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy V: Studies in Epistemology*

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

4. Laurence Bonjour, "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge," in *Studies in Epistemology*, p. 63.
5. Cf. Laurence Bonjour, "Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1978), p. 7.
6. Cf. David Schatz, "Foundationalism, Coherentism, and the Levels Gambit," *Synthese* 55 (1983): 97-118.
7. Alvin Goldman, "The Internalist Conception of Justification," p. 46-47
8. W. V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp 78, 83.
9. David Kelley, *The Evidence of the Senses* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986). Cited hereafter as ES.
10. *ES*, ch: 1.
11. *ES*, pp. 81-95, 228-242.
12. Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 2nd ed. (New York: New American Library, 1990). See also David Kelley, "A Theory of Abstraction," *Cognition and Brain Theory* 7 (1984): 329-57.
13. *ES*, p. 197.
14. *ES*, ch. 7.
15. Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, p. 14; Kelley, "A Theory of Abstraction."
16. Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 124.
17. *ES*, pp. 211-13.



# SYSTEMATIC PLURALISM AND THE FOUNDATIONALIST CONTROVERSY

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In this paper I shall examine the foundationalist-antifoundationalist controversy from the standpoint of a systematic pluralist. All of these labels -- foundationalism, antifoundationalism, systematic pluralism--designate ambiguous commonplaces that are given definite meanings in the works of particular authors. For the antifoundationalist position, I shall use Richard Rorty's "pragmatism," for Rorty began the controversy with his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*<sup>1</sup> and remains the leading antifoundationalist. Foundationalism then becomes whatever it is that Rorty is opposing, which is not a single position, but a heterogeneous group of positions called by various names: "traditional philosophy," "epistemology," "Philosophy" (with a capital "P").

"Systematic pluralism" refers to doctrines that have existed for about fifty years and have recently been given this name, thanks largely to the efforts of James E. Ford.<sup>2</sup> Pluralists in this context are those who share the conviction that multiple philosophic approaches are viable, but do not necessarily share the same philosophic approach. Systematic pluralists are those who systematize these philosophic approaches. The two most notable early systematic pluralists are Richard McKeon and Stephen Pepper. Pepper recognizes five relatively adequate "world hypotheses," mechanism, formism, organicism, contextualism, and selectivism.<sup>3</sup> His doctrine is easy to understand and he now has a large number of followers in many fields, particularly literature and the arts. McKeon's schema of



philosophic semantics took many forms, of which the last was presented in the 1965 Carus lectures and in the 1966 paper, "Philosophic Inquiry and Philosophic Semantics."<sup>4</sup> This form of the semantic schema distinguishes philosophies according to their selections, interpretations, methods, and principles. McKeon is difficult to understand, and his philosophy is not so much a doctrine as a power to construct indefinitely many doctrines. He has influenced directly or indirectly a large number of people in highly diverse ways, rather like Socrates. Some of those he has influenced have worked out modified forms of his pluralism: among the systematic pluralists I would include David Dilworth and myself,<sup>5</sup> and among the unsystematic pluralists Wayne Booth<sup>6</sup> and also Richard Rorty, if he is a pluralist at all, for he too studied with McKeon.

The particular form of systematic pluralism that I represent distinguishes philosophies according to their *archai*, or archic elements. *Archai* are not the same as foundations, for even an anti-foundationalist such as Rorty has his *archai*. The kinds of *archai* that any philosophy must have, if it is to have meaning at all, are four: the authorial perspective, the reality known from this perspective, the method by which the knowledge of this reality is ordered, and the principles (in a narrow sense) which ground this knowledge or, more generally, enable the philosophy to function in whatever way it does function. The archic elements which characterize a particular philosophy constitute its archic profile. In understanding a philosophy or a controversy between philosophies it is useful to begin by determining what archic profiles are involved. I will therefore begin by seeking the antifoundational *archai* of Rorty and contrasting them with foundational *archai*, if indeed this distinction is applicable to *archai*.

### 1. Foundational and Antifoundational *Archai*.

A salient feature of Rorty's pragmatism is its anti-representationalism. The mind, Rorty says, is not a mirror of nature: "The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations -- some accurate, some not -- and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods."<sup>7</sup> Among the philosophers who hold that the mind in some sense mirrors or images or models nature are Democritus, Epicurus, Zeno the Stoic, Francis Bacon, Locke, Peirce, and Bertrand Russell. Mirroring or objectivist perspectives are foundational in the sense that within them we seek to know nature as it is in itself, independently of us.

Lest we be held captive by Rorty's picture of traditional philosophy, however, we should note that traditional philosophy also includes

transcendental or disciplinary perspectives, for which the mind does not mirror nature but constructs its disciplines in accordance with its own interests and powers. Among the transcendental philosophers in this sense are Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Husserl, Dewey, and Habermas. "The received is in the receiver according to the mode of the receiver," as Aquinas succinctly puts it.<sup>8</sup> We syllogize in our sciences, but this does not imply that nature syllogizes. The distinction of theoretical, practical, and productive science is determined by our interests, and does not mirror a distinction that pre-exists in nature. Whatever is said scientifically by these philosophers falls within a discipline constituted by the mind for its own purposes. Transcendental perspectives are foundational in the sense that they constitute disciplines.

For another group of philosophers that includes Plato, Bonaventura, Leibniz, Hegel, Heidegger, and Gadamer, there is a hierarchy of knowers and their correlative objects (e.g., the Divided Line), but truth does not lie in this correlative mirroring, for the object mirrored may be far from the truth. The mind approximates to the truth not by a better mirroring of its objects, but by transcending the limitations of the perspective it happens to have and apprehending objects that disclose the truth more fully. We can never escape the limitations of our finite perspectives, but we can be open to the absence in what is present. If these revelatory or diaphanic perspectives are mistakenly seen as providing a final truth, we have the usual misinterpretations of such texts as Plato or Genesis which make them easy to dismiss. The proper contribution of Plato to the foundationalist controversy is not to found foundationalism, but to explode the distinction between foundationalism and antifoundationalism, for the source of truth destroys whatever foundation we may suppose ourselves to possess.

Rorty groups together as representational all the kinds of perspective that differ from his anti-representationalism. His own perspective, which he views as entailed by his anti-representationalism, he identifies as *ethnocentric*. In the Introduction to *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, he says,

The first and the last essay in this volume dwell on the topic of ethnocentrism. This is because one consequence of antirepresentationalism is the recognition that no description of how things are from a God's-eye point of view, no skyhook provided by some contemporary or yet-to-be-developed science, is going to free us from the contingency of having been acculturated as we were.<sup>9</sup>

To be ethnocentric is to divide the human race into the people to whom one must justify one's beliefs and the others. The first group -- one's ethnos - comprises those who share enough of one's beliefs to make fruitful conversation possible. In this sense, everybody is ethnocentric when engaged in actual debate, no matter how much realist rhetoric about objectivity he produces in his study.<sup>10</sup>

For Rorty, we always work within the perspective of some *ethnos*. These perspectives are relativistic not in the sense that what it means to be true is relative to one's perspective, but in the sense that what one holds as true is relative to one's perspective. This kind of perspective, that of the particular knower, either the individual or the group, has, like the others, a long history, beginning with the Hellenic Sophists and running through, thinkers such as Erasmus, Montaigne, Descartes, Voltaire, William James, and Sartre.

The appearance of Descartes' name in this list serves to remind us that, while a perspective in which the truth is inseparable from the knower lends itself to antifoundationalist uses, such a perspective does not preclude a foundationalist construction. If one considers only the individuality of the perspective, it is no great leap from Montaigne's "Sitting on the loftiest throne in the world we are still sitting on our own behind"<sup>11</sup> to Descartes' "My design has never extended beyond trying to reform my own opinion and to build upon a foundation which is entirely my own."<sup>12</sup> If Descartes' judgments are true, it is not because he has succeeded in setting aside his individual subjectivity in order to mirror the world objectively, in Baconian fashion, but because his individual mind has successfully developed itself as an individual mind. Rorty's antifoundationalism is thus not attributable merely to his ethnocentric perspective, but depends on other archic elements as well.

Rorty's pragmatism is not only anti-representationalist, it is also anti-essentialist. Just as his anti-representationalism stands for an opposition to all non-ethnocentric perspectives, whether representational or not, so here his anti-essentialism stands for an opposition to all the kinds of reality that he opposes, whether essentialist or not. He tells us forthrightly what we should exclude from the real:

We do not think it anachronistic to say that Aristotle had a false model of the heavens, or that Galen did not understand how the circulatory system worked. We take the pardonable ignorance of our great dead scientists for granted. We should be equally willing to say that Aristotle was unfortunately ignorant that there are no such things as real essences, or Leibniz that God does not exist, or Descartes that the mind is just the central nervous system under an alternative description.<sup>13</sup>

It is evident even from this brief quotation that, according to Rorty, we should deny the essential realities of Aristotle, Descartes, Heidegger, Whitehead, and Dewey, and also the noumenal realities of Plato, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant. Not only this, but the remark on Descartes indicates that we should reject also the substrative realities of Democritus, Locke, the British scientific tradition, and Nietzsche in favor of a non-reductive physicalism that leaves us simply with alternative descriptions of the

existential flux: "Just as the neural synapses are in continual interaction with one another, constantly weaving a different configuration of electrical charges, so our beliefs and desires are in continual interaction, redistributing truth-values among statements."<sup>14</sup>

The reality for Rorty's pragmatism is thus of the same kind as the reality of the Sophists, Cicero, Berkeley, James, Wittgenstein, and Sartre. There is no reality that is set over against appearances; they are the same. When Rorty's denial that there is any objective world for our knowledge to represent is compared to Berkeley's denial of the existence of material objects, it is primarily this aspect of their philosophies that is being noted. The existential flux is antifoundational in the sense that it does not supply an unchanging object of knowledge.

Rorty is not only anti-representationalist and anti-essentialist, he is also anti-methodical in the sense in which method is a rule-governed procedure. The logistic method is such a procedure, and it is in its nature foundational, basing each new step on what has preceded. Descartes figures as an arch-foundationalist in good part because of his logistic method, which begins from what is certain and builds upon this foundation in a way that assures the certainty of each new part of the structure. Such a method is used not only by Descartes, but also by Euclid, Leibniz, Spinoza, Newton, Locke, Hume, Husserl, and Russell.

Problematic or resolute methods, such as those of Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, and Dewey, are foundational not in beginning from what is certain or fixed but in achieving it. They begin from what is uncertain or indeterminate, but work toward a resolution, toward a definite settlement of what was in question. The result is that even though one does not have a foundation at the beginning, one may have one at the end.

Dialectical methods are at once foundational and antifoundational, establishing foundations by destroying them. The Socrates of Plato's *Apology* is uniquely well founded because he is quite without a foundation.

Rorty's opposition to representationalism, essentialism, and method, and his general confrontational and provocative stance, give us a clue to his own method, which appears to be agonistic or rhetorical. Rorty recognizes this antagonistic stance as essential to what he is doing. Hermeneutics is parasitic upon epistemology,<sup>15</sup> the non-Kantian is parasitic upon the Kantian,<sup>16</sup> and edifying philosophy is reactive rather than constructive. "Great systematic philosophers are constructive and offer arguments. Great edifying philosophies are reactive and offer satires, parodies, aphorisms."<sup>17</sup>

Rorty contrasts method, conceived as the reduction of rationality to rule, with deliberation concerning the relative attractions of various concrete alternatives:

Even nonpragmatists think Plato was wrong to think of moral philosophy as discovering the essence of goodness, and Mill and Kant wrong in trying to reduce moral choice to rule. But every reason for saying that they were wrong is a reason for thinking the epistemological tradition wrong in looking for the essence of science, and in trying to reduce rationality to rule. For the pragmatists, the pattern of all inquiry -- scientific as well as moral -- is deliberation concerning the relative attractions of various concrete alternatives. The idea that in science or philosophy we can substitute "method" for deliberation between alternative results of speculation is just wishful thinking.<sup>18</sup>

Rorty goes on to identify method with *theoria* and deliberation with *phronesis*. He appears to think that, in Aristotelian terms, he is substituting *phronesis* for *theoria*, but it is evident from his characterization of deliberation as "between alternatives" that what he is really doing is replacing both *phronesis* and *theoria* by rhetoric. Deliberation for Aristotle is inquiry into the means by which to attain an end, and is like the mathematical inquiry that analyzes a figure in order to be able to construct it,<sup>19</sup> whereas rhetoric *is* concerned with the relative attractions of various concrete alternatives. Rorty elsewhere recognizes that his method is rhetorical and depends on topics:

Without this model [the science of Galileo and Newton] to go on, the notion of "a scientific method" would never have been taken seriously. The term "method" would have retained the sense it had in the period prior to the New Science, for people like Ramus and Bacon. In that sense, to have a method was simply to have a good comprehensive list of topics or headings -- to have, so to speak, an efficient filing system.<sup>20</sup>

Rorty's anti-methodical method belongs in the tradition of rhetorical or agonistic methods running from the ancient Sophists through the Skeptics, Ramus, Galileo, Voltaire, Berkeley, and Nietzsche. As agonistic, such a method is well-suited to shaking anything that purports to be an unshakable foundation.

What is it that motivates all this anti-representationalism, anti-essentialism, and anti-methodism? What is Rorty's aim in philosophy? His answer, in a word, is *solidarity*. The pragmatist, says Rorty, is "dominated by the desire for solidarity."<sup>21</sup> He views even the epistemologists as pursuing objectivity for the sake of agreement with other human beings: "The dominating notion of epistemology is that to be fully human, to do what we ought, we need to be able to find agreement with other human beings."<sup>22</sup> His ground for rejecting foundationalist philosophy is that it has failed to produce agreement, and this is why he proposes that we abandon it and get along as best we can without a foundation, or only the foundation provided by our conversation with our fellow human beings.

Rorty relates the primacy of solidarity to the acceptance of the contingency of all starting points:

Let me sum up by offering a third and final characterization of pragmatism: it is the doctrine that there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones -- no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of the objects, or of the mind, or of language, but only those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow-inquirers. . . .

