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Rorty: On Logic and Knowledge

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[doi: 10.48047/AFJBS.6.Si3.2024.5793-5811](https://doi.org/10.48047/AFJBS.6.Si3.2024.5793-5811)**Abstract:**

Robert Rorty's "The Pragmatist Progress" explores personal intellectual development through a quest romance, comparing it to John Bunyan's "The Pilgrims Progress." Rorty's intellectual journey is intellectually challenging, as he confronts inner demons and struggles with his sense of self. His works "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" and "Pragmatism, Relativism and Irrationalism" reflect his evolving understanding of the self and the role of reading in shaping one's identity. Rorty sought an expansive vision beyond modernists, prioritizing social and institutional mechanisms of justice. He re-evaluated the pragmatist tradition after reading G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past. His work emphasizes justice and socio-cultural responsibility, and his Presidential Address in (Placeholder1)1979 highlights the importance of pragmatism in the classical time. Rorty's work emphasizes open-ended and liberal descriptions and purposes in philosophical exploration, believing that there is no right language for human beings and that human purpose and languages change in tandem. He advocates for continuous exploration and viewing quest narratives as an exercise in futility, viewing understanding the human journey as a matter of form rather than questing.

Introduction:

Umberto Eco's Tanner Lectures addressed text-delimiting interpretation, and in his 1992 essay "The Pragmatist Progress," Rorty compared his own intellectual growth to a "quest romance" involving a chivalric gallant conquering challenges for love and glory. Rorty's work is a moral metaphor, resembling John Bunyan's The Pilgrims' Progress. Huckerby's analysis of Rorty's journey highlights its significance, stating that he was an innocent beginning of the journey, believing in the journey to finish, actions to take, qualities to gain, and the triumph of seeing the light.

Rorty's narrative diverges from the pilgrim's, as he faces challenges in exposing himself to new concepts, evaluating different perspectives, and understanding different vocabulary words. He

also learns to understand dualisms as metaphors for the contrast between an imagined state of power and one's own present impotence. After consulting Freud, Rorty rereads Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, arguing that the will to power is a sham used by males to intimidate females or children to get even with their parents. Huckerby comments that Rorty's irony is that he sees that we cannot hold onto foundationalism but faces it cheerfully.

Rorty's "inner demons" disguise themselves as Walter Mitty-like roles in world history, confusing and diverting him from his mission. Overcoming these challenges, Rorty transforms into a philosopher who sees pragmatism as anti-authority. He appraises his quest with heightened perception, gauging his changed nature. However, Huckerby warns that this observation should not be interpreted literally, as established institutional criteria, traditions, canons, language, and culture can influence a reader's program in various contexts, including the classroom and home.

Since he is inclined to reject the trip thus far and engage in re-defining his sense of self, this quest represents the time of reckoning. In order to have a better understanding and perspective, Rorty reframes the situation and changes his viewpoint on the intellectual obstacles he encountered. Rorty now considers the literary obstacles he encountered in the past to be "descriptions to be appraised according to their efficacy as instruments for purposes, rather than by their fidelity to the object described" (1992; 92). His perspective is that of someone who has been severely reprimanded. "Still 'capable,' but more modestly, of 'as many descriptions as there are purposes to be served' (ibid.) is how he sees himself. Even though he is now known as "the Pragmatist," he was formerly known as "Seeker after Enlightenment" (ibid.). His sense of self and his perception of the world have undergone profound and dramatic transformations recently. Huckerby traces the outline of Rorty's development:

The formative change thus lies in going from seeing oneself as a *hero*, someone inherently better than the rest, on a singular *quest* for the right description (for truth; absolute knowledge), to seeing oneself as one human agent amongst many on a journey into the unknown – and simultaneously as someone capable of coping, of creating tools in response to shifting needs along the way (2018; 26).

