FOREWORD

Achieving the Enlightenment

ROBERT B. BRANDOM

Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism is Richard Rorty's long-lost, last book.[1] Its first English-language publication is an epoch-making event. Written ten years before his death, this volume presents Rorty's final, mature version and vision of his path-breaking pragmatism. Further, it announces a substantially new phase in the development of that view. At its core is a commitment to human self-determination. The principal animating and orienting impulse of pragmatism is now identified as its anti-authoritarianism. Its ultimate goal is our emancipation, both in practice and in theory, from subjection to non-human authority. Pragmatism points us at the sort of freedom that consists in humans taking full rational responsibility for our own doings and claimings.

On this conception, pragmatism is an intellectual movement of world-historical significance. Rorty construes pragmatism as aiming at nothing less than a second Enlightenment—as offering what is needed properly to complete the task begun in early modern times by the first Enlightenment. The key to the conceptual division of labor he envisages between the two historical phases of the Enlightenment is the "anti-authoritarianism" of the title—a theoretical and a practical attitude. It is the rejection in both spheres of the traditional understanding of authority and responsibility in terms of subordination and obedience. It is to be replaced by a conception of judging and acting as exercising the authority to undertake commitments that come with a correlative responsibility to justify them, to offer reasons for them that can be assessed by our fellow discursive practitioners.

As Rorty is thinking of it, the great achievement of the original Enlightenment is on the side of ethics. In broadest terms, it is substituting the secular for the sacred in our understanding of the source and nature of our most

fundamental obligations. The tradition that the Enlightenment reacted against and recoiled from took normative statuses of authority and responsibility to be independent of the attitudes of those whose statuses they were. Norms were understood as ontologically determined by the objective structure of things, epitomized by the *scala natura,* the Great Chain of Being. That is a hierarchical ontological structure of superiority and subordination, in which superiors have the authority to command and subordinates the responsibility to obey. (It is what determines "My station and its duties," as the title of F. H. Bradley's essay has it.) It is a natural structure with intrinsically normative significance. In its later Christianized form, it is taken to have been instituted by the supernatural fiat of the ultimate superior and authority, God. Thence derives the "divine right of kings," devolved through the various feudal ranks, bottoming out in the righteousness of man's dominion over the beasts. In both forms, those that take the norms to be read off of the natures of things and those that also take those normatively significant natures to be supernaturally ordained, the ultimate source of our responsibilities and obligations lies outside of us, in something non-human, in the way things anyway are, apart from and independently of our practical activities and attitudes. Our job is to conform our attitudes and practices to these normative statuses of superiority and subordination, authority and responsibility, about which we don't have a say.

From the pragmatist point of view that Rorty sees as prefigured by the Enlightenment, both the natural and the supernatural versions of this traditional picture are *fetishistic,* in Marx's technical sense. They reify what are in fact the products of human practices and project them into the non-human, merely natural or supernatural, world. By contrast, in its finest flowering in social contract theories of political obligation such as those of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, Enlightenment thought grounds normative statuses of authority and responsibility instead in human attitudes and practices of consent, negotiation, and agreement. In seeing this humanizing of the norms governing our practical activity as the core Enlightenment insight, Rorty is at one with Kant's account in his popular essay "Was Ist Aufklärung?" For there Kant construes the Enlightenment as announcing the emancipation and coming to maturity of humanity, our casting off our juvenile need for and dependence on normative tutelage from without, in favor of the adult dig-

nity that consists in ourselves taking responsibility for our ultimate commitments.

In the background of this understanding of the message of the Enlightenment is Kant's account of positive freedom: the freedom *to* do something one could not otherwise do, as opposed to the negative freedom that consists in freedom *from* some constraint. Kant understands freedom as autonomy: the authority to bind ourselves (*autos*) by norms (*nomos*), to acknowledge and undertake commitments, *making* ourselves responsible by *taking* ourselves to be responsible. The resulting constraint of commitments is intelligible as distinctively *normative* constraint (as opposed to the matter-of-factual constraint of compulsion by greater power) just insofar as it is the result of *self*-binding. This conception radicalizes what Kant learned from Rousseau's dictum that "obedience to a law one has prescribed for oneself is freedom."[2] For Kant turns Rousseau's definition of freedom into a criterion of demarcation of the genuinely normative. By analyzing normativity in terms of autonomy—a distinctive kind of positive freedom—Kant moves decisively beyond the traditional understanding of normativity in terms of subordination and obedience. Here the central inspiration of the Enlightenment achieves its most explicit self-conscious expression. This articulation of the intimate and ineluctable connection between freedom and genuinely *normative* bindingness underwrites a distinctive liberal, democratic approach to politics. It shows up as having as its implicit *telos* that everyone who is *bound* by a law should have a say in *imposing* that law: the ideal of universal suffrage, in the sense of according all those bound by (responsible to) laws the authority to make them.