I prefer this third way of characterizing pragmatism because it seems to me to focus on a fundamental choice which confronts the reflective mind: that between accepting the contingent character of starting-points, and attempting to evade this contingency. To accept the contingency of starting-points is to accept our inheritance from, and our conversation with, our fellow-humans as our only source of guidance.<sup>23</sup>

The non-contingent counter to all contingency is thus the desire for solidarity with our fellow-humans. This is an elemental principle, dominating both pragmatism and its opposite. Rorty recognizes the continuity of his principles with those of Hume: "I should like the sentiments of pity and tolerance to take the place of belief-systems (or of what Habermas calls 'the commitment to rationality') in bonding liberal societies together. I want a meta-ethics that follows up on Hume rather than on Kant."<sup>24</sup> Elemental principles ordinarily lead to foundationalist philosophies, as in Democritus, Plotinus, Hume, or Russell. But they can also be used, as in the Hellenistic Skeptics and Wittgenstein, as a foundation for antifoundationalism. The case is the converse of Descartes' use of the personal perspective, which is ordinarily anti-foundational, to establish a foundation. The true antifoundational principles are the creative principles, which do not counter contingency with human solidarity, but begin from the contingency. Because of their arbitrariness, they lend themselves to antifoundationalist uses, but, once laid down, they can become foundations. They have been used by the Sophists, St. Augustine, Locke, Heidegger, Whitehead, Dewey, Sartre, and many others.

Among the non-contingent starting-points are the reflexive principles of Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Husserl, which serve as foundations for their sciences. A conspicuous variety of foundationalism unites reflexive principles with the logistic method, as in Descartes, Spinoza, and Husserl. Comprehensive principles, as in Confucius, Plato, Leibniz, and Comte, are antifoundational in the sense that we can never wholly know or possess them, but foundational in the sense of providing ideals toward which we can orient ourselves.

The archic profile that we have found, then, has three Sophistic elements, the ethnocentric perspective, the rhetorical or agonistic method,

and the contingent web of existential reality, and one Democritean element, the desire for solidarity. This is also the profile of Erasmus and Voltaire.<sup>25</sup> A comparison of these three, Erasmus, Voltaire, and Rorty, would provide a welcome variation on the usual comparisons of Rorty with his contemporaries.

All three practice what might be called *serious playfulness*. The seriousness comes from the elemental principles, which provide a moral base for the fun and games. "There is a moral purpose behind this light-mindedness," Rorty says.<sup>26</sup> The ridicule, the making fun of folly, comes from the agonistic method. The opposition is formulated as one between we wise fools, or we who are enlightened, or we heirs of the Enlightenment, on the one hand, and the unenlightened on the other, because the perspective is that of the particular knower. Formal argument or proof is not really possible within this profile, for the existential reality precludes generality and the idiocentric or ethnocentric perspective makes arguments inseparable from the knower. Philosophers and the whole profession or *fach* of philosophy are thus a favorite target for all three. Literature is preferable to philosophy because it can present what is existential rather than abstract and because it can attach positions to particular characters. There is little point in arguing against those who have this profile, as when a theologian replies to Erasmus or a philosopher to Rorty, for there is no argument to argue against, and one will simply provide them with a further occasion for ridicule. It is better to enjoy the ridicule they provide, and every age has suitable targets for ridicule. We are always in need of persons with this profile to help liberate us from our follies. In Rorty's terms, they are among the edifying philosophers, for they are reactive rather than constructive and offer satires, parodies, and aphorisms rather than arguments.<sup>27</sup>

It is often instructive to compare a thinker with those who differ from him in only one archic element, particularly when the comparison is with one of the pure types, Sophistic, Democritean, Platonic, or Aristotelian. (I use the word "Sophist" in a descriptive, not a pejorative, sense, and mark this use by capitalizing the "S.") Rorty resembles the Hellenic Sophists in all but principle. In principle he resembles rather the Hellenistic Sceptics, who replaced the Sophistic concern with rule, power, and the shaping of the future, with indifference and tranquility. For Rorty our self-creations are adaptive and in the interest of the reflective equilibrium of principles and intuitions.<sup>28</sup> A society's "loyalty to itself is morality enough."<sup>29</sup> It is this aspect of Rorty that irritates activists with creative principles and revolutionary agendas.

The primacy in Rorty of what is human, as distinguished from that is independent of us, recalls the humanism of Erasmus and also the humanism of Protagoras' famous opening sentence, "Of all things the

measure is man, of the things that are, how they are, and of the things that are not, how they are not.”<sup>30</sup> The perspective of Rorty’s pragmatism is human and ethnocentric, and does not mirror a reality independent of us. The reality is human and existential, without the generality of essences or Ideas or the physicalist reduction of the physical philosophers. The method is one of human rhetoric or debate, setting vocabularies and descriptions in opposition to one another as alternatives, and does not claim to discover Nature’s Own Vocabulary by means of rules of rationality. The principle is the desire for solidarity with other human beings with which we confront the contingency of all starting-points.

We can see a similarity in more than title between Rorty’s “The World Well Lost” and Gorgias’ “On the Nonexistent or On Nature.” Gorgias’ arguments, viewed as formal proofs, are of doubtful value, yet as a mode of ridiculing his predecessors they are not without interest. We may recall Rorty’s remarks to the effect that he is not trying to prove anything, but only to change the subject. Gorgias’ work can in fact be considered the founding document of antifoundationalism, for in it Gorgias attacks the foundationalism of all his predecessors who had written works on nature. The three theses of Gorgias are “first and foremost, that nothing exists; second, that even if it exists it is inapprehensible to man; third, that even if it is apprehensible, still it is without a doubt incapable of being expressed or explained to the next man.”<sup>31</sup>

The importance of solidarity in Rorty, and the priority of democracy to philosophy, correspond to the need for the arts of Zeus in addition to those of Hephaestus and Athena in the great myth of Plato’s *Protagoras*, although with the difference, resulting from the difference in principle, that Protagoras is concerned with solidarity and conversation not as a ends in themselves, but as sources of power in the struggle for existence. Rorty’s picture of the all-purpose intellectual of the post-Philosophic culture, ready to offer a view on pretty much anything,<sup>32</sup> recalls Plato’s statement about Gorgias, that he makes himself available to any of the Greeks to ask anything he wishes, and there is no one he does not answer.<sup>33</sup> Rorty himself, who is well aware of his intellectual affinities, notes that his vision of the philosophy of the future brings us back to where the Sophists were before Plato invented “philosophical thinking”:

It is so much a part of “thinking philosophically” to be impressed with the special character of mathematical truth that it is hard to shake off the grip of the Platonic Principle [that differences in certainty must correspond to differences in the objects known]. If, however, we think of “rational certainty” as a matter of victory in argument rather than of relation to an object known, we shall look toward our interlocutors rather than to our faculties for the explanation of the phenomenon. If we think of our certainty about the Pythagorean Theorem as our confidence, based on experience with arguments on such matters, that nobody will find an



objection to the premises from which we infer it, then we shall not seek to explain it by the relation of reason to triangularity. Our certainty will be a matter of conversation between persons, rather than a matter of interaction with nonhuman reality. So we shall not see a difference in kind between "necessary" and "contingent" truths. At most, we shall see differences in degree of ease in objecting to our beliefs. We shall, in short, be where the Sophists were before Plato brought his principle to bear and invented "philosophical thinking": we shall be looking for an airtight case rather than an unshakable foundation.<sup>34</sup>

Rorty differs from the Hellenistic Skeptics and Wittgenstein<sup>35</sup> only in his ethnocentric perspective, and from Nietzsche only in using an existential rather than a substrative reality, but I will not pursue these comparisons because they lead away from the problem of understanding antifoundationalism.

## 2. The Foundationalist-Antifoundationalist Opposition as an Antifoundationalist Artifact.

The inquiry into Rorty's archic profile was undertaken not for its own sake but for its bearing on the foundationalist-antifoundationalist controversy. The profile enables us to understand, first of all, why Rorty formulates the issue as an opposition and why the opposed positions are stated as they are. Rorty's method, as we have noted, is the rhetorical presentation of alternatives. His perspective is that of the particular knower, and this leads to a formulation of oppositions in which Rorty and whoever is included in his "we" are on one side and everyone else is on the other. It is "us" versus "them." Thus, for Rorty, perspectives are representationalist or anti-representationalist; realities are essentialist or anti-essentialist; methods are methodical or anti-methodical; we give sense to our lives either by objectivity or by solidarity; philosophy is "traditional philosophy" or "pragmatism." The fundamental opposition is between the primacy of the human, of *anthropos metron*, and of the non-human; the opposition of solidarity and objectivity is just this opposition.

The formulation of oppositions in this way, then, is appropriate to Rorty's position because of its ethnocentric perspective and its rhetorical or agonistic method. From the standpoint of any of the positions on the other side of the oppositions he constructs, this is not an appropriate way of formulating an opposition or a problem. We can see from the many different ways in which the archic elements lend themselves to foundational uses that from the side of foundationalism the simple contrast between foundationalism and antifoundationalism will need to be reformulated to suit the profile of the foundationalist.

The opposition between "traditional philosophy" and "pragmatism" is cast in the historical terms required by an existential reality. It is not presented, for example, as an opposition of essential possibilities, but as an opposition of old and new, of traditional Philosophy, with a capital "P," and the lower case philosophy of the future. The old Philosophy we may hope will fade away, like that old soldier, theology. Presenting the opposition as one between the old and the new is again not an acceptable way of stating the opposition for those in other modes. For the essentialist, for example, the opposition between the Sophists and the Others is as old as the history of philosophy, and the narrative of the Others fading away and leaving the Sophists in possession of the field has little plausibility.

The reasons why the Sophist presents his views as replacing those of the whole previous tradition lie in the nature of Sophistic itself. Its perspective is that of the knower and his own time, its reality is the existential present, which really is different from anything in the past, its method of rhetorical challenge lends itself to claiming a radical break with the past, and its principles, if they are creative, make the Sophist himself the agent of change. If the principles are elemental, as in Rorty, they can be used to deflate the pretensions of rationalism. In either case the Sophist rightly sees himself as different from anything that has preceded him, and at most there can be a family resemblance between himself and earlier philosophers.

The same factors that relate the Sophist to his own time rather than to an atemporal reality lead subsequent generations to dismiss the Sophists as peripheral, or perhaps as not philosophers at all, and thus to marginalize their tradition. When I speak of the Sophistic tradition I mean to include not only those with the pure sophistic profile, but also those in whom Sophistic elements predominate, such as Cicero, Sextus Empiricus, John of Salisbury, Erasmus, Montaigne, Voltaire, Berkeley, and William James. No matter how prominent these philosophers may be in their own time, they tend to be marginalized by subsequent generations. When Rorty distinguishes peripheral from mainstream philosophers, he cites William James as peripheral, whereas Peirce is in his terms mainstream.<sup>36</sup> Or think of the many well-known Sophists of the Hellenic period -- Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Thrasymachus, Hippias, Antiphon, Critias, Isocrates -- and compare them with the one Plato whose decidedly odd views could hardly be called mainstream. The Platonic Socrates repeatedly notes that his views are shared by very few.<sup>37</sup> That man is the measure of all things is what "they" say, according to the Athenian Stranger in the *Lysis*.<sup>38</sup> Isocrates boasts that he has had more pupils than all the rest put together who are occupied with philosophy<sup>39</sup> -- the Academy was no match for his school in popularity. But later

generations of philosophers find that they have more to learn from the one Plato than from the many Sophists, and so he becomes mainstream and they become peripheral. Kirk and Raven in their book, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, for example, exclude the Sophists altogether. This retrospective marginalizing of the Sophists is what makes it plausible for Rorty to treat the foundationalists as mainstream and the antifoundationalists as peripheral.

Rorty is well aware of the ephemeral character of his kind of philosophy: "Great systematic philosophers, like great scientists, build for eternity. Great edifying philosophers destroy for the sake of their own generation."<sup>40</sup> "The best hope for an American philosopher is Andy Warhol's promise that we shall *all* be superstars, for approximately fifteen minutes apiece."<sup>41</sup>

Rorty's narrative, then, makes his pragmatism a break with the mainstream philosophical tradition since Plato. The fitting of individual philosophers to the two sides of this traditional-novel opposition also occasions differences between Rorty and others. To make Plato look traditional, it is enough to rely, as Rorty does, on the commonplaces that pass for his doctrines, it being supposed that every philosopher must have doctrines. This is why Rorty's picture of Plato strikes a Platonist such as Stanley Rosen as little more than a caricature. Rorty's agonistic method leads him to set Plato and himself in opposition, whereas Rosen's dialectical method leads him to suggest their hidden identity:

Rorty's pluralism, rejection of foundations, criticism of dualism, and invocation to conversation and intellectual experimentation, are all good things. As a Platonist of the kind that finds no place, either in Rorty's book or in most analytical accounts of Plato, I embrace them all. Perhaps it is not altogether false to suggest that inside every hermeneuticist, a Platonist is struggling to emerge.<sup>42</sup>

While Plato is forced into the role of opponent, John Dewey is forced into the opposite role of ally. Dewey in fact has no archic elements in common with Rorty, yet Rorty manages to recreate him in his own image. The contrast between Rorty's method and Dewey's is particularly striking: Rorty's method sets positions in agonistic opposition to each other, whereas Dewey's method seeks to undercut such oppositions in order to discover and solve genuine problems. This is one reason why it seems to Richard Bernstein that Rorty does violence to Dewey.<sup>43</sup> Since Rorty has no archic elements in common with either Plato or Dewey, he could equally well, and perhaps with more interesting results, have made Plato an anti-traditionalist ally and Dewey a traditionalist opponent.

Violence in interpretation is not only permissible but desirable from the standpoint of the Sophistic profile, for a text, like the world, is in itself

indeterminate, and the problem is to use it effectively. The pragmatist, according to Rorty, will offer us what Harold Bloom calls "strong misreadings":

The critic asks neither the author nor the text about their intentions but simply beats the text into a shape which will serve his own purpose. He does this by imposing a vocabulary -- a "grid," in Foucault's terminology -- on the text which may have nothing to do with any vocabulary used in the text or by its author, and seeing what happens.<sup>44</sup>

What is important about Rorty's narrative is not that it be historically correct, for there is no such correctness, but that it be effective. The commonplace Plato and the almost unrecognizable Dewey are strong misreadings that serve Rorty's purpose.

Rorty's narrative of foundational philosophy gone wrong and, so it is hoped, about to be replaced by antifoundationalism is thus essentially an artifact of his own antifoundationalism. If it is taken seriously, it will not be accepted by those with other archic profiles, to whom it will seem only a rhetorical myth that falsifies the past and dreams idly about the future. It will seem neither to state nor to solve any philosophic problem. It will represent progress only in the sense appropriate to Rorty's philosophy, for it keeps the conversation going, even if going nowhere.

