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Fetishism, Anti-Authoritarianism, and the Second Enlightenment:

Rorty and Hegel on Representation and Reality

Lecture One: A Rortyan Master Argument—its premises and development

I

Generations of German philosophy students were taught early on that they face a stark, ineluctable, existentially defining choice: “Kant, oder Hegel?” The thought was not that one needed to pick one or the other of these seminal, difficult, multifarious philosophers to concentrate on and master. It was that, struggle as one might, one would inevitably find oneself allied with one or the other—conceptually, methodologically, and even temperamentally, and that the difference would resonate beyond one’s conscious control throughout one’s thought, affecting the topics one found it important to address, the tools one used to do so, the manner in which one proceeded, and the standards to which one held oneself. If they got a bit further, the students would learn to line this question up with the more focused one: “*Verstand* oder *Vernunft*?”. This is asking whether one organizes one’s thought and philosophical aspirations according to the metacatgories of scientific *understanding* or of the more exalted *reason*, in something like the sense Hegel gave to this Kantian distinction. If the students didn’t get that far, the question would still live on for them in the form of a vague background concern with how seriously to take the Romantics’ critique of the Enlightenment.

Though he himself never put the point like this, I think a useful way to understand the basic principle animating the two books in which Rorty first found his distinctive philosophical voice—*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) and *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982)—is as applying a sophisticated form of this “Kant oder Hegel?” framework to then-contemporary analytic philosophy. So construed, the critique and diagnosis of the ills of the kind of philosophy he found himself immersed in at Princeton that is developed at length in *Mirror* condemn it for its Kantianism. (When at the end of that book, in a phrase he came both to reject and to regret, he prophesied the “death of philosophy,” the quintessential anti-essentialist explicitly defined what he meant by the term “philosophy”—what he thought we could, and urged we should, no longer go on doing—as “the sort of thing that Kant did.”) And the new kind of pragmatism Rorty proposed to replace that sort of philosophy is evidently and avowedly Hegelian in spirit—albeit inspired by the naturalized (but still historicized) form of Hegelianism he admired in Dewey and self-consciously emulated in his own work.

Later Rorty would applaud the broadly naturalistic, sociological, historicist impulse he saw Hegel as having bequeathed to the nascent nineteenth century, and speculate about how much farther we might gotten by now if at the end of that century Russell and Husserl had not, each in his own way, once again found something for philosophers to be apodeictic about from their armchairs. Rorty’s sought-for form of a justification for a recommendation of a way forward always was a redescription of where we are, motivated by a Whiggish story about how we got here that clearly marks off both the perils already encountered and the progress already achieved along that path. This is the literary genre of which Rorty is an undisputed master. He said that already during his Chicago years:

Hegel's *Phenomenology ofSpirit,* Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas,* and Lovejoy's *The Great Chain Being* gave me **a taste for ambitious, swooshy, G*eistesgeschichte* that I have never lost**. This taste was gratified in later years by such writers as Etienne Gilson, Hans Blumenberg, and, above all, the later Heidegger. My **taste for synoptic narratives** has sometimes made me think that my real *metier* was intellectual history, and that I might have been better off in that discipline than in philosophy. [pp 5-6 of Rorty’s “Intellectual Autobiography” in the Schilpp volume *The Philosophy of Richard Rorty* in the Library of Living Philosophers series (vol XXXII), edited by Randall E. Auxier and Lewis Edwin Hahn [Open Court Publishing, 2007].

Rorty here explicitly acknowledges his appreciation of the literary genre that Hegel both brilliantly practiced and centrally thematized, putting his distinctive new master metaconcept of recollective rationality at the center of his theoretical edifice.

It might seem that bringing the Kant vs. Hegel conceptual framework to bear to illuminate the state of Anglophone philosophy in the last third of the twentieth century was no great innovation and required no great insight. After all, hadn’t that tradition already pugnaciously divided itself into analytic and Continental camps that more or less lined up that way—with on the one side, a more narrowly professionalized research discipline using technical definitions and formalized arguments to address problems construed as perennial, and an epistemological focus on empirical science, on the one side, and on the other side a more broadly intellectual, thoroughly historicized, self-consciously hermeneutic pursuit,more interested in literature, art, and politics? But further reflection undercuts simply lining up of these movements with Kant and Hegel. It is true that it was the continentalists, and not the analysts who continued to read Hegel. But among the towering figures in that tradition, Husserl decisively identified himself with Kant rather than Hegel, and Heidegger had quite complicated attitudes towards both figures, unified in the end by his violent recoil from and vehement rejection of the pair of them, and all they stood for. In any case, the broadly Hegelian project Rorty was then recommending as an alternative to the degenerating Kantian research program he saw in analytic philosophy did not look to Europe for its inspiration, but to the substantially distinct tradition of classical American pragmatism.

At least equally radical and surprising as the re-imagined and revived pragmatism that he developed as a constructive response is Rorty’s remarkable diagnosis of the ills of analytic philosophy as resulting from uncritical, undigested Kantianism. For Kant emphatically was *not* a hallowed hero of that tradition. Anglophone philosophers thought that the “Kant oder Hegel?” question simply didn’t apply to them. After all, Russell and Moore had read Kant out of the analytic canon alongside Hegel—believing, correctly as it has turned out, that one couldn’t open the door wide enough to let Kant in without Hegel sliding in alongside him before it was slammed shut. Both figures were banished, paraded out of town under a banner of shame labeled “idealism,” whose canonical horrible paradigm was the British Idealism from which those codifiers of the analytic paradigm were recoiling. So in diagnosing 20th century analytic philosophy as constrained by conceptual bounds put on it by Kant, *PMN* was taking a remarkable and original line—offering a retrospective reconceptualization that was both disquieting and disorienting. The dominant self-conception (along this dimension perhaps owing more to Carnap than to Russell) was of analytic philosophy as an up-to-date form of empiricism, *logical* empiricism, advancing on traditional, pre-Kantian, early Modern British empiricism by the much more sophisticated sort of logical tools it deployed to structure and bind together essentially the same atoms of sensory experience to which the earlier empiricists had appealed.

II

To see why and how Rorty blamed Kant for what he saw as the calamitous state and degenerating research program of analytic philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century, one must look more closely at the argument of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Its most focused target is epistemological foundationalism. Rorty saw epistemology as unable to escape the Agrippan trilemma. Attempts to justify empirical knowledge must either move in a circle, embark on an infinite regress, or end by appeal to unjustified justifiers, which must accordingly supply the foundations on which all cognition rests. Justifying by inferring conclusions from premises can only transmit antecedently possessed positive justificatory status, so the first two options lead to skepticism about justification.

On the third, foundationalist, option, two kinds of justificatory regress threaten, since when a set of premises is appealed to in justifying a conclusion, one can inquire further after the warrant either of those premises, or of the implication of the conclusion by the premises. The two sorts of regress-stoppers Rorty saw appealed to were immediate sensory experiences, as ultimate justifiers of *premises*, and immediate grasp of the meanings of our terms or the contents of our concepts, as ultimate justifiers of *inferences*. In a telling phrase, he refers to these as two sorts of “epistemically privileged representations.”

Rorty takes Kant at his word when he describes himself as synthesizing rationalism and empiricism. But he takes it that what logical empiricism made of Kant’s synthesis takes over *both* sorts of privileged representations: the sensory given (from the empiricists) and the rational (logical, inferential) given, from the rationalists. This is one sense in which he diagnoses Anglophone philosophy as still in thrall to Kantian commitments. In this story, Carnap shows up as a neo-Kantian *malgré lui*—though that is not at all how he thought of or presented himself. That is also how Rorty’s hero Wilfrid Sellars regarded Carnap. (Perhaps the revenant neo-Kantian philosophical spirit of Heinrich Rickert, passed on through his student Bruno Bauch, Frege’s friend and colleague and Carnap’s *Doktorvater*, was just too strong to be wholly exorcised by the empiricist rites and rituals practiced by the Vienna Circle.)

In rejecting sensory givenness and meaning- or concept-analytic inferential connections, Rorty relies on the arguments of two of Carnap’s most important admirers and critics: Sellars in “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” and Quine in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” respectively.[[1]](#footnote-1) Tellingly, Rorty finds a common root in their apparently quite different critiques. Sellars and Quine both offer ultimately *pragmatist* arguments, which find the *theoretical* postulation of such privileged representations to be unable to explain cardinal features of the *practices* of applying empirical concepts.

Rorty then widens the focus of his own critique, by deepening the diagnosis that animates it. The original source of fo*undationalism* in *epistemology*, he claims, is *representationalism* in *semantics*. Thinking of the mind in terms of representation was Descartes’s invention, but the idea was brought to a new level of sophistication by Kant. He codified representation as the genus of which both sensory intuitions and inference-engendering concepts are species, and certified our privileged access to both under the still-Cartesian slogan “Nothing is better known to the mind than itself.” It is perhaps ironic that in digging down beneath epistemological issues to unearth the semantic presuppositions that shape and enable them, Rorty is following Kant’s example. For Kant’s argument, culminating in the “Refutation of Idealism,” was that once we understood how to respond to the threat of *semantic* skepticism about the intelligibility of the relation between representings and what they represent, there would be left no residual issue concerning *epistemological* skepticism about whether any such relations actually obtained: whether things were ever as we represent them to be.

In the end, I think that while Rorty’s objections to foundationalism are made pretty clear in the text, the rationale for laying responsibility for this epistemological view on semantic appeal to the concept of representation are less so. But putting together clues he offers us, an argument for seeing the necessity for two sorts of objectionably privileged representations as already implicit in the idea that the mind’s cognitive relation to its world is representational might be reconstructed along the following lines. The starting point is the Cartesian idea that if we are to understand ourselves as knowing the world by representing it, there must be *some* kind of thing that we can know *non*representationally—namely, our representings themselves. On pain of an infinite regress, knowledge of representeds mediated by representings of them must involve immediate knowledge of at least some representings. Our nonrepresentational relation to these representings will be epistemically privileged, immune to errors of misrepresentation. Next is the thought that when we ask about our knowledge of the *relation* between representings and representeds, another potential regress looms if we are obliged to think of *this* knowledge also in representational terms, that is, as mediated by representings of it. On this dimension, too, appeal to immediate, nonrepresentational access to representational relations seems necessary. Along both dimensions, the threat of an infinite regress seems to force a choice between foundationalism and skepticism, depending on whether we invoke something known immediately and nonrepresentationally, or allow that mediation by representings goes all the way down. According to such a picture, the *epistemological* choice between foundationalism and skepticism is already built deeply into the structure of the *semantic* representational model.

III

Looking back, in his intellectual autobiography, Rorty said:

I still believe most of what I wrote in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.* But that book is now out of date. ... I vaguely sensed that the trouble with analytic philosophy was that it had never advanced from Kant's eternalization of the intellectual situation of eighteenth-century Europe to Hegel's historicism. But I had not yet made myself sufficiently familiar with the post-Hegelian European philosophers who had resisted the temptation to go "back to Kant." [13]

I think Rorty came to be dissatisfied with the *PMN* strategy of arguing against representationalist paradigms in semantics on the basis that they force an epistemological choice between skepticism and foundationalism. He never wavered in his view that finding oneself in that epistemological predicament demonstrates the need for radical conceptual revision of one’s semantic model. And he continued to believe that the concept of representation was so burdened by epistemological baggage that a new start was needed. But his strategy for delegitimizing representational semantic models changed. During the last decade of his life he formulated a new line of attack: “seeing anti-representationalism as a version of anti-authoritarianism.” This more overtly political line both drew on, and, in an important sense, brought to a logical conclusion, the evolution of his thought in the intervening decades. This is the argument and the development I want to consider in more detail.

He introduced the new idea in his June, 1996 Ferrater Mora lectures at the University of Girona, entitled “Anti-Authoritarianism in Epistemology and Ethics.”[[2]](#footnote-2) In connection with those lectures, he was encouraged to invite discussants of his choice. I was privileged to be among them, along with my colleague John McDowell, and Bjorn Ramberg, whose sympathetic yet penetrating reading of Davidson had deeply impressed Rorty. One memorable extended discussion during those happy days led to a consensus among us about how three of our positions should be understood in relation to one another. We all agreed that if one found oneself obliged to choose between epistemological skepticism and epistemological foundationalism, then somewhere well upstream something had gone badly wrong conceptually. Shifting the metaphor, that predicament could be thought of as a bottomless abyss that must be avoided at all costs. Rorty’s view was that one put oneself severely at peril of falling into that chasm as soon as one permitted oneself to think in terms of the concepts of experience and representation at all. Although he conceded that these philosophical concepts were progressively and productively employed beginning in Early Modern times, he took it that we were now in a position to see where their use inevitably led: free-fall into the abyss, doomed to oscillate endlessly between skepticism and foundationalism. To keep us safe, Rorty thought, a protective fence needs to be erected sufficiently far from the edge that the temptation of the dilemma would not even be visible from the safe side of that fence. His radical proposal then, as already in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, was that both concepts must be given up once and for all. For Rorty, a principal virtue of the sort of pragmatism he endorsed and developed as a successor framework is that it had no need and no use for the traditional concepts of experience and representation in talking about how vocabularies help us cope with the vicissitudes of life. As he thought of it, pragmatism carves out an entirely different conceptual path from the modern philosophical tradition that grew up around those concepts.