The edifying lesson Rorty sees the Enlightenment as teaching is that fear of God and fealty to His authority are to be replaced by human freedom, self-reliance, and solidarity in the form of individual autonomy on the side of ethics, and social commitment to and participation in liberal political practices and institutions, on the side of politics. Our practices are the real source of our commitments and responsibilities, and those practices should be understood as involving no authority beyond what we institute and exercise by engaging in them. Instead of looking outside of human practice for our ultimate commitments, we are to look to what emerges in conducting the human conversation. Liberal political institutions are to structure that conversation

procedurally—in effect, to provide the *language* in which that conversation takes place. This is anti-authoritarianism on the side of our practical activity. The theme of *Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism* is that pragmatism should be understood as defined by its commitment to bringing about a *second* Enlightenment. Its task is to broaden the anti-authoritarian lesson of the first Enlightenment beyond the practical sphere, applying it to the theoretical sphere. It is to be applied not only to ethics and politics, but to epistemology.

Rorty admits that the extension he proposes is not one the philosophers of the original Enlightenment envisaged or endorsed. Early in Lecture 2 of this book he tells us

> The anti-authoritarianism which was central to the Enlightenment . . . finds its ultimate expression in the substitution of the kind of fraternal cooperation characteristic of an ideal democratic society for the ideal of redemption from sin. The Enlightenment rationalists substituted the idea of redemption from ignorance by Science for this theological idea, but Dewey and James wanted to get rid of that notion too. They wanted to substitute the contrast between a less useful set of beliefs and a more useful set of beliefs for the contrast between ignorance and knowledge. For them, there was no goal called Truth to be aimed at; the only goal was the ever-receding goal of still greater human happiness.

The Enlightenment's critical rejection of religious obedience was complemented by its constructive endorsement of scientific knowledge. But Rorty sees a crucial analogy between the idea of the authority of a non-human God over proprieties of practical conduct (what it is good to do) and the idea of the authority of a non-human Reality over proprieties of theoretical belief (what it is good to think and say). As he says in a different version of the lecture given here as Lecture 1:

> 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.

Rorty's idea is that the concept of Reality plays the same invidious role for the pragmatist Enlightenment on the cognitive side that God played for the original Enlightenment on the practical side.

He finds this thought already in the classical American pragmatists. On this conception, their thought is rooted in that of the British Utilitarians of the nineteenth century: Jeremy Bentham, James and John Stuart Mill, and Alexander Bain. The American pragmatists show up as extending their thought from the practical realm, to apply also to the cognitive realm. What is extended is the idea of the relativity of values to human interests—the thought that practical norms are ultimately to be derived from the needs and wants of the desiring beings understood to be subject to those norms. The pragmatists assimilate doxastic, cognitive, theoretical conduct oriented to reality and truth to practical, intentional, value-reflecting conduct oriented to the right and the good, viewing them as different species of a common genus. A bit later in Lecture 1 Rorty tells us that

> 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 which claims precedence over our cooperative attempts to avoid pain and obtain pleasure.

At the center of the version of pragmatism Rorty announces in this book is the thought that just as we should be anti-authoritarian in ethics in rejecting the authority of God over the correctness of what we do, we should be anti-authoritarian in epistemology by rejecting the authority of objective reality over the correctness of what we believe. Construed as the non-human locus of this sort of authority, Reality no more exists than God does.

This is a radical idea. It is one thing to emancipate ourselves from practical domination by the patriarchal dictates of what William Blake called "Old Nobodaddy." That is in a certain sense something we can do by coming to suitably redescribe and reconceive ourselves. For what we are freeing

ourselves from is a snare powered by a delusion. (Here we can still think of the truth as setting us free.) We have a pretty good idea both of what it is to understand ourselves to live in a God-less world, and even what it is like actually to live in such a world. The same cannot evidently be said about emancipating ourselves from constraint by objective reality.

The ideal of autonomy that sees us as ultimately bound by no moral facts or moral laws we do not ourselves set, or at least acknowledge, is an intelligible and in many ways attractive one. But don't we have to think of ourselves as bound by objective facts and laws of nature whose constraint does not depend at all on our acknowledgment of them? (For Kant, that is the fundamental distinction between constraint by laws, "natural necessity," and constraint by *conceptions* of laws "practical necessity.") The idea that we could emancipate ourselves from *that* sort of constraint by any kind of redescription or reconceptualization seems to depend on a kind of magical thinking located somewhere between extremely implausible and just plain crazy.

