# ELEUTHERIA

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## Message from the President

***Francis Peddle***

I

During the week of March 21-27, 1991 I attended a conference in London, England on "War and Peace" sponsored by the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade. The participants, who were from the U.S., the Soviet Union, the U.K., Hungary, Australia, Denmark, South Africa, the Netherlands and Canada, share an interest in the social and economic philosophy of Henry George. In 1879 George published *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth... The Remedy*, which is one of the most widely read and translated texts on the philosophy of political economy. This work had a substantial influence on such varied modern figures as Leo Tolstoy, Sun Yat-Sen, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Aldous Huxley, and Milton Friedman. Here in Canada, Georgist schools of economic science flourished during the first half of this century in such cities as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. The philosophy of Henry George also led to the formation of an international movement devoted to the recouping for the community of publicly created values and benefits which have hitherto been largely monopolized by a few individuals and interests with its accompanying maldistributions in wealth and power.

The conference was also the scene for the launching of a new book on Georgist philosophy entitled *Now the Synthesis: Capitalism, Socialism and the New Social Contract*, edited by Richard Noyes (London, Shepheard-Walwyn, 1991). Interestingly, this work uses Hegel's concept of the dialectical unfolding of history to argue for a holistic philosophy that sets aside the failures and distortions of both capitalism and socialism in favour of a social order which examines anew property rights, the ownership of land and natural resources, taxation and the development of institutional structures over the past several centuries which have "disfigured the rights of the individual", negated the natural environment and adumbrated our sense of community.

Hegelian dialectico-speculative logic, as historically instantiated, argues that philosophy comprehends (*begreifen*), in its time, the most explicit working of the Absolute. The limitation of Hegelian speculative philosophy is that it is primarily reflective (*nachdenklich*) and historical, not futural. The famous passage in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* is à propos:

> The teaching of the concept, which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when actuality is mature that the ideal first appears over against the real and that the ideal apprehends this same real world in its substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.

In reflecting on its own development, philosophy comes to understand the process of history, and thus its underlying continuity. Equally this continuity must be interrelated with novelty, paradigm shifts and the severe diremptions of a modern intellectuality that focuses primarily on imagination and the discursive rather than the rationally integrative and the speculatively reconciliatory. Even more importantly, mature philosophical reflection on the process of history must also have room for the power of the anticipatory hope which lies buried in future expectation.

There is a fundamentally speculative orientation in the socio-economic philosophy of Henry George. His exposition of a practical life and civilization that is based on the theoretical complementarity and dialectico-speculative mediation of freedom and property rights, of the production and distribution of wealth, of individual liberty and equal justice for all, of respect for all natural life and the environmentally sound creation of wealth, and of the tradition and its imaginative reworking and

development, is not only an accomplishment that scholars must further elaborate but also a disclosure which holds great promise for the future betterment of society.

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Expanding the publication frequency of ***ELEUTHERIA*** has been suggested by a number of members of the Institute. Semi-annual publication does not nearly cover the large amount of materials that Institute members currently have ready for the press. However, our financial resources do not, at present, allow us to increase the number of issues. Our General Endowment Fund is not currently able to meet the semi-annual operating expenses of ***ELEUTHERIA***.

I urge all members and interested parties, who have not yet brought their membership fees and donations up to date, to do so in the near future. Donations to the Endowment Fund are encouraged and greatly appreciated. There are many ways to make such donations, through loans, trust agreements, bequests, matching funding and so on. For example, if you work for a company that has a matching charitable funding program, you can direct that every dollar you donate to the Institutebe matched on a dollar for dollar basis with a corresponding donation to the Institute from your employer. All you have to do is to give a copy of the official receipt you receive from the Institute for your donation to your employer and direct the corporate donation to the Institute. Professional investment and legal advice on Canadian charities and tax law is available from the Institute free of charge. As an interim measure, the Board of Directors has decided that if there is a sufficient increase in funding, supplemental issues of ***ELEUTHERIA*** will be published in the near future.

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The Institute on February 23rd and 28th sponsored two seminars at the University of Ottawa on the topic "Modernity and History". These seminars, led by Peter McCormick, were a sequel to the seminar "Understanding Modernity" held by the Institute on March 31st, 1990. The review of Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, which appeared in Volume II, Number 1, is followed in this issue with a continuation of that review and a comparative consideration of Stephen Toulmin's *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. The portrait of modernity in the earlier review is filled out by McCormick with a critical evaluation of Taylor's historical narrative in the *Sources of the Self*. The contours of this narrative are then contrasted with the competing historical interpretation of the origin of "theory-centered" philosophy in the seventeenth century presented by Toulmin in *Cosmopolis*. Sponsorship of seminars and presentations on the nature of modernity are a regular part of the work of the Institute.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Peter McCormick on being named a Killam Fellow of the Canada Council. Over the next two years he will be relieved from his teaching duties at the University of Ottawa. This will enable him to concentrate on his writings in the areas of metaphysics and the philosophy of art.

# MODERNITY AND HISTORY

***Peter McCormick***

***Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*** by *Charles Taylor* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1989), Pp.xii + 601. ***Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*** by *Stephen Toulmin* (New York, The Free Press, 1990), Pp.xii + 228.

## I

Taking the critical measure of Charles Taylor's elaborate views on the sources of the self requires reminding ourselves of Taylor's complex aims.[1] The first aim is to provide both "a history of the modern identity," that is an articulation of "the ensemble of (largely unarticulated) understandings of what it is to be a human agent" in view of showing "how the ideals and interdicts of this identity... shape our philosophical thoughts" (ix). And the second goal is to use this portrait of the modern identity as "the starting point for a renewed understanding of modernity," that is "the momentous transformations of our culture and society over the last three or four centuries and getting these somehow in focus" (ix). More simply, Taylor aims to provide both a thematic portrait of human agency and an historical account of how this portrait has developed.

In the first part of this study, I focused at length on describing the various elements in Taylor's thematic portrait. Evaluating that portrait now involves understanding how that portrait has evolved.[2] My plan is to look at this evolution by gradually narrowing the focus from the overall plan of Taylor's story to what I will argue is the story's turning point, namely the origins of modernity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With the central elements of that turning point in view, I turn to a recent alternative account of the origins of modernity, Steven Toulmin's discussion in his new book, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. In comparing and contrasting Taylor's story with Toulmin's we will then be in a position to investigate just how much Taylor's narrative of the modern identity can actually function in support of his thematic portrait.

## I

### Explanatory and Interpretive Accounts

Before looking at the main outlines of Taylor's story, we need to spend a moment reflecting on how Taylor himself understands the relationships between his portrait of the modern identity in terms of the agent self and his narrative of how this portrait has evolved.

Taylor makes room for an explicit discussion of these matters only when already well underway in actually working out his story. At the end of the second part of his book he finally devotes a chapter to the theme of historical explanation.

Taylor is quick to deny that his story makes any explicit claims to pass as an historical explanation. Stressing the very many important topics he excludes, Taylor claims only to be "dwelling on certain developments in philosophical and religious outlook, with an odd glance at aspects of popular mentality" (199). Significantly, as it will turn out later, one of the extensive developments Taylor excludes from detailed consideration is Renaissance humanist views like those he mentions in passing, views for example on human dignity in Pico's Oration, or those on human agency in Nicholas of Cusa where agency is a completion of the creative work of God, or

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[1] This is the second part of a critical notice devoted to Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. The first part appeared in ***ELEUTHERIA***, Vol.II, No.1 (1990) 3-14. Unless otherwise indicated, references within the text are to Taylor's book.

[2] For other critical perspectives see the reviews of Bernard Williams and Jonathan Glover in, respectively, *The New York Review of Books*, 8 November 1990, and *London Review of Books*, 22 November 1990.

the hermetic and magical background in Dee and Paracelsus for Bacon's revolutionary work, or the explorations of Alberti and Vasari in the visual arts and their expansion on the understanding of human creative powers themselves, or even Florentine neo-Platonism in Michaelangelo's and Leonardo's contrasting understandings of just what "nature" art is to imitate and from just what perspectives (cf. 199-202). Part of what he is trying to do, Taylor concedes, works against any attempt at historical comprehensiveness.

Taylor thinks that his story is not to be taken as an historical explanation because he is not asking "what brought the modern identity about," a question that focuses on diachronic causation. Rather, Taylor's question is "an interpretive one," as he calls it (203). The question is: in what consists the appeal, the spiritual power, the "idées-forces" of the modern identity "however it was brought to be in history" (203).

The historical and interpretive questions, to be sure, are closely related; but they are also distinct questions. For each requires a related but different kind of answer, the first in terms of causal explanation and the second in those of interpretive understanding. And the interpretive question is centred on where the force of certain issues is to be found.

One consequence of raising interpretive rather than explanatory questions about the modern identity, Taylor thinks, is his being able to offer an incomplete account only. He claims however that the incompletion is unavoidable. For no interpretive investigation by its nature can do full justice to the endless complexity of understanding both the material contents and the human motivation that make up the precipitating conditions of such central Western phenomena as the emergence of the modern identity. As Taylor writes, "one has to understand people's self-interpretations and their visions of the good, if one is to explain how they arise; but the second task can't be collapsed into the first, even as the first can't be elided in favour of the second" (204).