Rorty thought that if it were possible for the concept of experience to be rehabilitated, if it could be purged of its Cartesian contagion, then surely Dewey would have brought it off. Dewey worked tirelessly to give “experience” the processual, interactive, ecological sense of Hegelian “Erfahrung,” rather than the atomic, episodic, self-intimating Cartesian sense of “Erlebnis.” (This is the sense in which, as Dewey says, it is perfectly in order for a job advertisement to specify “No experience necessary.” By contrast, read in the Cartesian sense, such a specification would invite applications from zombies.) But Dewey signally failed to get the philosophical and generally cultured public to shake off the Cartesian associations of the term. And his own practice degenerated to the point that, as Rorty said (thinking especially of Dewey’s practice in *Experience and Nature*), “he ended up using ‘experience’ merely as an incantatory device to blur every conceivable distinction.” Rorty remained convinced that Dewey had been right to eschew representation talk as giving aid and comfort to exactly the sort of static, spectatorial, intellectualist, “mind as the mirror of nature” views that fetch up in the skepticism/foundationalism dilemma. Ramberg agreed with Rorty on these basic points.

I was entirely of his mind as far as the concept of experience is concerned. Outside of explicitly Hegelian contexts, where it figures in his conception of recollective rationality, it is not one of my words. It is not used (but only mentioned) in the many pages of *Making It Explicit*, even where topics such as perceptual knowledge are addressed. I agree that the associations and correlated inferential temptations entrained with the term “experience” go too deep to be easily jettisoned or even for us to succeed in habituating ourselves completely to resist.[[3]](#footnote-3) The light of day neither abolishes the shadows nor stays the night. The expressive powers making things discursively explicit wields over what is implicit are real, but they are not unlimited. We are on the whole better off training ourselves to do without this notion. (I have since become more sympathetic to Dewey’s view that some version of the Hegelian conception of experience can be rehabilitated—though I think we should use Hegel’s full-blooded, recollective conception, which essentially involves dimensions Dewey did not exploit.)

But by contrast to the concept of experience, it seemed to me then, and seems to me still, that things are otherwise with the concept of representation. There are many things one might mean by “anti-representationalism,” and it is important to distinguish them. When I use the term “representationalism,” I mean a particular order of semantic explanation. It starts with a notion of representational content (reference, extension) and understands proprieties of *inference* in terms of such already representationally contentful contents. Those content must accordingly be assumed to be theoretically and explanatorily intelligible antecedently to and independently of the role of representations in inference. “Representationalism” in this sense contrasts with *inferentialist* orders of semantic explanation, which begin with a notion of content understood in terms of role in reasoning, and proceed from there to explain the representational dimension of discursive content. I recommend and pursue inferentialist rather than representationalist semantic explanations.

But not giving representationa fundamental explanatory role in semantics does not disqualify it from playing any role whatsoever. And subsequent discussions with Huw Price (another younger pragmatist for whose work Rorty expressed particular enthusiasm) have made clear that there is a big difference between *rejecting global representationalism*, in the sense of denying that the best semantics for *all* kinds of expressions assigns them a fundamentally representational role, and being a *global anti-representationalist*, by insisting that *no* expressions should be understood semantically to play representational roles. Perhaps their representational roles are essential to the content and use of some kinds of expressions (such as ordinary empirical descriptive locutions) and not to others (such as logical, modal, or normative locutions). It seemed to me in Girona, and still does today, that a suitable pragmatist explanatory strategy, beginning with social practices of using expressions to give and ask for reasons, could unobjectionably both underwrite theoretical attributions of representational content to some locutions and also underwrite the viability and utility of the commonsense distinction between what we are saying or thinking and what we are talking or thinking *about*—that is, representing or describing *by* saying or thinking that. In particular, I pointed then to the *MIE* strategy for explaining what one is *doing* in using the principal representational locutions of ordinary language—*de re* ascriptions of propositional attitudes, such as “Benjamin Franklin believed *of electrons* that they flowed through metal and not glass,”—as expressing explicitly differences of *social* perspective among various interlocutors.

So it seemed to me that a distinction should be made between the reprobate, irremediably tainted concept of experience, which should be banished from careful philosophical discourse, and the prodigal, errant, and potentially dangerous concept of representation, which might still be tamed, rehabilitated, and reintroduced to carefully supervised productive labor in a new, hygienic guise. In the image we all found useful, I thought the fence keeping us from sliding into the abyss of foundationalism-or-skepticism could be located *much* closer to the edge than Rorty did. He later found some sympathy for this approach, helped to that reconciliation by Price’s distinction between “I-representation” and “E-representation”—that is, between a representational dimension of discourse that is articulated within and integral to a vocabulary (“internal” to it) and one that purports to connect *all* vocabularies to something outside them (“external” to them).

Although, by contrast to the notion of experience, the concept of representation is not a particular focus of McDowell’s *Mind and World*, he was, and is, convinced that *both* concepts can be relieved of the excess baggage of associations that, he agrees, *can* and *have* made them principal villains enticing philosophers to their doom down the path that leads to the skepticism-or-foundationalism dilemma Rorty convincingly diagnoses. Rorty and I agreed that McDowell had successfully brought off the feat of disciplining a notion of experience to the point where it can do crucial philosophical work without falling into Sellars’s Myth of the Given. Given that remarkable achievement, it is no surprise that the relaxed way in which he invokes the representational dimension of empirical concept use also manages not to be philosophically theory-laden in a way that leads to the trouble Rorty diagnoses. It helps here that McDowell shares a Wittgensteinian version of the pragmatist anti-metaphysical conviction he shares with Rorty. That conviction entails that calling on *any* concept to do heavy lifting in philosophical explanations of some supposedly puzzling phenomenon (such as the possibility of genuinely knowing how things visibly are) is infallibly a sign of deep conceptual confusion in understanding the situation that seems to call for such explanation.

As a result of his resolute rejection of the impulse for deep metaphysical explanation, McDowell doesn’t think that a fence is necessary to avoid the abyss at all. If we are just sufficiently careful with our use of the concepts of experience and representation, cutting them free of entanglement with dubious and ultimately disreputable metaphysical programs motivated by ill-posed and ill-considered questions, we can keep carefully circumscribed versions of the ordinary language terms around and use them as necessary in philosophical clarifications. He shows that is possible by skipping merrily along the very edge of the foundationalist precipice, sure-footed as a mountain goat, never putting a foot wrong or seeming to be in danger of losing his balance.

Rorty and I agree that McDowell brings this off. But we want to say “Kids, don’t try this at home. This man is a skilled professional. It is not as easy as it looks.” The balancing act can indeed be brought off, because he can do and does it. But prudence nonetheless dictates the erection of a fence to protect the unwary, less careful, and less skilled philosophical public from what remains a dangerous temptation. McDowell seemed to us not to be sufficiently concerned about the danger to those less capable than himself. Edinburgh stringently enforces a legal prohibition on jaywalking—which is illegal if and only if it is done within sight of anyone under the age of twelve. Risk your own life, but don’t encourage the young and impressionable to follow suit. McDowell, we felt, insufficiently appreciates the practical wisdom of the Edinburgh rules.

IV

This three-sided discussion in Girona was in many ways a satisfying survey for us all. It usefully rehearsed and fixed our general locations in philosophical space, along with the hopes and suspicions that motivated them. At the end of it, Rorty told us that what we would hear about in his immediately upcoming lectures was a new line of argument against representationalism. It took the form of a recharacterization of the lesson and significance of the pragmatism that he had all along aimed to establish as the principal rival of and ultimate successor to the pervasive representationalism of the day. According to this new way of pitching things, what pragmatism aims at—beginning already, if only incipiently, with the classical American pragmatists—is nothing less than a second Enlightenment.

The picture of the original Enlightenment that he takes over as the fixed end of his analogy follows directly Kant’s characterization in “Was ist Aufklärung?”. The Enlightenment marks the ending of humanity’s self-imposed tutelage, the achievement of our majority and maturity, for the first time taking adult responsibility for our own character and destiny. It is our emancipation from submission to the alien, nonhuman-because-superhuman authority of Old Nobodaddy in matters of our practical conduct. Henceforth we would deem it incompatible with our human dignity to understand ourselves as subject to any laws other than those we have in one way or another laid down for ourselves. No longer should our ideas about what is right and good be dictated to us by a superhuman authority.

The deep insight was the diagnosis of what Marx, following Hegel, would later call “fetishism,” concerning the practical norms we acknowledge and identify with as making us what we are. Fetishism is mistaking the products of our own practices and practical attitudes for features of the objective world that are what they are independent of and antecedent to those practices and attitudes. Marx’s favorite example was the traditional conception of the *value* of precious metals, which thought of the value of metals the same way it thought of their density—so that there was a correct answer, independent of any of our activities, to the question of how many ounces of silver are *really* worth as much as one ounce of gold. (When I first moved to Pittsburgh one of the early public spectacles was fetishism in action in the form of the fundamentalist preacher Billy Graham attracting 70,000 of the faithful to Three Rivers Stadium to “pray for lower interest rates.”).

The first Enlightenment, as Rorty construed it, concerned our emancipation from nonhuman authority in *practical* matters: issues of what we ought to do and how things ought to be. The envisaged second Enlightenment addresses rather our emancipation from nonhuman authority in *theoretical, cognitive* matters. Here the nonhuman authority in question is not that of God, but that of objective Reality—the philosophical conception Rorty liked to write with a capital R. In an essay published in English a few years after the Girona lectures, “Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism,” Rorty summarized the view he had announced there:[[4]](#footnote-4)

There is a useful analogy to be drawn between the pragmatists’ criticism of the idea that truth is a matter of correspondence to the intrinsic nature of reality and the Enlightenment’s criticism of the idea that morality is a matter of correspondence to the will of a Divine Being. The pragmatists’ anti-representationalist account of belief is, among other things, a protest against the idea that human beings must humble themselves before something non-human, whether the Will of God or the Intrinsic Nature of Reality. [257]

He adds that “seeing anti-representationalism as a version of anti-authoritarianism permits one to appreciate an analogy that was central to John Dewey’s thought,” namely the the analogy between ceasing to believe in Sin and ceasing to believe in Reality. The connection is that

The representationalist tradition in philosophy which was dominant in those 400 years hoped that inquiry would put us in touch, if not with the eternal, at least with something which, in Bernard Williams’s phrase, “is there anyway” – something non-perspectival, something which is what it is apart from human needs and interests. [263]

By contrast:

What Dewey most disliked about both traditional “realist” epistemology

and about traditional religious beliefs is that they discourage us by telling us that somebody or something has authority over us. Both tell us that there is Something Inscrutable, something toward which we have duties, duties which have precedence over our cooperative attempts to avoid pain and obtain pleasure. [258]

Again:

Dewey was convinced that the romance of democracy, a romance built on the idea that the point of a human life is free cooperation with fellow humans, required a more thoroughgoing version of secularism than either Enlightenment rationalism or nineteenth-century positivism had achieved. As Dewey saw it, whole-hearted pursuit of the democratic ideal requires us to set aside *any* authority save that of a consensus of our fellow humans. [257]

Eduardo Mendieta says of the lesson of these lectures (in his introduction to *Take Care of Freedom and the Truth will Take Care of Itself[[5]](#footnote-5)*):

In the end, Rorty’s adamant skepticism and anti-dogmatism are simply ways to be anti-authoritarian and irreverently anti-fetishistic. There is no supreme power that can offer an alibi, warrant, or proof for our claims and beliefs, nothing except fallible human authority. There is no supreme authority, other than the authority of human justifications and reasons, whose only power is the power of persuasion.

[p. xvii]

Rorty’s call for a second Enlightenment is an Hegelian extrapolation of the original Kantian understanding of Enlightenment, extending the application of that conception from ethics to encompass also semantics and epistemology. Later on, I will say more about what makes it Hegelian, and what difference that makes. But first it is worth filling in the argument behind this subsumption of semantic anti-*representationalism* under the banner of humanistic Enlightenment anti-*authoritarianism*. In its largest structure, I think it consists of two moves: a Kantian appreciation of the *normative* character of *representational* relations, and a Hegelian social *pragmatism* about *normativity* in general.