Of course, that is not the sort of position Rorty is urging on us. Traditionally, the concept of objective reality is called on to play a dual role. As Rorty often says, it is understood to be at once both the *cause of sense* and the *goal of intellect.* The first concerns causal relations, the second, normative ones. This fundamental Kantian distinction between norms and causes shapes Rorty's thought throughout his life. He wholeheartedly endorses the idea of reality as *causally* constraining us. In this regard, his pragmatism is wholly naturalistic. Like classical American pragmatism, it is essentially a Darwinian naturalism rather than a Newtonian naturalism. It construes us as at base animals coping with our environment. Objective reality forces itself upon us by its recalcitrant resistance to our wants and the sometimes surprising and disappointing consequences of our actions, forcing us both to adapt it to our ends and to adapt to it ourselves. It is the physical arena we act in and deal with, setting Deweyan "problems" and framing Deweyan "inquiries" with which creatures like us respond.

Rorty's issue is with how we conceive the other, normative, dimension: the sense in which reality also functions as the "goal of intellect." He is concerned to deny a particular picture of that epistemic goal. He often marks the conception that is his target by using an uppercase "R" in referring to the target of his objections. The capital letter does not just indicate derision—though of course, it does that, too. Rorty uses it to demarcate a specifically *represen-*

tational understanding of the cognitive relation to what causally conditions and constrains us that we are aiming at. Reality with the invidious "R" is reality as the nondiscursive end of a representational relation: reality as what cognition aims to represent. Rorty wants to teach us how to live without that representationalist idea of Reality, as we have learned to live without the idea of God.

Representation is the core concept of Enlightenment epistemology. In many ways, it has dominated philosophical thinking about the relations between mind and world ever since. As its title indicates, this conception is the target of Rorty's criticism in his first monograph, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (hereafter *PMN*)—the book that made him famous. The paradigmatic expression of the representationalist picture of mind as the mirror of nature is Spinoza's. Because "the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas," nature and God's mind are two modes of one substance, two aspects of what there is, "Deus sive natura" (God or Nature). Spinoza concludes that any cognitive progress our finite minds make in better mirroring nature, eliminating the flaws of our errors and the gaps of our ignorance, is also progress in making our finite minds more identical with the infinite mind of God.

The premodern philosophical tradition understood the relations between mind and world, appearance and reality, in terms of *resemblance*. Resemblance is a matter of sharing some properties, as a good picture shares properties of color and shape with what it is a picture of. The correspondence of thought with thing that makes a thought true and so a candidate for knowledge is their sharing something: an Aristotelian form, or participation in the same Platonic Form. Error occurs when the appearance in the mind and the reality it seeks to know do not resemble one another by sharing a form.

Descartes saw that the new science of his day made this picture untenable. Copernicus taught that the reality of which the stationary Earth and the moving Sun were appearances was a rotating Earth and a stationary Sun. No shared properties there. Galileo taught that the best, most veridical appearance of periods of time was lengths of geometrical lines, and further—and from the point of the resemblance model, worse—that the most veridical appearance of accelerations was the areas of triangles. At this point, resemblance has been left wholly behind. Descartes invents the new, more abstract philosophical notion of *representation* to help in the understanding of these

new, vastly more successful theoretical guises in which the reality of the natural world could appear to us in science. The paradigm of representational relations is the correspondence Descartes worked out between algebraic formulae and geometrical figures, in his analytic geometry. The equations "$x^2+y^2=1$" and "$x+y=1$" do not at all resemble the circle and the line they determine. But correspondences such as that between the two simultaneous solutions of those equations and the two points of intersection of those figures show that the algebraic representings are veridical appearances that give us a hitherto unparalleled grip on the geometrical reality they represent. (Spinoza saw that this worked because the *local* isomorphism required by the resemblance model had been replaced by a *global* isomorphism of equations and figures—the "order and connection" of algebraic ideas that was the same as the "order and connection" of geometrical things—and drew deep *holist* semantic and metaphysical conclusions that would be of central significance for later German Idealism.)

The new Enlightenment representational paradigm was immensely productive in epistemology and the philosophy of mind. Exploiting this metaconceptual resource is one of the common philosophical strategies that binds together Descartes's British Empiricist and Continental Rationalist successors. The rationalists were less willing than the empiricists to treat representational relations as unexplained explainers: primitives from which to elaborate their philosophical theories. But both Spinoza and Leibniz accepted the need to explain representation as a principal criterion of adequacy of their epistemological theories. They sought to do so in terms of the relation of being a reason for, paradigmatically the relation of premise and conclusion of an inference, which was for them more basic in the order of philosophical explanation.

