

DISCUSIONES

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COMMENT ON RORTY

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Rorty's interesting two-part paper raises questions about indeterminacy of intentional attributions in its first part, and a clutch of questions about the systematic study of meaning and the value of truth in its second.

In the first part Davidson is approached via what Rorty thinks should be a disagreement (but is disappointed to find that it is not) between Davidson and Quine on the question of indeterminacy. The disagreement apparently should be over whether there is any genuine difference on the matter of indeterminacy between empirical theories, or "systems of the world" as Quine calls them, on the one hand and theories (or "manuals") of meaning and belief on the other. Quine has often spoken of such a difference, saying that only when it comes to the latter is there no fact of the matter, and Rorty finds this inconsistent with Quine's own well-known holistic attack on certain familiar dualisms in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". And since Davidson has been much more rigorous in insisting on and applying the holism, Rorty is initially disappointed to see that Davidson has not kept an appropriate distance from this, as he sees it, dubious differential use of the idea of "facts of the matter".

After this initial disappointment, in an effort at sympathetic interpretation, invoking an interesting-sounding paper by Bjorn Ramberg (which I haven't seen), he gives an interpretative gloss on what he thinks Davidson must have in mind when he seems to be following Quine here, and the interpretation relies on Davidson's own doctrine that intentional states are governed by normative principles.

In response, it would be hard to deny that this latter doctrine has something to do with what Davidson says about indeterminacy of the mental. After all it is a doctrine about what constitutes the mental. The question is how *directly* does it have to do with it, and whether there is not a more straightforward way of explaining the points of agreement between Quine and Davidson, an explanation which should preempt the disappointment Rorty feels with Davidson in the first place for registering this agreement, and which leads him therefore to seek his *other* interpretation.

I should at the outset say as a perfectly general point that it is impossible to study the developing relations between Quine's and Davidson's views over the years without noticing that Quine is sometimes almost amnesiac about his own changes of mind on various details. He will in one paper come around to a view Davidson has pressed on him and then in a remark in some subsequent paper write as if that had never happened. So in my attempt to persuade Rorty that Quine and Davidson can be seen to be in an agreement which is less puzzling in the first place than he seems to allow, I will simply have to focus selectively on one half of what often seem to be inconsistent remarks in Quine's writings. It is entirely possible that Rorty is more puzzled than I am because he has been focusing on the other half of those inconsistent remarks.

In the paper, Quine's view that indeterminacy in the realm of intentionality is over and above the underdetermination of physical theory, is presented as carrying a prejudice against the intentional. Rorty says it is a way of denying factuality to the intentional, and is a consequence of Quine's interest in reducing, a) the mental idiom to the physical idiom, and b) the non-extensional idiom to an extensional one. He of course knows well that Davidson does not have the reductionist interest, and he hopes also that Davidson has cast off the interest he avowed in his early papers in seeking regimentation into extensional idioms.

I won't say much about Davidson's interest in extensionality. It seems to me that that interest is entirely in the service of accommodating sentences *attributing* intentionality within the goal of providing a Tarski-style truth-theory of meaning for a language. Rorty may not share that goal with Davidson but whether he does or not, the issue has no relevance at all for whether Davidson has a prejudice against the intentional itself or against the factuality of intentional attributions. It is perfectly possible to have the goal of seeking extensional regimentation for sentences *attributing* intentionality without betraying any hostility whatsoever to the intentional nor any hostility to the factuality of intentional attributions.

However the real question is about the difference between Quine and Davidson on the reduction of the intentional idiom to a physical one. Rorty thinks that this reductionist prejudice underlies Quine's differentiating between indeterminacy of intentional attributions from the indeterminacy of the attributions of physical theories. But let me quote a passage from Quine's essay "Facts of the Matter".¹ He sums up a doctrine he discusses over many pages in

¹ In W.V.O. Quine, *Theories and Things*, Harvard University Press, 1981.

the following conclusion: “Where positions and states of bodies do not matter, there is no fact of the matter.” And then he says this:

This is not a reductionist doctrine of the sort sometimes imagined. It is not a utopian dream of our being able to specify all mental events in physiological or microbiological terms. It is not a claim that such correlations even exist, in general, to be discovered; the groupings of events in mentalistic terms need not stand in any systematic relation to biological groupings.

