

## Rorty's Linguistic Turn: Why (More Than) Language Matters to Philosophy

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The linguistic turn is a central aspect of Richard Rorty's philosophy, informing his early critiques of foundationalism in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and subsequent critiques of authoritarianism in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. It is argued that we should interpret the linguistic turn as a methodological suggestion for how philosophy can take a non-foundational perspective on normativity. It is then argued that although Rorty did not succeed in explicating normativity without foundations (or authority without authoritarianism), we should take seriously the ambition motivating his project. But taking that ambition seriously may require reconsidering the linguistic turn.

The linguistic turn was one of the most significant sea-changes in twentieth-century philosophy. At the heart of this dramatic change in philosophy's theoretical and practical self-images was a general departure from certain important ideas formulated in seventeenth-century philosophy (such as those of mind, idea, and experience) in favor of a rather different set of objects of philosophical scrutiny characteristic of twentieth-century philosophy (such as words, sentences, and meanings).

Ian Hacking, in his helpful 1975 book *Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy?*, confidently stated that, "It is a manifest fact that immense consciousness of language is at present time characteristic of every main stream in Western philosophy" (1975, 10). The decades since Hacking's remark have only confirmed the accuracy of his proclamation: the ushering in of the era of language has been at play in every philosophical tradition with a major presence. It is evident in phenomenology as that tradition moved from the analysis of consciousness central for Husserl and Heidegger to the high textualism of Derrida. It is evident in critical theory as that tradition moved from the materialism of Horkheimer and Adorno to the discourse ethics of Habermas. It is evident in the shift in analytic philosophy from talk of observation reports and sense data to talk of meaning, metaphor, semantics, and sentences. It is also evident in pragmatist philosophy as that tradition shifted from an exploration of the work of experience in our practices to an examination of the extent to which

our practices are funded by our vocabularies, for instance in the move from Dewey's inquiries into the meaningfulness of experience to Putnam's talk of the meaning of meaning. As concerns the turn toward language in these last two contexts of analytic and pragmatist philosophy, the work of Richard Rorty was central. Rorty spent the majority of his philosophical energies encouraging pragmatists and analysts alike to get over their prior obsessions with primary experience, observation reports, and qualitative givens so as to focus instead on vocabularies, redescrptions, and the myriad ways in which our lives are linguistically saturated.

The linguistic turn is so much a part of our philosophic present that we ought to treat it neither with scorn nor celebration but rather as something that we can learn from, bearing in mind that learning always involves coming to live with both positive and negative instruction. This instruction ought to enable us to see how the linguistic turn carries with it enormous advantages and disadvantages alike. The aim of this article is to engage the linguistic turn as Rorty put it forward, so as to better learn both its positive and negative lessons.

The main argument I shall be making here is that the linguistic turn ought to be understood as a *methodological* move, at least with respect to Rorty but probably also more broadly. By this, I mean that the linguistic turn should be seen as a contribution to our understanding of how philosophy conducts its inquiries, be this in the context of the practice of the analysis of concepts or in the context of the practice of attending to practical consequences. By referring to the linguistic turn as a *method* I do not mean anything grand or final or systematic, but rather something that is both important and humble, namely the *way we proceed* when we engage in philosophical practices of reflection, argumentation, question, and answer. Rorty's linguistic turn ought to be understood as a contribution to the way we proceed when we proceed philosophically. When Rorty urged the linguistic turn he should be seen as having said the following: "when you are engaged in a philosophical analysis of *x*, why not try looking at how we talk about *x*?" Contrast this to an interpretation of the linguistic turn as itself a substantive philosophical thesis according to which the figure who proffers the linguistic turn is saying something quite different: "when you philosophically reflect upon *x*, you can only talk about how we talk about *x*, because talk about *x* (or more instructively, textuality and linguisticity) is all there is." The linguistic turn need not be seen as linguistic idealism (or what Hacking in his book dubbed "lingualism"), even if for many linguistic turn philosophers this is exactly what it was. Rorty was not among these philosophers, and that is to his credit.

If we take the linguistic turn as a modest methodological suggestion concerning how philosophy ought to proceed, then we can put ourselves in an excellent position to come to terms with its advantages and disadvantages. We can begin to see how a focus on linguistic practice enables us to take a non-foundational perspective on normativity: this is undoubtedly an advantage. We can also begin to see how focusing solely or purely on linguisticity facilitates

incomplete accounts of normativity: this would undoubtedly be a disadvantage. The situation we inheritors of twentieth-century philosophy face might be put as follows: the linguistic turn helped show us the way out of foundationalist philosophy without abandoning us to relativism (advantage), but it did so by way of a methodological position that is insufficient for explicating the kind of non-foundational normativity that the linguistic turn itself showed us the need for (disadvantage). The conclusion I shall be working towards in this essay thus amounts to a statement of what would be required for an internal critique of the linguistic turn, at least as it is exemplified in Rorty's work. I begin the next section with a preliminary recounting of Rorty's arguments against representationalist foundationalist philosophy in favor of linguistic non-foundationalist philosophy. In the two subsequent sections I describe the advantages and disadvantages of a philosophy that takes language as its primary matter.

### 1. Rorty's Linguistic Turn

Rorty ably laid out the basic ideas of the linguistic turn in his 1979 book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (hereafter *Mirror*). Rorty did however write of the linguistic turn in earlier work leading up to that book, including his well-known 1967 edited collection on some new ways in philosophy, titled simply *The Linguistic Turn*. In his introduction to that volume, Rorty is clear that the linguistic turn is best seen not as just one thing, but rather as a series of turns, all pointing toward different destinations and motivated by different philosophical obstacles (cf. 1967, 1–4).<sup>1</sup> Rorty did not aim to resolve that complexity into something simpler in an effort to state how linguistic philosophy can resolve all our problems. And in subsequent work too, Rorty never pinned his contributions to a particular research program in linguistic analysis. Instead, he took the hodgepodge of linguistic approaches as demonstrating together an important metaphilosophical lesson. This is the lesson which Rorty is most animated about in stating on the final page of his introductory contribution to the linguistic turn volume that, “I should wish to argue that the most important thing that has happened in philosophy during the last thirty years is not the linguistic turn itself, but rather the beginning of a thoroughgoing rethinking of certain epistemological difficulties which have troubled philosophers since Plato and Aristotle” (1967, 39).<sup>2</sup> This metaphilosophical conclusion may seem shocking to a casual reader who finds themselves curious about the title of the volume. Rorty's point, however, was always that it is because of the linguistic turn that we were able to bring the problems of traditional epistemology into view. And that, the unexpected metaphilosophical result rather than the intended philosophical project, is why the linguistic turn matters most.