These two major currents characterise Rorty's thought. One is that Rorty has scaled back his self-importance and no longer sees himself as in perfect harmony with moral and ethical

principles. Second, by making him more self-aware of his reading and assimilation, these insights provide Rorty a better picture of his own strengths and areas for improvement. There is a heightened sense of obligation and duty that comes along with such a shift. Reading "Pragmatism, Relativism and Irrationalism" (1980) and "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" (1999) by Rorty makes this point very evident.

In order to demonstrate the usefulness and significance of hermeneutics, Rorty told the story of a pragmatist's journey. His works aimed to provide a hermeneutic "grid" that he viewed through the lens of story (1992; 91). This may be seen in Rorty's analysis of Umberto Eco's writings, which shed light on the shift in his thought process. In this context, "grid" refers to "the way the things hang together," as described by Sellars, or, as Huckerby puts it, "... grid... has a function much akin to Gadamerian pre-judgements or the scientist's hypothesis as she approaches raw data" (27). Reading Foucault's *Pendulum* (1988), Rorty says he described his own development. It's not easy to understand Eco's writings. The narrative of Foucault's *Pendulum* is multi-layered. There are various facets to it, including tales of hidden societies, conspiracies, and a search for the absolute truth. Some of the topics covered include philosophical concepts, semiotics, interpretation theory, and reading as an art form. In a postmodern context, Foucault's *Pendulum* has also been seen as a search for significance. Rorty made an effort to address all of these facets of Eco's work. As Rorty explains:

I decided that Eco must be satirizing the way in which scientists, scholars, critics and philosophers think of themselves as cracking codes, peeling away accidents to reveal essence, stripping away veils of appearance to reveal reality. I read the novel as anti-essentialist polemic, as a spoof of the metaphor of depth – of the notion that there are deep meanings hidden from the vulgar, meanings which only those lucky enough to have cracked a very difficult code can know (89).

According to Rorty, Foucault's *Pendulum* was a certain kind of structuralism: "... send-up of the very idea of structures which stand to texts or cultures as skeletons to bodies, programmes to computers, or keys to locks" (ibid.). Rorty concluded, over time, that Eco's writing is best understood via a pragmatic lens. The "pragmatist grid" he developed could not accommodate Eco's writings. That it would be a "imposition" was something else he came to terms with (ibid.). Adjusting his hermeneutic aim, he realised his theory was flawed. Therefore, according to Huckerby, "[Rorty's] grid was a temporary, open-ended, heuristic device for starting to think

about how things might hang together" (27). Though introspective, Rorty's analysis led to helpful comparisons that helped us understand the pivotal shift when the "Seeker after Enlightenment becomes the Pragmatist" (ibid.). A Theory of Semiotics by Eco was once seen as contradicted by Foucault's Pendulum. All the other codes might be cracked "to reveal the universal structure of structures" (Rorty 1992; 89) by deciphering the latter text. As Rorty put it, "that it stood to that earlier book as Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations to his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" (ibid.). Eco, according to Rorty, went through the same kind of "intellectual self-transformation" as he had. According to Rorty, there's a scene in the book where the protagonist takes a break from the other characters who are trying to decipher the code by finding the master code. Instead, he enjoys the sensations and experiences that come his way, like a child with juicy peaches. He says:

I read this passage as describing a moment like that when Prospero breaks his staff, or when Faust listens to Ariel and abandons the quest of Part I for the ironies of Part II. It reminded me of the moment when Wittgenstein realized that the important thing is to be able to stop doing philosophy when one wants to, and of the moment when Heidegger concluded that he must overcome all overcoming and leave metaphysics to itself (1992; 90-91).

To put it another way, Rorty was "able to call up a vision of the great magus of Bologna renouncing structuralism and abjuring taxonomy" (ibid.). Huckerby makes a useful observation in this regard:

Notice here one of Rorty's own small but effective literary moments when he, through casting Eco as 'the great magus' equates him, with dramatic flair, with Prospero, and conjures up some of the most powerful and theatrical scenes from Faust. Rorty's prose is littered with such moments, and their invariable effectiveness speak to his qualities as a storyteller (28).