### 3. Is Philosophic Disagreement a Threat to Solidarity?

I now want to turn to the genuine concern or problem that may be supposed to motivate Rorty's attack on philosophy. Rorty says his best argument against the tradition is that it is not working any more, that it is not doing its job:

The best argument we partisans of solidarity have against the realistic partisans of objectivity is Nietzsche's argument that the traditional Western metaphysico-epistemological way of firming up our beliefs simply isn't working anymore. It isn't doing its job.<sup>45</sup>

Not only is philosophy not doing its job now, it apparently never did, for it has been a failure for many centuries. When the realist says that truth consists in a correspondence of sentences to the world, "the pragmatist can only fall back on saying, once again, that many centuries of attempts to explain what "correspondence" is have failed, especially when it comes to explaining how the final vocabulary of future physics will somehow be Nature's Own."<sup>46</sup>

I would have supposed that Peirce gives Rorty exactly what he is asking for here, as other objectivists also have, each in his own way. And when we turn to the special arts and sciences, we find that those who hold the belief that Rorty is opposing, the belief that we should endeavor to know nature as it truly is, have produced and continue to produce success after success -- Newton, Darwin, Max Weber, Freud, Einstein. If we judge this belief pragmatically, by its consequences, we should celebrate and cherish it, not condemn it and look forward to its disappearance. And the same holds for the other *archai* and for the philosophies in which they have been examined and defended, for they have all in their various ways been successful.

What then does Rorty mean when he says that traditional philosophy has failed? He means, I think, that it has not produced agreement. Agreement is in general not essential to the philosophers he is criticizing, who seek to state the truth regardless of whether anyone agrees with it or not. Agreement is essential to Rorty, however, because he has nothing outside the conversation to serve as a ground for beliefs, and philosophic disagreement seems to jeopardize human solidarity. I propose in what follows to consider whether philosophic disagreement need be a bar to human solidarity.

One way to reconcile philosophic disagreement and human solidarity is to privatize philosophy and seek a politics and a kind of community that do not depend on philosophic convictions. This is the path that Rorty has followed. There is another and an opposite path, which has been explored by pluralism. This path seeks solidarity not by relegating philosophic differences to the private domain, but by affirming their value in all domains. This solution requires that it be possible for different philosophies, each for its own reasons, to appreciate the possibility and value of pluralism.

We may note that simply as a matter of fact it is possible for persons with different philosophies to comprise a single *ethnos* in Rorty's sense. Consider for example the galaxy of seventeenth century European philosophers who sought to justify their beliefs to one another and among whom more or less fruitful conversation was possible: Hobbes, Gassendi, Descartes, Arnauld, Boyle, Huygens, Spinoza, Locke, Newton, and Leibniz. But the solidarity of such a group is perhaps rather minimal, and the mere fact of its existence gives us no insight into the reasons why it is possible.

In seeking these reasons, we may observe first that Rorty's own view provides an obvious ground for including foundationalists in the conversation. If it is thought that an adequate philosophy must correspond to the way the world really is, that it must be written in Nature's Own Language, then each philosophy is in contradictory and

incompatible oppositions to the others. But if "there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones -- no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of the objects, or of the mind, or of language,"<sup>47</sup> then different philosophies simply lead to alternative hypotheses that open up the way to progress in investigation and to intelligibility in the comparison of doctrines. In viewing foundationalist philosophies as incompatible with each other and with his own view, Rorty seems to be retaining an element from the very outlook he is condemning. As McKeon says in a paper in which he has analyzed the various conceptions of time and temporality:

If these variations in the meanings and instances of time were presented as an account of doctrines or of statements alleged to be true, they would each be in contradictory and incompatible oppositions to the others. Since they have been presented as a pattern of commonplace possibilities for analysis, inquiry, and application, they stand instead in the relation of alternatives which focus on different aspects of time brought to the attention by different temporalities from which time takes its meanings. As alternatives they open up the way to progress in the investigation of time and the way to intelligibility in the comparison of doctrines of time developed in different philosophies in different cultures and at different times in each tradition.<sup>48</sup>

But to show that Rorty's philosophy is consistent with a genuine pluralism is not to solve the general problem. The general problem, as has been said, requires one to show that a similar possibility exists for philosophies of all kinds. And the remarkable fact is that the development of philosophic pluralism in its multiple forms has shown precisely this. Each of the perspectives distinguished earlier has its characteristic reasons for the existence of pluralism.<sup>49</sup> If one's perspective is ethnocentric, different philosophies within an *ethnos* result from differences in the individual knowers. If one thinks of the mind as a mirror of nature, one can follow Stephen Pepper and explain the differences of philosophies not in terms of the peculiarities of knowers but as the result of the fact that different world hypotheses have proved relatively adequate and at present we have no way of deciding which, if any, is correct. If one thinks that any human perspective is limited and partial, one can follow Wayne Booth and see the cause of pluralism in an inexhaustible truth that transcends and validates any particular and necessarily fragmentary portion of it. If one thinks that the mind in its autonomy constitutes its philosophies, one can do as I have done and show that an ineluctable pluralism results from a reciprocal priority of principles such that each subsumes all the others.<sup>50</sup>

The problem of the relation of philosophic disagreement to human solidarity is not adequately resolved by showing that philosophic pluralism is possible within any perspective. What remains to be shown is

the value of such a pluralism. Rorty says, for example, "Whatever good the ideas of 'objectivity' and 'transcendence' have done for our culture can be attained equally well by the idea of a community which strives after both intersubjective agreement and novelty -- a democratic, progressive, pluralist community of the sort of which Dewey dreamt."<sup>51</sup> Rorty here suggests that a community without objectivists and transcendentalists, a community in which everyone has more or less the philosophic views of Rorty, could attain all the good that a more pluralistic community could attain, that the Great Conversation of Robert Maynard Hutchins, in which everybody is to speak his mind,<sup>52</sup> could just as well be replaced by the diminished conversation of Rorty, in which the voice of foundationalism is no longer heard. The diminution is no small one, for the Great Conversation consists mainly of the voices of foundationalists, with the anti-foundationalists often central in their own time but ultimately peripheral.

Few, I think, would prefer the diminished conversation. William James brought Josiah Royce to Harvard and did what he could for Peirce as well. And it is not only in philosophy that objectivists and transcendentalists are needed, but in all the arts and sciences. The role of the diversity of philosophic principles in the special arts and sciences has been a particular concern of philosophical pluralists, including McKeon, Pepper, Booth, and myself. In a passage that anticipates Thomas Kuhn's distinction between normal and revolutionary science, but that relates the distinction, as Kuhn does not, to philosophic interpretations, methods, and principles, McKeon says:

In the sciences consensus is possible because the statement of laws and principles is tested by repeated use of the same method in application to the same things. The increase of knowledge is therefore cumulative in the history of science, since principles can be held by experts, at least for a time, and can be modified and improved to explain, order, or control the subject matter to which they are applied. The problems of science assume something of a philosophic character whenever the development of novel methods makes new or different facts relevant to a subject-matter or to a problem and whenever scientists differ on the interpretation of facts or the validity of principles. At such points the progressive accumulation of knowledge in the history of the sciences is punctuated by the abrupt formulation of new principles (or the reassertion of abandoned principles rendered more plausible by fuller knowledge) and by the recognition of new facts (or the rediscovery of discredited facts rendered more relevant by fuller exploration of their contexts.)<sup>53</sup>

The consequences of philosophic principles are worked out in the special arts and sciences, and therefore the examination of these principles in philosophy complements their use in the special arts and sciences. The principles examined in philosophy acquire concrete

significance in the special arts and sciences, and the use of principles in the special arts and sciences is enlightened by their examination in philosophy. The multiplicity of philosophic approaches, including ideals of objectivity and transcendence, far from being a hindrance to progress in the special arts and sciences, has everywhere contributed to it. I think I can best make clear the value of a pluralism that countenances different philosophic approaches, foundationalist as well as antifoundationalist, by showing how the different approaches complement each other in actual inquiry. The inquiry I shall examine concerns the relation between Dalton's atoms and Gay-Lussac's gaseous volumes.

John Dalton founded his new system of chemical philosophy on the concept of elementary atoms from which compound atoms are derived by composition. One cannot of course directly observe atoms or the ratios in which they combine, and Dalton was guided in his assignment of molecular formulas by his rules of chemical synthesis, which in turn depended on his conception of atoms as centers of force attracting atoms different in kind and repelling atoms of the same kind. If only one compound of two elements can be obtained, its compound atoms are presumed binary, that is, composed of two atoms, one of each element. If two compounds can be obtained, one is presumed binary and the other ternary, that is, composed of two atoms of one element and one of the other. The ternary compound is presumed to be the one with the greater gaseous density. If three compounds can be obtained, one is presumed binary and two ternary, and so on.

These rules yield for water the formula HO, not H<sub>2</sub>O. (For convenience, I use the familiar notation of Berzelius rather than the pictographic notation of Dalton, which has, however, the advantage of exhibiting the structure of the molecule.) His formulas for the oxides of nitrogen fared better than his formula for water: NO, N<sub>2</sub>O, NO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>3</sub>, and N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. The formula for water together with the weights of hydrogen and oxygen that enter into its composition determine the relative atomic weights of hydrogen and oxygen. Similarly, the formulas for the oxides of nitrogen together with the weights of nitrogen and oxygen that enter into their composition determine the relative atomic weights nitrogen and oxygen. Once we know the atomic weights of both hydrogen and nitrogen relative to oxygen, we also know their weights relative to each other. The formula for ammonia then follows directly from these atomic weights and the weights of nitrogen and hydrogen that enter into its composition. Thus the arbitrariness in the assignment of molecular formulas diminishes as the system expands. If Dalton had had accurate combining weights for water, the oxides of nitrogen, and ammonia, he would have been obliged to assign ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) the formula N<sub>2</sub>H<sub>3</sub>. But he argues that the data are consistent with a binary formula for ammonia, NH. At the end of his work, Dalton presents a table of thirty-six atomic weights and the



formulas for fifty-one compounds, "all the compounds which have hitherto obtained a tolerably good analysis." The implications of this table are in rough agreement with the rough experimental data that were then available.

Gay-Lussac, like Dalton, sought a foundation for the whole of chemistry, but instead of the Democritean distinction between the simple and the compound he used the Platonic distinction between the uniform and the variable, and sought a foundation in uniform laws that are the same for all bodies. He begins his "Memoir on the Combination of Gaseous Substances with One Another" as follows:

Bodies possess, in the solid, liquid, or gaseous state, some properties that are independent of the force of cohesion; but they also have others that appear to be modified by this force, very variable in its intensity, and which then no longer follow any uniform law (*loi reguliere*). The same compression applied to all solid or liquid substances would produce a diminution of volume different for each of them, while it would be equal for all elastic fluids. Similarly, heat expands all bodies; but the expansion of liquids and solids have hitherto afforded no uniform law, and it is again only those of elastic fluids which are equal and independent of the nature of each gas. The attraction of the molecules in solids and liquids is therefore the cause that modifies their specific properties; and it appears that it is only when it is entirely destroyed, as in gases, that bodies, being placed in like circumstances, present simple and uniform laws. At least, I am going to make known some new properties in gases, whose effects are uniform, by proving that these substances combine amongst themselves in very simple ratios, and that the contraction of volume which they undergo on combination also follows a uniform law. I hope by this to give a proof of what some very distinguished chemists have advanced, that the time is perhaps not far off when it will be possible to submit the greater part of chemical phenomena to calculation.<sup>54</sup>

When the two systems of chemistry are juxtaposed, the one based on indivisible atoms and the other on the simple numerical ratios of gaseous volumes, the problem immediately arises as to how the atoms are related to the volumes. Dalton saw at once that Gay-Lussac's

Dalton abandoned the hypothesis that equal volumes of different gases contain equal numbers of molecules because if equal volumes of nitrogen

notion of measures is analogous to mine of atoms; and if it could be proved that all elastic fluids have the same number of atoms in the same volume, or numbers that are as 1, 2, 3, &c. the two hypotheses would be the same, except that mine is universal and his applies only to elastic fluids. Gay-Lussac could not see (page 188, Part 1. of this work) that a similar hypothesis had been entertained by me, and abandoned as untenable.<sup>55</sup>

and oxygen could be united to form nitrous gas (NO), there would be only a slight reduction in the total volume while the number of particles would be reduced by one half:

It is evident the number of ultimate particles or molecules in a given weight or volume of one gas is not the same as in another: for, if equal measures of azotic and oxygenous gases were mixed, and could be instantly united chemically, they would form nearly two measures of nitrous gas, having the same weight as the two original measures; but the number of ultimate particles could at most be one half of that before the union. No two elastic fluids, probably, therefore, have the same number of particles, either in the same volume or the same weight.<sup>56</sup>

Dalton did not think the experimental data justified Gay-Lussac's conclusion that gases combine in simple integral ratios by volume. In fact, he thought that they justified the contrary conclusion, that gases never combine in simple integral ratios by volume: "The truth is, I believe, that gases do not unite in equal or exact measures in any one instance; when they appear to do so, it is owing to the inaccuracy of our experiments."<sup>57</sup> Different philosophic conceptions, of an idealized reality and of a physical reality, here result in contrary interpretations of the same data, both defensible. An ideal mathematical gas is not a physical gas.