This central lesson that Rorty drew from the linguistic turn was subsequently refined and developed in lush detail in *Mirror*. As stated there, it can be boiled down to a single guiding idea that runs like a kind of golden thread

throughout Rorty's corpus. When followed to its conclusions this idea leads to a number of surprising philosophical insights (or dead-ends, as critics would have it). The key move that forms the heart of the argument put forward in *Mirror* concerns Rorty's critique of the confusion of causation with justification in modern philosophy. This confusion figures most prominently in the attempt to forward an empiricist representationalist account of epistemological foundations. The modern philosophers who inaugurated representationalist epistemology equivocated on a crucial distinction between *physical* causes of beliefs and *rational* justifications of beliefs in a way that makes their epistemological program irreducibly and erroneously *foundationalist*. The only way out of moribund foundationalism, Rorty argued, would be to undertake a methodological shift in philosophical orientation away from the metaphor of our minds as machines for representing the world through our ideas and toward the metaphor of our beliefs as aspects of the vocabularies in which we justify ourselves to one another. But before considering how Rorty proposed to move on from a slain foundationalism, it is critical to understand why he thinks foundationalism is dead in the first place.

The story about the history of modern philosophy that Rorty tells in *Mirror* is found primarily in chapters one and three. At the beginning of the tale, Descartes invents for modern philosophy the metaphor of the *mind* as an inner theatre of contents of all different types. The great promise implicit in the Cartesian invention of the mind is that of a philosophical foundation. As Bernard Williams put it in his book on Descartes published one year prior to *Mirror*: "if we conduct our methods of enquiry in ordinary life clear-headedly and rationally, we shall in fact come to know truths about the world, and our conceptions of the world will not be systematically distorted or in error." This puts in place "foundations of the *possibility* of knowledge" (1978, 61). Descartes shows us how we can get absolute knowing up and running. After Descartes, Locke comes along and seeks to make good on this grand Cartesian promise where the rationalist program shows signs of faltering. Locke does this by urging that we dispense with rationalist versions of foundations in the form of intuitive innate ideas (e.g., the *cogito*), replacing them instead with empiricist flavored foundations in the form of sense-experience. Locke's picture, in sum, is this: sensations cause certain simple ideas in our minds, and these simple ideas function as upstream premises of downstream reasoning though they are not themselves the conclusions of any upstream reasoning. Since simple ideas are results of strictly causal processes, they remain unassailable first premises whose upstream credentials cannot be doubted – and since they are also inferentially articulable to other rational contents, they can indeed function as premises in further downstream reasoning. Locke thus invents for modern philosophy the idea that *ideas* in the mind are things that can be both causally related to things outside of the mind as perceptions and rationally related to other ideas inside of the mind as beliefs. The central promise of Locke's "idea" idea is that we can get an account of rational relations between ideas in the mind

(Locke in Book IV of the *Essay* defines knowledge as “agreement” among ideas) by paying attention to the origin of the ideas that are in the mind (Locke uses the funny old English word “original” as in the title of Chapter I of Book II of the *Essay*, “Of ideas in general, and their original”). By giving a causal account of how ideas get formed in the mind as the result of the external world pouring into us through the senses we can arrive at an epistemological account of how these ideas can be put together in knowledge. Causation here yields justification, or in Rorty's description, “a quasi-mechanical account of the way in which our immaterial tablets are dented by the material world will help us know what we are entitled to believe” (1979, 143). The history of seventeenth-century philosophy forwarded in *Mirror* has it that the legacy of modern philosophy is a Cartesian-Lockean metaphor in which *minds* are construed as representing machines whose units of representation are *ideas*.

Having told this tale, Rorty then argues, against its central metaphor, that causation and justification are not obviously related in the way that Locke proposed. With this, Locke's attempt at foundationalist epistemology founders, and since Locke's empiricist project is the best candidate at a general level for any adequate foundationalism, then the foundationalist promise originally offered by Descartes founders too. In *Mirror*, Rorty diagnoses the crucial error of empiricist foundationalism by packaging together two key insights from the work of Wilfrid Sellars and W. V. Quine.<sup>3</sup> It was one of Rorty's best achievements to have combined in the novel way that he did the leading insights of these two analytic philosophers from the generation preceding his.

Rorty's first crucial argument in Chapter IV of *Mirror* is on behalf of an insight he attributes to Sellars.<sup>4</sup> Sellars forwards “the crucial premise” that “there is no such thing as a justified belief which is nonpropositional, and no such thing as justification which is not a relation between propositions” (Rorty 1979, 183). What Sellars's “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” helped Rorty to show was that a belief can be shown to be justified (or unjustified) only on the basis of another belief or set of beliefs. A belief cannot be shown to be justified (or not) on the basis of what Sellars mocked in his essay as “the unmoved movers of empirical knowledge” (Sellars 1956, 77). This led Sellars to the point that there is no way to draw a direct link between the supposedly immediate (or non-conceptual) givens of perception and the mediated (or conceptualized) takings of knowledge. For perceptual inputs (e.g., sensations) to be in any way relevant to processes of justification and hence of knowledge they must already be conceptual in form so as to occupy some place in what Sellars called “the logical space of reasons” (1956, 76). Sellars's claim, upon inspection, is a rather modest one: every conclusion in belief stands in need of reasons as supporting premises. Modesty, of course, is often a high virtue in philosophy. And in any event, its appearance can be deceptive. In this case, a modest point calls into question the very project of epistemological foundationalism. For what Sellars is suggesting is that as-yet-unconceptualized perceptual inputs cannot play a determinative role in justificatory practices

involving classificatory concepts. The Jamesian “blooming buzzing confusion” of raw sensation may find its way into our experience on occasion but it cannot play any direct justificatory role in so doing.

Next comes the second crucial move in chapter four of *Mirror*. Having discussed Sellars, Rorty uses Quine to develop the point that concept use can always be discriminated in behaviorist terms in such a way as to show that percepts underdetermine conceptual content with respect to justifiability.<sup>5</sup> Perceptions are of course conceptually classifiable but not for that reason justifiers of any particular conceptual classification. Every perceptual given is always amenable to a multiplicity of conceptual takings – this is Quine’s thesis of ontological relativity or inscrutability of reference, made memorable in his example of the ‘Gavagai-Rabbit’ translation (Quine 1960, §7ff.). It follows that concepts by themselves do not yield justifications. Concepts are not, merely in virtue of being concepts, justifiers for any other concepts, even though (as Sellars showed) only a conceptually-laden belief can justify a conceptually-laden belief. Quine’s claim also seems rather modest. But the view it leads to is the radical divorce of epistemology and ontology which follows from the insight that, as Rorty put it, “there is no such thing as direct acquaintance with sense-data or meanings which would give inviolability to reports by virtue of their correspondence to reality, apart from their role in the general scheme of belief” (1979, 202). Rorty takes Quine to show that perceptions do not enter into us one at a time, but rather as part of complex webs of theory and practice such that any perception is always bundled together with many other perceptions as well as many other beliefs.