So we may ask, what could Quine possibly have in mind when he says “where positions and states of bodies do not matter there is no fact of the matter”. What manner of privileging the physical is this, if it is not a physicalist reduction of the mental? Quine himself gives the answer:

What it does say about the life of the mind is that there is no mental difference without a physical difference. Most of us nowadays are so ready to agree with this principle that we fail to sense its magnitude. It is a way of saying that the fundamental objects are the physical objects.

But the sense in which they are fundamental now seems much less like a reductionist prejudice than Rorty presents it for these words which I have quoted could easily be words that Davidson, whom Rorty salutes on this issue of the relation between mind and body, might have written. The sense in which indeterminacy of translation is over and above the underdetermination of physical theory is that, even if we supposed that we have uniquely right all the attributions of elementary physical states to space-time regions, they could not distinguish which one of two underdetermined translation manuals was the right one. This underdetermination, this compatibility of underdetermined

translation manuals with the very same fulfillment of elementary physical states by regions of space-time, Quine calls indeterminacy of translation. It implies no reduction of the intentional to the physical whatever. In fact, if one threw in what Davidson calls token-token identity, it allows as a quite *non-hubristic* goal of the scientific study of physical nature that it seek maximum comprehensives over all the objects and events that there are, without on the one hand making intentional states dispensable, nor on the other hand making them mysteriously autonomous from those objects and events.

In a more recent innovative move, Davidson has made this Davidsonian point in Quine about indeterminacy from a slightly different angle. He points out that if we follow through Quine's ideas that meanings and propositions are not hypostasized entities, then the objects of our intentional states are not in any real sense objects at all, not even psychological objects. Whatever it is that is involved in the specification of intentional states therefore is not the attribution of any kind of objects. Thus the contents of our intentional states are simply not entities like cities and stars, nor even like electrons, genes, etc. They are not objects at all. So when there are two empirically equivalent attributions of intentional states to someone there should be no temptation to say that there are two different sets of objects being attributed. This again allows for the Quinean claim that indeterminacy in translation is different from underdetermination in physical theory, on the assumption of course that we accept the Quinean premise that there *is* such a thing as the latter. No different and conflicting ontological claims are being made in different translation manuals, nothing therefore prevents both manuals being compatible, despite the divergent attributions, and to make this point Davidson has made familiar the analogy here

with assignment of temperature in accord with different scales to track the weather.

Now of course there is a question whether the Quinean background premise or assumption should be granted, that is whether there can be underdetermination of *physical* theory, as he understands it.² I think there is a serious question whether the idea of such underdetermination, of what he calls two incompatible but empirically equivalent “systems of the world” does not slide (as Quine himself admits)³ into a familiar conceptual relativism, against the coherence of which Davidson has famously argued.⁴ But even suppose that there is no convincing argument against such relativism. It would still not show that the two systems are *incompatible* for after all if such relativism is true, if these two systems of the world are genuinely incommensurate, then they lack a common comparable subject matter and both are about different sets of objects, so they can both be respectively true of those objects. Hence there is still no incompatibility. But notice that this way of rejecting the very idea of underdetermination of physical theory, as Quine envisages it, does not spoil the claim that indeterminacy of translation is something *other* than underdetermination of physical theory, *if the latter existed*. It is true that one

² Of course, the thesis of the underdetermination of theory would be uncontroversially granted by every one if it was not made clear that what is intended by the phenomenon is underdetermination by *all possible* evidence. If it was not all possible evidence that was intended, then presumably underdetermination simply follows from the fact that there is a difference between theory and evidence of the kind there is. Quine is absolutely clear that he has in mind “all possible evidence”, and that is what makes the thesis of underdetermination thesis an interesting and controversial one.

³ The admission of such a slide is in his “Empirically Equivalent Systems of the World”, *Erkenntniss*, 1975.