An Aristotelian teleological principle made it possible to unite the results of Dalton with those of Gay-Lussac. Avogadro replaced Dalton's indivisible atoms and Gay-Lussac's uniform laws with a conception of a natural norm of molecular mass functioning as a final cause, a conception not unlike G. N. Lewis' later conception of stable electron shells that he used to explain the bonds between like atoms that Avogadro had discovered. Avogadro's conception enabled him to accept the hypothesis that equal volumes of all gases contain equal numbers of molecules, and thus to use Gay-Lussac's law to confirm or rectify Dalton's results: "Our hypothesis, supposing it well founded, puts us in a position to confirm or rectify his results from precise data, and, above all, to assign the size of compound molecules from the volumes of the gaseous compounds, which depend in part on the division of molecules of which this physicist had no idea."<sup>58</sup> Avogadro points out that his hypothesis implies that if water, ammonia, nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), and nitrous gas (NO) were to be formed directly from their elements, the resulting molecules must divide into two:

Thus in all these cases there must be a division of the molecule into two; but it is possible that in other cases the division might be into four, eight, etc. The possibility of this division of compound molecules could even have been conjectured a priori; for without it the integral molecules of bodies composed of several substance and having a rather large number of

molecules would be of an excessive mass in comparison with molecules of simple substances; we could therefore have thought that nature had some means of bringing them back to the order of the latter, and the facts have pointed out to us the existence of this means.<sup>59</sup>

This splitting of the compound molecules entailed the splitting of Dalton's atoms, and Dalton had therefore rejected Avogadro's hypothesis before Avogadro stated it. "Thou knows. . . no man can split an atom," Dalton is reported to have said.<sup>60</sup>

Avogadro saw clearly that Dalton's and Gay-Lussac's results taken together implied two extraordinary consequences, but both of these consequences were *prima facie* implausible, and neither was supported by independent evidence. The first was that there can be a chemical bond between atoms of the same element. If, as Dalton thought, atoms are centers of force attracting atoms different in kind and repelling those of the same kind, it is not possible that atoms of the same kind should unite to form a stable molecule.<sup>61</sup> The second, stated in Avogadro's language, but easily translated into a proposition in the kinetic theory of gases, was that "the molecules in gases being at such a distance that their mutual attraction cannot be exercised between them, their different attraction for caloric may be limited to condensing a greater or less quantity around them, without the atmosphere formed by this fluid having any greater extent for some than for others, and, consequently without the distance between the molecules varying."<sup>62</sup>

The issue of the relation between Dalton's atoms and Gay-Lussac's volumes therefore remained unresolved within the scientific community as a whole for fifty years, until the Karlsruhe congress of 1860. The resolution depended upon yet a fourth philosophic view, the Sophistic phenomenalism of Cannizzaro. Atoms for Cannizzaro were not physical particles attracting and repelling each other according to some law of force, but simply the greatest common factors in properly constructed tables of component weights.<sup>63</sup> Mendeleev, who was present at the Karlsruhe congress, describes it as follows:

I well remember how great was the difference of opinion, and how a compromise was advocated with great acumen by many scientific men, and with what warmth the followers of Gerhardt, at whose head stood the Italian professor Cannizzaro, followed the consequences of the law of Avogadro. In the spirit of freedom . . . a compromise was not arrived at, nor ought it to have been, but instead the truth, in the form of the law of Avogadro-Gerhardt, received. . . a wider development, and soon afterwards convinced all minds.<sup>64</sup>

Let me note three points about this episode. First, Platonic, Democritean, Aristotelian, and Sophistic elements all contributed, in their distinctive ways, to the final resolution. In Dalton we see the power of

indivisible atoms, in Gay-Lussac the power of abstract form, in Avogadro the far-reaching power of mind, and in Cannizzaro the power of working with the way things appear to us as a means of achieving human solidarity. Second, any one of these approaches, taken alone, would have been less successful than their synergy. If Dalton refused to recognize Gay-Lussac's discovery even after it was made, it is not likely that he would have made it himself, and if both Dalton and Gay-Lussac rejected Avogadro's reconciliation of their views, it is unlikely that either of them would have pursued Avogadro's hypothesis in the thoroughgoing way that Cannizzaro did. And if Cannizzaro had not had the results of his foundationalist predecessors, he would have had nothing to apply his method to. It is not the case that the result of this episode could have been attained equally well if all the chemists had been following the method of Cannizzaro. Third, if Rorty or anyone else aspires to be the Cannizzaro of philosophy, achieving solidarity by setting aside foundational questions, he should note that Cannizzaro did not use the setting aside of foundational questions as a way of rejecting the achievements of his foundationalist predecessors, but as a way of accepting them. This is why he was successful in convincing all minds.

1. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).
2. Ford compiled a full bibliography of systematic pluralism through 1988, which was printed in his *Systematic Pluralism* Vol. I, No. 1 (Fall, 1988). The term "systematic pluralism" appears to have been first used by Henry Alonzo Myers in "Systematic Pluralism in Spinoza and Hegel," *The Monist* 45 (1935): 237-63, but in a sense different from that intended here. Ford organized a memorable first meeting of systematic pluralists of all kinds that took place in April, 1990. He also edited the July, 1990, issue of *The Monist* (Vol. 73, No. 3) on the general topic of Systematic Pluralism.
3. For Pepper's pluralism, see Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1942), *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), and *Concept and Quality: A World Hypothesis* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1967).
4. "Philosophic Semantics and Philosophic Inquiry" has been published in Richard McKeon, *Freedom and History and Other Essays*, ed. Zahava K. McKeon (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 235-56. McKeon's systematic pluralism is, paradoxically, not a system, and is expressed in his many articles taken as a whole. *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (1986): 654-62 has a nearly complete bibliography of his published books and articles; it lists 11 books and 158 articles.
5. See David Dilworth, *Philosophy in World Perspective: A Comparative Hermeneutic of the Major Theories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), and Walter Watson, *The*

*Architectonics of Meaning* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

6. See Wayne C. Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
7. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 12.
8. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 84, art. 1, in *Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Modern Library, 1948), p. 379.
9. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers, Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 13.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
11. Montaigne, *Essays* Bk. II, chap 13: *Of Experience*, in *The Essays of Montaigne*, trans. E. J. Trechman (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.), Vol. II, p. 600.
12. *Discourse on Method*, Part II, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), Vol. I, p. 90.
13. "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres," in *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, ed. Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 49.
14. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 123.
15. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 365-66.
16. *Consequences of Pragmatism*. (Essays: 1972-1980) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 108.
17. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 369.
18. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 164.
19. *Nicomachean Ethics* iii. 3. 1112b20.
20. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 194.
21. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 30.
22. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 316.
23. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 166.
24. "Thugs and Theorists: A Reply to Bernstein," *Political Theory* 15 (1987): 578, n. 24.
25. See Dilworth, *Philosophy in World Perspective*, Index. To work out for the first time the archic profile of a thinker is a difficult and time-consuming task, and it is easy to go wrong. The great merit of Dilworth's book is that it makes readily available the archic profiles of all the major figures in all the philosophic traditions of the world.
26. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 193.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.* p. 184.
29. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 369.
30. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 199.
31. Protagoras DK 80 B 1.
32. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. xxxix.
33. Gorgias DK 82 B 3, trans. George Kennedy in *The Older Sophists*, ed. Rosamond Kent Sprague (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), p. 42.
34. *Meno*, 70B.
35. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 156-7.
36. That Wittgenstein has the profile of the Hellenistic Skeptics was one of Dilworth's discoveries; see especially *Philosophy in World Perspective*, pp. 132-33, nn. 28, 29.
37. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 367-8.
38. See, for example, *Crito*, 49D or *Gorgias*, 472A.
39. *Laws*, iv. 716C.
40. *Antidosis*, 41.
41. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 369.
42. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 216.
43. S[tanley] R[osen], *Review of Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Review of*

*Metaphysics* 33 (1979-80): 801.

44. Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), p. 205, n. 48, which refers us to Bernstein's "Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind," *Review of Metaphysics* 33 (1980): 745-76.

45. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 151.

46. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 33.

47. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. xxvi.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

49. Richard McKeon, "Time and Temporality," *Philosophy East and West* 24 (1974): 127.

50. See Walter Watson, "Types of Pluralism," *The Monist* 73 (1990): 350-76.

51. Robert M. Hutchins, *The Great Conversation: The Substance of a Liberal Education* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), p. 1: "The tradition of the West is embodied in the Great Conversation that began in the dawn of history and that continues to the present day. . . . Everybody is to speak his mind."

52. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 13.

53. Richard McKeon, "Philosophy and Method," *Journal of Philosophy* 48 (1951): 654.

For the relation between the philosophic and scientific treatment of basic concepts, see Richard McKeon, "Process and Function," *Dialectica* 7 (1953): 191-231. For the relation of scientific and philosophic revolutions, see "Scientific and Philosophic Revolutions," in *Science and Contemporary Society*, ed. Frederick J. Crosson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), pp. 23-56. For a survey of McKeon's contributions to the philosophy of science, see Walter Watson, "Reconceiving the Philosophy of Science" in *The Power of a Pluralistic Truth: Essays on the Work of Richard McKeon*, ed. Wayne C. Booth and Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

54. J. L. Gay-Lussac, "Memoir on the Combination of Gaseous Substances with One Another," *Memoires de la Société d'Arcueil* 2 (1809): 207-34.

55. John Dalton, *New System of Chemical Philosophy*, Part II (Manchester: 1810), p. 556.

56. *Ibid.*, Part I (Manchester: 1808), pp. 70-71.

57. *Ibid.*, Part II (Manchester: 1810), p. 559.

58. A. Avogadro, "Essai d'une manière de déterminer les masses relatives des molécules élémentaires des corps, et les proportions selon lesquelles elles entrent dans ces combinaisons," *Journal de Physique* 73 (1811): 58-76, sec. iii.

59. *Ibid.*, sec. ii.

60. See John Dalton, "Observations on Dr. Bostock's Review of the Atomic Principles of Chemistry," *Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, and the Arts* 39 (1811): 145-48.

61. Avogadro, "Essai," sec. i.

62. J. R. Partington, *A History of Chemistry*, Vol. III (London: 1962), p. 806.

63. Stanislao Cannizzaro, *Sketch of a Course of Chemical Philosophy*, Alembic Club Reprint No. 18 (Edinburgh: 1910), trans. J[ames] W[alker] from *Il Nuovo Cimento* 3 (1858): 321-66.

64. Dmitri Mendeleev, *Principles of Chemistry* (1905), Vol. I, p. 341; quoted by J. R. Partington, *A History of Chemistry*, Vol. IV (London: 1964), p. 489.

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GAME THEORY AND THE VIRTUES:  
THE NEW AND IMPROVED  
NARROWLY COMPLIANT  
DISPOSITION\*

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Two approaches to moral philosophy could hardly be more different than ancient virtue ethics and contemporary contractarianism. The former is abundant in its assumptions about human nature; it emphasizes historical continuities, particularized contexts, and “ordinary language;” it embraces a highly intuitive mode of drawing conclusions. The latter, by contrast, is austere in its assumptions about human nature; it is atemporal, non-contextual, and utilizes a specialized, “high-tech” vocabulary; it purports to be mathematically rigorous. As a (modern) paradigm of the former, consider Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*.<sup>1</sup> And as a paradigm of the latter, consider David Gauthier’s *Morals By Agreement* (henceforth MBA).<sup>2</sup> Yet, in spite of the radical differences between these two types of moral theorizing, I believe that each could benefit by accommodating the strengths of the other. Game theory, the essential tool of contemporary contractarianism, can be used to tighten up virtue ethics, just as an appreciation of the traditional virtues can suggest

fruitful avenues for game theory to explore. I have criticized MacIntyre's approach as being too loose and indeterminate elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Here I would like to subject Gauthier's views to criticism to show how some of the more traditional virtues which he ignores can be given a game-theoretic rationale.<sup>4</sup>

Gauthier advocates "narrow compliance." By this he means the disposition to respect free market rights whenever interaction is parametric; and whenever interaction is strategic, to co-operate with only those agents who in turn co-operate only in ways which yield nearly optimal and fair outcomes.<sup>5</sup> These outcomes are defined according to Gauthier's principle of minimax relative concession (MRC). This principle requires a distribution of the proceeds of co-operation in such a way that the largest concession any co-operator makes, relative to his maximal possible gain from co-operation, is as small a relative concession as is possible for anyone to make.

In this paper I argue that Gauthier misidentifies the *moral content* of the narrowly compliant disposition. Narrow compliance, as just specified, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for rational social interaction, even among individuals who do not care about each other's interests; moral dispositions which go beyond this conception of narrow compliance are rational. In defending this claim, I extend Gauthier's mode of argument to some more traditional moral dispositions (e.g. reciprocal altruism, forgiveness, fortitude, moderation, and broad-mindedness), concluding that moral life is far more complicated than Gauthier represents it as being. Further, these complications pose serious problems for his demonstration of the strict rationality of narrow compliance. A weaker conclusion is indicated, such as that the common-sense institution of morality is not unreasonable.

The "Archimedean lever" by which Gauthier hopes to move the moral world is social ostracism only. If you are not narrowly compliant (if, for example, you are not co-operative enough because you maximize utility without constraint, or if, on the other hand, you are too co-operative because you interact with people who co-operate on terms less favorable to themselves than MRC), then it will be rational for other members of society to deny you the benefits of social interaction. In the long run you will lose more by this denial than you can hope to gain through not being narrowly compliant. Or so Gauthier claims. But obvious exceptions are ready to hand: imagine refusing to commission a life-saving work for a Mozart or a Marilyn Monroe simply because they co-operate with others on terms more generous than MRC! Some people possess special non-moral characteristics (e.g. genius, beauty, a sense of humor; in general "talents") which it would be more costly for some members of society to ignore than to cater to.<sup>6</sup> It is not rational to be *too* moralistic, to interact *only* with morally impeccable people. But Gauthier's theory

would require us to be moralistic to the point of ignoring our own utility functions when contemplating *specific* interactions with talented individuals who are not narrow compliers, since co-operating with them will tend in the long run to unravel his ideal co-operative society. (This is the burden of his argument at MBA, pp. 178ff.)

In this respect, Gauthier's theory is excessively demanding in a moralistic way. Compare D.A.J. Richards' "principle of mutual love requiring that people should not show personal affection and love to others on the basis of arbitrary physical characteristics alone, but rather on the basis of traits of personality and character related to acting on moral principles."<sup>7</sup> Commenting on this passage, Bernard Williams says, "This righteous absurdity is no doubt to be traced to a feeling that love, even love based on 'arbitrary physical characteristics,' is something which has enough power and even authority to conflict badly with morality unless it can be brought within it from the beginning. . ." Although Gauthier defends "free affectivity," the right to choose one's own emotional ties, he nevertheless, like Richards, must suppose that the power and authority of *all* talents can be brought within morality from the beginning, if there are to be no conflicts between the demands of his narrow compliance and rationality. I doubt that this can be done by any of the arguments Gauthier allows himself. Special talents give their possessors a lever by which they can nudge the moral world in their favor though, of course, how far they can deviate from narrow compliance depends upon how much weight their talents give them in the calculus of interaction, and also upon how many special cases there are.

The plot thickens considerably when it comes to people who are narrow compliers *viz-à-viz* members of their own group, but are straightforward maximizers *viz-à-viz* other groups. It would generally be irrational for members of the discriminated against groups to interact with these discriminators; but is this true also of like-minded members of the discriminating group? Not obviously, particularly when the discriminating group is relatively large. If this is so, and if discriminating groups overlap in very complicated ways, as they do, then it becomes increasingly difficult to say just what morality (and rationality) requires on Gauthier's theory.

Cases involving special talents illustrate that the disposition of narrow compliance, as articulated by Gauthier, is not a necessary condition for rational social interaction. Opportunities for reciprocal altruism illustrate this in another way. It would seem that Gauthier's narrow compliers apply the principle of MRC religiously, to each separate co-operative interaction;<sup>8</sup> and they do so without taking an interest in anyone else's interests. The point I wish to argue now is that the "formal selfishness" of Gauthier's co-operators limits the benefits they can hope to gain from social interaction, relative to what they could obtain if they were to adopt more altruistic dispositions.