The first is part and parcel of Kant’s radical recasting of Descartes’s division of things into minds and bodies in terms of the distinction between norms and causes. Kant reconceives discursive intentionality (apperception or sapience) as a *normative* phenomenon. What principally distinguishes judgments and intentional actions from the responses of merely natural creatures is their normative status. Knowers and agents are *responsible* for how they take things to be and make things be. Candidate knowings and doings express *commitments* as to how things are or shall be. They are exercises of a distinctive kind of *authority*: the authority to commit oneself, to make oneself responsible. This is the authority to bind oneself by rules in the form of the concepts discursive beings apply in judging and intending. Merely natural creatures are bound by rules in the form of laws of nature. Discursive beings are bound by rules they bind themselves by: concepts they apply, which are rules determining what they have thereby made themselves responsible to and for. Their normative statuses (responsibilities, commitments) are instituted by their attitudes of undertaking or acknowledging those commitments. Autonomy is the essence of Kantian rationality. It is a distinctive normative sort of freedom, which Kant develops from Rousseau’s idea that “obedience to a law one has prescribed for oneself is freedom.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

As we have seen, one of the principal grounds on which in *PMN* Rorty condemns then-contemporary analytic philosophy as still in thrall to Kantian conceptionsis the sophisticated central role Kant gives to the concept of representation in understanding the contentfulness of thought. In his later defense of anti-representationalism in semantics on the basis of a more thoroughgoing and general version of Enlightenment anti-authoritarianism, I think Rorty follows Hegel in focusing on the *rulishness* of Kant’s conception of representation. For Hegel reads Kant as offering a normative conception of *representation*, as a way of filling in his normative conception of *intentionality*. Kant dug down below Cartesian epistemological concerns about the warrant for our confidence in the *success* of our representational undertakings to uncover the underlying semantic understanding of representational *purport* they presuppose. Where Descartes takes for granted the representational purport of our thought (construing it as something we immediately know, just by having thoughts at all), their being, in his phrase, *tanquam rem*, “as if of things,” Kant wants to know what it is about our thoughts in virtue of which they so much as *seem* to represent something else, purport to point beyond themselves to something they are of or about. The lesson that Hegel learns from Kant, as I understand him, is that a representing is *responsible* to what it represents for assessments of its correctness, in a distinctive sense. What is represent*ed* exercises *authority* over what count as represent*ings* of it just in virtue of its serving as a standard they are responsible to for such assessments. This is a radical reconceptualization of the representational relations between representeds and representings as a *normative* relation of authority and responsibility.

As I want to understand Rorty’s late anti-representationalism as anti-authoritarianism argument, his long-standing *social pragmatism about normativity* comes into play because of this Hegelian *normative* understanding of representation, in terms of the authority of objective representeds over subjective representings of it. Pragmatism in this sense is the claim that normative statuses—paradigmatically responsibility or authority, commitment or entitlement—are always and everywhere features of the role something plays in social practices. Norms are creatures of our practices, instituted by our practical attitudes: how we take or treat things. Apart from their involvement in such practices, there are no *normative proprieties*, only *natural properties*.

This is a social, Hegelian version of a central Enlightenment idea. Samuel Pufendorf theorized about the “imputation” of normative characteristics of things: the way they acquire this new sort of normative significance by playing a suitable role in our practices. Social contract theories of political obligation looked for the origins of normative statuses of political authority and responsibility in practical attitudes of contracting and consenting. By contrast to traditional ideas of an objective natural or supernatural order of normative superiority and subordination (the *scala natura*, the Great Chain of Being), the modern idea is that there were no statuses of authority and responsibility, no superiors and subordinates, until we started taking or treating each other *as* authoritative and responsible, *as* entitled to command and obliged to obey.

As I understand the course of his intellectual development, Rorty’s axial commitment to social pragmatism about normativity, which becomes explicit in the 1970’s, was a product of his invention of eliminative materialism in the ‘60s. (That is why I described social pragmatism about normativity as a “long-standing” view of Rorty’s.) As I would rationally reconstruct the chain of thought that emerged there, Rorty begins by thinking hard about the Cartesian conception of the mind, in connection with Wallace Matson’s question: “Why Isn’t the Mind-Body Problem Ancient?”.[[7]](#footnote-7) He focuses on what it is that thoughts and sense-impressions such as images have in common, that could have led Descartes to assimilate such different items under the specially-crafted heading of “pensées”—an assimilation that would have seemed absurd to earlier Aristotelians, and to whose fraught consequences Sellars had sensitized him. The answer he eventually came to, starting off with the rough, popular characterization of “privacy” and ending with the substantially more focused notion of “incorrigibility,” was in explicitly *normative* terms.[[8]](#footnote-8) The key, he came to see, is a distinctive kind of first-person *authority*. Sincere contemporaneous first-person reports count as reports of *mental* occurrences just in case and insofar as they have a distinctive kind of un-overrideable authority.

Understanding minds in the Cartesian sense accordingly shows up as the task of understanding the nature of that authority. One option is that the authority should be understood as a natural, objective, ontological feature of mental phenomena. But Rorty has learned from the later Wittgenstein to be suspicious of this idea. *Normative* statuses, he thinks, must ultimately be understood as *social* statuses. (This is a Hegelian lesson Rorty learns from Dewey.) To talk about something as possessing authority is to talk about the role it plays in some social practice. Faced with two possible orders of explanation—from ontology to social practice (attitudes of acknowledging and attributing authority conform to and recognize antecedent objective normative statuses) and the other way around (normative statuses reflect the practical attitudes of participants in a social practice)—Rorty opts for the second. He is not prepared to think of the ancients as just having overlooked a key feature of the world: that nothing has the authority to contest sincere first-person reports of contemporaneous mental episodes. Rather, he thinks, social practices of according such authority to reports *changed*. Descartes both theoretically reflected and practically encouraged modern practical attitudes of taking or treating sincere first-person reports of contemporaneous mental events as having incorrigible authority. That change in normative attitudes brought into existence a new ontological category of thing: mental episodes as incorrigibly knowable by their possessors.

These two commitments—to demarcating the ontological category of Cartesian mental events by the normative status of putatively cognitive attitudes towards them (claims reporting them) and understanding such normative statuses as instituted by social practices—together entailed that a change in practice of the same general sort that brought Cartesian minds into existence in the modern period could eliminate them going forward. This was Rorty’s doctrine of “eliminative materialism.” It made his academic career as an analytic philosopher. For it was (along with the contemporaneous pyscho-physical functionalism of which it was a socially and normatively inflected variant) the first really original response to the mind-body problem in generations. It was the view in the philosophy of mind that corresponded to Nietzsche’s historicist third way between theism and atheism (itself rooted in Hegel): there once was a God, but when our social practices and normative attitudes changed sufficiently, He died (it was by radically changing our practical attitudes that we killed Him).

Rorty acknowledged and embraced eliminative materialism as a pragmatist form of Hegelian historicism. In the “Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism” essay I have been quoting from, he says “precisely because of his historicism, Dewey was, I believe, the classical pragmatist whose work will have the greatest utility in the long term.”[[9]](#footnote-9) But the *historicism* about Cartesian mindedness is argumentatively downstream from the social *pragmatism* about norms that emerges in Rorty’s thought for the first time already in the sixties. He is working with a distinction between two ontological categories of things, distinguished by the normative structure of authority that defines them. Cartesian mental things are what the attitudes of individuals have ultimate authority over, and social things (like discursive practices) are what the attitudes of communities have ultimate authority over. And normative statuses such as authority and responsibility he classifies as social things. Because the ontological classification itself is defined in normative terms of authority structures, the category of the social is given pride of place as *primus inter pares*.

Rorty has considered and rejected *objectivism* about norms, and so about Cartesian mindedness. This is the idea that the presence or absence of things defined by the normative authority of individuals or of communities is an objective matter, in the sense of being independent of the practical attitudes of individuals or communities. In his eliminative materialism period, Rorty does not explicitly confront the status of this third ontological category of objective things: things about which neither individuals nor communities exercise final authority. The final stage of pragmatism construed as anti-authoritarianism, as the completion of a second Enlightenment, is the result of applying social pragmatism about normativity to the ontological realm of objective beings, now themselves construed in normative terms of authority. According to Rorty’s radicalized version of social pragmatism about norms, the very idea of objective things as exercising epistemic authority over our attitudes—underwritten by the *semantic* idea of representeds serving as normative standards for assessments of the correctness of what count as representings of them just in virtue of being responsible to them for such assessments—is deeply and irremediably confused. *All* authority is in the end communal authority. We can only genuinely be responsible to *each other*, to what we can engage with in conversation, to what we can give justifying reasons *to* and in turn demand justifying reasons *from*.

This radicalization of social pragmatism about norms is now explicitly construed in *political* terms of freedom and dignity.

Only in a democratic society which describes itself in pragmatist terms, one can

imagine Dewey saying, is the refusal to countenance any authority save that of consensus reached by free inquiry complete.[[10]](#footnote-10)

This is the standpoint from which growing out of acknowledging the overriding practical authority of an objective supernatural lawgiver and growing out of acknowledging the overriding cognitive authority of an objective natural represented reality come to seem to Rorty to be two sides of one coin. It is a lesson he takes himself to have learned from Hegel via Dewey:

This is because he was the most historically minded: the one who learned from Hegel how to tell great sweeping stories about the relation of the human present to the human past. Dewey’s stories are always stories of the progress from the need of human communities to rely on a non-human power to their realization that all they need is faith in themselves; they are stories about the substitution of fraternity for authority. His stories about history as the story of increasing freedom are stories about how we lost our sense of sin, and also our hope of another world, and gradually acquired the ability to find the same spiritual significance in cooperation between finite mortals that our ancestors had found in their relation to an immortal being.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The incipient pragmatist emancipation Rorty is working toward is the substitution of a *pragmatics* of *consensus* for the *semantics* of *representation*. All we can do is give and ask for reasons with each other. Authority and responsibility are creatures of those discursive practices. We should accordingly reject the idea that our discursive practices answer to, are responsible to, need acknowledge the authority of, anything outside those practices and the practical attitudes of those who engage in them.

V

Rorty was probably the most polarizing philosophical figure of his generation. I believe that the conclusion of the line of thought I have been rehearsing, distilled by him over four decades, is the root cause of the stark division into opposing camps of rabid Rortyphobes and adoring Rortyphiles. It is, of course, iconoclastic to attack the modern picture of the mind as the mirror of nature, to seek to dethrone the dominant representational conception of our cognitive relations to the world. But semantic representationalism, pervasive and philosophically powerful though it might be, is dry stuff, of interest principally to specialists—as is the “crisis” of epistemological foundationalism, which Rorty saw as its unlovely offspring. What arouses passion, I think, is the consequent rejection—which Rorty sees as following from his critique of the semantic concept of representation (on behalf, remember, of the ideals of reason and of freedom)—and of the very idea of objective reality. Further, when we jettison that idea, along with it, he thinks, must go the idea of our cognitive practices as *rational* in the specific sense that essentially incorporates the goal of *fidelity* to the objective, attitude-independent *facts*. Rorty does so on behalf of a humanized, nonrepresentational conception of rationality as responsiveness to *reasons*, rather than facts.

From the point of view of his critics, however, it is bad enough that in place of the lofty ideal of science as a practical method for getting it right concerning how things anyway are, Rorty wants to put a purposely low-key notion of “coping” or “muddling through.” But when he further construes giving and asking for reasons, assessing evidence, justifications, and explanations, as all ultimately and ineluctably a matter of *politics*—his strong reading of James’s claim that “The trail of the human serpent is over everything”—the gauntlet has been thrown down and battle joined. (At this point the Deweyan insistence that what is envisaged is *democratic* politicsis unlikely to reassure or change minds.) This, the critics claim, is gross, dangerous irrationalism.

There are weighty considerations available on this side of the dialectic. For it can be claimed that Rorty recklessly proposes to sacrifice the most precious legacy of the actual Enlightenment: an appreciation of natural science as the very form of knowledge, as the disinterested pursuit of truth by the impartial assessment of reasons grounded in empirical evidence and answerable to how things really, objectively, anyway are. The sharp contrast between this cognitive scientific enterprise and every sort of *merely* political wrangling is *the* essential insight of the Enlightenment. The correctness of its realistic, objectivist theoretical understanding of both empirical science and the world it seeks rationally to comprehend is vouched for daily by the practical success of its technological arm, the engine of the Industrial Revolution, which has made it the most staggeringly successful social institution of the last three hundred years.

At this point the stage is set for both for assessing Rorty’s argument on the model of *modus tollens* rather than *modus ponens*, and for using one’s attitude toward it as a touchstone for assessing one’s philosophical temperament as tough- or tender-minded—or even as hard- or soft-headed. Rorty was always both struck and bemused by the extent to which the issue presented itself to his opponents as a *moral* one—as a choice between good and evil. This aspect of the debate on the theoretical side of cognition seemed to him to mirror exactly that on the practical side of action. The foes of the original Enlightenment could not understand how anyone who denied the authority of God to determine right and wrong concerning actions, independently of human attitudes, could nonetheless be a good person, concerned about acting as one ought. The foes of Rorty’s projected second Enlightenment cannot understand how anyone who denies the authority of objective facts to determine right and wrong beliefs, independently of human attitudes, could nonetheless recognize a distinction between better and worse arguments. Rorty said that he looked forward to a time when this criticism would seem as quaint and odd to people as the evident moral depravity of anyone who believed that the principle of motion of material bodies could be understood without looking outside the natural realm of those material bodies to their supernatural causes seems to us now.