With these precisions in place, Taylor moves quickly to formulate in interpretive rather than in explanatory terms his basic thesis about the emergence of the modern identity. "The modern identity arose," he writes, "because changes in the self-understandings connected with a wide-range of practices.... converged and reinforced each other to produce it...." (206). Consequently, Taylor's concern in articulating his story is not to address the direction of causal arrows between "idées-forces" and practices at any one moment in history. Rather, he proposes to sketch the various facets in the development of the modern identity in terms of the "idées force" themselves.

If these are the major lines in Taylor's own view of just what kind of story he is telling, an interpretive rather than an explanatory one, what then are the major phases in this story? These phases comprise three overlapping historical periods. The first phase stretches from "Augustine to Descartes and Montaigne, and on to our own day," Taylor says. Here he wants to stress the first of the three elements he conjectures as central ingredients in the modern identity, "modern inwardness, the sense of ourselves as beings with inner depths" (x). The second phase overlaps the first. It stretches from "the Reformation through the Enlightenment to its contemporary forms" the stress here falls on "the affirmation of ordinary life." And the final phase stretches from "the late 18th century through the transformations of the 19th century, and on to its manifestations in 20th century literature." This final phase accents the third ingredient of the modern identity, "the expressivist notion of nature as an inner moral source" (x). Taylor treats the first phase in this story as Part Two of his book under the heading, "Inwardness," the second as Part Three under the heading, "The Affirmation of Ordinary Life," and the last as Parts Four and Five under the headings, "The Voice of Nature" and "Subtler Languages." The full story - and it is both very long and still both a "prelude" to later works - Taylor puts under the guiding adage "understanding modernity is an

exercise in retrieval" (xi).[3]

I would now like to take up in more detail the first phase only of this story and indeed just that part of it that deals with the emergence of the modern identity in early modern times from Descartes to Locke. We need first a brief sketch of the trajectory Taylor follows in his account of the first phase, then a brief inventory of the salient features in the move from Descartes to Locke, and finally a sharper focus on just what the major claims about this movement really are.

## II

### Descartes versus Plato, Augustine and Montaigne

In discussing the first phase in the emergence of modern identity, namely the new focus on inwardness, Taylor ranges in a series of eight chapters from Plato to Augustine, to Descartes and Locke, before coming back to Montaigne and moving to summarize this part of his story around several key points. The culmination of this long discussion is the claim that the modern identity emerges by the end of the 18th century as a conjunction of three key elements of inwardness - forms of self exploration, forms of self control, and "the individualism of personal commitment" (185). Together, these three elements make up a first sketch of the modern identity as a "three sided individualism." These three sides comprise a characteristic localisation for self exploration in the inward individual, an instrumental form of moral atomism in the understanding of self control through the protections of subjective rights, and a productive economic sense of individualism as a "new centrality of constructed orders and artifacts in mental and moral life" (197).

Although this three-sided individualism emerges at the end of a sweeping view of western intellectual history from Plato to Locke, one of the most important strands in this story concerns the Cartesian transformation of the Augustinian tradition of radical reflexivity and inwardness. This strand moreover is carefully intertwined with a related but different one, namely a second version of internalization or radical reflexivity that we find in Montaigne. The critical opposition here is between Cartesian disengagement of an inner subject and Montaigne's exploration of an inner self.

Each of these two strands of early modern thought suggests a fresh understanding of human agency in terms of differing accents on inwardness. The first strand suggests the Cartesian relocation of moral sources and understanding of the good in a disengaged subjectivity duly objectified for analysis, and the second a counterbalancing humanist insistence on exploring a self without insisting on its objectification. This is the opposition I want to consider more closely before looking at a contrasting view.

Taylor sees Descartes as elaborating, above all by contrast with both Pagan and Christian antiquity, with Plato and Augustine, what he calls a "new conception of inwardness, an inwardness of self-sufficiency, of autonomous powers of ordering by reason...." (158). In short, Descartes both disengages the subject and proceduralizes reason. The result is that traditional moral sources are no longer located outside the subject, for example in the Ideas or in the will of God, but now within the subject.

With respect to Plato, Descartes substitutes a completely different understanding of self-exploration based on the new "resolutive-compositive" method of Galileo rather than on any theological inquiries informed by metaphysical theories of "logos." The result of this change in scientific theorizing is a corresponding change in how human beings are to be understood. Once the key to scientific exploration is seen to lie outside any appeals to a theory of ideas, the moral ground these ideas supported also has to

[3] Contrast Taylor's view here with the complex and pessimistic vision to be found in Leszek Kolakwski's recent collection, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990), as well as with the very different picture of modernity in R. B. Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1991).

be located elsewhere.

Thus, just as correct scientific knowledge of things now must involve the inner representation of such things, so moral knowledge requires a similar inner representation. The point is that in both cases this inward representation is neither an imitation nor a participation but a construction. Consequently, the order of things "migrates" from outside to inside and becomes an order of representation that finally generates not just knowledge but certainty as well.

Thinking becomes a gathering, a collecting, a "*cogitare*" (cf. 143-45) whose standards derive not from the world but from the thinking subject. These standards require that the body as well as the material world be understood as entirely distinct from the subject. The result is that the subject itself is no longer properly understood as disengaged from the world and its objectifications. In sum, a different epistemology leads to a different metaphysics, and the different metaphysics results in a different philosophical anthropology or philosophy of mind. In particular, "self mastery [now] consists in our lives being shaped by the orders that our reasoning capacity constructs according to the appropriate standards" (147).

When we turn from Plato to Augustine, we find that Descartes substitutes a new understanding of insight, one no longer dependent on a transformation of the will that finally allows insight into the good, but one grounded in the realm of independent mental substance. Unlike the Stoic doctrines that Augustine revised in large measure, Descartes's doctrines exclude the possibility of taking the cosmos as embodying a meaningful order in such a way that ethics could continue to be founded on a subjectivized physics. The world rather is a mute and meaningless mechanism to be grasped "functionally as a domain of possible ends.... a domain of potential instrumental control" (149). Rational self mastery requires insight, but insight is directed to the realm of mind and no longer to the realm of matter.

This fresh understanding of insight in terms of the mental only leads to a new view of the passions also. Unlike the Stoics and their later baptizers who saw the passions as instances of opinion, Descartes views the passions functionally. The passions are devices that "help preserve the body-soul substantial union" (150), that help preserve the organism from danger by triggering certain reflexes. Accordingly, rational self mastery means keeping the passions subordinated to the instrumental control of reason. Acting efficaciously thus is engaging oneself through the instrumentality of the passions, but engaging oneself in a detached way from the perspective of inwardness as rational self-control.

"The new definition of the mastery of reason brings about an internalization of moral sources," Taylor writes. "When the hegemony of reason comes to be understood as rational control, the power to objectify body, world, and passions, that is, to assume a thoroughly instrumental stand towards them, then the sources of moral strength can no longer be seen outside us in the traditional mode.... [And] if rational control is a matter of mind dominating a disenchanted world of matter, then the sense of a good life, and the inspiration to attain it, must come from the agent's sense of his own dignity as a rational being" (151-2). Thus, Descartes displaces temperance as the heart of the moral vision with that great-souled generosity that arises from human dignity (cf. 154-5). And rationality itself he now takes to consist not in a vision of an external reality but in certain properties of internal thinking - "rationality is no longer defined substantively, in terms of the order of being, but rather procedurally, in terms of the standards by which we construct orders in science and life" (156). Descartes thus moves "from substance to procedure, from found to constructed orders...." (156).

If these are the major elements in Taylor's view of Descartes's role in shaping the characteristic inwardness of the modern identity, what are the somewhat different roles that Montaigne plays in this story? Just as in the case of Descartes so

in that of Montaigne, Taylor devotes an entire chapter to this second perspective on "radical reflexivity" (178), a perspective on an explorative self rather than on a disengaged subject. What Montaigne discovers in his inner explorations, far from a stable human nature, is a continuously shifting subjective terrain, what Taylor calls "a terrifying inner instability" (178). This discovery results in a different understanding of reason in terms of limits, impermanence, mutability, and contingency. And it results as well in a model of self-description no longer in terms of "the exemplary, the universal, or the edifying, but [one that] simply follows the contours of the changing reality of one being, himself" (179).

This perspective on reason and self-description also leads to a new understanding of nature. Nature becomes once again, as in antiquity but now for different reasons, the salutary guide for right action, for living well. Following the precepts of nature protects the individual, as Montaigne understands the matter, from the excesses of both philosophical abstraction and moral rigorism. The explorations of the self in view of greater self-knowledge leads to the recognition of unsuspected limits that undermines any intellectual or moral perfectionism and reinforces the moderate demands of one's shifting, natural self. Inner explorations of the self are to be at the service of one's individual being and not at that of some universal human being (181). Montaigne, in short, "inaugurates a new kind of reflection which is intensely individual, self-exploration, the aim of which is to reach self-knowledge by coming to see through the screens of self-delusion which passion or spiritual pride has erected. It is entirely a first person study, receiving little help from the deliverances of third person observation, and none from 'science'" (181).

Taylor draws a contrast between Descartes and Montaigne in terms of their differing aims and methods. Montaigne's aim is sharply focused on the self as a unique individual, whereas Descartes's aim is directed to the subject as a general substance or essence. Further, Montaigne's method is "first-person self-interpretation," whereas Descartes's involves the "proof of impersonal reasoning" (182). Moreover, Descartes insists on universalizing the standards to which any individual ought to appeal in constructing his or her subjectivity, whereas Montaigne wants to insist on the irreducible originality of that inwardness each self constructs. Montaigne characteristically tries "not to find an intellectual order by which things in general can be surveyed, but rather to find the modes of expression which will allow the particular not to be overlooked" (182). So, Taylor opposes a deeper engagement with particularity in Montaigne to a deeper disengagement in Descartes.