Consider cases in which one person could make a tiny concession, in terms of resources, in order to yield an enormous benefit to another. By conceding a mere \$35, Ernest could confer an additional benefit of \$147 upon Adelaide (MBA, pp. 138-9).<sup>9</sup> Now, Gauthier claims that such a concession would be irrational for Ernest to make, since it could never be utility maximizing for him unless coercively exacted. He explains, "...it would be irrational for an individual to dispose herself to voluntarily making unproductive transfers to others. An unproductive transfer brings no new goods into being and involves no exchange of existing goods; it simply redistributes some existing goods from one person to another. Thus it involves a utility cost for which no benefit is received, and a utility gain for which no service is provided" (MBA, p. 197). It would seem that the kind of transfers presently under consideration are "unproductive" in this sense.

However, they are not necessarily irrational. Although such concessions are not *directly* utility maximizing, they may in some circumstances be *indirectly* utility maximizing. Thus in a society of reciprocal altruists, Ernest could expect Adelaide (or anyone else) to return the favour of making a small concession in order to provide him with a large benefit when circumstances were reversed. This would, in the long run, secure greater benefits all around. (Indeed, this strategy is structurally similar to the solution suggested by Narveson in endnote 9.) Genuine reciprocal altruism, which is different from Gauthier's articulation of narrow compliance, is an indirectly utility-maximizing strategy in a society of reciprocal altruists.<sup>10</sup> The formal selfishness exhibited by Gauthier's co-operators commits agents to an inferior long-run strategy (namely MRC), at least in this limited range of cases. The rationality of MRC is limited by its own presuppositions.

A narrowly compliant person is one with a disposition to co-operate in ways that are *nearly* optimal. Gauthier interprets "nearly" in terms of the *relative* concession an agent makes. For Ernest to concede the \$35 he would get according to MRC would be for him to make a *total* concession; and it would require *no* concession at all from Adelaide. This is as far as one can get from "nearly optimal" on Gauthier's reckoning. But if we interpret "nearly" in terms of the distribution of resources, it is still plausible to see a total concession by Ernest as "nearly optimal" he does not lose much, in terms of resources, in relation to what Gauthier would give him. My suggestion is that we should interpret the narrowly compliant disposition to include reciprocal altruism in cases in which it can be claimed that a total concession is "nearly optimal" in resource distributions, rather than relative concessions. In such cases, perhaps it could be said that the transfer is productive after all: productive of goodwill on the part of the altruist.

So far I have adduced considerations which tend to "broaden" the

allowable range of actions that can be rational under a narrowly compliant disposition. The remaining considerations will introduce bases of discrimination among narrow compliers as more broadly understood above. It is not rational to interact *only* with narrow compliers, as Gauthier understands this disposition; nor is it rational *always* to interact with narrow compliers so understood even where there is a co-operative surplus to be realized. Making this latter point requires some setting up.

The official version of Gauthier's theory sets each person's initial claim at his *maximum utility level* (MBA, p. 134). Now, most of his examples are very simple, typically involving dollar returns; and in discussing these examples, Gauthier makes the always-dangerous simplifying assumption that peoples' utilities are linear with monetary values (MBA, p. 137). But the assumption that people's utilities are linear with the quantity of any particular good is entirely unrealistic. Market theory is based on the idea that declining marginal utilities for goods make trade opportunities abundant. In the ensuing paragraphs, I would like to pursue a more complicated and admittedly fanciful case where the dangerous simplifying assumptions used by Gauthier are relaxed. It is fanciful only because I use a single example to illustrate a number of distinct points, thereby making it extreme.

Here is the scenario: Two children, Veronica and her brother Norm, are given, jointly, ten hours of television viewing time per week, provided that they complete various household tasks. That is, Veronica and Norm must complete a joint venture (household tasks) in order to realize a co-operative surplus (television viewing time). Furthermore, they must decide in advance how they will accomplish this joint venture (i.e. divide up the tasks), and also how they will distribute the surplus.<sup>11</sup> The relevant consideration from the point of view of Gauthier's theory of rational bargaining is the participants' utility functions, so it will help to appreciate the difficulties of the case if we characterize Veronica and Norm a bit more fully. As far as the tasks the costs of the joint strategy go, then, it will be important to note that Norm has a rather typical displeasure threshold. That is, he can tolerate the everyday tasks of life with (near) equanimity. Not so Veronica. She has a very low displeasure threshold, and finds even the most mundane tasks rather taxing upon her patience. Awareness of this throws her into the deepest misery, from which only watching T.V. can rescue her.

Turning now to the benefits, we should note several features of our two protagonists' psychologies. For the most part, Norm has a typical utility function involving declining marginal utilities: he derives most of his viewing pleasure from the first hours of T.V. watching, and steadily less and less the more he watches (but always getting some positive satisfaction therefrom, at least up to the ten hour limit). Veronica, on the other hand, is a "resource monster": she cannot get enough T.V. viewing,

and each additional hour adds at least as much pleasure as the first. In fact, her pleasure seems to feed upon itself; the awareness of having greater pleasure increases her pleasure still more.

Veronica has expensive tastes as far as the T.V. goes. Above all else, she prefers mini-series, which spread themselves out over five or more one-hour segments. Of course, most of the utility she experiences is derived from the final episode, when the plot of the series is resolved; but she cannot miss any of the prior episodes without losing the benefits of the whole series. Norm, by contrast, is happy to watch a disconnected series of one-hour or even half-hour programs; he tends to get rather bored if a show drags itself out for too long.

Norm has reasonably broad tastes in television shows, and can watch comedy, sports, news and documentary, nature and travel, or various other types of programming with almost equal pleasure. He does have distinct preferences, but these preferences are overridable. Thus he would generally prefer to watch two hours of Veronica's most preferred shows to only one hour of his own most preferred show. Veronica, however, is a fanatic. She can be satisfied only by the show she prefers most at any given time. Thus if she had to sit through one of Norm's shows, she would be all but indifferent; she would contemplate the (relative) "loss" she is "suffering" as much as the benefit she is receiving.

Veronica has a best friend, Monique Jones. Monique is an only child, and has her own T.V. Veronica and Monique like nothing better than to chat about their favorite T.V. personalities and shows (which guy is the cutest, what's going to happen next episode, and so on). When Veronica cannot see everything that Monique sees, they are unable to chat as successfully as before, and this displeases her. It also pains her that she is unable to "keep up with the Jones's" in terms of T.V. viewing time, which is something of a status symbol in her circle of friends.<sup>12</sup> Norm and his best friend, on the other hand, rarely talk about T.V. shows. When they are together they create their own enjoyments in the form of playing games.

To summarize: Whereas Norm has a reasonable level of fortitude, Veronica is faint and delicate. Also, Norm's preferences are temperate, moderate, broad-minded, and non-competitive; Veronica is a fanatical and competitive resource monster with expensive tastes. Given these psychological profiles and MRC, we cannot determine whether Norm will end up doing most of the household tasks with a fairly even split of the T.V. viewing time, or whether they will split the tasks evenly with Veronica getting most of the T.V., or what. What we do know is that Veronica's share of the T.V. will be significantly greater than her share of the household tasks.

Intuitively, this seems unfair; one might even say that Veronica exploits Norm's humaneness. Yet Gauthier's explicit theory bars him from seeing

matters that way; he provides no rational basis for criticizing these distributions of tasks and benefits. I would like to suggest that this is a fault of his theory and not of our intuitions. Indeed, our intuitions here can be bolstered by a more careful and intricate application of game-theoretic reasoning. The point I am making is not simply that a utility-defined theory of justice can have bizarre resource-distribution consequences under suitable assumptions. What is special about the above example is that it illustrates various virtues (Norm's) and vices (Veronica's) which should be rationally taken into consideration when deciding upon the terms of interaction -- or when deciding to co-operate at all. Our common-sense intuitions about this case point to an inadequacy of Gauthier's reasoning.

Nothing in the story suggests that Veronica is not a narrow complier, as Gauthier understands this disposition. We may stipulate that she is one. Yet the existence in society of people like Veronica poses a problem for normal folks. Whenever co-operation is required of them,<sup>13</sup> they act like drains on the co-operative surplus in that they command a greater share of the benefits, in resource terms, while contributing less to bringing it about. This is a "public bad" which normal folk could do well without. If Veronica had had character traits more like Norm's, both she and Norm would have done better (in terms of utility) in their interaction. It would be irrational for anyone to interact with Veronica-like people if they had a choice. The vices exhibited by Veronica should be recognized as such, and as a matter of rational interpersonal policy they should be put in their place, not encouraged. Contrariwise, the virtues illustrated by Norm should be encouraged, not frustrated, by social interaction.<sup>14</sup>

What the case of Norm and Veronica illustrates is that preference structures themselves can have a "moral tone." That is, there are morally relevant features of people's preference structures which call for very discriminating responses. Just as Gauthier's constrained maximizers take positive account of the utility levels of those with whom they interact co-operatively (MBA, p. 167), so would my narrow compliers take into account the underlying psychological bases of these utility levels. Rational individuals would attempt to discriminate the characters of those with whom they interact in ways not anticipated by Gauthier. They would, so far as they were able, prevent the mean-spirited, spineless, and utility-consuming Veronicas in society from benefiting abnormally (in terms of resources) from co-operative interaction, just as they would, so far as they were able, exclude straightforward maximizers.<sup>15</sup> A careful application of game-theoretic analysis recommends this to rational people. This conclusion is not fundamentally antithetical to Gauthier's project, it merely extends to some more traditional moral dispositions (fortitude, temperance, moderation, broad-mindedness, etc.) the same rational basis on which Gauthier puts constrained maximization. In so



doing, I believe it makes the contractarian approach to morality much more rich, realistic, and attractive.

Many other virtues and vices can be given a solid game-theoretic rationale as well. An important virtue that deserves special consideration is forgiveness. It is widely acknowledged that Tit-for-Tat the strategy of repaying nonco-operation and co-operation in kind is the best means of securing co-operation in reiterative games in which optimality requires it. Indeed, Tit-for-Tat is an important component of the disposition of narrow compliance, as Gauthier understand it. What he neglects to mention is that when playing Tit-for-Tat, one must be prepared to switch to the co-operative strategy oneself if one's partner relents and shows himself willing to do so also. To hold a grudge after the first unco-operative move is to be locked into nonco-operation, which is suboptimal. Hence the rationality of a disposition to forgive.

Without going on to summarize the literature in this area, I wish to suggest that a new and improved narrowly compliant disposition which is in line with the arguments I have sketched above will not be unrecognizably distant from common-sense morality. (*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*) Perhaps surprisingly, Gauthier's contractarianism, suitably amplified, is very much compatible with a virtue-oriented ethics. This is less surprising if one attends to Gauthier's emphasis on the primacy of dispositions throughout his exposition. He identifies rationality at the level of dispositions virtues and carries through the implications of this for individual acts.

I conclude this paper by suggesting, equally sketchily, that contractarian morality, fully developed along these lines, cannot be demonstrated to be strictly rational. In my view, the most that can be said about the relation between morality and advantage is that, in general, on balance, and in the long run, if one is not too unlucky, these will not often clearly conflict. By this I do not mean that it is a toss-up between adopting the full panoply of moral dispositions on the one hand, and adopting no morality on the other. Rather, it seems to me that there is a "critical mass" of central moral dispositions which are rational requirements of any social interaction; but that beyond these rather minimal requirements, the advantage of specific moral dispositions cannot be strictly demonstrated in the abstract.

If the moral landscape is far more rich and complex than anything Gauthier's explicit theory indicates, this has serious consequences for his arguments for compliance. Indeed, the simplicity of the situation facing Gauthier's moral agents is crucial to his demonstration of the strict rationality of narrow compliance. Gauthier introduces only two complicating factors: that people's dispositions are not completely transparent, and that the general population contains people who practice a mixture of co-operative and nonco-operative strategies (MBA, pp. 174-79). Yet

even these complications force him to qualify seriously his endorsement of constrained maximization. Once we realize that a person can instantiate only a small selection of the wide array of legitimate moral characteristics, each only to a greater or lesser degree, it becomes evidently impossible to distinguish sharply between the sheep and the wolves. Most people inhabit the vast grey area in between. How, then, can ostracism work as a reliable means of shaping social interaction? The Archimedean lever by which Gauthier hopes to move the moral world is in fact rather pliant.

It is highly doubtful that quasi-mathematical calculations will produce compelling results once all of the relevant considerations are factored into the equations. There is no convincing way to carry out a large scale cost-benefit analysis which takes account of all the necessary variables such things as interaction with morally imperfect people who possess special talents, reciprocal altruism, forgiveness, and discrimination of various virtues and vices. In fact, I do not believe that many very specific moral principles, beyond rights to personal security and obligations to honor one's word, can be formally demonstrated to be rational requirements of all social interaction. Morality, it seems to me, is underdetermined by formal, game-theoretic rationality, which is precisely why we must depend upon "practical reason" a more intuitive, contextual mode of appraising moral situations.

Philosophers of science have come to realize that even our most central theories are rationally underdetermined, yet we need not follow Descartes and be frightfully concerned about this. The same is true of morality. What moral theory must do is provide a schedule of values, roughly ordered in terms of centrality and stringency, leaving each society to give shape to these values in their concrete social and political processes. What is not possible, what we should try to avoid, is to derive from pure reason a very fine-grained systematization of moral values, applicable to all societies. Morality is indeed "made" or constructed by agreements, not by philosophers.<sup>16</sup>

\* This paper was written while I was at Jesus College, Oxford, holding a Doctoral Fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I would like to thank G.A. Cohen, Greg Johnson, and some anonymous reviewers for helpful suggestions. I would especially like to thank David Gauthier for his comments on the penultimate version, which I presented at the Canadian Philosophical Association meetings in Kingston, Ontario, in May 1991.

1. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed., (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).
2. David Gauthier, *Morals By Agreement*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 178. 3.

Grant Brown, Review of *After Virtue, Eidos*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (June 1988): pp. 105-10. A footnote in which I suggested how game theory might be used to improve MacIntyre's position was omitted in the published version.

4. In the preface to *Morals By Agreement* Gauthier says, "...the conception of practical rationality that I accept at the root of my argument [i.e. the instrumental, maximizing conception which is foundational to game theory] seems to me the only one capable of withstanding critical examination, and the moral theory that I then develop seems to me, in outline if not in every detail, the only one compatible with that conception of rationality. Yet, as Richard Rorty or Alasdair MacIntyre might remind me, perhaps I lack the vocabulary for talking perspicuously about morality." (p. vi) Here I argue that when we properly work out the details of morality given the approach Gauthier sketches, we come to appreciate how the vocabulary favoured by Rorty and MacIntyre can be accommodated within that approach. Elsewhere I have argued that Gauthier's "constrained maximization" is really a satisficing disposition, as are many of the virtues we intuitively recognize (e.g. moderation and spontaneity). See Grant Brown, "Satisficing Rationality: In Praise of Folly," *Journal of Value Inquiry*; in press.