Rorty’s brilliant move in *Mirror* was to package together these two insights offered by Quine and Sellars in order to cast doubt on a basic assumption of modern philosophy. Sellars helps Rorty show that any awareness which plays a role in our epistemic practices is always already conceptual. This means that there are no *epistemic* givens, or in Rorty’s slogan “no intuitions into which to resolve concepts” with justificatory effect. Quine helps Rorty show that the mere possession of a concept, and even its attribution in practice, cannot by itself determine the correct attribution of any other concepts. Some concepts are acquired merely causally without any justificatory apparatus attached. This means that there are no strictly analytic concepts, or again in Rorty’s slogan “no internal relations among concepts” (1979, 172).<sup>6</sup> But Rorty not only packaged these insights together. He also showed that the profound effect of this package is to call foul on the epistemological project inaugurated by modern philosophy. How did he show this?

Rorty’s argument was that the Quine-Sellars combine poses an enormous problem for a representationalist empiricism which makes use of two claims that seem unproblematic but turn out to be enormously puzzling once submitted to scrutiny: the first claim being that simple ideas come into the mind in the form of nonpropositional awarenesses, the second claim being that these ideas once in the mind somehow get converted into something that can stand in inferential

relations to propositions in the mind. Lockean ideas had always tried to play the double role of representations of an outside world and justifications for other inner ideas. But explaining how ideas can in fact do this double work is a task that may be impossible. Even the most obvious counterexamples stemming from cultural variance, perceptual illusion, and even just plain ignorance are enormously difficult to explain away. The rain outside may *cause* me to believe that the Gods are conspiring against me, but that belief is not therefore *justified*, especially if my audience for justification in this case is a group of evidence-obsessed meteorologists, or perhaps neurosis-analyzing psychiatrists). Sellars helps Rorty show that nothing except a conceptually-structured belief can count as a justification for another belief (thus the physical fact of rain by itself justifies nothing) – only concepts are capable of being justifiers. Quine helps Rorty show that our being caused to believe something does not for that reason alone justify that belief (thus the rain causing me to further faith the conspiracy by itself justifies nothing) – no concept by itself can be an unimpeachable justifier. Thus taken together, as Rorty showed us to take them, Sellars and Quine break the link between causation and justification at the heart of modern epistemology.

But why together? Why do we need *both* Quine and Sellars to make this move? Because, Rorty argues, each philosopher breaks down a venerable distinction that the other seems afraid to give up. Without Sellars, the Quinean is “not quite able to renounce that [distinction] between the given and the postulated” (Rorty 1979, 171) as evidenced in Quine’s distinction between fact-like sensory stimuli and language-like theoretical posits as for instance in the following passage: “we adopt, at least insofar as we are reasonable, the simplest conceptual scheme into which the disordered fragments of raw experience can be fitted and arranged” (Quine 1948, 16). The remnant venerable distinction in Quine encourages a slide into a noncritical naturalism which accepts the idea that ‘raw experience’ and ‘conceptual scheme’ are capable of standing in relationships of ‘simplicity’ to one another where said simplicity somehow connotes ‘reasonableness’. On the other hand, the Sellarsian who is deaf to Quine can too easily remain committed to an Oxonian project of conceptual analysis that makes “tacit use of the distinction between the necessary and the contingent, the structural and the empirical, the philosophical and the scientific” (Rorty 1979, 171) in order to claim that certain conceptual concepts are strictly (e.g., analytically) determined in relation to other conceptual contents. This facilitates a Sellarsian slide into analytic rationalism.<sup>7</sup>

For Rorty, the most important result of packaging Sellars and Quine together is holism. Holism holds that justificatory relations hold only among concepts and never among individual concepts but only among assemblages of concepts. Rorty thinks this momentous: “A holistic approach to knowledge is not a matter of antifoundationalist polemic, but a distrust of the whole epistemological enterprise” (1979, 181). Rorty takes the Sellars-Quine combine to leave modern epistemology at an impasse. Its foundationalist aspirations are

left broken-backed but in such a way that we now have no good candidates for a theory of knowledge as a normatively rational accomplishment. It is this impasse exactly that speaks to the heart of Rorty's most important philosophical ambition. For responding to this impasse requires that we develop a philosophical approach that can fulfill a crucial pair of requirements. These two desiderata can be dubbed *anti-foundationalism* and *anti-relativism*. The first desideratum holds that we should not appeal to philosophical foundations (be these of an empiricist, rationalist, or theological variety) in offering philosophical accounts of knowledge, morality, politics, art, or anything else. Instead of appealing to foundations, we ought to explicate our correct usage of language in terms of contextual features involving the historical, temporal, cultural, and practical situatedness of such language use. The second desideratum holds that we can and ought to offer philosophical accounts that enable us to come to grips with the way in which normative correctness figures in our practices. A steady focus on normative correctness blocks the descent into relativism that for many philosophers seems to follow from abandoning the pretensions of foundationalist philosophy. Many philosophers see Rorty as explicitly forwarding the first desideratum at the same time that he explicitly rejects the second. This is simply mistaken. It may follow that endorsing the first desideratum entails rejecting the second, but Rorty did not think so, and in any event he explicitly endorsed both desiderata. Already in chapter four of *Mirror* he is explicit that his Sellarsian-Quinean "epistemological behaviorism (which might be called simply 'pragmatism')" does not lead to relativism but is rather a project of "clearing the ground for morality and high culture rather than depriving them of 'objective truth'" (1979, 176, 193). This attempt to clear the ground for a pragmatic understanding of normative authority is one which Rorty always held close to for the remainder of his career. In endorsing both of these desiderata Rorty regarded the linguistic turn as helping bring each into clearer view. He also took the linguistic turn as the proper methodological point of departure for meeting these two requirements. To the extent that the linguistic turn helps bring these requirements into view, we ought to affirm its value. But if the linguistic turn were to turn out to fail at satisfying its own requirements, we ought to reach beyond it. I now turn to arguing that we should begin reaching beyond.