One striking addition to this contrast lies in the social dimension. We need to remember the deeply inter-personal motivation of Montaigne's turn inwards, the death of his friend, La Boétie. "He alone partook of my true image," writes Montaigne, "and carried if off with him. That is why I so curiously decipher myself" (cited, 183). Thus, the context of self-explanation for Montaigne is friendship, whereas the context of the construction of the subject for Descartes is scientific community. This context clarifies just why the exploration of the self in Montaigne leads finally to no one thing such as Descartes's substantial subject. Rather, Montaigne's explorations continually arrive at questions about what an individual person most essentially is once we have acquiesced to the mutability of nature itself.

## III

### The Two Modernities: Descartes and Montaigne

This story of the first phase in the constitution of the modern identity, with its key moment in the early modern period when the Pagan and Christian vision of reason and the moral realm was displaced through the articulation of a disengaged subject in Descartes and an engaged exploratory self in Montaigne is however one

version only of the origins of modernity.[4] Before we can investigate then the connections between Taylor's moral ontology and his story of the emergence of the modern identity, we do well to consider at least one plausible alternative.

In his recent book, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*[5], Stephen Toulmin investigates the relations between Descartes and Montaigne from the standpoint of a preoccupation with modernity which he shares with Taylor. But, unlike Taylor, Toulmin reads the relation between these two thinkers in very different terms. For Toulmin, the modern identity emerges as the result of two turning points and not one. The first is the humanistic discoveries of Montaigne and Bacon, and the second the scientific discoveries of Descartes and Galileo. These revolutions are separated by about 50 years or two generations, the 1570s and 1580s on the one hand, and the 1630s and 1640s on the other. The movement between these two moments is roughly the movement from renaissance humanism to 17th century rationalism. Moreover, the historical circumstances separating the two moments are those of a Europe convulsed in political, religious, and economic turnoil. And the result is the thorough going turn to scientific rationalism in the interests of stabilizing the intellectual currents of the times with all the reassurances of objective standards, non-theoretical demonstrations, and natural ideals.

The renaissance humanistic discoveries with their insistence on limitation, uncertainty, mutability, relativism, and contingency disappear from the center of the crowded European stage to remain in the wings for several centuries until the use of logical rigor and moral purity are once again challenged in the work of such masters of suspicion as Marx and Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Freud. In short, the need for certainty in so many fields of human activity suppresses the renaissance discoveries of utterly pervasive uncertainty - the clarities of logic triumph over the ambiguities of rhetoric, and the uses of an abstract rigor displace an always hesitant, tolerant, skeptical form of inquiry. As Toulmin writes: "In the 1580s and '90s, skeptical acceptance of ambiguity and a readiness to live with uncertainty were still viable intellectual policies: by 1640, this was no longer the case. Intellectual options opened up by Erasmus and Rabelais, Montaigne and Bacon, were set aside...." (44). In short, if Montaigne's work ushered in a renaissance in the understanding of modernity, Descartes's work has to be seen as a counter-renaissance. We will find it useful to look in more detail at Toulmin's account if we are to contrast it effectively with Taylor's.

Before looking at his treatment of Descartes and Montaigne however we need to notice the interesting and distinctive strategy Toulmin uses to establish a context for his later discussions. This context comprises a description of a standard account of the origins of modernity, the isolation of its controlling assumptions, the critique of these assumptions, and the proposal of a revised account.

"Modernity" itself is a tendentious term that still accommodates a number of competing interpretations. One central issue is just when we might date the origins of modernity. Answering this question depends very largely on one's interests. Modernity begins for those with mainly political interests with the emergence of the nation-state in the mid to late 17th century. Those with mainly economic interests on the other hand see modernity beginning a century later with the onset of the industrial revolution in England. Modernity begins roughly at the same time for those like Habermas who have strong sociological interests, specifically with Kant's articulation of the Enlightenment ideals of ethics and politics around the time of the French and American revolutions. For others, however, who stress the primacy of science in the modern era, the origins

[4] Consider the very different picture we find of the same period in D.R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1970). I am grateful to Frank Peddle for showing me the pertinence of this excellent study.

[5] Unless otherwise indicated, references in this section of the text refer to Toulmin's book.

of modernity lie in the work of Newton in the 1630's.

Toulmin thinks we need to reach back to the 1630's and to the work of Galileo and Descartes that first fixed the modern understanding of scientific theories as "rational" under a certain interpretation. A generation later this interpretation was generalized to the political realm. When Toulmin talks about "the standard account of modernity" then, he is referring to the origins of modernity in the 1630s and 1640s. And the basis of his claim to take this interpretation as standard is his conviction that, despite extensive disagreements over detail, this interpretation enjoys the support of an historical consensus today. "Most scholars," Toulmin writes, "agree on the point. The 'modern' commitment to rationality in human affairs was a product of those intellectual changes in the mid-17th century whose protagonists were Galileo in physics and astronomy, and René Descartes in mathematics and epistemology" (12). This consensus however has taken a new form today by comparison with the period before the second World War that saw the consolidation of what Toulmin wants to call the standard view.

The standard view, as Toulmin construes it, comprises three basic assumptions which historians over the last thirty years have been busy revising. The first element of the standard view of modernity is that "the political, economic, social, and intellectual conditions of Western Europe radically improved from 1600, in ways that encouraged the development of new political institutions, and more rational methods of inquiry" (16). The idea here of course was that a conjunction of circumstances - trade, city growth, printing, etc. - brought about the emergence of a secular culture which flowered in a scientific and methodological revolution marked by the appearance in the 1630s of Galileo's *Dialogues Concerning the Two Principal World Systems* and Descartes's *Discourse on Method*. The second element in the standard account was the belief that "after 1600, the yoke of religion was lighter than before" (16), "that ecclesiastical constraints and controls were relaxed in the 17th century" (18). Here the key notion was the decay of the Holy Roman Empire and the growing power of an educated laity to turn aside from the dogmatism and authoritarianism of the medieval church and to think through religious matters increasingly for themselves. Finally the third element was the belief that the genuine innovations in 17th-century science and philosophy were both revolutionary and emancipatory. And once again the main idea here is the power of Cartesian ideas of rationality to emancipate themselves from theology and to rearticulate experience in terms of a new kind of inquiry whose demonstrations from clear and distinct ideas were as accessible as the elements of Euclid's geometry.

But recent historical inquiry has challenged successfully each of these three controlling elements in the standard view of the origins of modernity. To the first belief about the radical improvement of European life in the early 1600s historians have opposed a body of materials that document recurring crises in Europe between 1605 and 1650. The second view about the presumed lightening of theological constraints in these years historians have contested on the grounds of the very great tightening of orthodoxy between 1620 and 1660 when the Protestant-Catholic conflicts envenomed the Thirty Years War from 1618-1648. Finally, historians have also challenged the third element in the standard account of the origins of modernity. Far from being the innovatory and emancipatory revolutionary movements they have seemed to be, the breakthroughs of 17th-century science and philosophy now seem "to look less like revolutionary advances, and more like defensive counter-revolution" (17). Thus, more recent historical research can be seen to have effectively undermined the plausibility of the standard account of modernity's origins that still holds sway, if not among historians at least among many historians of philosophy, perhaps even with Taylor.

The third element is particularly troublesome. For, as we have seen in Taylor's discussion of Descartes, the idea that the new sciences

developed a new understanding of rationality is seriously deficient. Toulmin argues in fact that this belief is doubly mistaken. Unlike Aristotle's concern for the rational analysis of both theory and practice, 17th-century thinkers narrowed the scope of rational analysis to "the theoretical arguments that achieve a quasi-geometrical certainty or necessity" (20). Further these thinkers - Newton and Boyle are examples - far from liberating rational analysis from the constraints of theological concerns, continued to frame projects with an eye fixed almost continually on theological matters. Thus, the standard account mistakenly insists on a thorough-going decontextualisation of reason which, while admittedly a goal of the 17th century thinkers, was more honored in the breech than actually sought after.

With these descriptions of modernity in mind and especially with the elements of a newly controversial standard account of the origins of modernity before us, we may now consider briefly the four major components in the revised account that Toulmin wants to argue. Each of these components, in Toulmin's view, were characteristic of the earlier revolution of renaissance humanism to be found in such writers as Erasmus, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Montaigne, and Bacon. And each was shunted aside as a consequence of the scientific revolution two generations later on view not only in Galileo, Pascal, and Descartes but also in Bunyan, Racine, Donne, and Thomas Browne. The turn was, in summary, from four kinds of practical knowledge to four kinds of theoretical knowledge, - from the oral, particular, local, and timely to the written, universal, general, and timeless.

In the first shift away from the oral to the written, the scientific philosophers, as Plato did with the Sophists, narrowed the broad field of argumentation to that of logic only. Rhetoric was set aside. The soundness and validity of written arguments displaced the form, persuasiveness, and rational merit of oral argumentation, "the circumstantial merits and defects of persuasive utterances" (31).

The second shift affected scope. Once again, as in the celebrated *Provincial Letters* of Pascal, 17th-century scientific philosophers effectively discredited the entire Aristotelian tradition of case studies that focused on particular circumstances. Instead, they championed against the so-called casuisty of their opponents the need for general abstract moral theory that one finds, for example, in the Cambridge Platonists. Moral philosophy was to dispense with case ethics once and for all and to devote itself to the formulation of general ethical principles only.