⁴ See his “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme”, in *Essays on Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, 1983.

might find underdetermination of *physical* theory as Quine describes it dubious because one finds the relativist idea of there being *incompatible* but empirically equivalent systems of the world dubious. And it is true that if Davidson is right one also finds dubious the idea that indeterminacy of *translation or meaning* involves *incompatible* translation manuals. But the reasons for being dubious about the incompatibility in the two cases are quite different. In the case of meaning and intentionality the point follows not from questions about conceptual relativism of the sort I've just raised but more immediately because of the fact that there are no such things as meanings and psychological objects of intentional states.

I have made two interpretative points that seem to be at odds with Rorty's understanding of both Quine and Davidson, and which make it unnecessary to invoke in any direct way his remarks about normativity to explain Quine and Davidson's agreement on these issues.

First, that Quine despite his naturalistic rhetorical flourishes, does not have in mind any *reductionist* physicalist prejudice toward intentionality nor even an eliminativist one, when he claimed that there is no fact of the matter about intentional attributions, and therefore that Davidson's agreement with him on this issue cannot seem even an initially puzzling thing, not even a *prima facie* backsliding from his own anti-reductionism and his own rigorous holism.

And second that Davidson's rejection of the widespread idea that there are psychological objects of intentional attitudes carries with it a plausible diagnosis of why one can indeed rightly say that there are no facts of the matter regarding intentional attributions which would in principle settle any indeterminacy in such attributions. If one keeps in mind that *this* (i.e., the denial of objects of thought) is what underlies the significance of the phrase "there is no

fact of the matter”, there is no temptation at all to say that the phrase (despite superficial verbal appearances)⁵ denies *factuality* to intentional attributions. Such attributions are truth value bearing and are often true, though sometimes of course false. Its just that when they are true they don’t attribute any psychological objects to speakers and believers. To think that they can’t bear a truth value just because they don’t attribute objects is a sheer prejudice. It is a prejudice, by the way, which casts the question of realism versus anti-realism about the mind in a very distorting light because *both* parties to the dispute share the prejudice and occupy different sides, the one (anti-realist) claiming that if there are no objects then there is no truth-value bearingness to the statements ascribing mental states, and the other (realist) claiming that there is truth value bearingness only because there are objects.⁶ It is not surprising then that Davidson, in rejecting the prejudice, rejects both realism and anti-realism in these standard debates.⁷

In the second part of his paper, Rorty singles out that aspect of Davidson’s work which flowers in his essay “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”⁸ as being what is most conge-

⁵ The phrase ‘there are no objects of the matter’ does not have quite the right ring to it. But in any case quite apart from trying to capture the idea in a comparable phrase, the idea of the relevance of the denial of objects of thought to the question of indeterminacy should be quite clear.

⁶ I take truth-bearingness of the sentences reporting states of mind to be the relevant sign of realist doctrine.

⁷ Actually Davidson rejects the standard debates about realism and anti-realism on quite different grounds, and when he rejects them he does not have in mind the debate as it applies to the question of mental states. But all the same, what I have said above should give him the particular reason he needs to reject the debate in the particular case of mental states.

⁸ The admission to such a slide is in his “Empirically Equivalent Systems of the World”, *Erkenntnis*, 1975.

nial to pragmatists and followers of Wittgenstein such as himself. But then he also says that for the very same reason it also puts into doubt the worthwhileness of another aspect of Davidson's philosophy of language: its commitment to system in the philosophical study of meaning and to representing that system in the format of a Tarski-style theory of truth. He says that knowing a language is a form of know-how, more like knowing how to ride a bicycle, and knowing a language need not therefore be thought of as being captured in the sort of format this latter aspect of Davidson's work requires.

The general question of what sort of knowledge a theory of meaning captures and whether or not there is a need for a systematic theory of meaning along Tarskian lines are questions too large for a short comment to address. But since the subject of Rorty's paper is Davidson, I do want to raise a modest interpretative question internal to Rorty's understanding of Davidson on these subjects. As he understands and presents him, Rorty's claim is that the salutary aspects of Davidson as they emerge in his relatively late paper "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" can do something to spoil his earlier commitments to a systematic Tarski-style truth-theory of meaning. Now, whatever one may think in general of the need for such a systematic theory, I should like to claim that it is a misunderstanding of what is genuinely salutary in that paper, to think that it in anyway touches or could touch his earlier commitment to such a systematic theory of meaning. If one, reading the earlier papers embraced Davidson's commitments there to such a systematic theory, then I think nothing in the paper on malaprops does or can do anything to make us abandon them.

