

Handout for Week 7

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas*, and Lovejoy's *The Great Chain Being* gave me a taste for ambitious, swooshy, *Geistesgeschichte* 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].

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But that book is now out of date.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." [ibid. 13]

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. [PAA 257]

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. [PAA 258]

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**. [PAA 257]

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.

[Eduardo Mendieta, p. xvii in his Introduction to *Take Care of Freedom and the Truth will Take Care of Itself: Interviews with Richard Rorty* [Stanford University Press, 2005].]

[P]recisely because of his **historicism**, Dewey was, I believe, the classical pragmatist whose work will have the greatest utility in the long term. [PAA 260]

This is **because [Dewey] 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. [PAA 262]

Representationalism and the Antiauthoritarian Argument Against it:

The target notion of representationalism is what I have called "*declarativist descriptivism*," a kind of *global* representationalism.

Declarativism insists on giving a *uniform* semantic account of all declarative sentences: not just "the frog is on the log," but "triangularity is a property," "patience is a virtue," "being a mammal entails being a vertebrate," "the word 'red' refers to a color," and "I believe in miracles."

Descriptivism then maintains that that uniform semantic account is a representational, descriptive one, the model of which *is* "the frog is on the log."

[I am here bracketing the quibbles about "representationalism" being broader than "descriptivism," because description usually excludes demonstratives, indexicals, and anaphors.]

Rorty's argument starts with

- a) Social pragmatism about normativity. This is the claim that all normative statuses (such as authority and responsibility) are ultimately *social* statuses, conferred by the role something plays in social practices.

This premise is then combined with

- b) The Kantian understanding of representation as a fundamentally *normative* concept, articulating a distinctive kind of *authority* that *representeds* have over *representings*, which count as *representings* of those *representeds* just insofar as they are *responsible* to those *representeds*, which supply a standard of success or correctness governing normative assessments of the *representings as representings*.

To get the full antiauthoritarian argument however, Rorty needs something stronger than just the social pragmatism about normativity in (a). He takes it that a *consequence* of that thesis is:

- c) nothing *nonhuman* can exercise authority over us, that we cannot be responsible to any nonhuman authority.

The justification for (c), I take it, is

- d) 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.

This a new principle, which builds on but goes beyond social pragmatism about normative statuses. Its slogan is “**No authority without correlative responsibility.**”

There is *something* right about this line of thought.

But even if it is correct for the most fundamental type of normative status, being one of *us*, a discursive practitioner, a *self* (what Hegel will take to be instituted by practical attitudes of *reciprocal recognition*), it does not rule out the intelligibility of *derivative* normative statuses, that are parasitic on the more basic kind.

Consider *omens and oracles* as examples where the community has invested normative significance in things that can’t give and ask for reasons.

This raises a question of *social engineering*: Can we describe practices in which communities *confer* authority over the correctness of their claimings on what they thereby count as talking *about* (representing, describing)?

Social-perspectival resources for a pragmatist account of representation:

A Social Route from Reasoning to Representing

1. In ordinary language we distinguish between:
 - a) what is *said* or thought, and
 - b) what it is said or thought *of* or *about*.
2. Assessment of what people are talking and thinking *about*, rather than what they are saying about it, is a feature of the essentially *social* context of *communication*.
3. For it to be *knowledge* that a scorekeeper takes another to have, that scorekeeper must adopt three sorts of practical attitude:
 - First, the scorekeeper must *attribute* an inferentially articulated, hence propositionally contentful *commitment*. This corresponds to the *belief* condition on knowledge.
 - Second, the scorekeeper must *attribute* a sort of inferential *entitlement* to that commitment. This corresponds to the *justification* condition on knowledge.
 - Third, the scorekeeper must *undertake* the same commitment attributed to the candidate knower. This corresponds to the *truth* condition on knowledge.
4. **The primary explicitly representational locution of natural languages is *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitudes.**
5. Ascriptions *de dicto* attribute belief in a *dictum* or saying, while ascriptions *de re* attribute belief about some *res* or thing.
6. An example with tense:
Two readings of *The President of the United States will be a woman by the year 2024*.
7. Ambiguous: *Henry Adams believed the popularizer of the lightning rod did not popularize the lightning rod.*
8. De Dicto: *Henry Adams believed **that** the popularizer of the lightning rod did not popularize the lightning rod.*
9. De Re: *Henry Adams believed **of** the popularizer of the lightning rod **that** he did not popularize the lightning rod.*
10. It is *de re* propositional attitude ascribing locutions that we use in everyday life to express what we are talking and thinking *of* or *about*.
11. In asserting an ascriptional claim of the form
S believes (or is committed to the claim) that $\Phi(t)$,
one is doing two things, adopting two different sorts of deontic attitude:
 - a) one is *attributing* one doxastic commitment, to $\Phi(t)$, and
 - b) one is *undertaking* another, namely a commitment to the ascription.
12. The distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* should not be understood to distinguish two kinds of *belief* or belief-contents, but two kinds of *ascription*—in particular two different *styles* in which the *content* of the commitment ascribed can be *specified*.
13. Prosecutor: *The defense attorney believes a pathological liar is a trustworthy witness.*

14. Defense attorney: *Not so. What I believe is that the man who just testified is a trustworthy witness.*
15. Prosecutor: *Exactly, and I have presented evidence that ought to convince anyone that the man who just testified is a pathological liar.*
16. De Re: *The defense attorney claims **of** a pathological liar that he is a trustworthy witness.*
17. **The expressive function of *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitude is to make explicit which aspects of what is said express commitments that are being *attributed* and which express commitments that are *undertaken*.**
18. What is made explicit by *de re* specifications of the contents of the beliefs of others is an essential element of *communication*.
19. De Dicto: *He believes malaria can be prevented by drinking the liquor distilled from the bark of that kind of tree.*
20. De Re: *He believes of quinine that malaria can be prevented by drinking it,*
21. *It is true that Benjamin Franklin invented bifocals,*
22. De Re: *It is true **of** the popularizer of the lightning rod that he invented bifocals.*
23. **The representational dimension of propositional contents reflects the social structure of their *inferential* articulation in the game of giving and asking for reasons.**

Historical-perspectival resources for a pragmatist account of representation:

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*...

The form of this retrospective understanding of historical beings as having histories rather than natures is Hegelian *recollection* [Erinnerung]...

Hegel's original conception of a distinctive kind of recollective rationality is 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. [FAASE 33]

For Kant, 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....

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. [FAASE 35]

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.

[FAASE 37]

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...
- And Rorty and Hegel agree with the Kantian analysis of representational relations as fundamentally *normative* relations of authority and responsibility between representeds and representings. [FAASE 38]

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’.”

Alienation is losing our grip on the intelligibility of norms as genuinely, *rationally* binding on us, as a result of understanding them as instituted by our attitudes. [FAASE 40]

Alienation in this sense is pretty much what Rorty's *pragmatism* both endorses in theory and adopts in practice. [FAASE 41]

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. [FAASE 42]

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].

Recollection is a retrospective rational reconstruction that selects and assembles from the series 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. Recollection confers normative significance on the sequence of past attitudes (applications of concepts) by exhibiting it as having the distinctive norm-instituting cognitive 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. [FAASE 43]

A helpful model is provided by **the evolution of legal concepts in Anglo-American common law**. [FAASE 43]

...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....

To justify endorsing a new view as veridically representing how things 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. [FAASE 46-47]

This **recollective** story about the **representational dimension** of conceptual content offers 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. [FAASE 48-49]

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 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. [FAASE 52]

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. [FAASE 53-54]

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?

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**. [FAASE 55-56]