Similarly, the scientific philosophers successfully resisted the extraordinary explorations the humanists had undertaken into the local concerns of "ethnography, geography, and history" (32). Descartes, we remember, could congratulate himself in the *Discourse* for having gone beyond his earlier interests in history. "When modern philosophers discussed ethnography and history as irrelevant to truly 'philosophical' inquiry," Toulmin writes, they excluded from their enterprise "whole realms of questions that had previously been recognized as legitimate topics of inquiry. From then on abstract axioms were in, concrete history was out" (33).

Besides stressing the oral, particular, and local, renaissance humanists stressed as well the timely problems and issues of "legal, medical, or confessional practice" (33). Timeliness here refers to the rationality of effecting certain actions within a particular temporal framework such as a mariner's decision to alter course as opposed to his actual computations. The importance of the transient was caught in the humanist interest in jurisprudence as the ideal for a rational enterprise rather then in science. By contrast, the scientific philosophers would subordinate "the significance of local diversity, the relevance of particularity, and the rhetorical power of oral reasoning" to their formal projects for "a universal natural philosophy" (34). Such projects had no room for the transitory, only for the permanent.

In short the scientific revolution shifted intellectual attention away from the revival of the traditional challenges of practical philosophical

concerns in the work of the renaissance humanists to the new challenges of theoretical philosophical concerns with formal issues.

Now, if this is the gist of the revised account of the origin of modernity that Toulmin would have us substitute for the standard account, how specifically does he understand the opposition Taylor describes in detail, the contrast between Descartes and Montaigne? We need to notice immediately that Toulmin, unlike Taylor, places these figures in the careful chronological order of a humanist versus a rationalist intellectual movement, whereas Taylor prefers to juxtapose their respective emphases on different kinds of inwardness.

As for the Montaigne of the 1570s and 1580s, the Montaigne of the *Apologie* and the *Essais*, Toulmin stresses as we would now expect the particularities of his "personal style and ideas," the unending detail of the topics he explores, the peculiarities of his attitudes. Interestingly, Toulmin also stresses the contrast between the different roles religion plays in Augustine's *Confessions* and in Montaigne's *Essais*. In the first, religion is at the center of the work, whereas in the second it is but one of many centers. The tone of this work Toulmin takes as "cool and nonjudgmental" (37) as befits the insistence on intellectual modesty in the face of skeptical concerns and the repeated experiences of the limitations of experience. Montaigne is also striking in his insistence on the privileged relation between soul and body whereby each must aid the other. By contrast, Toulmin sees Descartes's separation of the soul from the body as just one element in a much larger circumscription and final constriction of the mental. We have no responsibility for passions and feelings because these events merely happen to persons rather than result from persons' doings. Further, the naturalness of Montaigne's attitudes towards embodiment, and especially towards sexuality, is lost in Descartes's apparent overriding concerns for respectability, propriety, and socially acceptable conduct. As Toulmin observes: "By the 1640s, the rationalists do not just limit rationality to the senses and the intellect... they also reflect the first inroads of the 'respectability' that was so influential over the next two-and-a-half centuries" (410). Rationality and logic for Descartes are to be held strictly separate from rhetoric and the emotions.

Toulmin wants to contrast especially the different kinds of individualism to be found in Montaigne and Descartes. In the latter he claims to find "a flavor of 'solipsism'" (41) in that the subject is strictly delimited from its own embodiment and consequently is construed as a mind in isolation except for its sensory inputs from the world in which it lives. By contrast, Toulmin finds in Montaigne a sense of the embodied self whose richly particular experiences are taken as representative or typical of what it means to be a human being. "For Montaigne" '(life) experience' is the practical experience that each human individual accumulates through dealing with many coequal others: for Descartes, '(mind) experience' is raw material from which each individual builds a cognitive map of the intelligible world 'in the head'" (42).

This contrast for Toulmin epitomizes the larger contrast between the decontextualized rationalism of the 17th-century scientific philosophers with their "theoretical ambitions and intellectual constraints" and the older "restatements of classical skepticism" in the "practical modesty and the intellectual freedom" of the late 16th-century humanist philosophers.

Rationalism with its roots in natural philosophy and humanism with its roots in classical literature are then the two revolutions at the origins of modernity. It is rationalism however with its Cartesian understandings of rationality and abstract moral value that succeeds in displacing the polyvalent skeptical exploration of late renaissance humanism in such thinkers as Montaigne. The recognition of uncertainty, ambiguity, and contingency gives way to the quest for certainty, clarity, and necessity.

## IV

## The Disputed Origins of Modernity

Now, given these two pictures of the relationships between the work of Montaigne and that of Descartes, how do Toulmin's and Taylor's pictures contrast?

One important contrast is that of orientation. Whereas Taylor's discussion is largely oriented with one eye on how both Descartes and Montaigne stress different aspects of the turn towards subjectivity and selfhood, Toulmin is much more centrally concerned with how these two figures construe the relation between subjectivity and world, selfhood and embodiment. Thus if the mind-body problem can be taken as a general way of capturing Toulmin's orientation, Taylor's orientation stands rather under the sign of the problem of personal identity.

This difference in orientation has as its complement a difference in the respective attitudes towards the nature of the account that is offered. In Taylor's case, as we have seen, we are urged to view the historical discussion of the early modern origins of the modern identity as an exercise in interpretive understanding rather than as an attempt at historical explanation. Toulmin's story by contrast continually emphasizes causal connections among the disparate events of the two tumultuous generations that separate Descartes from Montaigne. Toulmin nowhere addresses the question of just how we are expected to take his account. But the structure of that account, as well as the way the key elements are related to each other, suggest more of historical explanation than of interpretation.

A further difference emerges once we focus on several of those elements in their own right. Both Taylor and Toulmin are interested in understanding just how a certain idea of rationality gradually takes form in the work of the scientific philosophers. But, unlike Taylor, Toulmin pays great attention to the important difference within the early modern period between the shifting priorities of one kind of discourse over another. Thus, where Taylor focuses exclusively on just how radical reflexivity differs in Descartes and Montaigne, Toulmin insists on how the priority of rhetoric and argumentation over logic and argument in humanist philosophers like Montaigne and Bacon is reversed two generations later in scientific philosophers like Descartes and Galileo. Toulmin's sensitivity to differing kinds of discourse in the early modern period as well as to shifting priorities among these discourses is not characteristic of Taylor's readings.

Still another general contrast between the two accounts turns on their relative sensitivities to the problems of historical stereotyping. This is an issue that Taylor seems to pass over in silence. Toulmin by contrast is much concerned to identify just what are the cardinal elements of the standard historical account of the early modern period, to criticize these elements in the light of the most recent historiographical consenses, and finally to offer an alternative view that is designed to side step the stereotypes while continuing to narrow the gap between what happened in the early modern period and how we understand today what happened then. While both Taylor and Toulmin are responsive to the need for “thick description” of any complex historical phenomenon like the emergence of the modern identity - they both cite Geertz's work - it is Toulmin rather than Taylor who takes pains to protect his own account from any undue influences by now discredited historical stereotypes.

The most important difference between these two accounts however concerns neither orientation, nor historical considerations, nor thematic concerns, nor historical stereotypes, but their specific treatments of Montaigne and Descartes. Taylor insists on juxtaposing the two thinkers whom he deals with non-chronologically, first Descartes and then Montaigne. His plan is to organize their similar reflections on radical reflexivity in complementary ways so that Descartes's disengaged subjectivity can be seen as part of an early modern pattern of inwardness that Montaigne complements with his account of the exploring self. And this non-serial approach is consistent with Taylor's mainly interpretive rather than explanatory task. Toulmin by

contrast insists on the rigors of chronology in his discussion, carefully looking in detail at several central themes in Montaigne's works before looking in similar detail at Descartes to discover their transformations.

This final contrast leads to the most striking differences between Toulmin and Taylor. For where Taylor sees two related strands of a similar concern with kinds of inwardness in the emergence of the modern identity in Descartes and Montaigne, Toulmin sees two radically different revolutions epitomizied in the work of Montaigne and Descartes where the chronologically later Cartesian revolution effectively undoes the results of the earlier humanistic revolution. Far from seeing the emergence of the modern identity in the complementary emphasis on disengaged subjectivity and on an engaged exploratory self in Descartes and Montaigne, Toulmin sees the humanistic philosophical discoveries of rationality in skeptical, contingent, and modest terms giving way to the scientific philosophical construction of rationality in terms of certainty, necessity, and metaphysical pride.

Thus the two pictures we find in these recent investigations of the origins of modernity comprise contrasting portraits of complementary figures of Montaigne and Descartes in a foreground, while in the background we find differing renderings of the understandings of history, language, body and mind, personal identity, and finally rationality itself. The question that arises then is just what effects if any the very different accounts of the origins of modernity in Toulmin and the origins of the modern identity in Taylor, centered as they are on very different ways of treating the relations between Montaigne and Descartes, should have on our attempts to take the critical measure of Taylor's "given ontology of the human experience?"

If we are not to attempt that critique without situating Taylor's moral ontology in the context of his historical narrative, well enough and good. But when a situation of at least one of the three central phases of this extended narrative turns out to comprise a strongly controversial reading of the relations among rationality, moral selfhood, and knowledge in such cardinal key figures as Montaigne and Descartes, how are we to understand the link Taylor wants us to respect between his thematic inquiries into the moral sources of the self and his interpretive but apparently short sighted historical narrative?