Rorty invokes Wittgenstein and the ideal of meaning as use, and of philosophy as therapy, as ideals with which Davidson is sympathetic, but not sympathetic enough be-

cause of the commitment to Tarski and to system. As he says:

What we should ask does a theory of meaning get us? Why should we not just do what Wittgensteinians did —distinguish between uses of linguistic expressions when needed for the therapeutic treatment of philosophical complaints?

It is true of course that the slogan “meaning is use” can certainly be (and has been) taken to stand in contrast to a theory of meaning. How? Because a theory of meaning explicitly makes a distinction between sentence-meaning and literal meaning on the one hand and on the other the *uses* to which sentences can be put in our utterances and which require interpretation other than that offered strictly by the theory of meaning itself. One way of interpreting the slogan “meaning is use” is to say that interpretation of the uses to which one puts one’s sentences is the only thing that is worth worrying about in the study of meaning, and there is no point to positing and then systematically theorizing about an abstracted core called *sentence-meaning*. Davidson’s idea of a theory of meaning (and in this he is joined by many others, including Dummett, for instance) is to say by contrast that sentence-meaning is essential to the understanding of language, and, because of a number of familiar arguments due to Chomsky and to Davidson himself having to do with learnability and the possibility of understanding novel sentences, sentence-meaning must be seen as having the properties of compositionality and generativity, properties which it is the point of Tarski-style theories to systematically model. So to deny the value of system as Rorty does is necessarily to deny the centrality of *sentence-meaning*. And I assume Rorty’s bringing on to centre-stage Davidson’s discussion of malaprops where he denies that there are any conventions for meaning is

because he thinks that it also provides a basis for *removing* from centre-stage the notion of sentence-meaning, the notion which is the focus of Davidson's systematic aspirations. But can this be right?

What is sentence-meaning? I have said it is an abstracted core from the various uses to which sentences can be put. Intuitively it is best conveyed by examples. Someone says "The train is about to leave". That is, she utters that sentence. By making that utterance she *uses* that sentence to convey to her friend who is, say, wandering around the station that she should hurry and board the train. But the sentence she utters does not, not even in her mouth on that occasion, mean that she should hurry and get on the train. It means only that the train is about to leave. As Davidson conceives of this latter, it is the sentence's truth condition and it is specified in a theorem delivered by a Tarskian truth-theory. Someone else says "Man is a wolf". That is, he utters that sentence. By making that utterance he uses that sentence to convey to his audience that human beings tend to be competitive. But the sentence does not mean that human beings are competitive. Once again it means what is specified by its truth conditions, i.e., that men are wolves, a condition that happens not to obtain. In fact it so manifestly happens not to obtain that the audience is bound to think of anyone who utters it that he cannot be such a manifest zoological idiot, and so it tips the audience to look for a more interesting use to which the speaker must be putting the sentence with that meaning. In these cases of indirect speech act and metaphor, sentences are put to certain uses but their meaning (their *sentence-meaning*) is not their use, even though it is exploited for their use. I have called it an abstracted core from use because the radical interpreter no doubt constantly encounters such things as indirect speech acts and metaphors and a whole host of such uses but manages somehow to abstract from the uses

a core of sentence-meanings that are derived from word-meanings among other things. How she does it of course is a story that Davidson has told often and with increasing refinement over the years.

Why we need this core of sentence-meaning and what system-inducing properties it has is, as I said, the product of certain arguments due to Davidson and Chomsky. I am not going to either rehearse them or to defend their conclusion. I only want to show that nothing that Davidson says in “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs” can offend their conclusion about the need for sentence-meaning.