Rorty faced with characteristic honesty, clarity, and fortitude the question raised by taking his line of argument to what he saw as its necessary conclusion. One can debate, with him and on his behalf, just how bad things would be if we were forced to put the idea of an objective nonhuman reality represented by and serving as the ultimate authority over the correctness of our empirical beliefs into a box with the idea of a supernatural nonhuman being whose will has ultimate authority over the correctness of our moral beliefs. And one can debate the propriety of treating the badness of such a conclusion, which is to force an understanding of his argument as appropriately exploiting the implication he points to contrapositively, rather than, as he does, by detaching the conclusion.

But if one rejects Rorty’s conclusion—whether because of its consequences or simply because one cannot deal with its outrageous radicality—one then owes a diagnosis of where the argument for it has gone astray. Where, exactly, does the analogy between the anti-authoritarianism of the first Enlightenment on practical matters and the anti-authoritarianism of Rorty’s projected second Enlightenment on cognitive matters break down?

Is the difference that makes a difference the difference in directions of fit? In Anscombe’s anecdote illustrating the difference between practical and theoretical reason, the shopper consulting a list and filling a shopping basket accordingly epitomizes the practical direction of fit and the detective writing a list of what the shopper puts in the basket epitomizes the cognitive direction of fit. In the context of assessing Rorty’s argument, it is critical to appreciate that these complementary directions of fit are characterized in *normative* terms. If what is on the list does not correspond to what is in the basket, in the shopper’s case what is in the basket is incorrect and in the detective’s case what is on the list is incorrect. For the list is *authoritative* in the first case: the shopper is obliged to follow the standard it provides, is responsible to it, for assessments of the correctness of what he puts in the basket. And the basket is authoritative in the second case: the detective is obliged to follow the standard it provides, is responsible to it, for what she puts on her list. Rorty’s social pragmatism about norms (downstream from Dewey and the later Wittgenstein) construes all these statuses of authority and responsibility as roles lists and baskets, shoppers and detectives, play in social practices that institute those normative significances. That much is common to the practical and cognitive directions of fit just because they are directions of *normative* fit: a matter of the socially instituted location of standards for normative assessments of correctness. Rather than undercutting Rorty’s analysis, invocation of Anscombian direction of fit seems to support and confirm the analogy he relies on in projecting the need for a second Enlightenment to complete on the cognitive side the anti-authoritarian work the first accomplishes on the practical side. For Anscombe, too, focuses on the essentially normative significance of the *representational* semantic dimension of doxastic or epistemic relations. That is enough to give Rorty’s social pragmatism about norms a grip and prepare the ground for his anti-authoritarian claim that objectivizing or naturalizing those essentially normative representational relations, reifying epistemically authoritative represented facts or reality, is falling into fetishism.

As I have reconstructed it, the two pillars supporting Rorty’s final global anti-representationalist argument are the *normative construal of representational relations* as essentially involving the authority of representeds over what count as representings of them just in virtue of their responsibility to those representeds, which serve as standards for assessments of the correctness of the representings (in a distinctive, representation-constitutive sense of “correctness”), and the *social pragmatism about norms* that consists in understanding all normative statuses (paradigmatically, authority and responsibility) as conferred by or consisting in roles in social practices. I take it that both express genuine and important insights: the first Kantian, and the second Hegelian. But I also think that a closer look at these two ideas opens up room for a nonfetishistic view that is friendlier to the concept of representation, and so more like the one I was championing in the Girona three-way than the one Rorty was defending. In particular, I think it is possible to understand empirical discursive commitments as representing objective facts (concerning objective properties and relations of particulars), to understand the representational relations those commitments stand in to what is represented as essentially and not just accidentally a normative matter of authority and responsibility, and to understand those normative statuses as instituted by social practices. Further, I think Hegel himself shows us in detail how to do that.

The basic issue is how to understand social pragmatism about norms. The underlying idea is that normative statuses are ultimately social statuses. Normative significances, such as having authority or being responsible, are instituted or conferred by playing a distinctive kind of role in social practices. I endorse that Enlightenment idea, which both Hegel and the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations*, each in his own way, developed and exploited (as, indeed, I would argue, did the Heidegger of Division One of *Being and Time*[[12]](#footnote-12)). Drawing Rorty’s conclusion requires a stronger version of the idea, however. For Rorty takes it that it follows from social pragmatism about norms in this sense that nothing *nonhuman* can exercise authority over us, that we cannot be responsible to any nonhuman authority. His reason, I think, is that discursive authority and responsibility are *rational* authority and responsibility— in the sense of being normative statuses that matter for practices of giving and asking for *reasons*. What doesn’t make a difference for those practices is semantically inert and epistemically irrelevant. And it is a key Enlightenment insight, emphasized, distilled, and developed in Kant’s critical philosophy, that authority is rational authority only insofar as it involves a correlative justificatory responsibility—a responsibility to provide *reasons* for exercising that authority in one way or on one occasion rather than another. Nothing that cannot fulfill that justificatory responsibility should be understood to exercise genuine authority within and according to our reason-giving practices. We should acknowledge the authority only of what we can critically interrogate as to its reasons. He concludes that only parties to our conversations, only participants in our practices can have normative statuses. In the end, the only authority we ought to recognize is each other: those to whom we owe reasons for our commitments and those who owe such justifying reasons to us for exercises of their authority. *Rational* authority involves a correlative *justificatory* responsibility. To attribute such normative statuses to anything that can’t talk is to fetishize. It is for this reason that the supposed authority of a nonhuman God and a nonhuman represented Reality are alike condemned as ultimately irrational, fetishistic remnants of traditional conceptions, which it is the task, the privilege, and the glory of Enlightenment to sweep away. It shows how little many of his critics have understood Rorty’s arguments that a principle charge in their indictment of him is his supposed “irrationalism.” It is precisely his devotion to reason that drives this whole line of thought. He is trying to think through rigorously what reason is and what it requires of us.

At the base of this argument is a new principle, which builds on but goes beyond social pragmatism about normative statuses. Its slogan is “No authority without responsibility.” I think there is something deeply right about it. Some version of this thought is central not only to Kant’s understanding of us discursive beings as essentially autonomous, but also to what Hegel made of that autonomy idea. For Kant, the basic normative status (our dignity as autonomous, which others are obliged practically to respect) is having the *authority* to make ourselves *responsible*, to commit ourselves. Committing ourselves (making ourselves responsible) cognitively, to how things are, is judging: endorsing a proposition. Committing ourselves (making ourselves responsible) practically, to how things are to be, is willing or intending: endorsing a practical maxim or principle. Among the things one makes oneself responsible for doing by exercising discursive authority of either the cognitive or the practical variety is having *reasons* for undertaking or acknowledging the commitments one does. Exercising one’s authority as autonomous makes one vulnerable to assessments of one’s reasons for those exercises.

It is more than a little ironic that when Rorty later sought new arguments for the global anti-representationalism he had first defended in *Mirror*, he turned to Kant, the arch-representationalist villain of that book. But what he turned to is one key principle animating Kant’s political liberalism—forging a connection between legitimate authority, the responsibility for reasoned justification, and democracy that Rorty whole-heartedly applauds in the form that Dewey gave it. The later Rorty is entirely comfortable with mounting an argument against semantic representationalism and the conception of epistemically authoritative represented reality it articulates that is ultimately a *political* argument, even if it relies on ideas whose credentials can be traced back to Kant. (Rorty’s disagreements with Habermas’s more transcendental Kantian political liberalism, in favor of his own less metaphysical Deweyan political liberalism are intramural. What he objects to about Kant is not his liberal politics.) As I am reconstructing Rorty’s argument, two of the three principal premises of his anti-authoritarian argument for global anti-representationalism and rejection of the idea of reality as the object of representation that it involves are due ultimately to Kant: the normative analysis of representational relations and the idea that genuine authority involves a correlative responsibility to be responsive to critical demands for reasons. The third pole in the tripod, social pragmatism about normative statuses such as authority and responsibility, I think of as introduced by Hegel rather than Kant.

I think Kant (and Hegel follows him on this point) is right that the most basic sort of normative status is a kind of rational authority that essentially involves correlative justificatory responsibility. Unless there were normative statuses of this sort, there would be no norms at all. But I do not think that *all* authority must be of this sort. Once implicitly normative social practices are up and running, derivative sorts of normative statuses, parasitic on the basic ones that characterize discursive practitioners, become possible. It is true that, as social pragmatism about normative statuses has it, it is only in virtue of playing a suitable role in social practices that anything acquires specifically normative significance. And it is true that those practices must include the special kind of role practitioners can play, in virtue of which they have the authority to commit themselves, to make themselves responsible to each other—among other things, but essentially, responsible for giving each other reasons justifying the commitments they have undertaken by exercising their authority. But in the context of discursive practices that include the kinds of authority characteristic of participants, other sorts of normative significance can be conferred on things that are not themselves capable of giving and asking for reasons.

Consider omens and oracles. A community can have practices according to which if a flock of black birds flies over the group that is deciding whether to undertake a momentous risky action—going to war, making or breaking an alliance, moving the tribe to a new location—that natural event is accorded the normative significance of a bad portent. It can be accorded the authority to prohibit the course of action in question. It only has that normative significance in virtue of the practical attitudes of the community members, who *make* it authoritative by *taking* it to be authoritative, by treating it *as* an ominous sign. There is nothing mysterious about how natural occurrences can come to be accorded such significances. Even if the practitioners are fetishists in their meta-attitudes—in that they deny the efficacy of their own practices in instituting the normative significance in question, taking it to be an objective, broadly natural or supernatural matter of fact—nonetheless *we* can see that they do in fact confer that normative significance by how they treat natural events of this kind, just as social pragmatism about norms claims. They are acting so as to grant authority over their own decisions to the occurrence or nonoccurrence of certain natural phenomena. And although the practitioners must be able to ask and offer each other reasons for their commitments—for instance, to cite the appearance of the birds as a reason not to break the alliance—it need not be possible to ask the birds for reasons for exercising the authority that has been attributed to them. There need be nothing that counts as holding the birds responsible for the decision their behavior authorized or prohibited in order for their authority to be intelligible as socially instituted or “imputed.”

Social pragmatism about norms says that the practices of the community are the *fons et origo* from which all normative significance flows. But that is compatible with those practices conferring normative significance, for instance, the status of having authority, on things other than the community members whose practices they are. And though the authority of those practitioners to participate in the practices that confer such significances essentially, and not just accidentally, involves correlative responsibilities, including those that involve liability to demands for reasons for their exercise of that authority, the same need not hold of all the items to which they attribute normative significance, including various kinds of authority over aspects of their practice (“No rum until the sun is over the yardarm”). So the three principles I have excavated as the basis of Rorty’s argument, when properly understood, leave room for the possibility that our discursive practices can confer on objective things and occurrences the normative significance of serving as standards for assessment of the correctness of what count as representings of them just in virtue of being in that sense responsible for their correctness to how it objectively is with what thereby counts as represented by them. That is conferring on representeds a distinctive kind of authority over representings. Participants in a practice granting authority over various aspects of that practice to things that are not even candidates for first-class status as participants (in virtue of their ineligibility as reason-givers) might in particular cases be unwise—as it surely is for treating the vagaries of birds as action-licensing or action-prohibiting omens, and could well be for letting the sun’s position determine when rum rations are due and appropriate. But it is neither unintelligible on social pragmatist grounds nor incompatible with our dignity as rational members of a democratic polity. The important point remains that nonhuman things have only the authority we grant them.

I think we are led by these considerations to a problem in social engineering. Once we see that the possibility is not ruled out in principle, we must ask whether there is a structure or configuration of practices that deserves to count as granting to things specifically *representational* authority over our thought and talk. How should we understand such authority, and what, exactly, do we need to do to institute it or confer it on things we will then qualify as thinking and talking *about*? More pointedly, can we make sense of our attitudes as having representational content in a sense that grants authority over their correctness to how “how things anyway are”—where “anyway” means independence *in some sense*, of our attitudes, including those that instituted the normative representational relations in the first place? For on the normative tripartite ontological sorting of things into subjective, social, and objective that emerged from Rorty’s arguments for eliminative materialism, to represent objective things is to represent things about whose properties neither individual attitudes nor community attitudes are finally authoritative. Rather, authority must be granted to, practically taken to reside in and be exercised by, the things themselves. Explaining how that possibility—which I have argued is left open in principle by the three principles on which Rorty’s representationalism-as-fetishism argument against the very idea of objective reality is based—can actually be realized in practice is a tall order and a hard job.