The main issue here - for there are several - is how to conciliate two opposed states of affairs. On the one hand, any adequate critical evaluation of Taylor's striking proposals about articulating the moral ontologies implied in those transcendent spiritual issues that underlie our immanent moral intuitions must consider both the formal coherence of the elements of those ontologies as well as the historical development of any particular moral ontology itself. But the interpretive account of such an ontology's moral development as opposed to an explanatory account on examination seems to conflate two quite distinct moments in the emergence of the modern identity under the guise of reading such moments as complements. Thus the problem that comes clear is just which historical interpretation of the emergence of the modern identity is to be understood as normative in our attempts to follow the dialectic in Taylor's interpretation, the dialectic between system and history, between necessity and transcendence on the one side - what he calls givenness - and contingency and immanence on the other - what he calls emergence.

In the end we are left with the further question as to just how strongly Taylor wants us to understand the relation between his thematic and historical investigations. If one of the elements can be described reasonably well and unambiguously but not adequately criticized without reference to the other, where the other element can be suitably criticized in the light of alternative accounts but not unambiguously described (it is necessarily incomplete we remembered Taylor insisting), then just how important finally is the link between the two? The situation is very much analogous to Hilary Putnam's talk about dynamic and dialectic relations between standards and contexts when dealing with very

general metaphysical and logical frameworks.[6] Here however instead of standards we have vague, brief, but stimulating talk about a "given ontology of human experience," a very different matter indeed than standards. And instead of contexts we have a sweeping, comprehensive, yet carefully argued selective juxtaposition of two major moments in the movement of European thought from the end of the 16th to the early part of the 17th-century where our modern understanding of both standards and moral ontologies are forged - again a much larger matter than merely changing contexts.

It is not clear, then, how we can easily resolve this tension in Taylor's work between a shifting dialectic of metaphysics and history on the one side and the need for truly critical discussion of such a shifting dialectic on the other.[7] And if we are not clear about how such a tension can be resolved, how would Taylor have us sympathetically but critically evaluate his extraordinarily ambitious claims to disengage the central assumptions of something so bold as "the given ontology of human experience"? These are some of the issues to which I hope to return on another occasion.[8]

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[6] See especially his *The Many Faces of Realism* (La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 1987).

[7] For the requisite contexts see Taylor's *Philosophical Papers*, 2 volumes (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985) and several of their most searching reviews such as those by Jonathan Lear in *London Review of Books*, 19 September 1985, and by R. Rorty in *TLS*, 6 December 1985. Part of the larger critical response can now be found in a special Symposium on Taylor's *Sources of the Self* in *Inquiry*, 34 (1991) with papers by Q. Skinner, M. Rosen, S.R.L. Clark, M. Löw-Beer, W. Kymlicka, together with Taylor's replies.

[8] On that occasion I hope to examine Taylor's very recent reflections in the context of Canada's constitutional crisis, "Shared and Divergent Values," in *Canada's Constitutional Options*, ed. Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Vol. I (Kingston, Queen's University Press, 1991).

# ON PRAGMATISM

***Francis Peddle***

***Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*** by *Richard Rorty* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989), Pp.xvi + 201.

## I

### Introduction

Richard Rorty stands for a definite and well-articulated position in contemporary American philosophy. His publication in 1979 of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (hereafter *PMN*) provoked widespread and lively commentary. In it he conducted a panoramic assault on the notion that the end of philosophy ought to be the accurate representation of the world. Rorty's name is associated with a revivified pragmatism whose American heroes are James and Dewey, refined by Sellars and Davidson, with comparable supporting themes to be found in the Continental writers like Heidegger, the later Wittgenstein, Derrida and Foucault.

The systematic attempt to find objective truth in traditional philosophy must, on Rorty's view, be set aside or dissolved into a non-objectivizing approach to human beings as generators of new descriptions. The essence of systematic philosophy, in his critique of representationalism and foundationalism, is epistemology, which, as a conventionally developed Cartesianism, rests primarily upon ahistorical and permanent distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity, spirit and nature, essence and accidents, reality and appearance, mind and matter and so on. Metaphysically descriptive discourse which perpetrates a canonical and privileged vocabulary, that is, which aspires to Parmenidean closure, must therefore be supplanted by a cautiously "edifying" philosophy which endlessly recontextualizes and repictures the self as the centreless web of beliefs and desires evoked in Chapter Two "The Contingency of Selfhood" of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (hereafter *CIS*).

Unshackling philosophy's concern with Truth as Correspondence does not, however, mean that anything goes. While insisting that there is no "right" language to explain what remains unexplained by science, Rorty maintains that there is a democratic framework to discourse, and thus to the philosophical discourse which may indeed deny such a framework, that places a moral constraint upon intellectuals. Rortyan pragmatism is thus "political" philosophy in contrast with the "scientistic" approach of Husserl or the "poetic" philosophy of Heidegger. The well-known final words of *PMN* reflect the priority of politico-morality in pragmatic philosophy:

> Perhaps philosophy will become purely edifying, so that one's self-identification as a philosopher will be purely in terms of the books one reads and discusses, rather than in terms of the problems one wishes to solve. Perhaps a new form of systematic philosophy will be found which has nothing whatever to do with epistemology but which nevertheless makes normal philosophical inquiry possible. These speculations are idle, and nothing I have been saying makes one more plausible than another. The only point on which I would insist is that philosophers' moral concern should be with continuing the conversation of the West, rather than with insisting upon a place for the traditional problems of modern philosophy within that conversation.

One could cite Vico and Hegel as the "future" systematic philosophers envisaged by Rorty who will strive for a "normal philosophical inquiry" while having nothing to do with epistemology. The limitations of the historical narrative in *PMN* should not, however, lead us to underestimate the importance of epistemological

theorizing for much of Anglo-American philosophy.

Like Davidson, Putnam, and most analytic and pragmatist philosophers, Rorty's intellectual output not accidentally takes the form of essays, occasional pieces, reviews, replies and short commentaries. The books which have appeared since *PMN*, such as *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), and more recently, the two volumes of *Philosophical Papers: Objectivity, Relativism and Truth, and Essays on Heidegger and Others* (1991) are collections of Rorty's ongoing anti-foundationalist work. A useful bibliography of his articles and reviews from 1959 to 1989 can be found in *Reading Rorty: Critical Responses to* Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature *(and Beyond)* (1990) edited by Alan Malachowski.

*CIS* does not deviate from this form of philosophical and literary presentation. It is based on two sets of lectures given by Rorty at University College, London in 1986 and at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1987. There are nevertheless common themes and elements distinguished and interwoven, as in *PMN*, which give these texts sufficient coherence and presentational solidity to justify one saying that Rorty has an identifiable philosophical orientation for which he is willing to make a vigorous defense.

Parts Two through Four of this review endeavour to isolate the salient characteristics of this philosophical orientation. Part Five is critical and comparative. It takes the inherent untenability of Rorty's position, its self-portrayal as "weak thought", and attempts to draw this self-portrayal into both the speculative argument and conclusion that philosophy does matter to civilization regardless of whether the culture which denies such an interconnection is wholly incapable of thinking a way through the self-imposed marginalization of its philosophical undertakings.

## II

### Contingency and Pragmatism

As the title suggests the book under review is divided into three parts, each containing tripartite expositions of the principal themes. Part I "Contingency" focuses on the contingency of language, selfhood and community. Part II "Ironism and Theory", which describes the "liberal ironist", contains "Private Irony and Liberal Hope" followed by "Self-creation and Affiliation: Proust, Nietzsche, and Heidegger", and "From Ironist Theory to Private Allusions: Derrida". In the latter piece, Rorty is anxious to show how Derrida extends the bounds of possibility by incessant recontextualization. Derrida thus manages to avoid all "final vocabularies", and thereby all authority, by engaging in language games where the traditional distinctions between philosophy and literature are pervasively side-stepped. Part III "Cruelty and Solidarity" explores the substitution of cruelty for self-creation in "The Barber of Kasbeam: Nabokov on Cruelty" and "The Last Intellectual in Europe: Orwell on Cruelty". The last essay "Solidarity" focuses on the notion that "we have a moral obligation to feel a sense of solidarity with all other human beings" (*CIS*, 190). Rorty's "light-minded aestheticism" is not therefore to be divorced from the claims of liberal democratic society.

The notion or idea of contingency developed in Part I is fundamental to the Rorty's characterization of "ironist" theory in Part II. He uses the term "ironist" to describe someone who faces up to the contingency of his or her most central beliefs and desires (*CIS*, xv). Only when we shed the idea that the world has an "intrinsic nature" will we be in the position to accept the pervasive contingency of language. It is clear that Rorty sees the recognition of the contingency of language as preliminary to an awareness of the contingency of conscience which in turn leads to the recognition "of intellectual and moral progress as a history of increasingly useful metaphors rather than of increasing understanding of how things really are" (*CIS*, 9). Disconnecting language from "the God's-eye view" is fundamental to Rorty's anti-representationalism. The history of language is, on this view, non-teleological and

expressive only of a reality which lies within us.

> To see the history of language, and thus of the arts, the sciences, and the moral sense, as the history of metaphor is to drop the picture of the human mind, or human languages, becoming better and better suited to the purposes for which God or Nature designed them, for example, able to express more and more meanings or to represent more and more facts. The idea that language has a purpose goes once the idea of language as medium goes. A culture which renounced both ideas would be the triumph of those tendencies in modern thought which began two hundred years ago, the tendencies common to German idealism, Romantic poetry, and utopian politics (*CIS*, 16).