For reasons I won't elaborate, let's work with the example of a slip of the tongue rather than a malaprop. Someone utters the sentence “I'm going towndown”. It is Davidson's point that interpreters adapt, in this case by adding to, their prior theories of meaning to produce a passing theory of meaning when they encounter utterances such as this. The passing theory assigns the truth-condition (that I'm going *downtown*) to the sentence. The point of this claim is to deny that meaning is governed by rules or conventions or norms. No norm or convention of meaning is violated here. It is true that a word that no one, not even the speaker, generally uses has been uttered. But it and the sentence in which it occurs nevertheless has the constructed core of meaning we call literal and sentence-meaning. “Towndown” means downtown. The passing theory specifies that. So also, in the eponymous malaprop, “derangement” means arrangement. And it is wrong to think that this in anyway implies that the norm or linguistic convention for “derangement” is being violated, because there is no such norm or convention. It is part of the point of saying that the interpreter has assigned a new literal and sentence meaning to the sentence on the speaker's lips with his passing theory, that there cannot be such norms or conventions to violate.

Rorty nowhere disapproves of the idea of a passing theory but seems to want to draw the wrong conclusion from it when he says that the notion of a passing theory coping in these ways with such idiosyncratic cases of speech, approximates Wittgenstein's slogan that meaning is use, and so marks its distance from the systematic side of Davidson's work. It could only do so if it cast aside the system-inducing notion of sentence-meaning. But it does not. The passing theory assigns *sentence*-meanings. One can see why one might be misled into thinking otherwise. The reasoning by which one is misled might go something like this. One might think that in the case of indirect speech acts and metaphors which I mentioned earlier, the use to which the sentence is put is quite other than the sentence and literal meaning. One can then think that that use cannot be tracked systematically in a theory. One might think that Wittgenstein taught us to stick with use and not philosophize about meaning. Transferring this ideological train of thought onto the case of slips of tongues and malaprops one might then think that the uttered sentences with the words "derangement" and "takedown" have their sentence-meanings given by the prior theories (or in the latter case no meaning at all in the prior theory) but the *passing* theory ignores these and gets directly to their uses and therefore is not a theory of sentence-meaning at all. And so finally one applauds Davidson for having, in an inspired fit of Wittgensteinian defection from his earlier views, thought of this idea of a passing theory of meaning as one addressing *use*, *not sentence*-meaning.

But things are not like that. In the case of malaprops and slips of the tongue (*unlike* indirect speech acts and metaphors), the speakers are *not* exploiting sentence-meaning to convey something different. Rather, their words just do not have the usual sentence-meanings captured in the *prior* theory for them. So the passing theories when it of-

fers a verdict on indirect speech acts and metaphors coincides entirely with the prior theory and its verdict is about what the sentence-meaning is. For malaprops and slips of tongues the passing theories do not coincide with the prior theories but are modifications of them; however one should not be misled by the fact that there are modifications. The crucial point is that they are modifications nor from sentence-meaning to use, but from one sentence-meaning to another. Davidson cannot possibly be seen as giving up an interest in sentence meaning for a direct interest in use because he insists on these modifications. Rather, he is only tracking a difference between the inherent nature of malaprops and slips of the tongue on the one hand and of indirect speech acts and metaphors on the other. Therefore passing theories fully respect the need for systematically deriving their theorems from their axioms however innovative they might have to be to the context of the particular case. So though anyone has a right to forswear interest in a systematic theory of meaning in the name of Wittgenstein and therapy, the point is that nothing in the notion of passing theories to interpret malaprops can give such a person any reason to do so.