I think Hegel offers just such an account. He subscribes to, and his account respects and accords with, all three of the principles Rorty invokes: social pragmatism about norms, the idea that representational relations between representeds and representings must be understood in normative terms of authority and responsibility, and an understanding of the most basic normative statuses as necessarily involving correlative authority and responsibility. In the rest of this essay [in my second lecture] I will explain how I think Hegel’s story about the institution of normative representational relations goes. At the heart of his explanation is the idea that the relations between norms (normative statuses such as authority and responsibility) and the normative attitudes that both institute and answer to those norms is essentially *historical*. In the end, I want to claim, Rorty did not follow his line of thought all the way through to its proper conclusion because he (following Dewey) did not sufficiently appreciate the thorough-going nature of Hegel’s historicism, and the conception of rationality it articulates.

Fetishism, Anti-Authoritarianism, and the Second Enlightenment:

Rorty and Hegel on Representation and Reality

Lecture Two: Hegel’s recollective account of representation

I

Last time I talked about the evolution of Rorty’s arguments against semantic representationalism. The considerations and commitments that shape the final, anti-authoritarian argument of Rorty’s that I have been reconstructing are among the central concerns Hegel addresses in his *Phenomenology*.[[13]](#footnote-13) Hegel takes over from Kant the insight that what distinguishes sapient, discursive beings from merely natural ones is the *normative* character of the space in which they live, and move, and have their being. His focal concept of *Geist*—what the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* is a phenomenology of—is the whole comprising all of our implicitly norm-governed, norm-articulating performances, practices, and institutions, as well as the explicit theoretical expressions of them that constitute our normative self-consciousness. The most obvious consequence of treating *Geist* as of co-equal significance with the individual self-consciousnesses who actualize and reflect on it, on which Kant had concentrated, is both to *socialize* and *historicize* the conception of normativity—the axial conception for both figures. For Hegel, *normative* statuses are essentially *social* statuses: products of individuals’ practical attitudes towards one another, aspects of the roles they play in social practices. He is the original social pragmatist about normativity—as Dewey and Rorty acknowledge (though the later Wittgenstein, whose thought is also principally animated by this insight, does not).

In addition, Hegel understands *Geist* itself as having a history. For him, the defining, transformative event in that history—the single most important thing that ever happened to us—is the rolling, extended, still incomplete transition from traditional to distinctively modern forms of normativity (and so, of selves and self-consciousness). To understand his conception of this titanic sea-change in the most fundamental metaphysical structure of normativity, we need to look more closely at the vocabulary he deploys to talk about norms—that is, about what makes us *us*, and not just part of *it*. At the base of Hegel’s conception of us is the distinction between what we are *in* ourselves and what we are *for* ourselves. We are what things can be something *for*, and prime among the things that can be something for us is us ourselves. I understand talk about what we are *in* ourselves as talk about our normative *statuses*, and talk about what we are *for* ourselves as talk about our normative *attitudes*. Each of these is further subdivided. The principal dimensions of what we are *in* ourselves are independence and dependence. I understand these Hegelian terms, when applied to individual self-conscious selves as normative subjects, to be ways of talking about authority and responsibility (right and obligation, entitlement and commitment). The principal dimensions of what we are *for* ourselves is what a self-consciousness is for *others* and what it is for *itself*. I understand these to correspond to normative statuses we *attribute* to others and those we *acknowledge* or undertake ourselves.



Put in these terms, what shatters the traditional normative order is the dawning practical and theoretical realization that we are *essentially* self-conscious beings, in the sense that what we are *in* ourselves depends on (is responsible to) what we are *for* ourselves. It is the discovery of the *attitude-dependence* of *normative* *statuses*. The contrasting traditional practical understanding, which forms the dark background against which the modern insight stands out in bright relief, sees normative statuses of authority in the form of superiority and responsibility in the form of subordination as objective, attitude-independent features of a normative order we find rather than make. In its purest theoretical form this traditional practical conception of norms takes the form of the *scala naturae*, the Great Chain of Being. Although it has many dimensions, at its core it is a *normative* order of superiority and subordination: the authority to command and the obligation to obey. At its summit is God, below him all the serried ranks of angels (seraphim, cherubim, thrones, and dominations…all the way down to mere archangels) through the feudal order of kings and lords down to peasants, hierarchically organized animals, vegetables, and minerals (which are apparently fair game to be bossed around by just about everybody). Our cognitive task is to discover what is fitting or proper (how things objectively ought to be) and our practical task is to bring our conduct and subjective attitudes into accord with those objective facts (the ought-to-do’s determined by “my station and its duties,” which articulate the ought-to-be’s). The principle organizing this traditional order is accordingly the *status-dependence* of *normative attitudes*. The normative order is objective, natural or supernatural, not the product of subjective attitudes or social practices. It is found and not made.

Hegel understands the practical realization that is the driving motor of modernity as finding explicit expression in the Enlightenment’s rejection of this picture as fetishism: the projection of the products of the activity of human subjects into an objective form in which they are no longer recognizable as such. Modernity is the replacement of the practical construal of norms structured by implicit commitment to the status-dependence of normative attitudes by a practical construal of norms structured by explicit commitment to the attitude-dependence of normative statuses. It is the most important event in the history of *Geist* (so far!). Social pragmatism about norms is the master idea of modernity, and the Enlightenment is explicit self-consciousness of it. Rorty, Dewey, and Hegel are at one on this point, even though they express it differently.

But the historicity of *Geist* in this sense is only one dimension of Hegel’s historicism. Essentially self-conscious creatures—those for whom what they are in themselves depends on what they are for themselves—are subjects of a distinctive kind of transformative, self-creative process. For changing what they are *for* themselves changes what they are *in* themselves. As essentially self-conscious, they are consequently essentially *historical* beings. In the place of *natures*, they have *histories*. For if you want to understand what they are in themselves, you must rehearse the cascade of changes in what they were for themselves, which occasioned changes in what they were in themselves, followed by new changes in what they were for themselves, and so on. The form of this retrospective understanding of historical beings as having histories rather than natures is Hegelian *recollection* [Erinnerung]. Applied to *Geist* as a whole, it is *phenomenology*. Hegel’s original conception of a distinctive kind of *recollective* rationalityis the key to understanding his account of the representational dimension of conceptual content, and how it satisfies the constraints operative in Rorty’s final anti-authoritarian argument for global anti-representationalism.

II

So far I have indicated how commitment to social pragmatism about normativity is built deeply into Hegel’s understanding of the advance modernity makes over traditional ways of understanding ourselves. It shows up as the realization of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses. In fact it takes the specific form of the idea that normative statuses are *instituted by* practical normative attitudes. The Enlightenment sees, as traditional thinkers had not, that there were no superiors and subordinates, no authority and responsibility, until people started practically *taking* or *treating* each other *as* superiors and subordinates, authoritative and responsible. It is playing that role in a social web of *practical attitudes* that confers normative significance on the performances of participants in social practices of attributing and acknowledging authority and responsibility. That is one of the three commitments I claimed Rorty’s skeptical conclusions about representation and represented reality rest on. Looking at some of the fine structure of Hegel’s account of the social practices that institute normative statuses will both show how he subscribes also to the interdependence of authority and responsibility Rorty invokes as a second premise, and illuminate the interplay of normative attitudes and normative statuses articulated by the historical dimension of Hegel’s story.

Kant, too, endorses a version of the modern insight into the attitude-dependence of normative statuses. His normative conception of discursive creatures as *autonomous* is the idea that we are genuinely normatively bound only by commitments that we ourselves endorse and acknowledge. This contrasts with merely natural beings, which are bound by laws that are independent of their attitudes. We are bound rather by our *conceptions* of rules. Only we can normatively bind ourselves, by our attitudes. These are the two sides of *autonomy*: **nomos** and **autos**, the law and the self-binding by it. This is what Kant makes of Rousseau’s dictum that “Obedience to a law one has prescribed to oneself is freedom.”[[14]](#footnote-14) The basic Kantian normative status, the status of being an autonomous subject of normative attitudes and statuses, is having the authority to undertake commitments: the authority to *make* oneself responsible by *taking* oneself to be responsible. This is the authority (a normative status) to institute commitments or responsibilities (another kind of status) by adopting an *attitude*: acknowledging or undertaking that commitment or responsibility.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Building on and developing this Kantian idea, Hegel understands normative statuses to be *socially* synthesized by attitudes of what he calls “recognition” [Anerkennung], when those recognitive attitudes are reciprocated. Recognizing others is taking them to be normative subjects. That is taking them to be subjects of normative statuses and attitudes: able to be responsible and to exercise authority, and to attribute those statuses to others and acknowledge, undertake, or claim them themselves. The intuition at the root of this socializing of Kant’s picture is that genuinely to *be* responsible depends not only on one’s *acknowledging* a responsibility oneself, but also on others *holding* one responsible. Kant expresses a weaker version of this idea in his claim that autonomous beings have an obligation to *respect* the autonomy of others. To respect the dignity of others as free beings in this normative sense is to attribute to them the authority to commit themselves, to *make* themselves responsible by *taking* themselves to be responsible. But for Kant, the normative status of autonomy and its dignity is just a fact (albeit a distinctive and distinctively significant kind of fact). And the attitude of respect or recognition by others is merely an appropriate reflection and acknowledgement of it: a status-dependent attitude. Hegel’s radical idea is that that attitude of respect or recognition by others is as constitutive of the status as the subject’s own commitment-instituting attitudes are. Not only are commitments or responsibilities attitude-dependent statuses, but so is the authority to institute statuses by one’s attitudes. Only the right social constellation of attitudes of attributing and acknowledging authority and responsibility institutes genuine normative statuses: actualizing what otherwise remain merely virtual objects of attitudes.

Taking normative statuses to be instituted by reciprocal recognitive attitudes involves assigning to the members of a recognitive community authority and responsibility that are co-ordinate and complementary. It is entirely up to me whom I recognize, in the sense of granting or attributing to them the authority to hold me responsible. But it is not then up to me in the same sense whether they recognize me in turn, nor what, exactly they hold me responsible for, nor whether they take me to have fulfilled that responsibility. The idea is that what I am actually committed to (this aspect of what I as a normative subject am “in myself”, my statuses) is the product both of my attitudes and of the attitudes of those I recognize—the responsibilities I acknowledge and what I am held responsible for.

Consider the status of being a good chess player. Achieving that status is not something I can do simply by coming subjectively to adopt a certain attitude toward myself. It is, in a certain sense, up to me whom I regard as good chess-players: whether I count any woodpusher who can play a legal game, only formidable club players, Masters, or even Grand Masters. That is, it is up to me whom I recognize as good chess-players, in the sense in which I aspire to be one. But it is *not* then in the same sense up to me whether I qualify as one of them. To earn their recognition in turn, I must be able to play up to their standards, to earn their recognition. To *be*, say, a formidable club player, I must be recognized as such by those I recognize as such. My recognitive attitudes can define a virtual community, but only the reciprocal recognition by those I recognize can make me actually a member of it, accord me the status for which I have implicitly petitioned by recognizing them. My attitudes exercise recognitive *authority* precisely in determining whose recognitive attitudes I am *responsible* to for my actual normative status.

I can make things hard on myself or easy on myself. I can make it very easy to earn the recognition (in this respect) of those I recognize as good chess players, if I am prepared to set my standards low enough. If I count as a good chess player anyone who can play a legal game, I will not have to learn much in order to earn the recognition by those who can play a legal game of my capacity to play a legal game. The cost is, of course, that what I achieve is only to be entitled to classify myself as a member of this not at all exclusive community. On the other hand, if I want to be entitled to look up to myself (as it were), I can exercise my independence, my authority, and set my standards high, recognizing only Grandmasters as good chess players. To be entitled to class oneself with them, be aware of oneself as possessing the status they give concrete determinate content to, would be an accomplishment indeed. But it is not easy to earn their recognition as a good chess player in that sense, that is, by those standards. The thought is that the normative status of being a good writer, or a good philosopher, involves the same sort of constellation of authority and responsibility distributed among members of a community instituted by reciprocal recognitive attitudes.

This is a sophisticated, richly structured version of social pragmatism about norms. The central application of the reciprocal recognition model of the institution of normative statuses by attitudes is for *discursive* commitments. Language [*Sprache*], Hegel tells us, is the *Dasein* of *Geist*: its concrete, immediate actuality.[[16]](#footnote-16) It is entirely up to me which counter in the language-game I play—whether I undertake the commitment expressed by “This coin is copper,” for instance. But what exactly I have committed myself to thereby, the content of my commitment, is not up to me. That content is administered by those I (and other users of the term “copper”) acknowledge as authoritative, those we recognize as metallurgical experts. They will hold me responsible for being committed to the coin’s melting at 1085° C, and to its conducting electricity, even if I have no beliefs, or different beliefs, about copper’s melting point and electrical conductivity.

So Hegel also builds deep into his social model of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses (his version of social pragmatism about norms) the reciprocity of authority and responsibility that leads Rorty to be skeptical about the very idea of a nonhuman authority—whether God with respect to our practical attitudes and commitments or a represented objective reality with respect to our cognitive attitudes and commitments. Recognitive practical normative *attitudes* institute the most basic normative *statuses*: being the subject of normative statuses and attitudes. They do so only when they have the right social structure: when they are mutual or reciprocal, when the *authority* of each member of the recognitive community instituted by those attitudes is balanced by *responsibility* to others, whose recognitive authority has been recognized in turn. Reciprocal recognitive attitudes are normative relations among *us*, because they define who *we* are. We cannot stand in such relations to what is *other*, in the sense defined by its otherness to *us*. If there are other significant normative relations that are not themselves recognitive relations, they must be understood ultimately in terms of recognitive attitudes. For without reciprocal recognition, there is no normativity, no *Geist*. This is all fully in accord with Rorty’s account and the motivations for it.