The "recontextualization" of language as solely a function of time and chance, that is, the dissolution of its Platonic formulation as the medium or instrument of thought, underpins the "metaphysics" of twentieth century philosophy of language as first philosophy. But Rorty's neo-pragmatism seeks to thoroughly naturalize and historicize the transtemporal elements and terms of reference of this linguistic metaphysics. Within the context of post-Cartesian epistemological theorizing, the conception of language as a *tertium quid* between thought or the "self" and reality is dissolved by Davidson. The Davidsonian tendency to break down all the traditional dichotomies to which representationalist philosophy has sought solutions and reconciliations is applauded by Rorty. The description of the basic character of language in Part I of Rorty's book relies heavily on the work of Davidson and to a lesser extent on Wittgenstein. Readers interested in exploring these themes further should look at the essay "Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, *op. cit.*, Davidson's response in "After-thoughts" to "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge" in *Reading Rorty*, *op. cit.*, and "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing: An Essay on Derrida" in the *Consequences of Pragmatism*, *op. cit*.

Rorty's own inversion of the contemplative wholeness of classical Greek metaphysics comes through strongly in Chapter Two "The Contingency of Selfhood". Plato's overcoming of poetry by philosophy - the absorption of the self into the universality of the undivided and the unchanging - must itself be reversed. Self-creation can only be attained through the recognition of contingency. The transcendence of contingency in any form of atemporal metaphysics leads only to the negation of selfhood. Rorty sees changes in the philosophical account of which boundary lines are to be crossed as crucial to advancing beyond the constraints of the tradition (*CIS*, 29). The pioneers in this endeavour are Nietzsche and Freud. Crossing the line between time and eternal truth, between the lower and the higher, between the accidental and the essential is no longer important or relevant. What is now central is moving from the old to the new, from the will to truth to the will to self-overcoming (Nietzsche), from moral guilt to practical inadvisability and from one mode of adaptation to another (Freud). Thought, now understood as idiosyncratic impression and fantasy, is thus utilized to meet the needs of the species, and not understood as a struggle to provide the right description of a divinized and creative first principle (Platonized Christianity), or the truth of an objective reality (Galilean science).

Rorty goes one step further and maintains that we must "de-divinize" the self as well as the world:

> The final victory of poetry in its ancient quarrel with philosophy - the final victory of metaphors of self-creation over metaphors of discovery - would consist in our becoming reconciled to the thought that this is the only sort of power over the world which we can hope to have. For that would be the final abjuration of the notion that truth, and not just power and pain, is to be found "out there" (*CIS*, 40).

The self ought not to cut itself off from the world, but its web of worldly relations, continually lengthened by time, will never be steady and fixed, only rewoven (*CIS*, 43).

In Chapter Three, "The Contingency of a Liberal Community", Rorty wishes to show, not argue, that the vocabulary of the Enlightenment, which concentrated on the distinctions between absolutism and relativism, morality and expediency, and rationality and irrationality, and which was essential to the establishment of liberal democracy, has become an impediment to the preservation and progress of democratic societies (*CIS*, 44). The historicity of vocabularies, the dominance of metaphor and the playfulness of self-creation, all expressions of the contingency of human beingness, provide, on Rorty's view, for no possibility of a neutral scrutiny of competing values or for a morally privileged language, i.e., a universal schematic of obligations and correct behaviour. In the pragmatic liberal community "moral philosophy takes the form of historical narration and utopian speculation rather than of a search for general principles" (*CIS*, 60). It was the Enlightenment's infatuation with science that led it to seek the foundations for civil society in an "unpoeticized" rationality. This equation of "philosophy" with Enlightenment rationalism and the vocabulary of epistemological theory echoes from Rorty's earlier work in *PMN*.

A key claim of Rorty's pragmatism is that the idea of representational truth must be replaced by "truth" as what comes to be believed in or what is chosen to be believed in.

> I should like to replace both religious and philosophical accounts of a suprahistorical ground or an end-of-history convergence with a historical narrative about the rise of liberal institutions and customs - the institutions and customs which were designed to diminish cruelty, make possible government by the consent of the governed, and permit as much domination-free communication as possible to take place. Such a narrative would clarify the conditions in which the idea of truth as correspondence to reality might gradually be replaced by the idea of truth as what comes to be believed in the course of free and open encounters (*CIS*, 68).

The heroes of the liberal community are thus people who combine commitment with a sense of the contingency of that commitment which derives from their sense of the contingency of language, moral deliberation, conscience, selfhood and community. Rorty has thus arrived at the "liberal ironist" richly described in Part II of *CIS*.

## III

### Irony and Political Philosophy

Political discourse, for Rorty, contributes better to a functioning civil society - a liberal democracy - when it does so without any controlling philosophical presuppositions. The unnaturalized and unhistoricized self, the human *qua* human, or a node of absolute reference, central to Greek metaphysics, Christian theology and Enlightenment rationalism has been continually eroded by modern intellectual culture. Rorty views his own anti-foundationalism as yet another redescription of what has been going on in the philosophical tradition for some time. The only condition for political discourse is the socio-historical milieu. Rorty does not maintain that the self as a "centerless web of historically conditioned beliefs and desires" is a necessary *model* of the self for liberal democracy since this would be to fall back into a form of foundationalism. Instead he is content to have liberal social theory "get along" with "common sense" and "social science", (*vide*, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" in ***Objectivity, Relativism and Truth***, *op. cit.*, (192). All one need strive for is a "reflective equilibrium" since "there is no natural order of justification of beliefs, no predestined outline for argument to trace" (*Id.*, 193).

The ironist, on Rorty's view, is unabashedly a nominalist and a historicist (*CIS*, 74). The ironist is defined as fulfilling three conditions (*CIS*, 73). First of all, he has "radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary he currently uses". Secondly, she "realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts". Thirdly, in philosophizing about her situation, "she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others". These people are ironists because they realize that anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed. This statement is difficult to reconcile with the politico-ethical tone of Rorty's view that ironists who are liberals see cruelty as the worst thing they can do. But it will become more clear why he makes the statement after his position on relativism is considered in more detail.

Rorty's attempts to insulate himself from the traditional charge of "relativism" not only by subjectivizing all discourse, but also by holding that the ironist functions outside of all relations between binary oppositions. Metaphysicians think ironist redescriptions are hopeless relativisms. They see language as a transparent medium for accurately relating thought and reality. Redescription must become subsumed or contextualized, that is, become a moment, within the framework of discovering and revealing a true external reality, essence or cosmology, according to the ontotheologician. By dissolving the "epistemological" relation, Rorty believes the ironist can avoid the traditional philosophical problematic of a "measure", of a "truth", that undergirds the final vocabulary to which the metaphysician is adhering. Formal selfcontradictions in the propositions that "all things are relative", or "there are no absolutes", or the Protagorean "man is the measure of all things" have no argumentative force for the ironist. Indeed, non-inferential associations and self-referential indexicals, historically and culturally conditioned, are the ironist's linguistic playground. Coherence theory makes as little an impression on Rorty in the end as does correspondence or representationalist theory.

Not accepting the traditional metaphysical terms of reference is a standard philosophical move of Heidegger, Derrida and many others, as Rorty knows. Equally, metaphysicians are very adept at forcing one down their path, even if the inversion of Platonized Christianity or Galilean science constitutes one's philosophical objective. Rorty is also aware that such an inversion is just as much a metaphysical snare for it relies heavily on the terms of reference and thought orientations of what is being inverted, *vide*, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, *op. cit*., "Deconstruction and Circumvention", (85-106). In fact the same can be said of Rorty's pragmatism in its use of such terms as "contingency", "irony", "political freedom", and "incarnated vocabularies". From a conceptual perspective, pragmatic ironism, if it were to be taken seriously, would have to neologize itself, or redescribe itself, either into unintelligibility or into the impossibility of reading. But Rorty is too much of a historicized Romantic, and too immersed in the Western political ethos, to give up on the tradition altogether and head to the Himalayas, or to the Orient, or immerse himself in Paul de Man's Dark God of Absence. The ironist measures success against the past (*CIS*, 97).

Another strange self-negation in Rorty's theory of ironism is that for all its emphasis on imagination, perspective, novelty, freedom and individual subjectivity, it contains no possibility of "originality". Since there is only re-description and re-re-description, there cannot be description. There is no "original" to which the redescriptions can be compared. One is only left with the comparison and juxtaposition of redescriptions or simply the looking at one picture and then moving on to another. This of course follows from Rorty's critique of representationalism. It seriously undermines, however, a theory of creativity, and makes it virtually impossible to distinguish between creativity, babble and mere imitation. In ironism there is no reference outside of the subject. Therefore the distinction between the

truly original and what is already in the tradition of a culture cannot be made. Either all is original *or* all is simply discoverable - both sides of the disjunction being self-negating. This conflicts with Rorty's desire to keep the conversation of the West moving along, since it is the metaphysical dialogue between the tradition, what is discoverable, and novelty, what is self-created, which propels intellectual and philosophical life forward. For Rorty, there can be no tradition as the tradition understands itself. Metaphysical dialogue, in the sense described, is therefore unsustainable within the parameters of Rorty's theory of ironism.