## 2. Why Language Matters to Philosophy

The ambitions motivating (and motivated by) the linguistic turn can be seen as positive and edifying as much as negative and therapeutic. It is true that Rorty spent much of his career, especially the earlier years, in a destructive and debunking mode. Equally evident, however, is a hopeful Rorty who portrays in a positive light such of his contributions as the linguistic turn. In this section, I rehearse the value of the linguistic turn for philosophy, beginning with a pair of negative motivations before turning to a corollary pair of positive motivations. My focus here will be on Rorty's post-*Mirror* writings, especially the most



Rortyan of all of Rorty's books, namely his 1989 offering *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (hereafter, *Contingency*).<sup>8</sup>

One broad reason for taking the linguistic turn seriously is that it helped we philosophers close the door on foundationalist philosophy. The most appealing form of foundationalism for philosophers in the twentieth century was the empiricist representationalism that stretched from Locke to Ayer and Carnap. The linguistic turn, which was already underway in the heyday of positivism, helped philosophy see its way out of the internal contradictions of empiricist representationalism and its attempt to supply foundational justifiers in the form of inference-generating causal observation reports or noninferred sensory information. In short, the linguistic turn helped disabuse we philosophers of our foundationalist pretensions. Of course, the linguistic turn, especially in its early years, did explicitly take the form of a linguistic foundationalism. The original linguistic turn, as inaugurated in early twentieth-century British philosophy by the likes of Bertrand Russell, was explicitly foundationalist in its attempt to give a fundamental epistemological account of knowledge and reality drawn up in purely linguistic terms. But, as Rorty argues in one of his histories of the linguistic turn, the linguisticism adopted for these purposes eventually undermined the foundationalism which was its end (Rorty 1993). This was because the original hope that language was amenable only to philosophical analysis and not to naturalistic analysis (according to methods of anthropology, or linguistics, or cognitive science) gave way over the course of the twentieth century as the naturalistic disciplines increasingly encroached on the terrain originally claimed by the new linguistic philosophers as their own.

One of Rorty's chief accomplishments in *Contingency* was that of spelling out how we can take seriously an explicitly anti-foundationalist conception of language in the context of the linguistic turn. Rorty's crucial move here involves dropping the idea of language as a representational medium in a way that enables him to break the foundationalist tie between physical processes of causation and rational-linguistic processes of justification. The consequences of this are, Rorty argued, momentous: "To drop the idea of languages as representations ... would be to de-divinize the world.... For it is essential to my view that we have no prelinguistic consciousness to which language needs to be adequate, no deep sense of how things are which it is the duty of philosophers to spell out in language" (1989, 21). Taking the linguistic turn means accepting that there is nothing outside of language to which we have a philosophical duty – this in turn means accepting that there is no extra-linguistic foundation which it is the job of language to represent.<sup>9</sup> Foundationalism thus gets short-circuited by the linguistic turn. But why should we see this as a good thing? Didn't Descartes teach us that we needed foundations? Well, no, not really. The problem with foundationalism is that it purchases normative authority (correctness) only at the cost of buying into dogmatic authoritarianism (infallibility). If there is any central idea that runs across all of Rorty's work, then here it is in all of its forceful simplicity: *authority without authoritarianism*.

In *Contingency* he expresses this idea on page after page, and in the last chapter tells his readers quite explicitly, “The fundamental premise of the book is that a belief can still regulate action, can still be thought worth dying for, among people who are quite aware that this belief is caused by nothing deeper than contingent historical circumstance” (1989, 189). Affirming contingency means giving up on all quasi-divinities in such forms as intuitional basic beliefs, perceptual observation reports, or the Book of Nature – taking the linguistic turn helps us do exactly this. A methodological dicta to focus solely on language opens up for philosophical reflection a unique field of inquiry in which we have no use for anything that can be made to look like a foundational authority that grounds or linguistic patterns. Notice here how the linguistic turn can be seen as undermining foundationalism *methodologically* rather than *metaphysically*: the best versions of linguistic turn philosophy (not only in analytic and pragmatist circles but also in the streams of phenomenology, structuralism, and critical theory) hold not that language is all there is, but rather that language offers a privileged point of departure for philosophical work that seeks to explicate our forms of normativity without appealing to foundations.<sup>10</sup>

A second broad reason for taking the linguistic turn is that it helped philosophers go post-foundational without descending into relativism. One of the initial promises of foundationalist philosophy had been that of a system that could show us definitively when we are, broadly speaking, correct. Foundationalism was a promise of unassailable normativity. The epitome of this program is Descartes’ project – epistemology ever since Descartes has remained fundamentally normative epistemology in that it seeks to explicate the conditions of possibility of knowledge as something that admits of correctness or rightness. The linguistic turn, understood as a *methodological* shift concerning how philosophy gets practiced rather than as a *metaphysical* platform stating how things really are, is consistent with this traditional philosophical ambition for explicating the good that is knowledge. The linguistic turn promises to preserve normativity after foundationalism goes by, amongst other things, naturalizing epistemology and morality. For some, most notably Quine, linguistic turn naturalization seemed to require jettisoning normativity altogether (Quine 1969). But for most contemporary philosophers of an analytic-pragmatist stripe, Rorty included, the turn away from foundationalism and toward linguistic naturalism can be seen as consistent with the idea that philosophy can help us explicate the normative grip that our use of language has on us (Kim 1988, 2003). This theme also clearly emerges in *Contingency*: “We can keep the notion of ‘morality’ just insofar as we can cease to think of morality as the voice of the divine part of ourselves and instead think of it as the voice of ourselves as members of a community, speakers of a common language” (1989, 59). A focus on language is de-divinizing but not for that reason de-moralizing. Here again we witness Rorty’s central insight of authority without authoritarianism, or what might be called morality without divinity.

The linguistic turn is therefore best seen as a methodological move that brings into focus a field of philosophical analysis which institutes the two desiderata named above: (1) the *anti-foundationalist* desideratum of avoiding any kind of invocation of theoretical foundations such as empiricist givens or rationalist basic beliefs, and (2) the *anti-relativist* desideratum of avoiding the loss of the normative in turning our philosophical attention away from foundationalism and toward naturalism or some other suitable alternative. It is useful to recognize that these desiderata can also be stated in their corollary positive forms as follows: (3) the *pro-contextualist* desideratum of putting forward philosophical accounts of truth, knowledge, goodness and the like which appeal to practical contexts of language use rather than theoretical foundations, and (4) the *pro-normative* desideratum of fashioning these philosophical accounts in such a way as to not lose sight of the normative purchase that our practices of language use have on us. Having described how the linguistic turn can be seen as instituting these desiderata in their negative forms, allow me to now turn to how it might satisfy these corollary positive requirements.