Rorty keeps track of these illuminating times of metamorphosis. So long as Goethe and Shakespeare didn't study Nietzsche and Freud, Rorty's references to Will to Power have no bearing. Since Rorty makes such a big deal out of differentiating between text and context or life and work, he doesn't even bother to specify if the relevant work is poetry or prose. According to Rorty, any two materials may be compared side by side. Whether or not his story is plausible, convincing, or pertinent is another question; what matters is that he makes "things

hang together" by forcing it on everyone. For Rorty, the most important thing is that these stories and their peripeteia fit into his framework for documenting the evolution of pragmatism. After breaking the spell with his magical wand, Prospero gave up making illusions because he wanted the players to see reality. As the play comes to a close, Prospero begs for forgiveness for his previous display of arrogance. The only way for him to get out of this jam is to depend on other people's kindness, which he has now come to terms with. According to one interpretation of the play, Shakespeare's decision to leave the theatre is symbolic of Prospero's decision to give up magic. Shakespeare departs for Stratford, much as Prospero abandons his island. Additionally, Rorty incorporates similar facts. Part II of Faust finds Goethe renouncing his quest from Part I in favour of a complicated, sarcastic story that moves from an individual to a community level. From grand ambitions to the more mundane human endeavours that give one life, it all flows together. Acknowledging the importance of aesthetics, he abandons illusionist idealism. Instead of being studied for some hidden semantics, Goethe composed the second half of Faust to gratify the senses and "satisfy the eye" (Eckermann 2012; 344). Taken together, these examples suggest that the heroes' transformation into more level-headed and compassionate people occurred when they gave up on past objectives that had consumed them throughout certain points of transition. Huckerby has captured the essence of the benefit of such "transformation" in personas:

At all these junctures, illusions are dropped, and the central characters fall back on – or must reckon with – their humanity. These are *not* moments of *conversion*, *Kehres*, as there is no re-orientation towards another fixed goal, no taking up of a different quest; no (re)turning, no getting on the *right* path to Enlightenment. The Pragmatist does not adopt a new doctrine. All these moments represent a decision to surrender. They are moments of letting go of ideas or ideals that, until that moment, *did* govern, and thus freeing moments where letting go expands one's realm of possibilities. They represent a giving up of higher metaphysical art- and life-defining causes and giving oneself over to how things then, in their mere worldly humanity, are. They moreover represent overcoming as they are moments of acceptance of limitations, earthly pragmatism, *and* recognition of a new sense of autonomy (29).

A similar pattern can be observed in Rorty's "Trotzky and the Wild Orchids" (1999), in which the protagonist is enchanted by a vision that, just before a pivotal moment of change, turns out

to be an illusion. This is followed by a more recent surge of optimism, freedom, an autonomous cell, and an expansion of the domain of possibilities. The left-wing activist who raised Rorty was the man himself. He had the insight that "the point of being human was to spend one's life fighting social injustice" as early as the age of twelve (Gross 2008). Because of his parents' background, he was anxious that Trotsky would disapprove of his "private, weird, snobbish, incommunicable" tastes, which were unproductive in society and looked at odds with his aspirations for the future (1999; 06). He enrolled at Chicago University when he was fifteen years old in an effort to find a solution to the paradox of Trotsky and Orchids, or the challenge of balancing individual happiness with collective good. His words were:

I wanted to find some intellectual or aesthetic framework which would let me - in a thrilling phrase which I came across in Yeats – ‘hold reality and justice in a single vision’. By reality I meant more or less, the Wordsworthian moments in which, in the woods around Flatbrookville (and especially in the presence of certain coralroot orchids, and of the smaller yellow lady slipper), I had felt touched by something numinous, something of ineffable importance. By justice I meant what Norman Thomas and Trotsky both stood for, the liberation of the weak from the strong (1999; 07-08).

Rorty, a "Seeker after Enlightenment," returns to his roots and embarks on a path towards maturity and societal use. He read W. B. Yeats' *A Vision*, which introduced him to the supernatural worldview. Rorty misquoted the statement "they have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice" in his vision, replacing "single thought" with "one vision" to emphasize the ideas of reflecting and mirroring.