There is an irony in this point for contemporary philosophers wrestling with the task of interpreting Wittgenstein. Rorty says that Davidson should come around more wholeheartedly to meaning as use, and to Wittgenstein the philosophical therapist who gets rid of complaints rather than construct systematic answers to them. But even if, as I say, Rorty does not have exactly right what Davidson does say about malaprops, what Davidson does say goes against a very current and widespread reading of Wittgenstein, which sees Wittgenstein as establishing the normative aspect of meaning. Because meaning is supposed to be normative, Kripke and those who follow him claim that certain kinds of sceptical problems arise about meaning and

the following of the rules or norms that attach to meaning. Many philosophers have rejected Kripke's claim about there being a sceptical problem as being a misinterpretation of Wittgenstein. But they have not criticized the assumption that partly gave rise to the problem which is the assumption that meaning is normative.⁹ Davidson unlike Kripke and Kripke's many critics, does so. And if he is right, he shows that the entire discussion of rule-following in Wittgenstein, when applied to word-meaning,¹⁰ can be seen as just one more bit of unnecessary dust that philosophers are prone to raising, because there ought to be no compulsion to find rules and norms of word-meaning in the first place. This is an absolutely gorgeous example of philosophy as therapy. So it will perhaps give Rorty some ironic satisfaction that despite preserving the systematic study of meaning, Davidson provides therapy for the master of therapy himself.

Rorty ends his paper with some very interesting remarks about truth and its value. This is of course one of the great issues of philosophy, and as he says of human culture. I want to end by making two very small remarks about it which are quite compatible with Davidson's views but which address what Rorty describes as the pragmatist's angle on the subject, which he contrasts with Davidson's views.

Truth, Rorty says with Davidson, goes beyond justification because a belief or sentence can be justified to the fullest extent we are capable of and still not be true. This he calls "the cautionary use of truth" since it cautions inquir-

⁹ Of course denying that word-meanings, that is lexical items, involve this sort of normativity, does not at all mean that Davidson cannot say, as he clearly does say repeatedly, that intentionality is constituted by normativity. For more on this distinction, see Chapter 3 of my *Belief and Meaning*, Blackwell, 1992.

¹⁰ See previous footnote.

ers that their best justified beliefs might be false. And then he raises the question whether that notion of truth is more than notional in any inquiry that agents undertake. Isn't the inquirer simply seeking justification? Isn't it strange to say that the inquirer must seek something like truth over and above justification, even though we must admit that true belief is not the same as justified belief. This is a large and most interesting subject which it will not be possible to take up in a brief comment,¹¹ except for the following speck of a comment.

For the pragmatist (or at any rate the pragmatist who fully exploits her own dictum that "what makes a difference to inquiry is all that matters to epistemology"), as far as the inquirer is concerned, anything she fully believes, anything she has no serious doubt about, *is* something which is true. Beliefs in this sense, *from the first person (inquirer's) point of view*, are always true. But it is quite wrong to state this point by saying that this means that justification and truth coincide for the inquirer. The pragmatist's point is rather that from the first person point of view these are truths and there is no place for justification at all here. All that one needs justification for, from the inquirer's first person point of view, is whether (from the point of view of the *current* state of her inquiry, that is from the point of view of what she currently believes without doubt) she should in any way *change* those beliefs, giving incoming states of information that may raise some question about any particular belief or beliefs. Here she may justly wonder if it would be rational to change her beliefs or not, and to wonder that is to wonder if *changes* would be justified or not. But she does not need to seek any justification for

¹¹ I've discussed the issue at length in "Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry?", in Robert Brandom (ed.), *Rorty and his Critics*, Blackwell (forthcoming).

the beliefs she presently holds without doubt, and when a specific question of changing them has not arisen. From the first person point of view all full beliefs are true.

It is only from a third person perspective that one might raise the question about whether these beliefs held as certain are true, but that cannot be cautionary in the sense of being cautionary for the inquirer. The third person would have to do something more than point out in a general way to the inquirer that there is a logical possibility that the beliefs he is certain of, are false. He would have to open up his mind by saying something about this or that belief of which he is certain that there are specific reasons not to believe it. But that is not what Rorty's so-called cautionary aspect of truth specifies. That aspect is about a general logical possibility that *any* of our beliefs could be false. The inquirer may admit that it is logically possible that her belief or beliefs are false, but that does not make any difference to her inquiry. And for the pragmatist it is only what makes a difference to inquiry that makes a difference in epistemology. This is the pragmatist's way of opposing Descartes, and it is very different from the kind of anti-Cartesianism you find in many others, including Davidson. So granting the logical possibility of one's belief being false does not amount to being cautioned at all in one's inquiry. This is a point to be found very clearly in Austin and Wittgenstein as well as the pragmatists.