But the advance to the more abstract model of representation came with a cost. Giving up the requirement that representing appearances share properties with, and so resemble the reality represented by them drives a wedge between appearance and reality. It makes possible a wholly new, substantially more corrosive sort of skepticism than that available on the old resemblance picture. For it raises a worry about whether the whole realm of mental representings might swing entirely free of any represented reality, and how, epistemically confined as we seem to be to our representings, we could know whether or not things are as they are represented to be, whether they really are as they appear.

In *PMN* Rorty argued that representationalist understandings of mind and meaning originally developed by early modern philosophers and still dominant in updated-form twentieth-century analytic philosophy doomed their advocates to an unfruitful oscillation between skepticism and foundationalism. Foundationalism shows up as the only alternative to skepticism when one considers the practices of reasoning that might justify knowledge-claims. Conceptions of justification that lead either to an infinite regress or to circularity seem themselves to be in the end themselves forms of skepticism. The only non-skeptical alternative (within what is sometimes called the "Agrippan trilemma" in epistemology) is then foundationalism. Rorty characterizes its strategy as the postulation of "epistemically privileged representations" that function as regress-stoppers. Regresses on the side of premises—justifying *p* by appeal to *q,* and then *q* by appeal to *r,* and so on—terminate in representings given in sensation, paradigmatically something looking (appearing) red. Regresses on the side of inferences—where the skeptical challenge is not to premise *q* offered as a reason for the conclusion *p* but for the implication of *p* by *q*—terminate in the subject's grasp of the meanings of the terms or the contents of the concepts deployed in the knowledge-claims *p* and *q*. Both kinds of representations are understood as characterized by the distinctive kind of epistemic privilege Descartes used to demarcate minds from bodies, as Rorty identified it in his classic 1970 paper "Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental."

For it is a structural requirement of the representational picture of the mind and its knowledge of reality that if anything is to be known representationally, something must be known *non*-representationally. If the reality I know is known by being represented by my representings of it, then I must know my representings themselves in some other way than just by representing them in turn. For the alternative would launch a *semantic* regress, of representings of representings of representings . . . in which no terminal knowledge is ever finally achieved. If representational knowledge (or even awareness) is to be possible, at some point, there must be representings of which I am aware simply by *having* them, rather than by representing them. Their occurrence must be self-intimating. The idea of knowledge mediated by representings presupposes the idea of immediate knowledge of representings. That is the Cartesian idea of the mind as the locus of representing events (sensings and thinkings) whose very existence already

guarantees the subject's knowledge of their existence. Their contents must be immediately, non-representationally available. Since error is understood as *mis*-representation, that immediate knowledge of the appearings that are representings must be immune to error: incorrigible.

Rorty takes it that the great achievement of mid-century analytic philosophy was the thoroughgoing critique of Cartesian regress-stopping privileged representings. It had the effect, he thought, of driving a stake through the heart of foundationalism, and thereby the representational paradigm itself. He saw one aspect of it as carried through by Wilfrid Sellars against the idea of judgments to which we are epistemically entitled in virtue solely of what is given to us in sensation, in his masterwork "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." He saw a complementary aspect of it as worked out by W. V. O. Quine against the idea of judgments justified wholly by our grasp of their meanings, in his critique of analyticity in his classic "Two Dogmas of Empiricism." That these two landmark philosophical works, though in many ways quite different, can be seen as illuminating two sides of one coin, as ways of working out one unified line of criticism, is one of Rorty's deepest and most original insights. It is a paradigm of how a way forward philosophically can be opened up by redescribing how we got to where we are.

It was by thinking hard about how Sellars's and Quine's arguments worked, and what they had in common, that Rorty worked out his own view, as presented in his 1982 book, *Consequences of Pragmatism*. He found in classical American pragmatism, especially as articulated by James and Dewey, the basis of an alternative to the representationalist tradition that he had argued was doomed to find itself forced to choose between an untenable foundationalism and an unpalatable skepticism. At the center of his version of pragmatism is a social practice theory of normativity in general. *Normative* statuses, he claims, are always and everywhere *social* statuses. That we should understand norms not as features of the natural or even supernatural world, but as instituted by the practical attitudes we adopt to one another was, for him, one of the principal orienting lessons of the Enlightenment, epitomized by social contract theories of political obligation.

