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I am delighted to notice that the discussion seems to be shaping up as a celebration of the idea of *practice* as fundamentally necessary in the critical evaluation of all theoretical work, whether that theoretical work is given the honorific name of philosophy or not. I want my remarks and questions to be understood as being in that same generally pragmatic spirit.

At one point relatively late in his paper, Professor Habermas ascribed to Heidegger the idea that the task of philosophy consists primarily in critical self-reflection on the history of metaphysics. The practical or pragmatic upshot of this idea then seemed to be that such critical self-reflection can in turn—perhaps paradoxically—prepare us for ultimately transcending the conceptual limits of metaphysics as such (or, at least, avoiding metaphysics and its inherent limitations). Professor Habermas ascribes also a "deflationist" version of this Heideggerian position to Professor Rorty.

Now, however one evaluates the thought that we might be able to transcend or avoid the conceptual limits of metaphysics, I want to call attention to a possible ambiguity involved in the very idea of such a thing. On the one hand, such transcendence might (at least in principle) be meant to indicate an avoidance of all contingent constraints on thought. But that would be exactly like asking for a point of view from which we could see things which nevertheless avoids all contingent constraints on vision, or for a way of describing things that avoids all the linguistic and other constraints on description. I am sure that this interpretation is not what either Heidegger or Rorty had in mind, since I am sure, given their overall positions, that they would agree with me in insisting that such unconstrained viewing, describing, and thinking are not only impossible, but quite incoherent. We cannot transcend or avoid the constraints and limitations of metaphysics if what we

mean is transcending all the constraints that are inherent in thinking itself. *This* kind of transcending is no mere paradox.

On the other hand, what we can do—and perhaps this is what really *may* be recommended by Heidegger and/or Rorty—is to transcend or avoid whatever constraints that there have been up until now in our own points of view. Our rehearsal of the history of metaphysics can help us to learn where we are limited; it can help educate us. Such education might not come easily, of course. Our egos might make it difficult for us to see our mistakes and limitations; we may instead be too powerfully impressed with our own ingenuity. But there is definitely a chance that critical review of the history of metaphysics might indeed educate us and may even help to cultivate other ways of looking at things.

But rather than preparing us for transcending or otherwise avoiding the conceptual limits of metaphysics as such, it seems more reasonable—and more accurate—to think of this undertaking as preparing us for making our own contributions to that very history. Rather than getting away from metaphysics, perhaps what we can do—through critical self-reflection concerning the history of metaphysics, among other things—is to improve, along some path, our own metaphysics. I rather suspect that neither Habermas nor Rorty would wish to put the matter like this, but why not?

And now, still in the same generally pragmatic spirit which appears to be animating the entire discussion, I must say something about Professor Rorty's reactions to Professor Habermas's paper. I confess that I am still not sure I understand Rorty's hostility to ideals such as the ideal of truth. My complaint is not new, perhaps, but it still cries out for a clear response. Such ideals as the ideal of truth—and ideals like those of reason and morality surely stand and fall with the ideal of truth—seem plainly to have an enormous pragmatic value. They lure us out of our too-constrained, too-limited ethnocentric or idiosyncratic frames of reference. It is always possible, of course, that such ideals may be abused; they have frequently been deployed, in particular, as clubs used to beat down views and modes of behavior that are threatening or otherwise disliked.

But they need not be abused. Their proven and potential value is quite extraordinary. They offer us standards which pay explicit respect to the principle that the criteria we use for evaluating

ideas and modes of behavior should be *non*ethnocentric and *non*idiosyncratic. They offer us standards that we can appeal to in luring ourselves or others to step outside of our relatively narrow present points of view here and now and toward a broader perspective that can serve us better tomorrow and elsewhere.

The *pragmatic* problem with embracing and encouraging too much relativism seems to be perfectly clear. If man is the measure of all things—if that really is true—then when my neighbor takes a position that seems to me to be deeply threatening, there is really nothing short of blows and weapons that I can resort to in trying to ease the threat. The regulative ideals of reason, truth, and morality serve to moderate attempts to persuade that could too easily otherwise resort to weaponry.

Professor Rorty, like Professor Habermas, has always insisted on the crucial importance of finding ways in which people can learn to moderate their attempts to persuade, especially in threatening situations. But I do not see anything in the doctrine that man is the measure of all things—in relativism—that can accomplish this. Indeed it strikes me that relativism is a profoundly *dangerous* doctrine in a world in which the differences between people seem to be getting more and more shrill.

So I ask Professor Rorty this: What is there, in his own reformist program for philosophy or for theoretical thinking, that can fulfill the extraordinarily important regulative ends that the ideals of reason, truth, and morality traditionally have served?