So the distinction between truth and justification for the pragmatist is quite different from how Rorty presents it. Because the pragmatist introduces inquiry as central, from the point of view that inquiry takes place, where the inquirer fully believes something (such as say the modern scientific inquirers belief that the earth is not flat, or my belief that I have a hand) there is no question of justification that even so much as arises, even though others might think (i.e., from the third person point of view) that

these beliefs are not or might not be true. This point is not best expressed, as Rorty does, by saying that from the point of view of the inquirer there is no real difference between truth and justification, or that the inquirer's goals are justification and not truth. The inquirer's goal is to relieve doubt about things that he does not fully believe (things like hypotheses, conjectures, supposals, etc., all of which are contrasted with full beliefs) but not to justify any beliefs that he might have without any serious doubt. So what pragmatism really does is not to engage in a debate about whether truth and justification are really or notionally distinct. It only asks us to change our focus to what the inquirer is engaged in in inquiry, and here it says justification is a notion that has point only when it comes to change of full belief, not to full belief itself. So despite Rorty's sympathy for pragmatism, it seems to me that his pragmatism does not fully take advantage of the central use that the notion of inquiry has for that doctrine. As a result, he still worries about the older forms of debate about truth versus justification, debates that should have no place, in fact which cannot even be sensibly formulated, in a fully pragmatist framework.

One last word about truth: about its value in our culture. Rorty is keen to downplay the value of truth by saying that truth is not a goal, nor is it a moral value or norm in the way that truth-telling is. But I think it is urgent, especially in the academy today, to say that it is, at least implicitly, something more. The sense in which truth is a value is not at all in the straightforwardly moral sense in which truth-telling is a value. It is a value which is much more abstract. And its abstractness lies in the fact that the *liar* who violates the moral norm of truth-telling *also values truth*. In fact it is partly because he values it in this sense that he tries to conceal it (or invent it). Rorty might contest this and ask: What is this more abstract value which

even the liar has? Can there really be a value to truth in this sense, over and above truth-telling? If there is, and if *even* the liar values it, *someone* must surely in principle be able to *fail* to value it, else how can it be a value? And the answer is yes, someone does indeed fail to value truth in this more abstract sense, but it is not the liar. It is the equally common sort of person in our midst, its the bullshitter. This is the person who merely sounds off at parties or, alas, gets published in some academic journals just because he is prepared to speak or write in the requisite jargon, without any goal of getting things right nor even (like the liar) concealing the right things which he thinks he has got. The so-called Sokal hoax on which so much has been written I suspect has this point to make. All that I have read on the subject of this hoax, including by Sokal himself, takes up the issue of how Sokal exposed the rampant and uncritical relativism of postmodern literary disciplines. Though I don't doubt that literary people in the academy have recently shown a relativist tendency, I wonder if that is really what is at stake. The point is analogous to the one I just made about the liar. The relativist also does value truth, in the abstract sense that I have in mind, even if he has a somewhat different gloss on it from his opponents. In fact he too, precisely because he does value truth in this abstract sense, wishes to urgently put this different gloss on it. I believe it quite likely that the journal in which Sokal propagated his hoax would have been happy (at least before the controversy began) to publish a similarly dissimulating hoax reply to his paper in which all kinds of utterly ridiculous arguments were given, this time for an anti-relativist and objective notion of truth, so long as they were presented in the glamorous jargon and with the familiar dialectical moves that commands currency in the discipline. If so, the lesson to be learnt from the hoax is not that relativism is rampant in those disciplines but that

very often bullshit is quite acceptable, if it is presented in the requisite way. To set oneself against that is to endorse the value of truth in our culture in a way that amounts to valuing *truth* over and above truth-telling, for a bullshitter is not a liar. No pragmatist, or Wittgensteinian can deny this. It defines the possibility of philosophy as we are doing it in this room but also (despite the propaganda generated by the Sokal hoax) as it is done in continental Europe, where it *is* for the most part done quite interestingly and profoundly.

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