Without calling it "pragmatism," Rorty had called upon understanding normative statuses in terms of social practices already in his early papers on eliminative materialism. He begins there by understanding Cartesian minds in terms of the epistemic status of incorrigibility. As we've seen, where error

is explained as consisting in misrepresentation, some representings must be taken to be immune to the possibility of error. Otherwise, not only knowledge but the possibility of error itself is unintelligible. That thought is what led Descartes to his unprecedented assimilation of thoughts, images, and pains as species of a genus. Rorty goes on to understand incorrigibility in normative terms: as a distinctive kind of *authority*. The authority of sincere, contemporaneous first-person reports of whether one is in pain or of what one is currently thinking have a distinctive kind of authority: they cannot be overridden by any evidence available to other subjects. In the decisive third step of his argument, Rorty then analyzes that authority as a matter of the role such sincere, contemporaneous first-person reports play in the practices of a community. That authority, he claims deflatingly, should be understood as consisting just in how such reports are taken or treated by other practitioners. That social status of unoverridability need not be understood as grounded in or reflecting any independent ontological fact. It is *just* a distinctive status conferred by a contingent constellation of social practices and attitudes.

He had begun this line of thought by trying to answer Wallace Matson's question "Why isn't the mind-body problem ancient?" Rorty concludes by observing that the practices that institute the distinctive kind of authority that is Cartesian incorrigibility are historically variable. Our practices did not always have this shape, and they might change again to a different one. Progress in neurophysiology might lead us to treat scientists' claims about what is going on in a subject's brain as potentially overriding their sincere first-person reports of being in pain, imagining a triangle, or thinking of a fish on a dish. The social normative status of incorrigibility of such reports would then no longer exist—and so, Rorty argues, neither would the Cartesian minds that we had genuinely had so long as our practices instituted the right sort of authority. The result of the telling redescription of incorrigibility as a normative status instituted by social practices of taking or treating some reports *as* incorrigible is eliminative materialism about Cartesian mindedness.

On this way of understanding it, Rorty's argument for eliminative materialism is the origin story of his pragmatism. If one understands knowledge, or truth, or being the goal of intellect or inquiry, as normative statuses, then a social practice account of normative statuses in general will entail a kind

of *pragmatism* about those statuses. It will consist in understanding those normative statuses in terms of their role in our practices, and understanding how playing that role can institute that sort of normative significance and confer it on some of our doings. What then comes to the fore is not *relations* of representation or truth to something external that grounds those normative statuses, but our *practices* of giving, asking for, and assessing reasons, of justifying our commitments (both theoretical and practical) to our fellows. To call something a *reason* is to offer a *normative* characterization of it: to attribute to it the capacity to confer on a commitment a distinctive kind of *entitlement* or *authority.* Pragmatist epistemology focuses to begin with on our social practices of reasoning and justifying—things we *do.* The relation of truth that some of our doings, thought of as representings, might have to bits of our environment, thought of as represented by them, would be brought into the story only later, and only if and insofar as postulating such representational relations is needed or at least helpful to explain some feature of the practices of intelligent coping in which justifying and the giving and assessing of reasons plays a starring role.

Rorty sees both Sellars and Quine, each in his own way, as offering critiques—of the Myth of the Given (Sellars) and the Myth of the Museum (Quine), immediate sensuous and semantic knowledge, respectively—that are at base pragmatist arguments in this sense. Sellars offers a social-practical deflation of the incorrigibility of claims about how things merely look or appear. He analyzes that normative status reflecting the fact that such claims have the significance of overtly *withholding* the endorsement that would be made by the corresponding claim about how things really are. "The coin *looks* elliptical" is noncommittal, having something like the force of "I am tempted to say that the coin *is* elliptical, but I suspect my responsive dispositions might not be reliable under these conditions, so I'm not willing to commit myself to that." Such a claim is incorrigible because no substantive commitment is being undertaken by such a manifestation of a disposition. Further, one can only withhold endorsements one is capable of making, so the incorrigibility-through-virtual emptiness of "looks" claims makes sense only in an environment where one can already make risky claims about how things are. So the latter accordingly cannot be understood in terms of the former. Quine points out the fragility of the unfalsifiability of statements such as "Bachelors are unmarried males" that are supposed to be true in virtue of the mean-

ings of their terms alone, and the practical functional indistinguishability of claims like this from platitudinous general truths such as "There have been black dogs." In this way he queries whether any feature of our actual practices of holding on to some claims "come what may" in the way of challenges is actually explained by postulating a distinction between those made true by what we mean and those made true by what we believe. In each case, the normative status of claims that possess the epistemic privilege invoked to terminate potential regresses of justification is exhibited to be the fragile, contingent product of optional features of our discursive social practices. So Rorty could see the pragmatism he was articulating as arising implicitly already within the immanent critiques to which the latest, logical empiricist incarnation of the representationalist tradition had given rise in the 1950s.