It was during the times of high modernism that reality and justice were in opposition in everyday life and poetry through its potential and power attempted to do justice. Yeats had married Georgie Hyde-Lees who could call spirits and she told the poet that spirit was fetching "metaphors for poetry" (Harper 1925; 08; also see Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism*, 2002, esp. ch. 05). Yeats was also led to believe that this cosmology aided in "stylistic arrangement of experience" (ibid. 25). Critics have opined that this was the manner in which his wife influenced Yeats to the more involved as husband and also think of the relevance and potential of her intellect. Yeats came to think that he was writing better poetry after his occult seasons with Hyde-Lees. Yeats said:

THE other day Lady Gregory said to me: "You are a much better educated man than you were ten years ago and much more powerful in argument". And I put *The Tower and The Winding Stair* into evidence to show that my poetry has gained in self-possession and power. I owe this change to an incredible experience.' The experience being his wife beginning to channel an 'unknown writer', 'so exciting, sometimes so profound' (Loc. cit.).

Modernist poets like Yeats and Ezra Pound believed that poetry could achieve higher things and convey the veracity and coherence of experience. Poems depicted the world's, nature's, and art world's complex semantics, elevating the mundane and embodied both the world as it is and the world as it ought to be. Rorty, an exception to this rule, believed that the aesthetic was the key to accessing reality, as he did not have an intricate parallel or link in mind when using the orchid idea in relation to Wordsworth's flower imagery and metaphors. In the context of modernists, justice signified a worldly, ideological, socialist program of liberation, with pacifism moderated by Trotskyism. Rorty sought simultaneous resolutions to these critical problems within a theoretical-philosophical framework, anticipating swift resolutions. Overall, modernists believed that poetry had the power to achieve higher things and convey complex meanings.

Rorty briefly turned to religion in an effort to find solutions to such problems. Despite his decision to follow Christ and put aside his "private obsessions" in order to serve humanity with "proper humility," the philosopher "fell back on absolutist philosophy," making him an even more valiant "Seeker after Enlightenment" (for more on this, see "The Pragmatist's Progress" 1992; 90). "Moral and philosophical absolutes sounded a bit like my beloved orchids - numinous, hard to find, known only to a chosen few" (Rorty 1999; 09) was his opinion when he was a young man. Rorty pondered the choice of profession:

if I became a philosopher I might get to the top of Plato's 'divided line' - the place 'beyond hypotheses' where the full sunshine of Truth irradiates the purified soul of the wise and good: an Elysian field dotted with immaterial orchids. It seemed obvious to me that getting to such a place was what everybody with any brains really wanted (*ibid.*).

Here we see Rorty, a man whose ambitions are unfulfilled, seeking a career path. He is a seeker, seeing the desired endpoint in order to reach that critical juncture of satisfaction. Rorty was

dissatisfied with absolutist philosophy since it seemed to lack any universal principles. "Philosophical talent" is "largely a matter of proliferating as many distinctions as were needed to wriggle out of a dialectical corner," according to Rortz, "but this does not make one either wise or virtuous" (Rorty 1999; 10), and the world is contingent, in his view. The bigger issue that emerges is the function and original intent of philosophy. Rorty found some answers to his broad inquiries when he started reading *Phenomenology of Spirit* by G. W. F. Hegel. His words were:

I read [it] as saying: granted that philosophy is just a matter of out-redescribing the last philosopher, the cunning of reason can make use even of this sort of competition. It can use it to weave the conceptual fabric of a freer, better, more just society. If philosophy can be, at best, only what Hegel called 'its time held in thought', still, that might be enough. For by thus holding one's time, one might do what Marx wanted done – change the world (1999; 11).