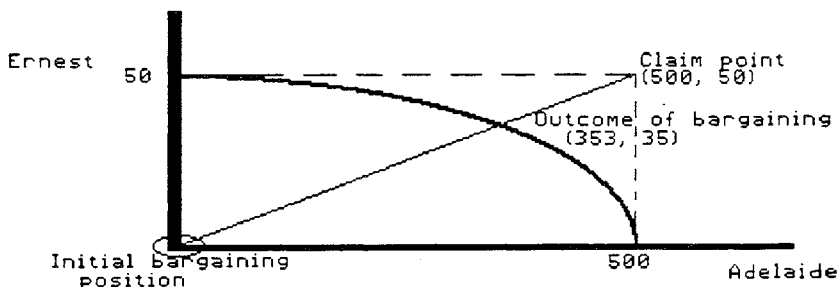
5. Interaction is parametric when the actions chosen by one agent do not affect the payoffs to the other agents. Each agent can therefore regard the payoffs being faced as fixed by the circumstances, with only the agent's own choice of action being a variable. Interaction is strategic when the payoffs to agents depend upon what other agents do. Thus there are interdependencies in strategic interaction, and agents cannot determine their payoffs given only their own actions. The most explored kind of strategic situation is the Prisoners' Dilemma.

6. Gauthier assumes that all members of society are equally and fully rational, but he is not entitled to assume that everyone is equally talented.

7. The principle is advanced by D.A.J. Richards in *A Theory of Reasons for Action*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 94. It, as well as the quotation following in the text, is found in Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 16.

8. As will be noted presently, there is some tension in Gauthier's exposition. In a later article Gauthier notes, "I do not attempt to deal with the relation between macrolevel fulfillment of MRC and microlevel principles of interaction." (Cf. "Moral Artifice". *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 18 (1988): p. 390. That is, a society is just, according to Gauthier, as long as the interaction of its members roughly satisfies MRC on the macrolevel, regardless of the microlevel principles employed to bring this about. Here I argue that those "microlevel principles of interaction" diverge considerably from MRC.

9. Below is a geometric representation of the bargaining situation.



Jan Narveson notes that in cases where outcomes can be assigned a transferable value, the indicated solution is *always* to opt for the joint strategy that produces the greatest value (in the present example, Adelaide's way for \$500), and then compensate the party who would otherwise lose out in this strategy (Ernest) with a side-payment (in excess of \$35, but less than \$147). This solution dominates MRC. Though valid and important in other contexts, I will accept Gauthier's verbally communicated response to this criticism, which is to say that we are concerned here with the *logic* of the case for MRC, and so will assume that the goods in question cannot be transferred. (But doesn't Gauthier's normative theory of rational choice imply that *all* goods can be assigned a transferable value indeed, a monetary value? Cf. the discussion of the requirement that preferences be continuous (MBA, pp. 45-6).)

10. R.L. Trivers maintains that reciprocal altruism is the basis for many evolutionarily stable strategies found in nature. Gauthier's conception of narrow compliance might also be a stable strategy, as he suggests in citing Trivers (p. 187); but I think it is important to emphasize that a disposition of narrow compliance is not as comprehensive as reciprocal altruism.

11. As I construct the case, it is a non-market, strategic interaction. That is, Norm and Veronica cannot shop around for more congenial partners who may be willing to interact on better terms. Thus the terms of the joint venture are not determined by the market and individual rights, but by bargaining. This may seem artificial; however, like Gauthier, I am only concerned here to illustrate the logical implications of MRC.

12. Veronica is a "positional goods" seeker. As such her utility function is not completely independent of others' utility functions. But her interactions with Norm still exhibit mutual unconcern, or non-tuism (MBA, p. 87).

13. That is, whenever interaction is strategic. An n-person example which is very much in vogue these days concerns the co-operation needed *not* to avoid polluting our collective environment beyond recovery.

14. Paul Viminiz suggests that societies will tend to gravitate toward either Norm-like or Veronica-like dispositions, depending upon the relative proportions of each initially existing in the population. This is because it is easier for each individual to change his or her own characteristics than it is to effect change in most everyone else's. But for reasons given below, having to do with the inconclusiveness of compliance arguments, I think that a certain proportion of Veronicas could be "evolutionarily stable" within a larger population of Norms. This is why I believe active attempts to discourage those dispositions are reasonable.

15. Another possible response to the problem of Veronicas would be to insist upon an equitable division of the costs and benefits of social co-operation, regardless of the initial claims advanceable by the different agents. This is a less desirable solution in individual interaction because it is less discriminating. But in real-life, n-person situations, the bargaining costs associated with other solutions may make the equitable one a salient and (therefore) optimal one to pick. As Mike Kubara impressed upon me, we must never forget to take into account the costs of insisting upon precise justice, which in many cases are considerable.

16. Cf. Gilbert Harman, "Justice and Moral Bargaining;" *Social Philosophy and Policy* 1 (1984): 114-31. Sociobiology provides a useful model here, by illustrating how optimal behaviour patterns (whether genetically programmed or learned) are highly sensitive to variations in the local environment and to initial conditions. We should expect our "microlevel principles of interaction" to be likewise sensitive to these social variables.

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# *ET TU QUOQUE?* RATIONALISM RECONSIDERED

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(1) Is it rational to be rational? Can rationality be rationally defended? Few philosophical questions seem more fundamental. One significant contemporary argument answers these questions with a resounding “no”. It is usually termed the *tu quoque* argument (the you also argument). It holds that rationalism, in the sense of the acceptance of the imperative “Be rational,” is, like religion, ultimately a matter of faith. The rationalist cannot afford to throw stones at the woman of faith, for the rationalist is herself a woman of faith.<sup>1</sup>

(2) The *tu quoque* argument aims at confronting the rationalist with a dilemma. Either (a) it is rational to be rational or (b) it is not rational to be rational. If (a) then the rationalist in arguing for rationalism must argue in a circle and hence beg the question. In defending (a) she will employ the very rationality that is brought into question. If (b) on the other hand, rationality becomes a matter of faith. If it is not rational to be rational, then why is the rationalist a rationalist? How can she justify her commitment to rationality? She can't. Rationality is simply something in which she has faith. Many rationalists, including critical rationalists like Sir Karl Popper, have felt constrained to accept (b). They admit that the desire to be rational and the commitment to rationality are irrational. What else can they do? After all, begging the question, alternative (a), appears to be an even greater evil.

(3) The question: “Is it rational to be rational?” looks to be a sensible

one. It is a good English sentence (as is its indicative transform: It is rational to be rational). But appearances can be deceiving. It can be argued that many English sentences though apparently meaningful give rise to paradox. A famous case comprises certain self-referential sentences, sentences which say of themselves that they are false. Consider the following (i) S is false, where S is the sentence, S is false. In this situation, S is false if S is true, and S is true if S is false. Something is wrong somewhere. (Notice that (ii) All English sentences are false is not a paradox, strictly speaking. It is simply false, self contradictory. Since (ii) is itself an English sentence, it too would have to be false, but if (ii) is false, then it is not the case that all English sentences are false. So, if (ii) is true it has to be false. Paradoxes can be neither true nor false.)

(4) Because of this kind of paradox, some philosophers have declared English and other natural languages unsuitable for scientific or professional (including philosophical) purposes. What they attempt to do is substitute some improved or more ideal artificial language, for our natural languages. In the improved language, sentences giving rise to paradox are simply not formulable. This is, of course, not to say that the avoidance of paradox is the sole aim of so-called ideal or formal language philosophers in employing these languages.

(5) Paradoxical sentences are to be banned from improved languages, but this should not be accomplished in an ad hoc way. It should be the defensible linguistic rules of the language--themselves independently certified as reasonable or intelligible--which serve to do the banning. The rules should not be tailored primarily to avoid the paradoxes.

(6) What does the above detour into paradox and improved languages have to do with our problem? It is not difficult to see. The *tu quoque* does not confront us with a paradox, but simply with an uncomfortable situation, more exactly, a dilemma. It is obligatory to avoid paradoxes; it is simply desirable to avoid dilemmas. Dilemmas place us in situations we would do well to avoid. Our strategy is to show that the *tu quoque* dilemma should not arise and that in attempting to deal with the dilemma philosophers have been misled by natural language or more accurately, by a misunderstanding of natural language. Such claims are notoriously difficult to defend. In what follows we shall merely sketch such a defense.

(7) Our claim can be put thus: In a rationally constructed language, the *tu quoque* dilemma cannot arise. It cannot arise because the question "Is it rational to be rational?" only appears sensible. The question can only arise after the term rational has been introduced into the language. We construct a language from as near the ground up as possible. At some level, certainly not at the ground level, the term rational as a predicate of behavior, belief, or attitude will be introduced. Terms are introduced

primarily in two ways (A) by examples, positive and negative instances and (B) by rules of meaning (semantic rules). These rules regiment previous usage, they serve to sharpen the vague outlines of terms introduced by example. They may in some cases even revise the original application of the term.<sup>2</sup>

(8) Let us simplify things further and say that rational is a predicate applicable principally to behavior. It will be introduced by indicating cases of rational and non-rational behavior. (Maybe rational, non-rational, irrational would be the appropriate division.) Subsequently a rule will be forthcoming regimenting this usage. At the level in which rational is introduced our language will already contain terms for particular kinds of behavior. Questions whether a certain kind of behavior is rational or whether a piece of behavior is rational will then be formulable. BUT when rational is introduced, the term rational behavior will not belong to the linguistic apparatus. It will not be available to describe a kind of behavior we can talk about. The question as to whether rational behavior is itself rational cannot then sensibly be asked. Rational behavior can be said to include and exclude many things, but not rational behavior itself.

(9) Rational cannot sensibly be predicated of rational behavior. We can, however, introduce a new term rational\* (and a new, extended notion of rationality, along with it). It can be predicated of rational behavior; it will then make sense to ask whether rational behavior is rational\*. The answer we get would, of course, depends upon just how rational is introduced. It is here, anyway, that philosophically interesting questions about rules, practices and ways of life come to the fore.

(10) In philosophy no more than in life, should we scratch every itch. Not all questions formulated in English are worth addressing, or fruitful to address or even meaningful to address, but, of course, any account of fruitfulness or meaningfulness is likely to raise questions about its own fruitfulness or meaningfulness etc. Philosophy's temptation to "go global," to come up with universal theories or accounts, has been a stimulus for attack and retreat down the ages. Comprehensive theories like Popper's account of rationality either apply to themselves or do not; neither alternative is happy. The logical positivist verifiability principle, for instance, was charged early and often with being unverifiable.

(11) Comprehensive theory making has, however, not been limited to philosophy. Logicians and mathematicians have tried their hands at comprehensive theories of truth, number and set. Not surprisingly, paradox has been a problem. Certainly Bertrand Russell's discussion of these paradoxes in the introduction to *Principia Mathematica* has been a locus classicus for a certain kind of approach. Russell's idea was that we get into difficulty when we fail to distinguish context provided by levels of



language. A word like "true" is systematically ambiguous in the sense that it appears on different logical and linguistic levels, yet gives the appearance of being univocal. This is, of course, Russell's famous type strategy, theory of type strategy or stratification strategy. We especially get into trouble when we attempt to transcend relativity to level and try to speak about all levels at once. There is, however, no level available for such talk so we vacillate between paradox and nonsense.

(12) There is something right, even natural, about the type strategy; yet there is something wrong also. For one thing, we do not always get into difficulty by talking about all levels at once. There seems to be no problem with sentences like "All English sentences begin with some letter of the alphabet". So type restrictions do not always appear to be necessary. Nor are they sufficient because there is more to context sensitivity than level relativity. Disambiguation may have nothing to do with levels at all in any obvious sense. (Distinguishing performative from descriptive aspects of words like "know".) We should not, however, underestimate the fruitfulness of the stratification approach. F. Waisman's paper "Linguistic Strata"<sup>3</sup> is a fine example of the potential flexibility of the instrument. Waisman's approach lies somewhere between the formal approaches to language of Russell and Tarski and the informal approaches of Wittgenstein, Ryle and Austin.

(13) One problem that must be faced, however, is the self-reference problem for type theories themselves. They are supposed to cure us from the ills of universal theories but they are themselves universal. If relativity to type is necessary, then how can we have a type theory about all types? Is type theory not hoisted with its own petard, and thus isn't the present type-like attempt to deal with rationality and the *tu quoque* argument (Bartley's term) doomed to failure through self-refutation? Paul Weiss in 1928 argued this point against Russell's theory of types.<sup>4</sup> Frederick Fitch tackled the same problem eighteen years later.<sup>5</sup> Fitch thinks the type approach can be salvaged but at a price. Logic, at least classical logic, must be tampered with. We must ultimately give up the law of excluded middle. This is, of course, one way out of the Liar Paradox also. The liar sentence does not have to be either true or false. But appearances to the contrary, the present type-like approach does not have to deal with these problems. It is not itself an attempt to provide a universal theory of language. It is a partial account of that part of our language which deals with rationality and the principles of rationality. It does not deal with all possible talk about rationality but only actual or feasible (admittedly vague notions) features of such talk and language use. Infinite regress problems do not arise because we just do not ever find ourselves very high up in the type hierarchy. We could, (philosophical-logical could), but we don't. At these higher levels there are not even itches that are felt, so

the problem of whether to scratch doesn't arise (What about the apparently universal principle of the context relativity of language use and meaning? Is this not itself a universal theory? This kind of talk is difficult to avoid but the question is how seriously to take it. It is more of a rule of thumb than a theoretical principle. But this is only the beginning of an adequate response.)

(14) We have appealed to the notion of an improved language to deal with the *tu quoque*. The key idea was that of linguistic levels. These levels may be looked at as mirroring certain contexts of communication and language use. All communication is always at a certain level, it is always within a certain context. People who take the *tu quoque* seriously are simply guilty of taking things out of context.<sup>6</sup>

1. The literature on this issue is already voluminous. The reader is especially invited to compare the line of argument taken in the present paper with the (at points) parallel, but far more elaborate argument of John F. Post in "Paradox in Critical Rationalism and Related Theories" (*Philosophical Forum*, 1971) esp. pp. 51-52 and 54. I thank Joseph Agassi for calling Post's paper to my attention. I had not read the Post paper until after the present paper was written. Post and I come to very different conclusions.