However, as he elaborated the pragmatism that he intended to provide a constructive alternative to the semantic and epistemological representationalism that had structured the philosophical tradition from Descartes through Kant, and then from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* through Carnap, Tarski, and Quine down to his colleague David Lewis, Rorty came to be dissatisfied with *PMN*'s criticism of that model as skewering us on the fork of skepticism and foundationalism. Looking back, in the intellectual autobiography he wrote just before his death in 2007, Rorty says, "I still believe most of what I wrote in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. But that book is now out of date."[3] Already by the 1980s it seemed that nobody cared about the epistemological issues of skepticism and foundationalism anymore.[4] Those issues just didn't loom large enough or seem threatening enough in the philosophical landscape of the last decades of the twentieth century to rest the critique of the representational paradigm and so the recommendation of pragmatism on the need to evade those alternatives. Even so, representationalism remained rampant and reigned supreme in contemporary philosophical thought about mind, meaning, and knowledge. Rorty continued to believe that the representationalist paradigm was fatally flawed, and that pragmatism was its situationally appropriate successor conception. In addition to the Deweyan original, he now saw the later Wittgenstein's dethroning of concern with meaning in favor of concern with use (semantics in favor of pragmatics, in a broad sense) and the early Heidegger's critical grounding of the representationalist presence-at-hand expressed by explicit theoretical principles in the social-practical readiness-to-hand of equipment deployed

in skillful practical coping as arguing for pragmatism about discursive norms. His greatest recent philosophical heroes were all aligned with his pragmatism. But he needed a new anti-representationalist argument.

Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism announces his discovery of that sought-after alternative, and elaborates his new, *anti-authoritarian* critique of representationalism. As such, it marks a major new stage in the development of Rorty's thought. It can be thought of as based on redescribing representation in normative terms—in much the same way that his argument for eliminative materialism was based on redescribing Cartesian mindedness in normative terms. That is what allows pragmatism in the form of a social practice account of normativity to get a grip. In this case, the insight can be found already in Kant (Rorty's arch-representationalist foe in *PMN*). For one of Kant's axial ideas is his normative construal of intentionality. For him, what distinguishes the judgments and intentional actions of discursive beings from the responses of merely natural ones is that they are subject to distinctively *normative* assessment—both of the subject's reasons for them and for their correctness. Judgments and actions express the subject's *commitments*. They are something the subject is *responsible* for. They are exercises of the subject's *authority* (specifically: the authority to undertake commitments, to make oneself responsible, the form of positive freedom that is autonomy). All of these are normative notions. In this way, Kant moves decisively beyond Descartes's *ontological* distinction between minded creatures and everything else, to redescribe it rather as a *deontological* distinction.

As a consequence of this normative turn, Kant breaks with the tradition and takes the minimal units of awareness to be judgments, rather than concepts or sense-impressions ("ideas"). For judgments are the smallest unit for which one can take responsibility, to which one can commit oneself. (Frege puts the same point by saying that judgeable contents are the smallest logical unit to which pragmatic, paradigmatically assertoric, force can attach. The later Wittgenstein identifies sentences as the smallest linguistic unit that can be used to make a move in a language game.) For Kant the "objective form of the judgment" is "the object = *X*" because the object one is thinking about is what one becomes responsible *to* in judging. In effect, he is pointing out the normative dimension of representation. What is represent*ed* exercises *authority* over what count as represent*ings* of it just in virtue of being *responsible* to it, in the sense that what is represented provides the standard for

assessments of the correctness of representings of it. There is, of course, also a dimension of matter-of-factual (and even subjunctively robust *counter*factual) isomorphism between represenTeds and representings: what Sellars called "picturing." It is what Spinoza invokes with his slogan about the identity of the order and connection of things and the order and connection of ideas. But Spinoza not only failed to appreciate the essentially normative character of the "order and connection of ideas," he failed to appreciate the essential normative dimension of the representational relation between them. Kant fully appreciates both.

I think that the thought that animates Rorty's extension of Enlightenment anti-authoritarianism from ethics to epistemology in *Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism* is precisely this insight into the essentially normative character of representational relations: the sense in which in order to do their appointed semantic job they must be understood as normative relations of *authority* of represenTeds over representings, and correlative *responsibility* of representings to represenTeds. It is this idea that brings into relief and makes visible the special, distinctively normative understanding of our causally conditioning environment that Rorty denominates "Reality" and, boldly, puts in a box with "God," denying whose normative authority over human conduct he takes to be the crowning achievement of Enlightenment. For Reality is reality conceived of specifically as what is represented, in the normative sense of exercising authority over human doxastic commitments—that is, as providing normative standards for assessment of their correctness. It is reality understood as a non-human authority to which human cognitive practices are subject.