Reading Hegel's work taught Rorty that 'redescription' is the solution and may explain the mutability and changing of eras and epochs. For a long time after leaving Flatbrookville for Chicago, Rorty viewed *Phenomenology of Spirit* as humanity's crowning achievement, comparable to Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, which he praised: "the book which took the place of the wild orchids" (1999; 11). Rorty continued by praising Proust's accomplishment:

Proust's ability to weave intellectual and social snobbery together with the hawthorns around Combray, his grandmother's selfless love, Odette's orchidaceous embraces of Swann and Jupien's of Charlus, and with everything else he encountered – to give each of these its due without feeling the need to bundle them together with the help of a religious faith or a philosophical theory – seemed to me as astonishing as Hegel's ability to throw himself successively into empiricism, Greek tragedy, Stoicism, Christianity and Newtonian physics, and to emerge from each, ready and eager for something completely different (*ibid.*).

While it is true that Rorty had a greater grasp of Hegel's writings than Proust's, the more pressing issue is tracing Rorty's intellectual development (see Bowie 2000). When Rorty started reading Proust after reading Hegel, his perspective changed. Instead of thinking about the

eternal universal as Hegel did, he started thinking about the concrete and temporal experience of humans as succinctly expressed in Proust. In a short amount of time, Rorty realised that the ideas put out by Hegel and Proust could not be combined into a single theoretical framework that could do justice to their respective minds. Their "shared attention to the temporal and the particular and their display of a common spirit and skill" brought them together in Rorty's eyes, according to Hackerby (2018: 33). In his defence of the matter, Rorty does a respectable job. He states:

It was the cheerful commitment to irreducible temporality which Hegel and Proust shared – the specifically anti-Platonic element in their work - that seemed so wonderful. They both seemed able to weave everything they encountered into a narrative without asking that that narrative have a moral, and without asking how that narrative would appear under the aspect of eternity (Rorty 1999; 11).

According to what Rorty learned, "the appropriate response to disillusionment with Plato was Hegel's willingness to stop trying for eternity and just be the child of his time" (1999; 11-12). It may be stated that Rorty left the realm of illusion and entered the realm of irony when he realised he had to take Hegel's and Proust's replies. Here is how Huckerby has defined it:

as in *Faust* this moment of overcoming a naïve idealism required not only leaving it behind, but a turn towards the human world and earthly striving, a change that manifested in Rorty's re-evaluation of the pragmatist tradition (Huckerby 2018; 33).

Readings for Rorty grew more thorough, and he found it easier to sort:

Dewey now seemed to me a philosopher who had learned all that Hegel had to teach about how to eschew certainty and eternity, while immunizing himself against pantheism by taking Darwin seriously. This rediscovery of Dewey coincided with my first encounter with Derrida [which] led me back to Heidegger, and I was struck by the resemblances between Dewey's, Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's criticisms of Cartesianism. Suddenly things began to come together. ...The result of this small epiphany was a book called *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Rorty 1999; 12).

After making some insightful references to "Wordsworthian moments" previously, Rorty shifts his attention to Proust and supports Wordsworth's prelude concept of "spots of time," which is relevant to both works (see Trott 2006). Rorty could now see the interplay between Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Dewey's views. According to Huckerby, this was a pivotal moment: "he [Rorty] saw the anti-representationalist, anti-essentialist, historicist, nominalist argument he would articulate in PMN [Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature]." At that point, he fully embraced the pragmatic Rortian perspective" (34).

In "The Pragmatist's Progress," Rorty documented his subsequent actions; however, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" delves farther into his autobiography:

So I decided to write a book [*Contingency, irony, and solidarity*] about what intellectual life might be like if one could manage to give up the Platonic attempt to hold reality and justice in a single vision.

[It] argues that there is no need to weave one's personal equivalent of Trotsky and one's personal equivalent of my wild orchids together. Rather, one should try to abjure the temptation to tie in one's moral responsibilities to other people with one's relation to whatever idiosyncratic things or persons one loves with all one's heart and soul and mind... The two will, for some people, coincide... But they need not coincide, and one should not try too hard to make them do so. So, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre seemed to me right when he denounced Kant's self-deceptive quest for certainty, but wrong when he denounced Proust as a useless bourgeois wimp, a man whose life and writings

were equally irrelevant to the only thing that really mattered, the struggle to overthrow capitalism (1999; 12-13).