A methodological focus on linguistic usage promises to fulfill the first positive desideratum insofar as it provides a field of inquiry for philosophical reflection that refers purely to our linguistic practices of justifying our beliefs to one another with reasons. This dispenses with the old foundational need for an appeal to super-linguistic realities or idealities which our sociolinguistic justifications are answerable to. The justification of our beliefs, Rorty argued, has everything to do with how convincing we can make ourselves to our peers and nothing to do with how good we think we are at putting ourselves in touch with nonhuman reality. Justification, in other words, is a linguistic relation that holds amongst language-using humans rather than a non-linguistic relation between human minds and non-human realities. Rorty tells us that the “crucial premise” of the Sellarsian-Quinean argument forwarded in *Mirror* is that “we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and thus have no need to view it as accuracy of representation” (1979, 170). In subsequent work Rorty often discussed this contextualism, which he sometimes also provocatively referred to “ethnocentrism”, in the idiom of a linguistified pragmatism, for instance in his American Philosophical Association presidential address of December 1979, where he practically defined pragmatism in terms of the idea that “there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones – no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of the objects, or of the mind, or of language, but only those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow-inquirers” (1980, 165).<sup>11</sup> Notice how Rorty’s pragmatist conception of justification is here focused on context in a purely linguistic sense (“conversation” and “remarks”). Notice also that there is explicit talk of constraint here in a way that suggests attention to that which has normative purchase on our justificatory practices of giving and asking for reasons. This brings me straight away to the second desideratum that the linguistic turn aims to satisfy.

Attention to linguistic usage promises to provide a methodological field of focus in which we can come to recognize that we employ concepts in ways that are subject to normative requirements. Our use of language takes place under authority. By attending to linguistic usage we can come to recognize that reasons are something we put forward to, and accept from, one another in ways that we take to be binding and correct. Here is how Rorty put it in the context of a discussion of Donald Davidson's work on truth: "The need to justify our beliefs and desires to ourselves and to our fellow agents subjects us to norms, and obedience to these norms produces a behavioral pattern that we must detect in others before confidently attributing belief to them. But there seems no occasion to look for obedience to an additional norm – the commandment to seek the truth" (Rorty 1995, 26).<sup>12</sup> How exactly does non-authoritarian authority figure in on a linguistic analysis of meanings, sentences, statements? Just insofar as linguistic analysis enables us to discern that there are correct and incorrect usages of our words and other bits of language. Just try indiscriminately calling persons "criminal" or "diseased" and you will quickly see the point. Rorty's point was just that the correctness of the employment of a concept, which of course can change over time as we reapply the concept in novel situations by coming up with new usages of words, hinges not on the way in which our words track something ultimate in reality itself but rather merely on the extent to which we use our words in ways that our conversation partners themselves endorse in the context of conversations. This positive point about normativity, however, must be understood as going further than a merely linguistic description of correct language use. Rorty's chief pride in the linguistic turn concerns the way in which it helps us bring into view the cultural potential of our projects of novel redescription and new usages of words. In *Contingency* Rorty describes his "liberal utopia" as being brought about by a general increase in our sympathies with one another (good Humean that he is) and he understands this as taking place primarily through language (good Wittgensteinian that he is): "This process of coming to see other human beings as 'one of us' rather than as 'them' is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and redescription of what we ourselves are like" (1989, xvi). The thing to take note of here, and throughout the book, is that liberal progress is enabled in the first place by linguistic acts of "redescription" rather than, say, political acts of redistribution or recognition. According to Rorty's arguments in *Contingency*, the primary vehicles of social and moral progress are "words" and "vocabularies" (1989, 73). His clear penchant in that book for putting his point in terms of talk of talk features extraordinary faith in the power of language to change our worlds for the better.

Rorty's view is that a turn toward language will help us better understand how it is that we have such a thing as normativity without relying on something extra-human to back it up. This involves Rorty's big idea: authority without authoritarianism. In one of his more candid moments in a late essay, Rorty wrote: "I am a hedgehog who, despite showering my reader with allusions and

dropping lots of names, has really only one idea: the need to get beyond representationalism, and thus into an intellectual world in which human beings are responsible only to each other" (2004, 474).<sup>13</sup> Rorty's idea is that we are, in good Kantian fashion, able to construct authority amongst ourselves. This is something we would do well to be more explicit about in our reflections on the standard menu of philosophical topics.

### 3. Why More than Language Matters to Philosophy

The linguistic turn has been the subject of much criticism in every major philosophical tradition. Rorty's version of the linguistic turn has been criticized by analytic and pragmatist philosophers alike. These criticisms can be categorized under two headings. The vast majority of criticisms have amounted to *metaphysical-external* (or ontological-external or ethical-external) arguments to the effect that Rorty's linguistic turn just misses some crucial non-linguistic aspect of experience, reality, ethical life or some other equally important philosophical subject matter. A second form that a criticism of the linguistic turn could take is of a *methodological-internal* orientation. This criticism would amount to accepting the insights of the linguistic turn in instituting the two requirements of anti-foundationalism and anti-relativism, but then going on to suggest that the linguistic turn fails to fulfill these desiderata which it has set for itself.

Most of the criticisms of Rorty presently on offer miss the mark. They do so because they take the form of external and metaphysical-sounding pronouncements about the reductivism inherent in Rorty's claims on behalf of a purely linguistic philosophy. These criticisms largely fall wide of the mark because they construe Rorty as himself offering a metaphysics of language, a linguistic foundationalism, or what in short we can call "lingualism." But Rorty himself never said that everything is linguistic and so did not endorse the false fable of foundationalist lingualism. Indeed, as discussed at the beginning of the previous section, Rorty explicitly sought to disclaim the metaphysical and foundationalist pretences of first-wave linguistic turn philosophy. Rorty's claim was only that language offers a privileged point of departure for philosophical inquiry. In urging this point he avoided foundationalism by arguing "against the idea that there is a fixed task for language to perform" (1989, 13).<sup>14</sup> If language does have some specific job to perform, then analyses of language might somehow cut reality at its foundational joints. But Rorty disclaims foundationalism and lingualism at once. He thus disburdens himself of having to show how everything that is important is linguistic and of having to show how language really does represent reality itself. And yet in doing so he accepts a burden of a rather different kind. Because he now has to show how a methodological focus on language meets the twin requirement of enabling us to explicate normativity without an appeal to foundations.

These clarifications concerning how to best understand Rorty's view helps us weigh how we might want to criticize that view. For a criticism to hold ground against Rorty's linguistic turn, it must involve the claim that a purely linguistic philosophical methodology misses something crucial for the project of philosophical inquiry. We simply beg the question against Rorty if we presume at the outset that philosophical inquiry must account for something extra-linguistic. Perhaps it does – but that still needs to be shown. If we agree with Rorty that the job of contemporary philosophy is to bring into focus the possibility of authority without authoritarianism, then it is an open question, but also a fair one in the context of a criticism of linguistic pragmatism, if a strictly linguistic account can do the job. So instead of giving metaphysical-external criticisms of the linguistic turn, we might now begin to think about forwarding methodological-internal criticisms. The point of this brand of criticism would be to show that the desiderata instituted by the linguistic turn are valuable but that the linguistic turn does not itself satisfy these desiderata. The linguistic turn, according to this type of criticism, fails on its own terms. The linguistic turn fails to sufficiently address its own internal problematic insofar as it does not sufficiently explicate nonfoundational normativity. Now if the linguistic turn fails to be nonfoundationally normative, it is clearly not because of surreptitious foundationalism in language-centric philosophical methodologies. Rather, it could only fail at this by not bringing into full view the normativity of the practices which a methodological focus on language is meant to give us a perspective on.