This idea is the basis for Rorty's anti-authoritarian protest against the conception of reality-as-represented. The objection is that this idea endorses a kind of semantic *tyranny*. Tyranny is authority without correlative responsibility. (It is what Hegel calls "Mastery.") The missing responsibility in question is answerability to demands for *reasons* legitimating that authority. As Kant makes clear, one of the central motivating ideas and commitments of the Enlightenment is that liability to *criticism*—assessment of reasons—and genuine authority are inseparable. Only what can be queried and challenged to justify itself by providing reasons is properly authoritative. For Rorty, this is where God and Reality alike fail the test of critical reason. They are not participants in practices of giving, asking for, and assessing

reasons, in justifying and demanding justifications. The lesson he thinks we should learn from the first Enlightenment is that we answer only to each other, that we are beholden to no authority outside our practices. What is authoritative are the reasons we give to each other, the justifications we can offer and assess. Those justificatory and critical practices determine the meanings of the vocabularies we use and the contents of our commitments. We conduct those reasoning practices, deploy our vocabularies, in a natural environment that causally constrains us in many ways. But *normative* constraint is wholly our creature, a historically sedimented accumulation that is instituted by our own social practices and the practical attitudes we adopt while engaging in those practices. That is the conclusion Rorty draws by conjoining his pragmatist social-practical analysis of normativity with an appreciation of representation as a relation of authority and responsibility between representeds and representings. The route from a pragmatist understanding of norms as instituted by social practices to anti-authoritarianism in *epistemology*—the theme of the second, pragmatist Enlightenment that Rorty envisages—goes through a *semantic* understanding of representation in *normative* terms.

I have been telling a story, offering a version in my terms, of the conceptual background, both in the history of philosophy and in the development of Rorty's own thought, that I see as framing the arguments he presents, in his own, characteristically vivid vocabulary in the body of this book (indeed, beginning already in his helpful Preface). I want to register briefly that at this point in the discussion of the concept of *representation* at least, I part company with Rorty. It seems to me that one can both adopt a social-practical approach to normativity and appreciate the essentially normative character of the relations between representeds and representings without concluding—as I think Rorty goes on to do—that *because* normative statuses are always and everywhere *instituted by* social practices, *therefore* authority and responsibility can only be *vested in* or *exercised by* participants in such practices: the ones who can give reasons and so take rational responsibility for the authority they exercise. I take it that the best response to all these considerations is not to adopt global anti-representationalism in semantics. Rather, social pragmatists about normativity should take on the hard work of crafting a pragmatically acceptable account of the sort of authority and responsibility involved in the representational dimension of conceptual contentfulness, and

explain how it is instituted and administered by the discursive practices we engage in. I think Hegel already tried to do that, and I have taken some steps along the path he indicates.

Rorty was well aware of this strategic disagreement, and reveled in exploring it. When he originally presented this material in 1996 as the Ferrata Mora lectures at the University of Girona he generously invited me, John McDowell, and Bjørn Ramberg to accompany him as discussants. Our week in that magical Catalan city was filled with lively, extended debates. Rorty addressed some of these controversies in his two final lectures. In Lecture 9 of this book he offers this summary:

> Brandom is, in this respect, to Davidson as McDowell is to Sellars. Each thinks that a distinguished precursor was unfortunately tempted to throw the baby out with the bath. Brandom wants to recuperate "representation" and McDowell wants to recuperate "perceptual experience." It is natural, therefore, that both Brandom and McDowell have doubts about my own version of pragmatism—a version which delights in throwing out as much of the philosophical tradition as possible, and urges that philosophers perform their social function only when they change intuitions, as opposed to reconciling them.

Reflecting on this disagreement with my beloved *Doktorvater* is at the heart of my own philosophical work. Here I want only to acknowledge it, not to pursue it.

For the important point, as I see it, is that in announcing, adopting, and developing in this work his new anti-authoritarian pragmatist argument against the representationalist semantic and epistemological paradigm that has dominated the Western philosophical tradition since Descartes's brilliant and momentous introduction of that framework, Rorty diagnoses a fundamental, but hitherto unremarked, tension in the most basic commitments of Enlightenment philosophy. It is a tension between its critical, humanistic, anti-authoritarian reclamation of ethical and political authority and responsibility from non-human usurpers, on the one hand, and on the other the core strategy of its epistemology: understanding mindedness and meaning in terms of *representation*. Rorty sharpens this tension into a contradiction by redescribing the first as rejection of any picture of creatures who can give

and assess reasons but are nonetheless subject to the overriding authority of something non-human that provides a normative standard for assessments of the ultimate correctness of those practices, and redescribing the second as the acceptance of a particular instance of just such a picture. For Rorty, the collision between these ideas is "the little rift within the lute, that by and by will make the music mute, and ever widening slowly silence all." For the proper Enlightenment teaching, he argues, is that we should give up (as pragmatically unintelligible) the normative notion of "ultimate correctness" that is correlated with that concept of "overriding nonhuman authority," in both the practical and the cognitive domains. Whether or not one accepts that conclusion, the redescription Rorty offers in this volume, which makes that tension visible, should be acknowledged as a major contribution to our philosophical thinking about the Enlightenment. It is one of Rorty's Big Ideas.