Rorty's "The Pragmatist's Progress" highlights the importance of detail in understanding the pragmatist's awakening. He acknowledges that personal preferences may differ from the general public, and that this doesn't mean we should shame or downgrade our uniqueness. He emphasizes the responsibility humans have to other living things, such as not bullying or overthrowing tyrants. Rorty also acknowledges that empathy doesn't mean we should fit sensitivity to others' suffering into a single account. Caring for others cannot be explained in a single way, and avoiding a "single vision" can help maintain a clear charitable focus. This

approach acknowledges that empathy and compassion are not confined to a single perspective and can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the world.

"Trotzky and the Wild Orchids" links "The Pragmatist's Progress" to Rorty's larger cultural narrative, which emphasises social and cultural responsibility and fairness. The intellectual and personal development of Rorty often coincide. Huckerby has documented a synopsis of it:

Briefly re-told, Rorty's story goes like this: Western intellectual culture was first under the spell of Platonism, of Ideas. Captivated by this picture, we simply kept on adding new metaphysical metaphors to fit within its frame – Cartesian dualism for instance. We kept working at replacing faulty universalising frameworks (Theories) with new ones we thought – now, finally – got it right. A shift in our collective mindset occurred in the wake of Kant formulating criteria for knowledge based on human reasoning, as it opened our minds to the idea that human thinking could replace theology – that we could become the adjudicators of knowledge (even while Kant might not have thought so). Hegel's historicism helped us see human ideas as manifestations of history rather than Reason. While the romantics retained a metaphysical outlook in their interpretation of Kant and Hegel – in their belief that human imagination and powers of expression would reveal profound truths – their insistence on the human perspective brought us one step closer to breaking free from the hold of teleological narratives altogether (2018; 35).

When "proto-pragmatists like Nietzsche self-consciously connected human thought to humanity's self-image by discussing what philosophy, human knowledge is or is not" (ibid. 36), it became a defining point in this broader personal story. Humans came to terms with their material humanity, apathy, and the contingency of the mutability record through Darwin's theory of evolution. Classical pragmatists subsequently illuminated the path. You may see traces of idealism and essentialism in today's philosophy. 'Textualism' after structuralist thought provides an example of this (Rorty, "Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism" 1981). The practical substitute is offered by Huckerby:

Only the combined efforts of writers like James and Dewey, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, but also Wittgenstein, Quine, Derrida, Sellars and Davidson can enable us to overcome it. Metaphysics has taken shelter in the idea of

language. Their shared antirepresentationalism and common focus on *language* helps us see that what we are doing when we use language is merely to write descriptions for varying purposes, narratives that make 'things', in that wide-ranging Sellarsian sense, 'hang together' (2018; 36).

A "literary culture" was adopted by the West, and Rorty's advancement is chronicled in the process. Thus, it follows a culture's maturation as it follows an individual's journey from a naive "self-perception" towards a "quest of absolutes, of Platonic ideas, Enlightenment, Rationality,... [and] Truth" that reaches a climax at the conclusion when the journey appears fruitless. Rather than their thoughts finding new meaning or a good conceptual schema, this occurred as a result of a shift in how they viewed descriptions, which was a result of and related to how they perceived themselves. A new narrative about self-awareness helped them to "know themselves." In "Philosophy as a Transitional Genre," Rorty emphasised "literary culture" and expressed this:

A way of getting Nietzsche, James, Wittgenstein, Derrida, Heidegger, and Dewey under the same antirepresentationalist tent, and a focus on the overlap between their views rather than on their disagreements, is pretty much all I have to offer. I want us to see all six of them as heralds of a new dawn – not just a new stage in the history of philosophy, but a new self-image for humanity. I think of them all as assisting in the takeover by what I call a 'literary culture,' a culture unlike anything that has existed in the past (2004; 04).