Indeed it is not at all clear that taking meanings, discourses, and vocabularies as our methodological object of focus is sufficient for an account of normativity. To develop this criticism, it is helpful to chart two divergent paths corresponding to two theoretical options that a pragmatist might pursue if they take the linguistic turn with an eye toward fulfilling the positive double desiderata of contextualism and normativity. I shall call these the *weak-retail* and the *strong-wholesale* options for a linguistic account of non-foundational normativity. The former approach is Rorty's own, while the latter can be seen in the work of his former student and fellow linguistic pragmatist Robert Brandom (and perhaps also in some aspects of Hilary's Putnam's work, though I will not discuss this matter here).<sup>15</sup> I shall show how both options fail to put us in a good position to explicate normativity nonfoundationally, despite agreeing that this is a good goal.

According to the *weak* or *retail* approach, there is little to be gained by an attempt at a systematic philosophical account of non-foundational normativity. We can indeed offer non-foundational accounts of normativity, but these accounts will be retail or piecemeal and put forward on a case-by-case basis. We can tell a story about the correctness of our usage of words like "criminal" by, for instance, invoking analyses drawn up in sociological or anthropological terms. But such stories will not rely on, nor constitute, a general philosophical architecture whose aim is to show how any correct usage of any word derives its

correctness. These *retail* accounts of normativity are the ones that Rorty sought to make room for. He thought that we could give local or ethnocentric justifications of practical norms, but that these justifications could not be made to rise above the level of the particular to general systems of justification in general. Such retail accounts, Rorty argued, are all we need for the purposes of understanding the place of normativity in human action.

But are such accounts really sufficient? My worry is that a methodological choice to take language as the object of focus saddles the philosopher with an object of inquiry that is not robust enough to fully explicate the forms of normativity we often meet with in some of our most important practices. To show this, all we need are examples of practices where normative achievement is present, but in a way that cannot be brought into view through linguistic analyses. What such examples would show, of course, is not that linguistic analysis is never suitable for bringing into view the normativity of our practices, but rather that there are some practices (and presumably quite important ones) where language fails to bring us into contact with normativity. I think, in fact, that it is strikingly easy to find many such examples. Consider the practical achievement present in a successful dance performance in which the normativity is better construed as an embodied skill than anything that could be analyzed as propositional, sentential, or linguistic on even the broadest construal. No matter how long and thorough a manual of instructions on dance we might devise, all this verbal kibitzing is but gibberish to the body that is engaged in a performance that requires that we know how to do things without words. The point here is not just that there are somatic practices that cannot be reduced to linguistic marks and noises, but rather that there is a normativity characteristic of certain somatic practices which language on its own cannot bear. Dance may seem to some to be rather less important than other practices more central to our culture. But the example is illustrative of the way in which embodiment informs epistemic accomplishment. Once one begins to take this embodied perspective, it is remarkably difficult to disabuse oneself of the idea that the body has some important role to play in a vast range of human practices.<sup>16</sup>

Plenty of critics have noticed defects in piecemeal offerings like Rorty's. Many have argued that Rorty's account fails because his linguistic perspective is too reductive – as stated above, the majority of these criticisms amount to external arguments against linguistic pragmatism. Some other critics, however, have sought to hold on to the perspective of a linguistic pragmatism by forwarding it in a rather different way. These philosophers take the defects in Rorty's retail approach as symptomatic of the need for a *stronger* and more *wholesale* account of non-foundational linguistic normativity. Such an account would take the form of systematic philosophy of language that establishes the conditions of possibility of any form of linguistic correctness whatsoever.

The best contemporary example we have of such a wholesale account is that forwarded by Brandom, who writes in his recent *Reason in Philosophy* (2009) that “the most urgent philosophical task is to understand the nature of

this normativity, the bindingness or validity of conceptual norms” (2009, 33). Brandom’s development of this idea directly follows Rorty’s core idea of *normativity without foundations*. He writes, with even more breathtaking grandiosity than we find in Rorty, that “One of the permanent intellectual achievements and great philosophical legacies of the Enlightenment – and perhaps the greatest contribution modern philosophers have ever made to the wider culture – is the development of secular conceptions of legal, political, and moral normativity” (2009, 60). Brandom here expresses Rorty’s idea that we can give an account of, and so remain committed to, normativity without descending into wicked forms of foundationalist non-secularism to do so. But Brandom also aims well beyond Rorty in attempting to forward a systematic account of normativity itself where Rorty remained content to piece together an understanding of normativity on the basis of an assemblage of piecemeal micro-accounts of norms operating within practices. Since Brandom’s strategy goes beyond Rorty in a way that is illuminating, it is useful to give it some consideration here.

Brandom’s massive book *Making it Explicit* (1994) is non-foundational normative philosophy of language at the very pinnacle of systematicity. A key aim of that book is to show how concept use, which for Brandom always takes the form of rational practices of giving and asking for reasons, has normative purchase on us without buying its normativity by speaking the language of Nature, God, History, Destiny, or Anything Else. Brandom takes what might be called the ‘normative constructivism’ of our concepts to be a broadly Kantian insight: “One of [Kant’s] cardinal innovations is his introduction of the idea that conceptually structured activity is distinguished by its *normative* character. His fundamental insight is that judgments and actions are to be understood to begin with in terms of the specific way in which we are *responsible* for them” (1994, 8). Notable is that Brandom seeks to build an account of conceptual normativity in ways that obviously build on the insights of Rorty: “The ‘must’ of justification or good inference is not the ‘must’ of causal compulsion” (1994, 12). Normative authority for Brandom is not grounded in foundational authoritarianism but, as for Rorty, in discursivity and sociality. Brandom’s book is an attempt at a systematic and wholesale elaboration of how conceptual normativity gets constructed by making explicit in rational language that which is already implicitly binding in social practice.