Rorty also often appeals to Hegelian dialectic as the sort of redescription and historicism which is fundamental to pragmatism. The quasi-dialectical passages in his essays are, for the most part, unsystematic and arbitrarily developed. They are also frequently parasitic upon thinkers who take philosophy as something defensible in its own right and who are thus diametrically opposed to the ironist position (*CIS*, 98). Occasionally, these passages can be quite illuminating, such as when he draws symmetries and parallels between Anglo-American and Continental thinking in their mutual antiessentialism and so on. Such an approach is nevertheless thoroughly unHegelian since it abstracts or onesidedly separates the instability of dialectical or negative discourse and development from the overall dialectico-speculative unity of the concept (*Begriff*). Rorty is well aware that it is extremely difficult to avoid the historical conundrum of all roads leading to Hegel, no matter how deftly one tries to move away from systematic philosophy. And he is, as others have noted, often quite adept at describing the status of his own thoughts. But pretending to be able to stand outside the philosophical situation he is describing, while at the same time declaring that it is impossible to get beyond the localities of time and culture, is an error of abstractionism, and an internal inconsistency, which few metaphysical thinkers commit.

Literary critics are also important for ironists, who take them as moral advisers on the basis that they are people who "have been around" (*CIS*, 80). Rorty points out that ironism is both private and reactive, and this is necessarily so (*CIS*, 87). Ironist philosophy is more conducive to the pursuit of private perfection than social amelioration. Liberals *qua* liberals cannot therefore use the ruminations of the ironist for public purposes. The separation of private irony and social tasks in Rorty is another indication of the abstracted, fragmented and derivative nature of his philosophical orientation. This is, however, as Rorty correctly points out, the orientation of much of modern philosophy. In this sense he is a reflection of the localized character of his own education in liberal Western philosophy. It is also the reason why writers such as Albert Schweitzer and Henry George had very little influence on academic moral philosophy during this century since they were primarily concerned to integrate self-perfection and social obligation. In other words, for Schweitzer and George an ethics of self-devotion widened into an ethics of self-perfection, which Rorty narrows down in private ironism, cannot be divorced from a demanding ethic of altruism and progress in the civil order without becoming a perverse and self-enclosed individual atomism.

The ironist looks back at the past along a horizontal axis (*CIS*, 96). Redescribing those books in the past which have held that their vocabularies are unironizable constitutes the retrospective vista of ironist theorizing, if one can call this approach "theory" *per se*. Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger are all paradigms of such theorizing, according to Rorty (*CIS*, 101). The problem of ironist theory is to overcome authority without claiming authority (*CIS*, 105). Many ironists, however, like Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, try to make it impossible for anyone to redescribe them except in their own terms. They thus see themselves as the "last philosophers". Rorty says that Proust had no such temptation to see himself as different from his predecessors and thus relapse into metaphysics. Novels are a safer place than

theory to recognize the relativity of one's authority figures. Proust, according to Rorty, "was a perspectivalist who did not have to worry about whether perspectivalism was a true theory" (*CIS*, 107).

With a discussion of Derrida in Chapter Six "From Ironist Theory to Private Allusions: Derrida" (originally entitled "From Ironist Theory to Private Jokes", *vide*, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, (120, note 8), Rorty completely severs the connection between ironism and the traditional sense of "theory". There is no longer any possibility of seeing the tradition holistically, continuously or developmentally in either a evolutionary or devolutionary manner. Our predecessors in philosophy are for Derrida a realm that is simply there for us to give free rein to our imaginative associations (*CIS*, 125). There is no moral, pedagogical or political use to be made of these playful fantasies. Derrida and Proust extend the realm of possibility, which is fundamental to the activity of ironism, "by incessantly recontextualizing whatever memory brings back" (*CIS*, 137). The very notion of authority loses all application in their work. Rorty puts Derrida's condition this way:

> I take it that Derrida does not want to make a single move within the language game which distinguishes between fantasy and argument, philosophy and literature, serious writing and playful writing - the language game of *la grand époque*. He is not going to play by the rules of somebody else's final vocabulary (*CIS*, 133).

The private allusions of Derrida are, according to Rorty, the end product of ironist theorizing, the only solution to self-referential theorizing and the only way to get around the redescriptive potency of the philosophical tradition without succumbing to what one has repudiated all predecessors for doing.

## IV

### Pragmatic Ethics:

### Avoiding Cruelty and the Sense of Solidarity

Self-creation is the focus of the theory of private irony Rorty elaborates upon in the discussion of the books of Proust, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida in Part II of *CIS*. The central topic of the first two chapters of Part III is cruelty in the works of Nabokov and Orwell. Rorty states that there are two sorts of books which help us become less cruel. One kind makes us aware of the effects of social practices and institutions, another helps us see the effects of our private idiosyncrasies on others (*CIS*, 141). It is the latter sort that is discussed in the chapters on Nabokov and Orwell. Rorty is attracted to Nabokov because of their mutual suspicion about the utility of general ideas to shape moral sentiments into rules for deciding moral dilemmas (*CIS*, 148). The elevation of detail over the general, and of imagination over the intellect, goes hand in hand with Nabokov's view that the "good" is something irrationally concrete.

Knowing the good is not having knowledge of a Platonic Idea but just sensing what matters to other people. The aesthetic and the moral no longer need to be bridged since there is no distinction between the two. Artists are thus moral advisers and educators:

> All that is required to act well is to do what artists are good at - noticing things that most other people do not notice, being curious about what others take for granted, seeing the momentary iridescence and not just the underlying formal structure. The curious, sensitive artist will be the paradigm of morality because he is the only one who always notices everything (*CIS*, 159).

Rorty thinks Nabokov's greatest fear is that one cannot have both ecstasy and kindness. The combination of altruism and joy is a function of "some very specific chain of associations with some highly idiosyncratic memories" (*CIS*, 153).

George Orwell, according to Rorty, wanted to be of use to those who were suffering. The success of his novels lies in their immersion in the twentieth century - they were the right books for the right time. By "playing off scenarios against contrasting scenarios" Orwell provided, not an illumination of a transcendent moral reality, but an alternative description of recent events. Therein lies the moral power of *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Contrasting the different approaches of Nabokov and Orwell to cruelty, Rorty states:

> Whereas Nabokov sensitized his readers to the permanent possibility of small-scale cruelties produced by the private pursuit of bliss, Orwell sensitized his to a set of excuses for cruelty which had been put into circulation by a particular - the use of the rhetoric of "human equality" by intellectuals who had allied themselves with a spectacularly successful criminal gang (*CIS*, 171).

Orwell's moral gift was to expand our horizon with respect to the possibility of cruelty.

In the final chapter "Solidarity" of *CIS* Rorty takes the "sense of solidarity" with all other human beings as a moral obligation. Solidarity is limited to humanity because humans share a capacity for pain, which animals do not have, such as the tearing down of particular structures of language and belief. Pragmatists, according to Rorty, want to drop the idea that human beings are responsible to a nonhuman power, *vide*, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, *op. cit*., "Science as Solidarity", (39). Objectivity therefore becomes reduced to solidarity (*Id*., "Solidarity or Objectivity?", 22).

Rorty severely constricts ethics by making truth what is good for *us* to believe. Moral obligations are quite limited if they are not widened to all life, even if the ability to bear sensory or physiological pain is the lowest common denominator of this more universal solidarity. Rorty sees the detailed recognitions of pain and humiliation - a universal cutting across all other human differences - as the principal contributors to moral progress (*CIS*, 192). At the same time he maintains that our public responsibilities to others have no *automatic* priority over our private attempts at self-creation. What is to be given priority results from deliberation within the context of a particular situation, and not from a predetermined hierarchy of public and private obligations. This follows from Rorty's separation of the private and the public as well as from his position that there is no objective moral order or grid of rational criteria or principles from which such decisions would naturally flow.

In the end Rorty needs a synthesis, although he would be reluctant to call it such. He believes that it must be possible for a single person to be a liberal *and* an ironist (*CIS*, 198), otherwise an individual would not be the well-rounded citizen appealed to so often in Western liberal education. Only by abandoning an identification with humanity as such, or by not engaging in a fruitless quest for the first principles of knowledge and morality, will it be possible for self-doubt to let us question our sensitivity to pain and humiliation and to think about the institutional arrangements which contribute to pain and humiliation. Distinguishing between the ironist issue of whether we share the same final vocabulary and whether someone else is in pain is crucial to maintaining oneself as a liberal ironist - as an individual who feels a sense of solidarity while exploring private thoughts about the point of human life.

## V

### Metaphysics and Pragmatism

> *As though anything could be more unfortunate than a man ruled by his imagination* (Pliny), II. 7

Reactions to Rorty's pragmatic philosophy are very often visceral. Its predominately second-order, derivative nature is for many no basis to sustain any kind of intellectual, much less

philosophical, life. Some would strongly question whether the self-abdication by philosophy of its own future, in order to bring about some degree of *rapprochement* between scientific and literary culture, and between analytical and Continental philosophy, is necessary. For others, Rorty's pragmatism, and its separation of private irony and public solidarity, results in a political complacency that is unacceptable in a world where current institutional structures result in the democratic and economic disenfranchisement of so many. Individuals smitten by philosophical reflection that is both inwardly and outwardly directed often find it intuitively distasteful when they hear Rorty expostulate on how little philosophy matters to civilization. With Rorty philosophy finally succumbs to the imagination - something it more or less tried to avoid for two and half thousand years.