2. For some details in connection with the construction of such a language, see Paul Lorenzen, "Methodical Thinking," *Ratio*, 1967. Unlike the constructions of logical positivists, Lorenzen's construction includes semantic or material rules as well as syntactical rules. Of course, the problems with explicating notions like 'semantic rule' are notorious. The present modest undertaking leaves these questions aside.

3. *Logic and Language*, 2nd series pp. 226-247.

4. "The Theory of Types" *Mind* 37.

5. "Self-Reference in Philosophy" *Mind* 55 1946.

6. I would like to thank an anonymous referee of this journal for some helpful suggestions.

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*Book Section*  
*Review Essay*

*Democracy and Moral Development: A Politics of Virtue.*  
By David L. Norton. University of California Press, 1991.

A good government produces citizens distinguished for their courage, love of justice, and every other good quality; -- *Dionysius of Halicarnassus*

*Democracy and Moral Development* (hereafter DMD) is in many ways an attempt to make out a case for the above claim. As David Norton puts it: "the paramount function of government is to provide the necessary but non-self-suppliable conditions for optimizing opportunities for individual self-discovery and self-development" (p. 80). In a previous book, *Personal Destinies* (Princeton University Press, 1976) hereafter PD, Norton laid out a eudaimian ethics which stressed virtue over rule-following. In DMD he lays out a politics of virtue arguing that a certain type of society is requisite to the good life of the individual. Yet he does this from an individualist perspective and not from a collectivist or coercive communitarian one.

Norton is an individualist arguing for a more than minimal role for government in the life of the individual. In modern times classical liberalism has been the major individualist political tradition and one that favors minimal government. Thus Norton spends a good deal of effort developing his views in contrast to what he takes to be classical liberalism. One of my tasks here will be to lay out some of these differences, especially regarding the role of government. I have already mentioned that Norton thinks government ought to play a larger role in the life of the individual but I will postpone a more detailed treatment of this issue until later.

At root, the difference (as Norton sees it) between his position and that of the classical liberal lies in their different conceptions of the individual. The key difference between Norton's (eudaimonistic) view and the classical liberal<sup>1</sup> (or modern) view of the individual is that the former is a developmental conception. Norton claims that the modern view treats the

self as a *fait accompli*. In both *DMD* and *PD* he argues convincingly that to do this is a grave mistake. The implicit assumptions of his argument is that the classical liberal's minimal government position is attractive to those who hold the non-developmental view of the self, and that once this view of the individual is given up the role that government is to play grows.

One of the major consequences of non-developmental individualism is what Norton calls "moral minimalism". This is the view that most (or at least some) of one's experiences are without moral significance. In opposition to this Norton claims that individuals don't encounter moral problems, they are moral problems.

Human being is a problematic being; to be a human being is to be at bottom a problem to oneself, specifically an identity problem. It is the problem of deciding what to become and endeavoring to become it. (p.2)

This point is one that distinguishes Norton's position from both the modern and communitarian views of the individual. His view differs from the modern view in its explicit rejection of moral minimalism. And though he shares with the communitarians the idea that the self must be expressed in a community, he adds that one must discover which community is right for oneself (p.132), thus giving individuality priority over community.

Contrary to the moral minimalist, for the eudaimonist all of one's actions have moral import.

For eudaimonistic theory, all human conduct without exception has moral meaning, and the relevant distinctions are first, of course, between right and wrong actions, and second, between acts of maximal moral meaning and acts of minimal moral meaning. (p.21)

Norton claims -- citing the work of J.G.A. Pocock -- that the decisive step away from this more inclusive view and toward moral minimalism was made when Machiavelli rejected Aristotelian ethics for one suited to persons "as they are or as they are capable of speedily becoming" (pp. 21-22). Thus efforts at self-transcendence, while not being ruled out, are no longer thought to be required of the moral man.

That Norton has correctly characterized the way that many people today think about morality is, I think, undeniable and Norton clearly shows some of the major flaws with this view. Leaving aside questions regarding his characterization of the ethics of classical liberal individualism,<sup>2</sup> Norton makes a good case against moral minimalism and for a more developmental conception of the individual; one which regards growth and self-actualization as essential to morality.

Although Norton does not include a direct discussion of value in his book I consider it here because I think that his conception is fundamentally flawed and this flaw leads to some of his conclusions with

which I shall take issue later. Early in the book, while setting out the fundamentals of his eudaimian ethics, Norton rejects what he refers to as the altruist/egoist bifurcation of ethics (p. 7). He claims that, on the eudaimonistic understanding, one is realizing objective worth and this is valuable both to oneself and to others. Thus the question of for whose benefit one ought to act becomes a non-issue or at most a secondary matter. I think this is mistaken. It also seems that much of what Norton argues for could be better formulated on an egoist foundation. I may agree with Norton that the self-actualizing individual is realizing objective worth, but objective here does not mean intrinsic. I will argue that Norton's attempt to transcend the altruist/egoist bifurcation fails and that it is important to decide for whom something is of value or worth.

Any correct conception of value is logically dependent upon two further points: the individual(s) to whom something is a value, and the purpose for which it is valuable.<sup>3</sup> The very conception of value logically requires both a subject and a purpose or end.<sup>4</sup> This being the case, any attempt to do without either will lead one into serious difficulties when attempting to identify values.

Subjectivism is the result of retaining the subject and dropping the end. We are left without any standard except the perception of the thing as a value to an agent. On the other hand if we drop the subject and leave only the end we are left with free floating abstract values which are values to nobody in particular or to everybody in some mysterious way. If both subject and end are dropped the identification of values becomes a completely mysterious process.

At times Norton seems to recognize the importance of one or the other of these two aspects of value but never both and occasionally neither. He is often extremely careful to identify values with a subject but not in the sense that they are values for the subject but in the sense that they are values that the subject is responsible for realizing. Individuals are required to actualize 'objective' value or worth:

which is to say it is of worth not solely or primarily to the individual who actualizes it, but also to (some) other persons -- specifically to such others as can recognize, appreciate, and utilize the distinctive kind of worth that the given individual manifests. (p.7)

Notice that utility is merely one of the qualities a value may have, thus values are not necessarily for an end. The reason why this is so is that for Norton values are primarily intrinsic. They are simply out there as possibilities to be identified with or recognized; there may be a goal that they facilitate, but this is a secondary matter.

This leaves us in need of a standard by which to identify what the values are. For Norton, value identification is "not identification of values, instead it is the individual's identification of himself or herself with

certain values" (p. 84). This would be fine if the identification of values were unproblematic. However it is a problem, and we need a standard by which we can identify what things are values or valuable before we can identify with them. Norton attempts to avoid this problem by claiming that there are criteria for value identification so that one may do it rightly or wrongly. Thus:

The right values-identification by an individual is his or her explicit identification... with the values which he or she is implicitly -- that is, innately -- identified. *These are the values in service of which the individual will experience the intrinsic rewards of personal fulfillment.* (pp. 84-85 emphasis added)

According to this account there are certain innate (and intrinsic) values one is responsible to actualize and as a secondary matter one will experience the intrinsic rewards of self-fulfillment. But this has things backward. It is better to say that one ought to act to achieve certain ends because they are valuable to one as a means to self-fulfillment. Self-fulfillment, for its part, includes the development of those capacities which are specifically aimed at life sustainance and enhancement. Thus, self-fulfillment, which is the discovery and becoming of the particular being that one is, is instrumental to one's existence. We may then say that in a fundamental sense the standard of value is one's existence.<sup>5</sup> To flourish means to spend one's life developing and exercising those individual capacities which are instrumental to the sustainance of one's life<sup>6</sup> as the particular being one is. Norton, by separating values from the individual ends they serve, makes the utility of values a secondary matter. As he sees it, value is something which is primarily intrinsic.<sup>7</sup>

But how are we to identify these intrinsic values? If we attempt to equate or correlate individual potentialities with values, we must have a way of determining which of these potentialities are, or lead to, values. The problems with this approach are compounded in the case of valuing others where it becomes more difficult to even identify the potentialities, let alone to decide which of these potentialities are, or would lead to, values. To avoid problems like this we must understand utility as being essential to value.

Norton's discussion of virtue is one of the areas that is effected by this intrinsic conception of value. He describes virtue in the following way:

In the conception of personhood and the good life that we are employing, "enhancement of the quality of life of human beings" means the acquisition by human beings of moral virtues, where moral virtues are understood as dispositions of character that are (1) personal utilities; (2) intrinsic goods; and (3) social utilities. (pp. 80-81)

Since he describes virtues as being intrinsic goods one might expect his treatment of them to have all the problems that the conception of intrinsic goods does. In fact these problems are almost all eliminated

because he also claims that "all virtues are personal utilities". (p. 91) Thus we can identify them as dispositions of character which are conducive to the happiness of the individual possessing them. The discussion of the virtues, particularly in chapter four is excellent and with slight modifications is amenable to an ethical egoist theory of value which avoids the problems of value identification discussed above. Norton's discussion of 'the unity of the virtues' and the virtue of integrity is particularly excellent. Regarding integrity Norton says that:

to be a human being is to be obliged to decide what to become and endeavor to become it. Significant success at endeavoring to become what one has chosen to become requires integration of faculties, desires, interests, roles, and life-shaping choices, such that aspects in each of these categories complement others, and all aspects alike contribute toward the chosen end. This integration must be achieved out of an initial disorder that was enduringly depicted by Plato in his image of the human soul as a chariot, charioteer and two fractious horses, one struggling to rise aloft while the other seeks to plunge below. (*Phaedrus*). In this condition the chariot cannot move and is at risk of being torn asunder. It symbolizes the disordered and internally contradictory condition of the self in which integration has not in significant measure been achieved. Such a self will be ineffective at achieving its ends and equivocal or contradictory in identification of them. (p. 87)

So, even though Norton's account of the virtues is flawed due to his intrinsic theory of value, since he also makes the claim that the virtues are personal utilities, his account of what the virtues are and their relation to each other is compatible with ethical egoism.<sup>8</sup> This means that it needn't rely on the value theory that Norton uses to support it.

While his account of the virtues might be compatible with an ethical egoism, his idea of the role of government is not. Once again he takes issue with classical liberals for reducing the role of government too far, but being an individualist he sees the necessity of placing limits on its scope.

If we term both social engineering and the welfare state "maximal government," and the night-watchman state of classical liberalism "minimal government," then good government, eudaimonistically conceived, lies intermediate between them, as conducive government. (p. 166)

To better understand what 'conducive government' is one ought to note that Norton considers his politics to be a revisionist Platonism. He accepts Plato's account of what the role and aim of government ought to be: "complementary interrelationship of self-directed, eudaimonic human lives on the foundation of (Platonic) justice".<sup>9</sup> But he says that he:

departs from Plato on the means by which this end is to be achieved. Thanks to modern sociological and developmental knowledge we are positioned to recognize some of what Plato took to be means as in fact obstructions.



For example one thing he takes exception to is Plato's idea that one of the functions of the rulers is to identify the natures of children (since they cannot do so for themselves) and to educate them accordingly. Norton objects that children are essentially dependent and are required to adopt socially conferred personalities which mask the innate individual that they alone may discover and venture to become. Thus it would be impossible for the leaders to discover this innate individual as Plato would have them do.

Yet there seems to be a more fundamental objection that one could make to Plato than one based on modern developments on sociology and developmental psychology. This objection would draw upon the relationship between choice and value. As noted above, Norton claims that individuals are moral problems and thus all of their actions are morally significant. Individuals must evaluate the various alternatives open to them and make intelligent choices. Thus he recognizes the importance of choice, yet because he incorporates so much into the moral sphere the link between choice and the moral good is in danger of being misconstrued.

While it is true that something may be said to be good, regardless of how it came to be, the morally good must be freely chosen. Indeed, in order for our actions to be either morally good or bad they must be products of choice. Norton seems to recognize this, yet, he claims that all of our actions have moral import because they are all chosen in some sense. Yet, in an important way actions which are freely chosen (that is, are not coerced by others) are related more fundamentally to morality. They are the type of actions which are associated with the flourishing individual.

If our actions and characters are determined by factors out of our control then there is no room for morality. Imagine the case of someone who is afflicted with a disorder such that he cannot control his body well enough to act as he intends. For example when he wants to raise his right arm he lifts his left leg, or if he wants to turn his head he, instead, makes a fist. He is thus capable of intending to act but how he acts is out of his control. His actions are not the products of his judgement and choice, he is not self-directed. Even if, by some stroke of luck, all of his actions had consequences that were good for him, perhaps even better than the actions he intended would have had, he would not be flourishing. He has not developed any character and, though his actions would have been virtuous had he chosen them, we cannot call him virtuous.

Now take for instance the case of a man who is forced to commit a certain act A at gunpoint. It is true that the development of his character is up to him so that he is responsible for acting bravely, rashly or like a coward. Thus his action will have some moral import. Yet, if we are to

take seriously the idea that the good that he ought to aim at is self-actualization, and that this involves the use of reason in guiding one's actions, we can see that he cannot be flourishing if his own decisions are consistently pre-empted in this manner. So, while the person in our example might be responsible for A in some sense, if he is consistently deprived of the freedom to choose his actions he will never be able to flourish.

We may therefore agree with Norton in saying that all of our acts have moral import but we should add that some do so directly and some derivatively. In the case described above the man being held at gunpoint is free to respond to this situation bravely, rashly, or like a coward. However, this possibility depends on his having been free to act in the past according to his own judgement, so that he might develop the character that manifests itself when he is coerced. If he has never been free to direct his actions in the past, he, like the completely incontinent man described above, would never have developed any character at all. Thus uncoerced actions are moral in the primary sense while those which are coerced<sup>10</sup> may be so only in a derivative sense. In other words those actions which lead to character development and are related to human flourishing and self-actualization must be uncoerced, that is, they must be the product of the judgement of the individual in question.

What I have been arguing here is that the moral good must be freely chosen. All morally good actions must be chosen and for this reason we must be careful to avoid metaphysical determinism<sup>11</sup>; but flourishing and the development of virtue also require action that is not coerced. In short, human flourishing is a self-directed activity<sup>12</sup> which has as a necessary condition that one's actions be freely chosen. This is the intimate connection between freedom and morality. Freedom is a necessary but not sufficient condition for human flourishing. Norton, following Plato, fails to correctly identify the relationship between freedom and flourishing. This failure has political consequences that run counter to the possibility of human flourishing.

In PD Norton argues that "In self-determination, 'freedom for' takes logical precedence over 'freedom from'". Thus mere absence of constraints is not true freedom. True freedom is freedom for an end, namely, self-actualization or flourishing. But put this way one is in danger of identifying good acts with free acts such that, if one has done the good, then one has acted freely. However, if I am right and freedom is a necessary -- but not sufficient -- prerequisite to human flourishing, then we need an independent means of identifying freedom. We cannot identify free individuals as being those who are flourishing. Freedom must leave open the possibility of making bad choices as well as good ones.