But on the wholesale level, a methodological focus on language fails for quite the same kinds of reasons adduced above in criticism of the piecemeal account. What one would need to show in this instance is that, for a given systematic account of linguistic normativity, the account fails to explicate some crucial aspect of normativity present in all of the important cases. A full demonstration of this is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, for it would require systematically engaging a wholesale account of linguistic normativity such as Brandom’s. Still, I would like to at least nod toward the way in which Brandom’s wholesaler’s approach appears to fall short in certain respects which



Rorty, a retailer by trade, himself urged. It is worth recognizing in this context how Brandom's purely linguistic approach requires a methodological restriction on our object of analysis in such a way as to prioritize as paradigmatic specifically propositional uses of language. (And this is just one of many severe methodological restrictions adopted in this system.) Although Brandom asserts the "pragmatic priority of the propositional" in the realm of semantics (1994, 79), it is not at all clear that meaning in the first instance occurs at the level of the proposition. The point is that this is a methodological decision that needs to be justified. Brandom of course does attempt to justify this decision, and by deference to Kant, the very philosopher who encouraged a shift in the analysis of meaning from sub-propositional to properly propositional units of understanding. Brandom the Kantian tells us that, "What we do, as opposed to what happens to us, is to judge" (1994, 80). I agree with Brandom that judging is indeed one of the things I do. But Brandom is going further than that when he identifies us as primarily judging kinds of creatures. I do not know if I would wish to accord to judging supreme pragmatic priority in my own life. Indeed I do not know if I would wish to accord it supreme pragmatic priority with respect to the linguistic aspects of my life. When I talk to my friend or my lover, does judging really have to take priority? Always? Primarily? What about when I attempt to shower my lover in the poetry of a language that creates between us a beauty within which we can find our ways to one another newly? Are such poetic usages of language really parasitic on our propositional chit-chat about where to go for dinner and our propositional discourse on whatever films we happen to be watching? Or is the latter language of propositions itself parasitic on the language of love? Or (more likely) is neither of these ultimately primary and deserving of being accorded priority? A view of persons as in the first place judges sounds like a description of a person who it would be hard to be in love with, rather than a description of how two or more persons find their way to normativity (goodness, rightness, and even binding love) in the context of their shared conversations. The point, to reiterate, is not the external one that Brandom reduces love to language, but rather the internal one that Brandom's methodological restriction to language is an obstacle to a fully nonfoundational normativity.

This criticism highlights an aspect of Brandom's view with which Rorty would be inclined to disagree. Brandom's conception of language was always much thinner than Rorty's. Where Brandom is always rigorous about language as a field of philosophical analysis, Rorty remained ever more playful and romantic. Hence Brandom supposed we could philosophically systematize linguistic normativity while Rorty remained skeptical of all such projects. Rorty would never have endorsed Brandom's strange claim to the effect that the best thing, or the most important thing, about being human is making judgments. There are many things about who we are that are important accomplishments – all of them deserve our attention. But the contrast between Brandom and Rorty,

and the failings I have identified in each account, is instructive in the comparison that it enables.

For where Brandom and Rorty do meet, and remain stuck together, is in their thinking that language (whether construed in a broad and playful sense or a narrow propositional fashion) somehow captures what is of greatest importance about being human. It is not at all clear why we should feel inclined to accept this view. If Rorty could quip about Brandom unnecessarily restricting the scope of linguistic analysis to propositional analysis, then cannot we object to Rorty's unnecessary restriction of the field of meaningful human action to the domain of language as if semantics completely covers semiotics? The objection, put this way, cannot of course invoke human action as an unaccounted metaphysical remainder. The point, rather, is that we need a broader account of human action precisely for the purposes of understanding the normativity through which we guide ourselves such that we do not misunderstand that guidance as a strict function of some metaphysical or epistemological foundation to which we have privileged access.

If the worries I have been raising regarding both Rorty's retail strategy and Brandom's wholesale strategy are justified, then the linguistic turn has been a methodological misconception, at least in certain respects. This is not because the linguistic turn fails to acknowledge something that is really there anyway (i.e., some extra-linguistic reality which would deliver us back to the very foundationalisms that the linguistic turn rightly cautions us against). Rather, it is because the linguistic turn fails to meet its own worthwhile goal of achieving an account of normativity.

A metaphysical-external critique involves instituting a third desiderata over and above the two attributed above to Rorty: not only must we be non-foundational, and non-relativist, but also non-reductive. I do not think there is a viable way of coordinating these three desiderata with one another. The charge of reductivism, it seems to me, can only be made from the perspective of a pro-foundationalism, at least if the further requirement of non-relativism is also kept in view. This is because any account that sufficiently explicates normativity is not going to appear reductive except by reference to some alternative foundational perspective. For an account of normativity, we do not need to institute a third desiderata of non-reductivism, for we have all we need to go on with the first two. My claims are that the two desiderata are taken together sufficient (three cheers for the linguistic turn!) and that the linguistic turn does not sufficiently satisfy the second of its own two requirements (three strikes against the linguistic turn! the mighty Casey has struck out!).

If we take the linguistic turn in order to get the anti-foundationalist insight into view and also realize that we cannot rely purely on language to develop an account of normative practice, we can still always go one step further by taking some other turn that is both anti-foundationalist and pro-normative. If the linguistic turn is a methodological shift which brings into view nonfoundational normativity, then why should we not avail ourselves of other

similar but also more successful methodological shifts which bring the same into view but in a way that is both clearer and also non-reductive? At this point the language philosopher might reply that there simply is no other route beyond foundationalism except that which follows language all the way down. In other words, the reply might be that we face a strict alternative between linguisticism and foundationalism: if we do not take the linguistic turn, so the worry goes, we will saddle ourselves with a foundationalist methodology, at least insofar as we are committed to explicating normativity. It seems to me that this reply fails. But it is important to be careful here. For I agree that the linguistic turn is the philosophical perspective within which, historically speaking, philosophy was able to show itself the way out of the fly-bottle of foundationalism. But having now climbed to the next plateau, we can leave the linguistic turn behind like a ladder which we will no longer need, except to teach those who come after us how we got exactly here. We can, I think, see that this ladder can be left behind without regret by availing ourselves of alternative philosophical perspectives which are neither linguistic all the way down nor foundational at the core.

#### 4. Conclusion: With and Beyond the Linguistic Turn

I have charted a path through Rorty toward a slim pair of desiderata for our philosophical present and then toward the conclusion that the linguistic turn fails at satisfying these desiderata. Perhaps the linguistic turn can be taken as philosophically valuable without being taken to be ultimate as a philosophical methodology. If this is right, then it is likely the case that what philosophy needs in the present moment is a series of experimental post-linguistic-turn research projects that both take the twin requirements of the linguistic turn seriously and at the same time reject the fast conclusion that the linguistic turn will satisfy these requirements.