Hegel also takes over from Kant a normative understanding of the significance of specifically representational relations. However they are established or instituted, to count as *representational* relations, whatever plays the role of represent*eds* must exercise a distinctive kind of authority over what can only count as representi*ngs* of them if they are suitably responsible to those representeds. What is represented must be intelligible as providing a normative standard authoritative for assessments of the correctness of representings of it, in a distinctive (representational) sense of “correctness.” Liability to *attitudes* that are assessments of correctness set by what thereby counts as represent*ed* is constitutive of having the normative *status* of a represent*ing*.

But these normative relations of representational authority and responsibility are not symmetric and reciprocal in the way they would have to be to be intelligible on the model of reciprocal recognition. The authority of representeds over representings and the responsibility of representings to them are complementary only in the trivial sense that if X has authority over Y, Y is responsible to X (and *vice versa*). Recognitive reciprocity requires that if X has authority over Y (Y is responsible to X) then Y has authority over X (X is responsible to Y). Each interlocutor X has the authority to recognize any Y, but that is the authority to grant to Y a corresponding authority: the authority to hold X responsible. In the representational case, the authority of representeds over representings (the responsibility of representings to representeds) is not balanced by a symmetric authority of representings over representeds (responsibility of representeds to representings). The idea that there is such a reciprocal authority of representings over representeds is a kind of subjective idealism that is as foreign to Hegel as it is to Rorty.

So as I read him, Hegel endorses all three of the premises of Rorty’s anti-authoritarian, global anti-representationalist argument for the conclusion that we should reject as fetishistic the idea of the ultimate authority of a represented nonhuman, natural objective reality over our *cognitive* practices—as and for the same reasons that we reject as fetishistic the idea of the ultimate authority of a nonhuman, supernatural being over our *ethical* practices. Both have ground-level commitments to social pragmatism about normativity: the idea that norms and normative significances are instituted by playing roles in our social practices, and the constellations of practical attitudes they make possible. And Hegel’s particular model of the social institution of normative statuses by reciprocal recognitive attitudes builds in Rorty’s insight that part of what the Enlightenment was rejecting about traditional understandings of normativity was the idea of *authority* not balanced by complementary *responsibility*. Genuine authority must be *rational* authority, in the sense that we are obliged to acknowledge the authority only of what we are in a position to hold responsible for providing *reasons* for its exercises of that authority. There is a kind of social-perspectival ‘I’/‘thou’ democracy articulated by Hegel’s mutual recognition model of the social institution of normative statuses by normative attitudes. It is not yet the full-blown liberal Deweyan ‘I’/‘we’ normative democracy, Rorty officially embraces, but it is a recognizable relative. And Rorty and Hegel agree with the Kantian analysis of representational relations as fundamentally normative relations of authority and responsibility between representeds and representings.

Rorty argues that if we think through the implications of these first two ideas, we will see as confused and ultimately unintelligible the idea that the meaningfulness of our discourse is constituted by, or even essentially dependent on, normative representational relations between things that *can* give and ask for reasons and things that can*not* participate in those reasoning practices, cannot adopt those attitudes. We should not acknowledge the *authority* of what we cannot interrogate and hold *responsible* for its reasons. In spite of their many fundamental agreements in this vicinity, however, Hegel does *not* follow Rorty in rejecting the idea of a normatively inflected, specifically *representational* dimension to the contents of our discursive commitments. Nor does he reject the idea of an objective reality exercising authority over our cognitive commitments that that representational dimension of conceptual contentfulness underwrites. How can Hegel reconcile that with his embrace of the modern insight into the attitude-dependence of normative statuses, and his understanding of the institution of normative statuses by reciprocal recognitive attitudes?

III

Hegel takes modernity’s discovery of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses, which is social pragmatism about normativity, to be a decisive advance in our (and so *Geist*’s) self-consciousness. We have come to understand that our practical attitudes play an essential role in instituting the norms, governance by which makes us discursive, sapient beings, and not merely natural ones. But he also thinks that this self-understanding is partial and incomplete, and that the evident substantial gain is mixed with a complementary loss. There is a worm in the apple of modernity. He calls it “alienation” [Entfremdung]. Alienation is a defect in the metaphysical structure of modern normativity. In grossest terms it is a loss of the *binding force* of the norms. He calls what is lost “*Sittlichkeit*,” after *Sitte*, customs or mores, the traditional implicit form of governing norms.

While Hegel whole-heartedly applauds the overcoming of the fetishism that takes norms to be objective features of the non-human world, something merely there, antecedently to and independently of our attitudes towards them, he thinks that coming to see them explicitly as products of our practices—as something *we* are *responsible* for—threatens to undercut their practical *authority* over us. Traditional commitment to the status-dependence of normative attitudes expressed a genuine insight, even though that insight took the deformed shape of the fetishistic reification of norms. Practical attitudes are intelligible as genuinely *normative* attitudes only if they are answerable or responsible to, governed by, the norms (statuses) they are attitudes towards.

The authority of norms over attitudes—the sense in which practical attitudes and conduct are bound or governed by norms—is two-fold. It has deontic and alethic dimensions. First, the norms serve as normative *standards for assessments* of the correctness or propriety of attitudes. One should attribute to others or acknowledge oneself what the parties are actually committed to, the authority they actually have. That is something one can get wrong. Second, the attitudes one adopts should be *subjunctively sensitive* to the contents of the statuses acknowledged or attributed, in the sense that if the norms or stasuses *were* or *had been* different, the acknowledgements and attributions *would be* or *would have been* different. These are the two dimensions along which norms are practically efficacious as making a difference to the conduct of participants in the practice. Having this sort of significance is essential to its being *normative* statuses that are being acknowledged and attributed, towards which attitudes are being adopted.

Hegel thinks there is a substantial tension between norm-governedness in this sense and the modern appreciation of the attitude-dependence of norms. Seeing the norms as products of our attitudes can make it impossible to see those attitudes as genuinely governed by the resulting norms, in this dual sense. As Wittgenstein puts his version of the point: “One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can’t talk about ‘right’.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Alienation is losing our grip on the intelligibility of norms as genuinely binding on us, as a result of understanding them as instituted by our attitudes. The result is a picture that is attitudes “all the way down,” unanchored in actual norms. Notice that where the issue is alienation from the normative products of our own attitudes, it is no use to invoke the *social* dimension of the institution of normative statuses by recognitive attitudes so as to try to understand *my* attitudes as bound by the norms instituted by *our* attitudes. For the question is how *our* attitudes can be so bound.

*Alienation* in this sense is pretty much what Rorty’s *pragmatism* both endorses in theory and adopts in practice. Rorty deliberately chooses the Romantic and Hegelian term “irony” for the sort of private detachment from the commitments that govern our public life that he recommends and esteems.[[18]](#footnote-18) Rorty is well aware that in his discussion of alienation in the *Spirit* chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel identifies Romantic irony as one of the most characteristic expressions of alienated modernity. Hegel would see Rorty’s version of Deweyan pragmatism as a clear-eyed acknowledgment and deliberate embracing of our modern, alienated predicament. As according to Kant I am genuinely normatively bound only by norms whose bindingness I acknowledge (explicitly or implicitly), so for Rorty we are bound only by those norms we can agree on. To have authority or be responsible just *is* to be practically taken or treated *as* authoritative or held responsible by the community. (That is the serious thought behind such characteristic Rortyan throw-away lines as “The truth is whatever your community will let you get away with.”) There is not and cannot intelligibly be anything *else* that is authoritative over our practices and practical attitudes. That is what Rorty means by anti-authoritarianism.

It is a consequence he draws from his social pragmatism about norms. He agrees with Hegel in seeing the idea that our social practices institute the norms we are bound by as the principal lesson of the original Enlightenment. Authority as superiority and responsibility as subordination are not statuses ordained by God and revealed in scripture, nor are they natural states to be discerned by careful empirical investigation. (A thought well epitomized both in Shakespeare’s line “The fault…is not in the stars, that we are underlings, but in ourselves,” and in the rude traditional but radical rhetorical question: “When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?”) In calling for the completion of this movement in a second Enlightenment, Rorty appeals to the essentially *normative* character of *representational* relations to assimilate the idea of an objective represented Reality *cognitively* authoritative over our representings of it (theoretical attitudes) to that of God or an objective *scala naturae practically* authoritative over the propriety of our conduct. For him, both fall under the heading of “non-human authority over human attitudes,” and are accordingly to be rejected.

Hegel disagrees. He thinks what is needed is a post-modern reconciliation of the modern insight into the attitude-dependence of normative statuses with a suitably unalienated reappropriation of the traditional *sittlich* insight into the status-dependence of normative attitudes. The aim of such a synthetic reappropriation is to re-establish the intelligibility of the bindingness—the *rational* bindingness, the authority—of norms that, though instituted by our practical attitudes, nonetheless transcend those attitudes sufficiently to normatively govern them. Among the various kinds of attitude-transcendent norms he countenances, Hegel treats as central and essential those that articulate the representational dimension of conceptual content: the authority of represented states of affairs over representings of them in thought and talk. By contrast to Rorty, he thinks that the relations between representeds and representings are intelligible as normative relations of authority and responsibility even though we do not recognize what exercises representational authority as one of us. In particular, to be accorded normative authority by our practices and attitudes, what is represented need not itself be either recognized by us as the subject of normative recognitive attitudes, nor itself adopt such attitudes towards us. Having our attitudes normatively governed (in the dual sense) by something that does not itself have normative attitudes is not, Hegel claims, incompatible with the modern insight that normative statuses are instituted by normative attitudes. What is required is only that the normative statuses of authority and responsibility constitutive of the representational relation between representeds and representings be instituted by our attitudes towards them, by the role they play in our practices. The challenge he faces in making out this claim in a way compatible with the insights and commitments he shares with Rorty is to say just how we need to act, what we need to *do*, so as to confer distinctively *representational* normative significance on what thereby acquire the practical normative significance both of representeds and representings.

IV

The general form of Hegel’s strategy for overcoming alienation and reachieving *Sittlichkeit* by reconciling the modern insight into the attitude-dependence of normative statuses with the traditional insight into the status-dependence of normative attitudes is to appeal to the *historical* structure of the constellation of reciprocal authority and responsibility that relates attitudes and statuses. He understands *past* attitudes as having instituted norms that govern our current and future attitudes. The engine of his account is the idea of a new sort of rational activity: *recollection* [Erinnerung]. (It is possible that only someone who, like Hegel, was writing as part of the generation that invented intellectual history in the modern sense could have come up with this idea.). Recollection is a retrospective rational reconstruction that selects and assembles from the series of of attitudes that have actually been adopted by practitioners an *expressively progressive* trajectory through them. To say that it is expressively progressive is to say that the reconstructed path has the shape of the gradual emergence into explicitness of a norm that can be seen to have implicitly governed the process all along. Recollection turns a mere *past* into a *history*: the past comprehended as normatively significant.[[19]](#footnote-19) Recollection confers normative significance on the sequence of past attitudes (applications of concepts) by exibiting it as having the distinctive norm-instituting recognitive structure of a *tradition*. That is a quite specific constellation of authority of the past over the present and future and authority of the present and future over the past. It is a kind of active *making* (institution of norms) that has the form of a *finding* of a norm as already governing the prior attitudes. The content of the norm is recollected as constant throughout, with each included episode of applying the norm by adopting an attitude serving to reveal a bit more of that content, further expressing it by making explicit aspects that had hitherto remained implicit.

A helpful model is provided by the evolution of legal concepts in Anglo-American common law. Here there is no initial explicit governing statute. All there is to determine the content of the legal concepts being applied is the history of their prior application by earlier judges. For this reason it is sometimes described as “judge-made law.” (Even where there is an explicit statute, case law articulating it develops in the same way as common law.) The only authority a judge can claim for her decision to apply or withhold the application of a concept of common law (such as negligence or strict liability) to a new set of facts is the authority of earlier decisions. The rationale or justification for such a decision takes the form of a recollection of prior judicial attitudes, as expressed in those decisions. From the welter of the actual record, some decisions are privileged as precedential. They are treated as having gradually but inexorably revealed important contours of the content of the concept in question. A tradition is reconstructed, consisting entirely of episodes treated as precedential, and hence authoritative as to the content of the norm being discerned. In order properly to rationalize and justify the current decision, that tradition must be presented as the cumulative, progressive clarification of a norm (law) made visible as operative throughout the process. The reasons the judge gives for her current decision take the form of an explicit codification of the lessons learned along the way, as different aspects of the implicit norm or concept are shown as being brought into the explicit light of day by precedential decisions. (The inevitable cases where this cannot be done must be decided on grounds other than *stare decesis*—since they must be decided. But treating a case as wholly novel in this sense, as one of “first impression,” is always a last resort and a confession of a certain kind of failure. The failure is the inability to ground the authority of the new decision in its responsibility to and acknowledgement of the authority of precedent.)