Rorty's philosophical self-marginalization of philosophy is too inherently self-contradictory and incoherent for *it* to have any widespread influence on either popular or intellectual culture, although he seems to think, in contradiction to his own position, that it already has. This is true despite his often adroit attempts to show that his position is impervious to argumentative rigour or its own internal dialectic. The philosophy of Rortyan pragmatism is one of dogmatic abstractionism, of the elevation of one conceptual moment over another, and of an indefensible scepticism. He *must* therefore separate language as a tool from language as a medium, argument from imagination, self-creation from public domain obligations, process from conclusion and so on in order to maintain that anti-foundationalism cannot be conceptually encapsulated within the relational dialectic and speculative mediation of traditional binary structures such as subjectivity / objectivity, essence / existence, necessity / contingency, and species / sample. Speculative thought itself is not in any way limited to the catalogue of binary categories accumulated in the tradition. Nevertheless Rorty's writings abound, albeit haphazardly, in the distinction and imaginative interrelation of many such categories and contrarieties. That these writings innocently pretend to seek no privileged vocabulary, and are content to let a hundred flowers grow, is a claim for the privilege of philosophical passivity.

*CIS* is a helpfully provocative book. Like the exposure of the limitations of epistemological theorizing in *PMN*, it immerses us overwhelmingly in the tremendous power of linguistic, social and cultural contingency. Both books are, however, vacuous when it comes to helping us with the nature of post-epistemological or post-philosophical culture. The reason for this lies partly in the narrowness of Rorty's understanding of what philosophy is and partly in his underestimation of its historical influence. In *PMN* he has relieved himself of the task of discovering truth, essences and absolutes. Self-doubt is thus directed solely inward and the human relation to a greater universe is no longer relevant or problematic. In *CIS* he maneuvers himself into the position of not having to make much of the history of philosophy. The combination of the former, the task of the classical Greeks, with that of the latter, the undertaking of Hegelian philosophical science, is a pivotal point in speculative philosophy. The “discourse” of twentieth century philosophy has not yet succeeded in fully working out the implications of this combination since this discourse for the most part has been a onesided inversion of the classical Greek stance - thus the elevation in modernity of potentiality above actuality, openness above limitation, the particular above the universal, existence over essence and so on.

The main tenets of Rorty's pragmatism are focused on the culturally discursive and the historically dialectical. It is thus an abstraction from the dialectico-speculative, which is as much descriptive as it is interrelationally redescriptive of its terms. There are occasional speculative passages in Rorty, such as at the end of *CIS* where he says a single person can be a liberal and an ironist while at the same time separating the domains of both. But speculative passages such as this are never speculatively

argued for in Rorty and are therefore mostly accidental glimmers of insight. Furthermore, objectivity in speculative philosophy cannot be defined as exclusionary for the truth in a speculative system is only revealed and attained on the basis of a comprehensive inclusion, even of positions which deny that such inclusion is possible.

The separation of the self-creative ironic imagination in Rorty's anti-essentialism from philosophical argument also leads to misinterpretations of speculative thinkers like Hegel and Plato. For example, in the essay "Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher?" in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, *op. cit*. (119-128) Rorty assumes that argumentation requires that the same vocabulary be used in the premises and conclusions. The Hegelian *Aufhebung* is therefore not part of an inferential argument with respect to the self-diremption of the Concept but the replacement of an old tool with a new one either by using an old word in a new way or a new word (*Id*., 126). No doubt there is a certain mystery to the use of *Aufhebung* in Hegelian logic - it always seems to come in at the point where the discursive language of the dialectic is completely breaking down and there is no where to go but on to a new category. *Aufhebung* can therefore be construed as a non-inferential leap of faith, or something that requires the exercise of the speculative imagination. But there is no reason to exclude such an exercise from the overall philosophical argument of the self-unfolding of the Absolute Idea. Grappling with how the non-inferential leap out of a dialectical conundrum can intensify the depth of one's understanding of the Absolute is part and parcel of the speculative discipline. Merely abstracting from this discipline to say that it is nothing but *our* replacement of one language game by another is Rorty's attempt to avoid the more severe demands of systematic speculation.

The inherent weakness and limitation of pragmatism lies in its use of different vocabularies for different purposes. It is therefore a fundamentally political, that is, institutionally particularized, philosophy. The interrelation of vocabularies is of no concern to pragmatism, nor is understanding, argument, or principled action. It is not unfair to blame pragmatic philosophy in part for the wholesale dilution of the power of our deductive faculty in the thought-world of modernity. The issue of whether one has got ahold of a true or false totality is now irrelevant to the socio-cultural and historical determination of the intellectual activity of pragmatism. The popular notion that pragmatists believe what works is right, ideologues think what is right works, would not be an oversimplification of Rorty's position.

The continual reactions in modernity to the intellectual self-effacement of pragmatic philosophies, as one finds in religious fundamentalism or in blind allegiance to scientific methodology, testifies to the fact that the self-marginalization of philosophy is not to be explained and accepted as an inevitable outcome of its alleged past failures. History has shown that philosophical thought will never be content simply with such a subsidiary role in civilization. Furthermore, it *is* possible to develop another stance which is neither a reconciliation of analytic and Continental philosophy nor an interweaving of the scientific and literary cultures. Only speculative philosophy can prevent philosophy itself from being scientized or literarized. The post-epistemological future needs to be filled with invigorated speculation on how history and socio-political institutions reflect as adequately as possible, within contingent existence, the theoretical or dialectico-speculative principles which are their necessary firmament and foundation.

## PHILOSOPHY AS A CHESS GAME

***James Lowry***

> Submission. *One must know when it is right to doubt, to affirm, to submit. Anyone who does otherwise does not understand the force of reason. Some men run counter to these three principles, either affirming that everything can be proved, because they know nothing about proof, or doubting everything, because they do not know when to submit, or always submitting, because they do not know when judgement is called for.*
> *Sceptic, mathematician, Christian, doubt, affirmation, submission*. Pascal, ***Pensées***, 170

There are only so many moves to be made in philosophy. Hegel is the paradigm here. He rightly understood Plato's "*gene*" and Aristotle's "categories" as logical and as such intentionally complete. Thus in his *Logik* he declared what he thought was a complete set. But because his actual criteria was the history of thought and a linear progression his categories were *too* many and *too* complex and *worse* they fall into the paradox or self-negation of his own effort *by* that effort in so far as they could not account for the open-ended or temporal character of history - that is, history could not *be* the proof Hegel needed to deduce a complete set. To understand this last great problem of philosophy is to finally get out of the over complexity and manyness and historicity of the *Logik* without reversion to the over simplicity of Plato and Aristotle - that is, to produce *Mentaphysics*.

If this process were really fully understood, it would be seen that the paradigm is *throughout* everything. The double helix, the alphabet, mathematics, poker, the Table of Elements. There "are" only *so many* pieces of the puzzle, but they build an endless series of individualities or of unities of particular and universal. The "ideas" are in short endlessly instantiated. But the process is not open-ended. It is *closed* - the apparentness of the open-endedness occurs *within* the closure. Just as in any game where the rules (or justice, or providence) prevails - and key to this all, they must prevail or nothing could "be" by itself, which cannot happen due to the nature of nothing as just nothing.

To grasp the simple necessity of mentaphysics would relieve modernity of its arrogance of being "modern" in the sense that it is after all really a kind of hybrid scepticism which is at base dogmatic. The reason the modern - really better contemporary forms, i.e. the twentieth century - want always to return to origins, to go beyond their historicity by ever starting anew, is quite simple. It is the effect of scepticism infected with temporality as non-transcendable; that is, it is scepticism devoid of the ancient sense of "quietness or imperturbability." Thus the present suspension of reason tends to dwell in religious fundamentalism, blind patriotism, aesthetic eclecticism, or scientific busyness. Each is an effort not to think by being practical. That is by living in time, in the present as future (or a future not yet taken - it is the same thing) i.e. as *always* perturbed.

Thus the "moves" of contemporary philosophers are really quite transparent. They can never give a *final* account of anything - past, present, or future. They can only give a best or consensus account - the model of which is actually statistical - that is, normative as accepted by a majority on the public evidence available to all as reproducible. Thus everything is only tentative awaiting *another possible* move. Thus the "best" account is only really another (an other) account. The circle rather like that of a cat chasing its tail has a kind of futility regarded as a virtue because the quarry cannot "really" "be" caught.

The model here is secularly the film in which the director is like god and the product a series of snapshots, the continuity of which appears to be temporal but actually is not. The continuity is what the director says it is as the temporality of each shot may be very different from its

place in the film. OR the model is the scientific paper in which the same process is at work. Various experiments at different times in which the scientist nee director chooses his evidence to provide a picture or a continuity. The endless falsifiability of the product has the same structure as the film in that the arbitrariness of the continuity can never be necessitated by the snapshots in themselves. The subjectivity of the director and the scientist always lie *behind* the appearance of truth. This is the actuality of modern subjectivity as endlessly tentative and hence in its scepticism dogmatic.

What makes this process interesting is that it has happened before and will doubtless happen again. It is this paradigmatic structure, this lack of newness that is really philosophical. For the ancients it was the desire to be free of the world, to attain imperturbability. For the moderns the impulse is exactly the opposite - it is to attain the busyness of practicality, of endless perturbation. To see them both as each the opposite side of the *same* coin is to see them philosophically, or as both perennially futile and as perennially necessary in that they are each a "move" in a closed set of pieces which can be moved, like chess pieces, in a sense infinitely, but in that every game ends, only finitely. Philosophy is thinking this through in the sense of *both* process *and* end.

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