If one recognizes this important relationship then we can again see the value of minimal government without being moral minimalists. Govern-

ment is to afford to individuals the freedom (by protecting their rights<sup>13</sup>) they need to make choices and to act on them. This freedom is a prerequisite to the development of virtue. Thus the minimal government of classical liberalism is conducive government and, to the extent that any attempt to expand the role of government is destructive of this rights protecting function, it is undesirable. Minimal government is actually a misnomer in this context, for the key thing to note about the classical liberal conception of government is not that it is minimal but that it is limited. This limiting serves a dual function. On the one hand it protects the individual from the dangers of the totalitarian regime. On the other it is good for the government in that it fosters the realization of its end -- this end necessarily being in harmony with those of the individual citizens.

It was noted earlier that Norton's idea of a good government lies somewhere between the welfare state and minimal government. If, however, we look at some of the policies which he advocates it is hard to see how his idea of government differs from the welfare state. For example on page 122 he brings up 'rights to subsistence'. In this context he prefers the term workfare to welfare to stress that it is responsibilities based rather than rights based. He says that:

If it is [self-fulfilling productivity] that constitutes the well being of persons that society exists to promote, then workfare must include opportunity for exploration and choice among a wide range of types of work, *and this mandates national administration.* (p.122 emphasis added)

It is this last clause that is precisely at issue and needs to be argued for. Why exactly is this an issue for national government and not individuals or community groups? For that matter, why not global administration? Furthermore it seems nationalizing the attempt at providing these opportunities would eliminate choice and variety, for though all individuals are not the same, justice requires they be treated equally by the government. Introducing the Platonic notion of proportional equality, which takes into account relevant differences between individuals, doesn't help here because of the epistemological problems involved in determining, on such a large scale, normative differences between individuals. This problem parallels, and dwarfs in difficulty, the socialist calculation problem<sup>14</sup>. While it may be possible in a family or in a tribe it is simply not possible in the extended order. The type of knowledge required is so difficult to obtain, that only the individual and perhaps a few close friends may have it. It is just not reasonable to expect the government to have anything approaching this kind of knowledge of individuals. The best it can do is create an environment where people are free (from the interference of others) to act in accordance with their own judgement and in cooperation with others. What this amounts to is the classical liberal conception of government.

While Norton does make a compelling case for the existence of certain

conditions which are not self-suppliable<sup>15</sup> and necessary for self-actualization, it is not clear that, aside from the above case of protecting rights, they ought to be provided by government. In fact it seems clear that they can be better provided by other institutions such as the family, church, community groups, etc.<sup>16</sup>

Yet many of these things (such as education and health care) are vitally important to human flourishing, thus there is a desire for some to attempt to guarantee them. For many leaving these things up to smaller and more contingent groups appears too risky, or at least less risky than assigning them to government where one would be entitled to them 'by right'.<sup>17</sup> But this guarantee is chimerical; the government cannot even guarantee the protection of the negative rights that the classical liberal desires it to safeguard.

Furthermore, the more it ventures from protecting rights the more difficulty it will have doing even this. Limits are placed on government in order to enable it to attain its end -- the protection of individual rights. A good constitution provides the principles which serve to integrate the various functions of government. A government, in order to be effective and helpful, must act in ways that its citizens can understand and usually predict. In order to do this it must treat all of its citizens as if they were the same. This does not mean that it must ignore normative individual differences. What it does mean is that these differences are, for the most part, to be dealt with formally; principles must be established which deal with individuals as 'X's. These principles may specify context and even type of individual (e.g. minors, members of corporations, etc.) but they cannot pay any regard to those distinctly individuating aspects of a person which make them more than an X. In short government should treat individual normative differences formally not substantively.

Platonic justice, which considers individual normative differences in their substance, cannot treat individuals alike. Thus a government designed on this model will not be able to formulate principles by which to deal with its citizens except for very ambiguous ones such as 'to each according to his need'. These sorts of principles, while fine in the context of a family, in a more extended society, are bound to seem arbitrary to the members of that society. A government that acts predictably produces order conducive to extended plans of action and character development by individuals. A government that acts unpredictably is simply another threat to be dealt with. It is for this reason that extending the bounds of government in the way that Norton suggests poses a threat to the proper functioning of government and to human flourishing.

My main concern here has been to examine and take issue with Norton's claim that "the paramount function of government is to provide the necessary but non-self-suppliable conditions for optimizing opportunities of individual self-discovery and self-development" (p. 44). There is

nothing objectionable in this statement if it is interpreted to mean that the government, by protecting rights (in accordance with the classical liberal model), creates an environment where individuals may cooperate and combine their efforts in ways that each judges to be beneficial. But to interpret it as Norton does is a mistake.

Even if one finds arguments for a eudaimonistic ethics convincing and therefore regards individual self-actualization as the primary good to be achieved, given the fact that the moral good must be chosen, each individual must be left to be convinced that this is the good. Any attempt to preempt or override this choice, by attempting to force people to do what is truly good for them is self-defeating. The role of government is precisely to protect individuals from this force. By forcing people to do 'the good', i.e. what would have been good for them if they had chosen it (for example going to school or choosing a particular career), government is acting contrary to its own purpose. It is also obstructing the moral development of its citizens. On the other hand, by protecting the freedom of individuals to act in response to what they judge to be the good it is protecting the very possibility of moral action or what Norton might call acts of maximal moral meaning.<sup>18</sup>

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1. I will not take up whether or not Norton's is an accurate characterization of classical liberalism (though I doubt it is) for two reasons. First, I don't think that Norton's more substantive political arguments depend on this, and secondly, to do so would steer the discussion toward certain debates which are outside the purview of DMD and hence this review.

2. I leave these issues aside here but I do have doubts that he has correctly characterized the ethics of classical liberalism -- the cases of John Locke and Wilhelm von Humboldt come to mind here. There are also several contemporary authors in the classical liberal tradition to whom Norton's description would certainly not apply. In particular Tibor R. Machan, Douglas B. Rasmussen, Douglas J. Den Uyl, and Eric Mack.

3. This is a point that was developed by Ayn Rand. See especially her essays "The Objectivist Ethics" in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York, Signet 1964) and "What is Capitalism" in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York, Signet 1967).

4. This does not mean that all values are wholly instrumental values. Some things may, in fact, come to be valued primarily because they have their own ends and are not merely instrumental to serving one's own ends (e.g. other individuals). However, all values, being things about which we are concerned and which make a difference to us, must, in some sense, be instrumental to our ends.

5. This again is a point which was developed by Ayn Rand. See "The Objectivist Ethics" op. cit.

6. As I will discuss below, Norton himself argues that "all virtues are personal utilities" (p. 91)

7. Thus Norton makes reference to 'intrinsically rewarding work' (p. 61); he calls virtues

'dispositions of character that are intrinsic goods' (p. 81); and he refers to the intrinsic rewards of actions (p. 62) and tenure (p. 94).

8. In this regard see Tibor R. Machan: *Human Rights and Human Liberties* [(especially ch.3) Chicago, Nelson and Hall, 1975].

9. Platonic justice means proportional justice, that is, it is based on an equality which includes considerations of individual differences. Norton contrasts this with classical liberal or 'merely formal' equality (i.e. equality under law).

10. The individual must be free to make what Norton refers to as "life-shaping choices".

11. In fact, Norton is quite careful to avoid metaphysical determinism. See especially his discussion in chapter 5 of *Personal Destinies*, op. cit.

12. For a discussion of this point see :Douglas B. Rasmussen "Liberalism and Natural End Ethics" *American Philosophical Quarterly* vol. 27, pp.153-160.

13. Rights here are the 'negative' rights of the classical liberal.

14. The impossibility of a single individual or group making the necessary calculations to run an economy has been dealt with at length by the Austrian economists. See Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (London, Jonathan Cape 1969).

15. Non self-suppliable may be too strong a term to use because in some sense many of these conditions are what we make of them and are in this way self-supplied. For instance many people manage to turn what most would consider adversity to their advantage, while others in the same situation will not derive any benefit from it -- though they might have.

16. This is largely an empirical matter which I do not deal with here because of space considerations and because Norton hasn't dealt with it in his book. However, he has attempted to argue that negative and positive rights are compatible with each other, contrary to the claim of classical liberals. He does this by basing rights on responsibilities. One is entitled to have certain things provided for oneself because they are necessary conditions for the fulfillment of one's responsibilities. Yet Norton has not dealt with the difficulties of determining and coordinating all of these responsibilities. The scope of this problem would be even greater than that of simple socialist planning of an economy. This seems to lead us back (as socialism did in eastern Europe) to the totalitarianism which many associate with Platonic political philosophy. Though Norton denies that the two are connected he simply fails to show that this is the case.

17. For Norton this right would be based on a prior responsibility.

18. I would like to thank Tibor Machan, Greg Johnson, Roy Childs and Tom Palmer for their comments and suggestions regarding this essay.



## *Book Review*

*Procedural Justice.* By Michael D. Bayles. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990.

### 1.

There are many evidentiary rules, e.g., the rule against hearsay and the general rule against allowing character evidence to show that the defendant acted in conformity thereto, that are procedurally dedicated to achieving justice. The same might be said about many of our constitutional guarantees, e.g., due process and equal protection rights. Moreover, Civil Law litigation is governed by the rules of civil procedure and criminal law prosecution is circumscribed by constitutional mandates to counsel and protections against self-incrimination. Each safeguard and procedural rule is designed to prevent unfair treatment while also allowing judicial freedom. Even professional ethical codes are imbued with procedural restrictions designed to circumvent injustice, e.g., restrictions not only on possible conflicts of interest, but also on *ex-parte* communications and overreaching within the agent-principal relationship.

What is essential to all of these rules and standards that renders them procedural and for what purpose are they to be applied? These are the questions that chiefly concern Professor M.D. Bayles in his smart little book *Procedural Justice*.

Professor Bayles trifurcates his book into synergistic parts. Part one covers the traditional requirement for procedural justice. Professor Bayles notes such fundamental prerequisites as: impartiality of the decision maker. This, in turn, is analyzed in terms of the decision maker being free of an interest in the outcome of the case, not being possessed of a bias toward or a prejudice against either side and being free of actual and possible conflicts of interest along with a more limited proscription against *ex-parte* communications. In addition to the fundamental, procedural requirements for justice, Professor Bayles notes that each party to civil litigation and each side in a criminal prosecution must be ensured the opportunity to be heard upon adequate notice. The process



of being heard requires the chance to present and rebut evidence, confront contrary parties, enjoy the benefit of counsel and the right of appeal. The last portion of Part one addresses the necessary dangers of adding flexibility to the above noted requirements. Judicial discretion, and analogical, judicial reasoning tempered by the principle of *stare decisis* (judicial consistency) are the final concerns of the first part.

Part two of Professor Bayles' intellectual analysis of procedural justice deals with the theoretical justification of those rules and standards traditionally required and referred to in Part one. According to Professor Bayles, the norm for evaluating the rules and standards for achieving procedural justice is not simply a utilitarian cost-benefit scale. The variables are cost and benefits of a practical and moral nature, e.g., reaching a correct and true appraisal of the facts and the approximate law, issues of timeliness, participation of relevant parties, social confidence in the procedures and equal treatment of the parties-fairness.

Part two ends with an analysis of the limits of the adversarial, judicial system and possible alternatives for purposes of adjudicating conflicts and nonconflicting issues. Such considerations as state action, deprivation, the possibility and cost of enforcement conjoined with judicial discretion all play, with differing degrees, in the evaluation of the various legal and ethical systems, e.g., adversary adjudication, bureaucratic investigation, directorship, professional service and negotiation.

Part three is devoted to the application of the fundamental requirements as presented in Part one and theoretically justified in Part two, to two areas of conflict-benefit resolutions, namely professional discipline and employment decisions. With respect to professional discipline, the theoretical requirements recommend the use of the adversary model with bureaucratic investigation at the preliminary stages. Guarding against possible conflicts of interest, is the chief danger to be negotiated.

As Professor Bayles notes, employment decisions constitute a more difficult challenge. Making distinctions between hiring, merit and promotion, demotion and termination, Professor Bayles notes the different theoretical values at play and the best procedural safeguards designed to respect those values.

## 2.

Professor Bayles' work seems clearly correct and that may be the chief problem with it. Part one is, in terms of material covered, very ambitious. And although there obtains some penetrating analysis and insightful conclusions, some of the issues in Part one are treated as obvious when, perhaps, they are not. Some issues are treated only glancingly, e.g., the procedural problems anent various burdens of persuasion, the hearsay rule, the topic of professional confidentiality, etc. All in all, Part one, if

occasionally too expansive, is satisfying yet neither exceedingly innovative nor pellucid. The least satisfying portion of Professor Bayles' work is Part two. This Part seems vague in part and underargued in part. From a careful reading, one is left with a clear understanding of what one perhaps already knew and a vague idea of what one did not know prior to the reading.

By far, the most intellectually exciting and fun portion of Professor Bayles work is Part three. The application of fruits of the prior two partsn to the issues of professional discipline is especially enjoyable. The application is innovative and lucid.

On balance, Professor Bayles' work is scholarly and frequently, quite exciting. It is without any difficulty to see that the procedural safeguards that are expressly provided for in, say, the civil law principle of *res judicata* (the principle that a party who has had a full opportunity to present a contention in court is denied permission to assert it on another occasion) or the *Dead Man's statute* (the principle that the declarant is deemed incompetent to testify concerning the decedent's oral promiser or declarations which usurp the decedent's estate in favor of the declarant) are covered by Professor Bayles's work, notwithstanding that neither principle is actually addressed by Professor Bayles.

However, Professor Bayles does not tell us why certain procedural rules are so very important in achieving justice. What are the philosophical arguments for that aspect of justice which Bayles' procedural safeguards are designed to achieve? Professor Bayles does not tell us how to weigh procedural requirements against the mandates of substantive law when there is conflict, e.g., the Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable search and seizure with the attendant exclusionary rule confronting incriminating evidence actually connected to the defendant. Nor does Professor Bayles help us discern the difference between substantive law and procedural rule inherent in such difficult cases as *Erie R.R. v Tompkins*, 304 U.S. 64 (1938) (the case that established the doctrine that federal courts are obliged to use the common and statutory law but not the procedural rules of the state in which they reside).

In all Professor Bayles' book elucidates what the procedural requirements are for justice without explaining what justice is nor how or why these procedural rules are deemed exactly to achieve justice beyond the intuitive appeal of the rational person.

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