The concept of "the new dawn" and "the new self-image for humanity" refers to a time when people stop seeking truth and instead think like a Pragmatist. This transformation, marked by self-awareness and duty, is a watershed moment, as ideas from philosophers and intellectuals take root within the community, forming an essential part of cultural identity due to the common language developed through their expression.

Rorty's 1979 Presidential Address to the American Philosophical Association marked a significant moment in the development of pragmatism. The pragmatist tradition has used attitudes, consequences, and practices since its inception. James argued that pragmatism should be seen as an attitude of orientation, focusing on the last things, fruits, consequences, and facts. He connected pragmatism to the empiricist attitude, which he connected to the rationalist temper. James urged people to approach the world as an anti-sceptical scientist would, taking

the world at face value but leaving aspirations for final answers behind. Hilary Putnam, in his 1995 book *Pragmatism: An Open Question*, characterized American pragmatism as a combination of anti-scepticism and fallibilism.

To contrast with Rorty's position, James believed that pragmatism had a distinctive "method" to it. Following the results that a concept produces when it is implemented is how James defines his "method" for evaluating it. It is important to note that "the general triumph of that method would mean an enormous change in what I called... the 'temperament' of philosophy" (51). Both John Dewey and Charles Sanders Peirce share this fixation on "self-conception" and the need of inculcating an attitude (Madelrieux 2017). There was a school of American thinkers preoccupied with pragmatism, and Louis Menand examined their theories. This group of thinkers had a common "attitude towards" ideas and concepts, in his view. As Menand put it:

They all believed that ideas are not “out there” waiting to be discovered, but are tools... that people devise to cope with the world in which they find themselves. They believed that ideas are produced not by individuals, but by groups of individuals – that ideas are social. They believed that ideas do not develop according to some inner logic of their own, but are entirely dependent, like germs, on their human carriers and environment. And they believed that since ideas are provisional responses to particular and unreproducible circumstances, their survival depends not on their immutability but on their adaptability (2001; xi-xii).

Rather than just a change in attitude, early pragmatists witnessed a paradigm shift in human thought about perspectivation. The previously mentioned articles by Rorty demonstrate that his pragmatism is more than just a linguistic orientation; it goes beyond that to investigate the ramifications of this orientation in terms of ideas and language in relation to self-conception. There has to be a shift in temperament, accompanied by increased "self-consciousness," but also keeping in mind the ramifications for humans as a whole (see Rorty 1980). "Human nature" was not an idea that Rorty supported, even in other contexts. In "Pragmatism, Relativism and Irrationalism" (1980), Rorty has extensively explained his views on pragmatism. At the heart of Rorty's definition of pragmatism was the premise that "all starting point are contingent" (1980; 721). This was something that one had to decide for themselves. Throughout, this has been the central issue. Rorty offered three "brief sloganistic

characterizations of pragmatism" in his book "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism" (ibid.). Regarding "things like 'truth,' 'knowledge,' language,'morality,' and similar objects of philosophical theorising," Rorty stated: "My first characterization of pragmatism is that it is simply anti-essentialism applied to them" (ibid.). It should be recalled that Rorty advocated for "an anti-essentialist idea of literature," and the word "literature" might be used here as well. Instead of seeing concepts in a transcendental light, he framed pragmatism as an approach that investigates things from a pragmatic perspective. "Differences are made in terms of practice and consequences, not in terms of metaphysically determined (ontological) kinds" (1980; 723) is his second defining feature of pragmatism related to its definition. When asked about the relationship between the sciences, crafts, moral contemplation, and art, Rorty elaborates by saying: "James' dictum about truth, says that the vocabulary of practise [sic] is uneliminable" (ibid.). According to "The Pragmatist's Progress" (1992), their sole distinguishing feature is the role they play. For example, according to Rorty's "Non-reductive physicalism" (2012), 113, the pragmatic paradigm regards poetry and science similarly. That is to say, according to Rorty, there is nothing metaphysical in poetry or scientific literature. They were just man-made, in his view, and the only way they were unique was in the role they played in education. Here is Rorty's definition of pragmatism:

it is the doctrine that there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones – no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of the objects, or of mind, or of language, but only those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow-inquirers (1980; 726).