In common and case law, there is no content to the norm except what it has been imbued with by the authority of such jurisprudential decisions. That authority in each case essentially involves a correlative responsibility, however. That responsibility is administered by future judges. For they will recognize the precedential authority of the current decision only insofar as they take it to be licensed by, responsible to, a suitable acknowledgement of the authority of, the prior decisions privileged as precedential by those future judges in *their* recollective vindications of their own decisions. The authority of each decision depends on the *reasons* for it that can recollectively be extracted from the rationally reconstructed tradition it discerns. Recollection is accordingly (a distinctive kind of) rationalization. It is a process of rationalization that *produces* reasons, a process of giving *contingency* the (normative) form of *necessity*, as Hegel puts it.

Though historical recollective developmental processes are essentially *a*symmetrical, because diachronic, they also exhibit the *symmetrical* structure of authority and responsibility characteristic of reciprocal recognition. Each judge is both a recognizer and a petitioner for recognition—recognition that, if successful, results in the judge being recognized in turn. The judge only has the normative status she claims, the authority of a correct or even precedential decision, if she is in fact recognized as having it by future judges, who adopt attitudes of attributing that authority. The ones she recognizes (the prior judges to whom she attributes precedential authority, to whom she accordingly acknowledges responsibility) are not the same individuals on whose recognition she depends on for the actualization of her attitudes, for the transformation of her claim to authority into the actual status of authority: the future judges who assess the fidelity of her recollection to the authority of precedents they themselves acknowledge. Yet she, like all the rest of the judges in the tradition has authority only insofar as she succeeds in making herself responsible to the attitudes of others in the diachronic recognitive community, that is, the tradition, constituted by their recollections. She makes herself recognitively responsible to past and future judges in these different but symmetrical ways by adopting the attitude of claiming *authority* that is implicit in making a decision at all.

It is of the essence of recollection that the concepts, norms, or laws that emerge from this process (that jurisprudential recollection reveals and makes more explicit) can *both* be “judge-made” *and* provide genuine *reasons* for deciding cases one way rather than another. The deciding judge recollectively claims the authority of what she takes or treats as precedent, as providing reasons for her decision. Those reasons are genuine, actually have the authority claimed for them, just insofar as they are recognized in turn *as* reasons by later judges, who have the authority to treat the present decision as itself precedential and authoritative, insofar as it is taken suitably to have fulfilled its responsibility to the reasons provided by the tradition it both inherits and retrospectively constitutes.

Hegel thinks that the recollective-recognitive process that I have described as determining the content of legal concepts in common law jurisprudence also determines the contents of our ordinary empirical descriptive concepts, and that of their sophisticated scientific relatives. In the case of applying empirical concepts, as opposed to legal ones, he understands each phase of the process of experience (*Erfahrung*, by contrast to the episodic, self-intimating episodes of *Erlebnis*) to include three stages. It begins with the *registration* of an anomaly: the acknowledgment that one finds oneself with commitments that are *incompatible,* by one’s own lights, according to one’s own understanding of the contents to which one is committed. They are incompatible in the sense that one cannot become entitled to them both (or to all of them). Because the motor of experience is always the acknowledgement of the conflict of one’s commitments with each other, for Hegel experience is always the experience of *error*. Practically acknowledging that incompatibility is taking oneself to be obliged to *do* something, *change* something. This is the obligation to engage in a process of *repair* of the anomaly, to replace rational discord with rational harmony, by altering or giving up some of the offending commitments.

This much is already in Kant, as Hegel reads him. What one is doing in making a judgement is undertaking a specific task-responsibility: the responsibility to *do* something. What one is undertaking the responsibility to do is to rationally integrate that commitment with one’s prior commitments, by finding reasons justifying it, acknowledging the consequences that follow from it, and (the case that matters most for Hegel) resolving any incompatibilities that result from taking the new claim on board. Doing this is what Kant calls “synthesizing” a constellation of commitments that exhibits the sort of systematic rational unity distinctive of sapient awareness: the “synthetic unity of apperception.” At this point, though, Hegel moves decisively beyond the Kantian paradigm, by adding a crucial constraint on what counts as successful repairs of commitments acknowledged as discordant. When anomalies occur, perhaps prompted by perceptual judgments noninferentially wrenched from the subject as the immediate deliverances of sense (the passive exercises of conceptual abilities), not just any rejiggering that removes the incompatibility suffices. Successful repairs must *explain* and *justify* the changes made, in a special way, by taking a distinctive form. Vindication of a proposed reparative strategy in response to acknowledgment of incompatible commitments must take the form of a special kind of *historical* narrative: a recollection. One must tell a retrospective story that rationally reconstructs an idealized expressively progressive trajectory through previous changes of view that culminates in the view being endorsed after the repair of the most recently discovered anomaly. In the first stage of the experience of error, the previous conception of how things are, what played the role *to* consciousness of what things are *in* themselves, has been unmasked as appearance, and has accordingly shifted status. It now plays the role *to* consciousness of being only what things were *for* consciousness: an erroneous view of how things really are. To justify endorsing a new view as veridically representing how thing really are in themselves, one must show how, assuming that things are that way, one did or could have come to *know* that things are that way.

Doxastically endorsing a conceptual content is taking it to be fact-stating: to present how things are in themselves. That *what* one takes to be facts (which contents, exactly, one endorses) *changes* is just a change in status of the contents involved during the registration and repair stages of the experience of error. The old content changes status from being endorsed to not being endorsed, and its replacement changes status from not being endorsed to being endorsed. What was *to* consciousness noumenal reality is unmasked as phenomenal appearance, and replaced by a different content, newly endorsed as objectively factual. The recollective stage of an experience of error justifies this change of status by forging a distinctive kind of link between the content newly endorsed as noumenal and all the previously endorsed contents that now are taken to be phenomena. It is a representational link, in virtue of which they show up to the conscious subject as phenomenal appearances *of* that noumenal reality. The link is forged by offering a retrospective recollective rational reconstruction of a sequence of phenomena culminating in the facts as one currently takes them to be. That rational reconstruction exhibits them as all along implicitly normatively governed by their link to that noumenal reality, in the sense it serves as the normative standard by which their adequacy *as* phenomenal appearances of it is to be assessed.

Doxastic commitments are not just fact-expressing. For Hegel they are, further, implicitly *knowledge* claims. The demand for recollective vindication of one’s commitments codifies Hegel’s version of the justification dimension of claims to knowledge. This distinctive kind of justification requires showing how the previous views one held in the process leading up to the current candidate can properly be understood as views, appearances, or representings *of* what one now endorses as the reality one claims was all along being viewed, appearing, or being represented. To be entitled to claim that things are as one now takes them to be, one must show how one *found out* that they are so. Doing that involves explaining what one’s earlier views got right, what they got wrong, and why. It involves rationally reconstructing the sequence of one’s previous views of what one now takes to be the same topic so as to exhibit it as a process of *learning,* of gradual *discovery* of how things actually are. This is the progressive emergence into explicitness, the ever more adequate expression, of what is retrospectively discerned as having been all along implicit as the norm governing and guiding the process by which its appearances arise and pass away. Offering such a retrospective historical rational reconstruction of the process leading up to the constellation of commitments whose endorsement is being vindicated as the lesson properly to be learned from the earlier registering and reparative phases is the final, *recollective* phase of an episode of the experience of error. Recollection transforms a mere description of past commitments into a progressive narrative of a sequence of lessons whereby how things really are, in themselves (according to one’s current commitments), gradually came to be revealed, through that progressive sequence of ever more adequate appearances, culminating in one’s current happy state of (as one takes it to be) *knowledge* of how things really are. A recollecting narrative is a narrative of *expressive* progress. It is a story about how what is now revealed to have been all along *implicit* in prior commitments, as the reality they were appearances of (the noumena behind the phenomena), gradually emerged to become fully *explicit,* showing up as what it really is, in the view currently endorsed, in which that process culminated. It is a story of how what things are in themselves (“an sich”) becomes what they are for consciousness.

Already something thought, the *content* is the property of substance; existence has no more to be changed into the form of what is in-itself and implicit, but only the *implicit*—no longer merely something primitive, or lying hidden within existence, but already present as a *recollection*—into the form of what is *explicit,* of what is objective to self. [*PG* 29]

A recollection accordingly exhibits past commitments that have been discarded because of their incompatibility with others as genuine (if only partially correct) appearances *of* reality as it is now known to be, and in that sense as not *merely* illusory.

This recollective story about the representational dimension of conceptual content an *expressive* account of it. It explains how what was, according to each recollection, always *implicit* (“an sich,” what things are in themselves), becomes ever more *explicit* (for consciousness). The recollective story is an *expressively* progressive one. The representational relation between senses and referents is established by displaying a sequence of appearances that are ever more adequate expressions of an underlying reality. In general Hegel thinks we can understand what is implicit only in terms of the expressive process by which it is made explicit. That is a recollective process. The underlying reality is construed as implicit in the sense of being a norm that all along governed the process of its gradual emergence into explicitness. Without at any earlier point being fully explicit to the consciousness undergoing the experience, according to the recollection that unveils it as what the appearances were appearances of, it nonetheless practically (hence, implicitly) governed the process. According to the retrospective rational reconstruction that is the recollection, it served as a normative standard for better and worse appearances, accordingly as they revealed (expressed) that reality more adequately. And according to the recollection, those assessments were efficacious. The metanorm that governs recollection (determining better and worse recollections) demands *expressive* progress: progress in making explicit what shows up as having been all along implicit. This recollective notion of expression is more fundamental than the notion of representation it is called on to explain.

Telling that sort of recollective reconstructive story is offering a *phenomenology* of a view (a set of commitments). A phenomenology vindicates that view by showing how it gradually emerged into the explicit light of day from the partial, variously erroneous appearances of it. This is what Hegel does at the metalevel for various “shapes” of self-consciousness (and ultimately, of the whole of *Geist*) in the *Phenomenology.* The final, adequate form of self-consciousness (“Absolute Knowing”) knows itself as engaging in a process of this historical recollective kind in its dynamic experience of ground-level empirical and practical commitments and the determinate concepts that articulate them. Such a phenomenology vindicates the endorsement of some conceptual contents as noumenal reality, as objectively factual, by showing how they explain the sequential variety of phenomenal appearances by which a subject comes to know them *as* noumenal reality, and thereby explain the advent of that knowledge.

A recollective reconstruction does that by exhibiting the various erroneous beliefs *that* things are thus and so (phenomena) as appearances *of* the facts as they really are (noumena). A recollection performs a great reversal: what eventuates from a process of repeated experiences of error, as its final (thus far) *end* or result, is placed, as it were, also at the *beginning* of the sequence.

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.[[20]](#footnote-20)

(Hegel often uses circular imagery in this connection.) For the fact is seen as what drives its progressive revelation. How things actually are is recollectively revealed as normatively governing the process both deontically, as a standard of assessment of expressive success, and alethically, as that to which the episodes that count as expressively progressive are subjunctively sensitive. It is at once the cause of a course of experience and its goal. In the case of phenomenological recollection, the conceptual content that is endorsed as factual, as the underlying noumenon, is taken to be *referred to* by all the phenomena thereby linked to it as appearances *of* it.

It should be added, though it is not to our purpose here to pursue the point, that I have been discussing how things look exclusively from the *retro*spective recollective rationalizing point of view. The very same triphasic process of *registration* of incompatible commitments, *repair* of the incompatibility, and recollective rational *reconstruction* of an expressively progressive trajectory through past commitments vindicating the repair looks very different when viewed from a complementary *pro*spective temporal perspective. Looking backward, the recollective task is to make visible steady, cumulative progress in revealing how things always already were and are now known to be. Looking forward reveals the ruptures, gaps, contradictions, and mistakes, the ignorance, wrong turns, and failures to understand that inevitably mark the course of conceptual development as having the shape of the experience of *error*. Seen from this point of view, the way to truth is a fallibilist path along which skeptical despair threatens, as every only temporarily stable constellation of commitments dissolves, revealing itself as having been appearance rather than the reality as which it masqueraded. Indeed, Hegel thinks that for reasons of deep metaphysical principle there can be no set of determinate empirical or practical concepts whose *correct* application, according to the norms articulating their contents, will not lead eventually to commitments that are incompatible by their own lights. That is his version of the way in which the immediate (noninferential) deliverances of sense outrun and overflow what is captured conceptually. Kant, like his empiricist predecessors, understood this in terms of its being an infinite task to capture sensuous immediacy conceptually in judgments. There will always be something still not captured. Hegel understands the surplus of the sensous over the conceptual—immediacy over mediation—rather in terms of the necessary *instability* of any set of empirical concepts: the way their application will show their inadequacy, the need to change them. This shift from understanding the limits of conceptualization in terms of *inexhaustibility* to understanding it in terms of *instability* is of the essence of Hegelian *Vernunft*. The larger point I can only gesture at here is that it is essential to Hegel’s view that the sunny Whiggish retrospective progressive and constructive perspective I have been emphasizing and the dark pessimistic prospective perspective of unavoidable error and dissolution be understood as complementary and reciprocally interdependent.