I mention in closing my own outlines of an attempt at such a project.<sup>17</sup> There are, of course, many other such projects along these lines that are much further along and also possibly more promising to the reader. What unites the various strands of philosophy I have in mind are that they all initiate a powerful *methodological* shift away from both a post-foundationalist and a post-lingualist *object* of philosophical attention. A very incomplete list of such projects would include work by Barry Allen (2004, 2008) taking artifacts as his focus, Ian Hacking (1982, 1992) focusing on complex material-ideational ensembles construed as “styles” of scientific thinking, Mark Johnson (1987, 2007) focusing on embodiment and metaphor from the point of view of pragmatist-informed cognitive linguistics and aesthetics, and Richard Shusterman (2008) focusing also on the aesthetics of bodily meaning or what he calls “somaesthetics.” My own offering is worth singling out in the present context not as a competitor to these other projects, but only insofar as my view is explicitly formulated as a pragmatist rejoinder to Rorty’s pragmatism, while the other post-linguistic-turn projects that I am aware of are not explicitly positioned as such.

My third-wave transitionalist pragmatism attempts to do justice to the insights inherent in Rorty's linguistic turn whilst also acknowledging the insights inherent in the prior pragmatist philosophies of James and Dewey which would regard linguistic analysis as methodologically insufficient for an account of non-foundational normativity. The key idea in my strategy involves a methodological turn toward the historicity and temporality of our practices in order to bring into focus ways in which normativity figures therein without thus figuring in a foundationalist manner. Normativity is featured in our practices just insofar as these practices involve successful realizations in the present of prior anticipations from the past. This view is meant to be suggestive of the broadly Deweyan character of practices of inquiry as the "reconstructive" amelioration of dangers, difficulties, or problems. At the heart of every version of pragmatism is a melioristic impulse toward betterment and improvement: this is the central theme of my pragmatist transitionalism. It can be fruitfully seen as an attempt to meet the two requirements brought into clear view by Rorty's linguistic turn pragmatism: bringing into view the meliorist normativity at the heart of our best achievements by focusing these through the non-foundational lens of transitionality.

The central idea for this project, authority without authoritarianism, represents the crucial philosophical problematic of our times. This project is also, as it happens, at the heart of the entire pragmatist tradition. Dewey stated it in the opening chapter of his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* when he asked a question that is at the heart of that book's project: "How, it will be asked, can inquiry which has to be evaluated by reference to a standard be itself the source of the standard?" (1938, 13). It was one of Richard Rorty's greatest philosophical achievements to have called our attention once again to the need to address ourselves to this urgent question. For in a response to this question we may yet find a valuable understanding of normativity without foundations. Therein would be our way to what is surely still wanting in our world today: authority without authoritarianism.

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#### NOTES

1. See the helpful commentary by Voparil (2010, 15–19), also an excellent brief overall introduction to Rorty's thought.
2. See Rorty's casual dismissal of his earlier book in Rorty (1979, 172n7).

3. Incidentally, this suggests that *Mirror* on the whole is perhaps most profitably read as an intellectual history of philosophy from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century, rather than as an original piece of philosophical argumentation in its own right. This is not to downplay Rorty's achievement in *Mirror*, but rather to more exactly locate it, namely as a synthetic rather than a wholly original project. On this retelling Sellars and Quine are the two principal heroes of the intellectual history put forward in that book. Though Rorty there explicitly locates himself in a capacious philosophical sweep involving Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger, the central problematic that his book is addressed to cannot be found in these three figures so much as in the work of the two later twentieth-century analytic-pragmatist epistemologists. The Dewey-Wittgenstein-Heidegger trifecta should be seen as inaugurating the larger post-Kantian problematic that has been the obsession of philosophy for at least the past one hundred years. Dewey, for instance, ably outlined the problematic in his *The Quest for Certainty* (1929) in a way that was deeply instructive for Rorty, especially in his later work where pragmatism guides the way to a more searching inquiry concerning how to retain the idea of normativity after foundationalism. But there are many ways of stating (and responding to) the general problematic of non-foundational and non-transcendental philosophy. My view is that Rorty's response is not to the general problem so much as to one specific formulation of it which can be located through Quine and Sellars, who took their bearings largely from a certain reading (and not the only possible one) of Dewey.

4. The relevant discussion is in Rorty (1979, 182–192).

5. The relevant discussion is in Rorty (1979, 192–209); note that Davidson plays a role here too and that in later essays Rorty (1998, 124ff.) sometimes expounded the insight by reference to Sellars and Davidson leaving Quine to the side.

6. This particular result is made clearest in Quine (1951).

7. This (but now I am merely speculating) may be the source of some of the lingering difference between Rorty and Brandom I discuss below, as is suggested by Rorty's critique of Brandom for failing to take seriously enough the Davidsonian (and also Quinean) critique of the idea of representation (1998, 130, 133).

8. For further discussion of these points regarding Rorty's positive ambition, see David Rondel's (forthcoming) paper "On Rorty's Evangelical Metaphilosophy" as well as my own (unpublished) paper "Challenging Philosophy."

9. As Rorty put it in his review of Hacking's book which I referred to at the outset, "Asking how languages manage to represent reality seems a bit like asking how it is possible for wrenches to wrench.... [I]t is easier to understand biological or sociological questions about how we managed to make the particular language we have made, or how we teach it to our young, than transcendental questions about how anything could do what we have made language do" (1977, 370).

10. It will be pointed out by careful readers that Rorty himself on at least one occasion expressed doubts about an interpretation of the linguistic turn as a shift in method when he said that "insofar as the linguistic turn made a distinctive contribution to philosophy I think that it was not a metaphilosophical one at all." But by "method" I do not mean anything particularly special above and beyond that which is deserving of philosophical attention in just the way that Rorty goes on to specify when he continues, "Its contribution was, instead, to have helped shift from talk about experience as a medium of representation to talk of language as such a medium – a shift which, as it turned out, made it easier to set aside the notion of representation itself" (1992, 373). The linguistic turn is a methodological shift just in the way it encourages us to shift what we talk about, inquire into, and wonder at. Such a methodological shift need not be taken as

implying that there is such a thing as a philosophical method in the offensive Cartesian sense, and this is what Rorty is worried about in the first part of the passage quoted. On a tangent, this approach to Rorty's caution about the term "method" is also the best way of resolving his quips about Dewey's frequent claims about "scientific method" as for instance in Rorty (1981).

11. On "ethnocentrism" see Rorty (1985, 1988, and 1989).

12. There are clear resonances with Brandom (1994) in this passage.

13. Note that the shortened version of this article in Rorty's *Philosophical Papers, Volume 4* unfortunately excerpts the section in which the quoted line appears.

14. In the passage quoted, the view is attributed to Donald Davidson, but it is also Rorty's own.

15. See Bernstein (2008, 212) contrasting Brandom and Rorty along similar lines.

16. The work of Richard Shusterman (2008) and Mark Johnson (1987) is instructive on these points.

17. See for the full picture Koopman (2009).

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