"Accepting the contingent character of starting points, and attempting to evade this contingency" is the central idea of Rorty's preferred explanation, which centres on "fundamental choice" (ibid.). Rorty seems to believe that there is a close relationship between the idea of language, being human, and language. Let Huckerby provide further details:

adopting a pragmatist attitude towards language and concepts is *simultaneously* to orientate ourselves towards other human beings. If their remarks are our only source of guidance, we must pay careful attention to what they say (2018; 39).

Rorty didn't label James and Proust as "egotism" until his 2010 book "Redemption from Egotism: James and Proust as Spiritual Exercises" (394). He said that egotism is bad since it's sole purpose is to make you happy. Furthermore, Rorty states:

[e]gotists who are inclined to philosophize hope to short-circuit the need to find out what is on the mind of other people. They would like to go straight to the way things are (to the will of God, or the moral law, or the nature of human beings) without passing through other peoples' self-descriptions (*ibid.* 395).

A "humanistic" reality, according to Rorty, is one that is not egotistical and is thus open to the desires and needs of other people. He comes to this conclusion once he settles on the fundamental idea that everything in the universe is subject to random chance. The pivotal point in "The Pragmatist's Progress" (1992) and "Trosky and the Wild Orchids" (1999) is based on this concept, as does his overarching storyline on evaluation of Western culture. At the same iconic moment, our liberal hero uses irony to realise he must remain firm for his beliefs. In his 2006 book "The Politics of the Novel" (p. 64), Voparil delves into the topic of "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism" and examines its significance.

Pragmatists work together towards a common objective, but they often remind their interlocutor of their position and shared starting points. This "fundamental choice" that all things and hierarchies are subject to change is what brings down and levels the world's highs. According to Huckerby, descriptions, texts, and poems all appear as material "things" that help interpret and make sense of our experiences, forming narratives that help us cope. This approach helps us understand and navigate the world's highs and lows.

According to Rorty's "Intellectual Autobiography" (2010), there is an urgent need to choose between many descriptions and liberal, open-ended goals. He states:

The point of these new suggestions... is to twist the kaleidoscope in such a way that what looked to past thinkers like "hard, first-order, philosophical problems" simply vanish from view. There is no right way in which the bits of glass in the kaleidoscope should be arranged, because there is no right language for human beings to speak. There are only languages that serve some human purpose better than others. Human purposes and human languages change in tandem with each other.

...A consistently historicist view would envisage intellectual and moral progress not as getting closer to anything but as the process by which the kaleidoscope keeps getting bigger and more colorful. To hope that such progress will continue

is to hope that the human imagination will keep inserting new bits of glass, of previously undreamt-of hues. Goethe was right when he said that we live our life in colored reflections. That is not, as Plato thought, our misfortune. It is our glory (22-23).

Conclusion:

Rorty's writings, reminiscent of the *Kunstler Roman* style, advocate for the renunciation of quests and crusades. They depict his intellectual maturation, expanding understanding of his role as a philosopher, and the transformation of European society into a literary one. The protagonists' quest tales take the form of quests, with events shaping their understanding gradually. Rorty realizes that questing is pointless as it leads to clarity rather than truth. He suspects that a search may not necessarily lead to moral and intellectual growth, and that one must come to terms with the fact that a pragmatist is an autonomous, exploring Wanderer.

Rorty advocates for an expansionary process characterized by continuous exploration, viewing past actions as a "narrative grid" and expecting reflection on the journey. He rejects teleological questing and its associated narratives, viewing them as moral and historical advancements for mankind. He believes that the drama of an individual's life or the history of humanity is not one where a preexistent goal is triumphantly reached or tragically not reached. Rorty's rejection of questing as narrative may have been more clearly expressed in his works *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*.

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