I want to conclude by pointing out that we are now in a position to appreciate properly the magnitude and significance of the late development in Rorty's thought effected by his adoption of practically progressive Enlightenment anti-authoritarianism as the new basis for his rejection of the whole representationalist tradition in the philosophy of mind and epistemology. For this *Kehre* reveals a popular caricature of that development as not only simplistic, unnuanced, and flat-footed, but as fundamentally wrong-headed. According to this pastiche, after a brief flirtation with analytic philosophy, culminating in his articulation and defense of eliminative materialism, in *PMN* Rorty offered a thoroughgoing criticism of Enlightenment philosophy, and decisively and emphatically condemned and rejected both its rationalism and its empiricism. He dismissed every aspect of Kant's synthesis of these strands of thought, as the culmination of the failed project of Enlightenment philosophy. And Rorty further scorned the whole subsequent tradition downstream for simply continuing to do philosophy, in the sense of "the sort of thing that Kant did." In *Consequences of Pragmatism* he announced and elaborated his constructive alternative: a pragmatism inspired by James and Dewey, but expanded so as to encompass also the early Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* then confirmed Rorty's disdain for Enlightenment philosophy and Kant, and ceases to pretend that his pragmatist alternative is anything other than a contemporary form of Romanticism, and (so) irrationalism. Mimicking the Romantic recoil from the Enlightenment, Rorty displaces natural science

in favor of art and politics in assessing the high culture. The role of reason is minimized, and replaced by passion and power in the understanding of human beings. Rorty then confirms his turn away from philosophy toward politics by writing *Achieving Our Country*.

In fact, what Rorty criticized and rejected in *PMN,* and continued to criticize and reject ever after, is only the *epistemology* of the Enlightenment, specifically its placing of its master-concept of *representation* at the center of our philosophical understanding of our discursive practice, reason, and mindedness in general. He wholly applauds the Enlightenment's secular, humanistic, critical, and emancipatory commitments and accomplishments, as theoretically articulating the progressive transformation of traditional institutions and forms of life into distinctively modern ones. As *Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism* makes abundantly clear, Rorty sees the task of pragmatism (as the way forward for philosophy that he recommends) as being the *completion* of the project of Enlightenment. According to his diagnosis, doing that requires correcting its epistemology, so as to repair the deformations wrought by its reliance on the representational model.[5] For, properly understood, that model turns out to be incompatible with essential progressive insights and impulses of the Enlightenment: the distinctive fusion of freedom and responsibility it began to make visible, if at first only dimly. It is in the service of that reformed Enlightenment project that Rorty's pragmatism seeks to frame a broader conception of *experience,* as the ecologically situated socially and historically articulated process of Hegelian *Erfahrung,* rather than as individual self-intimating immediate episodes of Cartesian *Erlebnis*.

As to the charge of irrationalism, I hope my remarks here make clear just how point-missing such a characterization would be. Far from rejecting the notion of *reason,* Rorty seeks a broader, deeper conception of it. To that end, his pragmatism follows Peirce in focusing to begin with on the kind of selectional process common to evolution and learning, and follows Dewey in thematizing the radical transformation wrought by engaging in specifically *discursive* social practices: practices of giving, seeking, and assessing reasons. Rather than jettisoning reason, Rorty argues that the Enlightenment needs to be brought to completion by rejecting the semantic representationalism at the core of its epistemology precisely because that strand of its thought is not compatible with the critical, anti-authoritarian conception of reason and

the role of reasoning in the normative life of human beings that he takes to be the principal glory of that movement of thought. Indeed, like his hero Hegel before him, Rorty is, *inter alia,* the prophet of a particular kind of emancipatory reflective reason. For he practices, preaches, and theorizes about the sort of self-consciousness that consists in redescription: in deploying new vocabularies that alter what we take to be a reason for what, and so what we can mean and think. What is on display in this volume is Rorty's pragmatism as his final synthesis of Enlightenment naturalism (the mirror, image of scientific fidelity to nature) and Romantic creativity (the lamp, image of artistic creative genius) precisely as an inspiring new conception of reason.