V

Hegel understands the *social* fine-structure of normativity as *communities* synthesized by reciprocal *recognition*. He understands the *historical* fine-structure of normativity as *traditions* retrospectively synthesized by *recollection*. Along both dimensions norms precipitate out of, are instituted by, attitudes. That is the attitude-dependence of normative statuses that is the principal discovery of modernity. But the picture is not attitudes all the way down. Recognitive attitudes do institute genuine normative statuses, and those norms are made visible as genuinely governing attitudes in turn. Practical attitudes or performances are genuinely governed by norms or statuses in the sense I have been discussing only if they are responsible to those norms along two dimensions: deontic and alethic. It is a criterion of adequacy by which recollections are assessed (by future recollectors) that the norms they discern are authoritative for all the attitudes in the retrospectively constituted tradition. They provide standards for assessment of the correctness of those attitudes, which are in that sense genuinely responsible to them. And all the prior attitudes (applications of concepts) that are certified by a recollective rational reconstruction as expressively progressive, as precedential or correct, are exhibited as having been subjunctively sensitive to, and in that sense not only responsible but responsive to the implicit norm they explicate. Normative governance of attitudes in this dual sense of their deontic responsibility and alethic subjunctive sensitivity to norms is the status-dependence of normative attitudes. The result of the rational reconstruction of an expressively progressive tradition by recollection is the revelation of a governing norm to which the attitudes that make up that tradition are both responsible and responsive.

So Hegel offers an account both of how normative statuses are instituted by reciprocal recognition, and how they become recollectively visible as having genuinely binding force over attitudes. In this way he reconciles the *modern* appreciation of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses with a reconceived version of the *traditional* commitment to the status-dependence of normative attitudes that that shows us that alienation from our norms is not an inevitable consequence of the modern insight. That central implicit insight of modernity, we have seen, just is social pragmatism about normativity. So Hegel shows how pragmatists need not be normative nihilists. Because it is the sort of conceptual norms recollection determines that provide reasons for judgments and actions (not only in courts of law), it also shows that pragmatists need not be irrationalists. Both of these are conclusions Rorty argued for and sought to defend—though not by wheeling in the heavy metaconceptual machinery of recognition and recollection that Hegel deploys.

I suggested earlier that endorsing social pragmatism about normativity—acknowledging that norms are instituted by social practices—need not rule out a community’s investing normative significance in something other than themselves. A community can grant authority to the flights of birds or the patterns of fire-induced cracks on a tortoise shell by taking or treating those natural occurrences as normatively significant. That is one form that practical attitudes instituting normative statuses can take. Anthropology provides many examples of just such conferral of normative significance on the natural—as Rorty’s friend and Princeton colleague Clifford Geertz would have been the first to remind him. In his allegorical treatment of Sophocles’ *Antigone,* Hegel himself considers (and deplores) the Greeks’ treatment of natural differences between biological males and females as *objective* markers of different bundles of rights and responsibilities with respect to family and polis.

I also considered Rorty’s rejoinder to the pointing-out of this possibility. Pragmatists about semantics understand the contents of our utterances and thoughts in terms of the functional role they play in norm-governed discursive social practices. And specifically *discursive* authority and responsibility is essentially, and not just accidentally, *rational* authority and responsibility. It is inseparable from the liability speakers and thinkers have to demands for *reasons* for the commitments they avow and acknowledge. The authority of their claims is conditional on their fulfilling their responsibility to provide suitable reasons for them when appropriately challenged to do so. Kant was right to see the task-responsibility that gives practical weight to cognitive claims—what one must *do* in order to be entitled to the authority one claims—to be the responsibility to offer reasons justifying those commitments, and to acknowledge the further commitments for which they provide reasons in turn. (As Locke was right to condition credibility and respect for the testimony of others to the extent to which they apportion their assent to their evidence.[[21]](#footnote-21)) *This* kind of authority, *discursive* authority, the sort of authority that provides *reasons* for us to believe what is claimed, can in principle only be possessed or exercised by those who participate with us in our practices of giving and asking for reasons: persons, not things. It is this thought that grounds the deep connection Rorty, following Dewey, sees between a proper *semantics* and a liberal democratic *politics*: between *reason* and *freedom*. (It is the basis for the philosophical commonality Habermas and Rorty always felt for each other, in spite of the many differences between their views, both about semantics and about politics.)

Hegel, as I have been reading him, agrees both with the observation that social pragmatism is compatible with a community’s conferring normative statuses on things that cannot adopt normative attitudes and with the basis of the rejoinder: rational authority is inseparable from a correlative responsibility to provide reasons. Social practices of giving and asking for reasons are necessarily the basis of discursive practice and the norms such practice institutes and applies. But on that basis Hegel then builds a further kind of rationality: historical recollective rationality. This telling of Hegel’s story revolves around two master ideas. First, on the pragmatic side, is a social understanding of normativity in terms of *mutual recognition.* Second, articulating his pragmatism, is the conception of a new kind of rationality. It consists in a historical understanding of the relations between conceptual content and implicitly normative discursive practices in terms of an *expressive* process of *recollection.* Each of these ideas comprises a number of subsidiary ones, and has an intricate fine structure relating them.

The model of expression as recollection—the story about what one must *do* to count as thereby making explicit something that was implicit—is in many ways the keystone of the edifice. It explains the representational semantic and cognitive relation between how things appear “for consciousness” on the *subjective* side of *thought* and how things really are “in themselves” on the *objective* side of *being*. It explains the constitutive reciprocal relations between normative attitudes and normative statuses: how attitudes both institute norms and answer to them. And it explains the relations between those two stories: how *normative practices* bring about *semantic relations.* (In Hegel’s terms, explaining how cognition presupposes recognition is explaining how consciousness presupposes self-consciousness.) Hegel extends Rortyan (and Deweyan) pragmatism by explaining how what one is practically *doing* in recollecting (the *process* of producing a retrospective recollective rational reconstruction of a course of experience as expressively progressive) provides the basis for an *expressive* semantic account of normative *representational* *relations* between the human and the nonhuman. Hegel understands what things are *in themselves*—objective reality—in terms of the functional role they play in our discursive practices as normatively governing our claims about them (in the dual sense of “normative governance”). He appeals to the notion of recollection to specify the fine structure of the attitudes that acknowledge something as playing that role. How things are *in* themselves is seen to emerge recollectively from a sequence of how things show up *for* consciousness (the *reality* behind what are now visible as appearances *of it*).

Both Rorty and Dewey avowedly and evidently learned important lessons from Hegel’s historicism. Both distinguished themselves from their fellow philosophers by the extent to which they in fact practiced the recollective rationality that Hegel preached. Their different but largely consonant diagnoses of the ills of their respective philosophical milieus took the form of sweeping metaconceptual narratives of the intellectual heritage and traditions that shaped them. Yet from my point of view Rorty and Dewey both in the end failed to appreciate the overarching significance of Hegel’s historicism. For they did not pay sufficient attention to its fine structure: Hegel’s invention of the metaconcept of recollective rationality as the structure of *Vernunft*, and the philosophical work he called on it to do in understanding both the transitions to and beyond modernity and (so) in reconciling social pragmatism with what was right about representationalism.

I have argued that Hegel presents a detailed, constructive, anti-authoritarian, non-fetishistic, social pragmatist account of the representational dimension of conceptual content. He thereby offers a concrete *pragmatist* alternative to global semantic and epistemological anti-representationalism. He anticipates the challenge to the very idea of objective reality as providing norms for thought that Rorty sees fundamental Enlightenment insights as mounting. This was the lesson Rorty thought required for us a second Enlightenment to appreciate. But Hegel sees Rortyan *irony*, (no less than the Romantic irony from which it develops) as theoretical and practical *alienation* from the tradition-constituting and tradition-articulating norms—as ultimately a confession of failure to reconcile their acculturating role in making us what we are with our role in instituting those norms. This is the failure to bring together in one vision the two senses in which the norms are *ours*. Already in 1806 he anticipated Rorty’s argument, and the alienating, ironic pragmatist challenge to the intelligibility of the representational paradigm that Rorty offers on behalf of reason and responsibility. Hegel’s pragmatist account of the fine-structure of normativity in terms of the way reason in its recollective function administers the interplay of attitude-governing normative statuses and norm-instituting attitudes shows how the emancipation from alien authority the Enlightenment promised can be achieved without the alienation that its insights seemed to entail.

I want to close by reverting to the “Kant oder Hegel?” question with which I began. From the point of view of the Hegelian response I have rehearsed to the anti-authoritarian, global anti-representationalist argument Rorty announced in Girona, Rorty appears to remain mired in alienated Kantian analytic *Verstand*, unable to make the momentous step to Hegelian recollective *Vernunft*. To this extent and in this respect, Rorty shows up as unable fully to disentangle himself from the coils of Kantian thought he had been struggling to wrestle free of since *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, as he rigorously followed out what he saw as the consequences of the social pragmatism about normativity that he extracts from what Dewey made of Hegel. As I see it, this leaves the discussion with a new, heightened and transformed, specifically *pragmatist* version of the “Kant oder Hegel” question. Should pragmatists embrace the concepts of representation and its associated understanding of the reality we represent, reconstrued along Hegelian lines of recollective rationality (perhaps thought of as a successor version of Pricean “I-representation”)? Should the concept of experience be rehabilitated as Hegelian *Erfahrung*? To do so would be to complete the circle Rorty began when he rejected what he properly understood as ultimately Kantian conceptions of representation and experience in *PMN*. The question then becomes whether pragmatism’s advance from Kant should be understood and developed in Rorty’s way, or in Hegel’s.

End

1. These particular arguments are assembled for this antifoundationalist purpose with exceptional clarity in Rorty’s student Michael Williams’s dissertation, rewritten as *Groundless Belief* [Yale U. Press, 1977]. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Published as *El pragmatismo, una version: Antiautoristarismo en epistemologia y ética,* trans. Joan Verges Gifra [Barcelona: Ariel, 2000]. As far as I know, these lectures were never published in English. The English text is included in the Richard Rorty Papers among the Special Collections and Archives at the University of California, Irvine libraries (“Born digital writings—Subseries 8.7, 1988-2003).  [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A bold and powerful, conceptually revisionary strategem that gives me pause in this assessment is due to Anil Gupta’s recent work—see his *Conscious Experience* [Harvard University Press, 2019]. He shows us how to think of experience as a nonconceptual force that is articulated by the transformations of conceptual commitments it occasions. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism” Revue Internationale de Philosophie 53:1 (207) (1999): 7– 20, and In John R. Shook & Joseph Margolis (eds.), *A Companion to Pragmatism*. Blackwell. pp. 257-266 (2006) (My page references are to this version.) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Take Care of Freedom and the Truth will Take Care of Itself: Interviews with Richard Rorty* [Stanford University Press, 2005]. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Social Contract*, Book I, section 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In P. Feyerabend and G. Maxwell (eds.) *Mind, Matter, and Method* [University of Minnesota Press, 1966] pp. 92-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In “Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories” of 1965 and “Incorrigibility, the Mark of the Mental” of 1970. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism” p. 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. “Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism” p. 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism” p. 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Cf. “Heidegger’s Categories in *Being and Time,*” Chapter 10 of *Tales of the Mighty Dead* [Harvard University Press, 2002]. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The story I tell here about Hegel’s conception of recollective rationality is developed in much greater detail in my book *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology* [Harvard University Press, 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “[L]'obéissance à la loi qu'on s'est prescrite est liberté.” *Social Contract*  I.viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Kant does, of course, acknowledge commitments whose bindingness is *not* up to us in this sense. But these are *categoreal* commitments, in the sense of commitments that are implicit in adopting any discursive attitudes at all. These are optional and attitude-dependent only in a thin and very different sense. As Sellars says: “Of course, one could simply not speak—but only at the cost of having nothing to say.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. [*PG* 652] and *PG* [666]. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *PI* §258. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Locus classicus* is, of course, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In a sense Hegel develops from J. G. Herder’s: “The mere narrator is an annalist, a writer of memoirs, of newspapers; the reasoner about the individual narration is a historical rationalizer; but the man who orders many occurrences into a plan, into a vision—he is…the true historical artist…he is the creator of a *history*.” “Older Critical Forestlets” in *Herder: Philosophical Writings* Michael N. Forster ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding” V. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [Oxford, Clarendon 1959], p. 366. A. Wierzbicka has a fascinating discussion of the cultural resonance and significance of Locke’s concern, in Chapter 2 of *English: Meaning and Culture* [Oxford, 2006]. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)