

Richard Rorty
Mind, Language, and Metaphilosophy: Early Philosophical Papers
Edited by Stephen Leach and James Tartaglia

INTRODUCTION

Richard Rorty published six volumes of his own selections from the papers he wrote between 1972 and 2006. Together with his two monographs, these now provide the main source for his views, and scholars may debate at leisure whether some of the papers Rorty did not select have been unjustly neglected as a consequence. However it seems clear to us that there is a large body of Rorty's work which has most certainly been unjustly neglected: the early work. For before he wrote 'The World Well Lost', the 1972 paper that opens *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty was already an influential philosopher. Many still fondly recall this first phase of his career, and we have often heard say that Rorty was an excellent analytic philosopher back in the '60s and early '70s before he read some continental philosophy, became a postmodernist, and consequently went off the rails. Almost everything about this latter view is wrong, but there is nevertheless a kernel of truth to it.¹ This is that Rorty wrote some classic papers in the '60s and early '70s which, for better or worse, would probably be of more interest to the average contemporary philosopher working on mind or language than his mature manifesto of replacing objectivity with solidarity and metaphysics with literature. But given that Rorty's thinking never did radically change direction, there is also plenty to be found here for those interested in the mature Rorty. To neglect the papers in this volume is, in short, to neglect innovative ideas which retain their interest and relevance, as well as a

¹ Rorty's MA supervisor Charles Hartshorne studied under Husserl and Heidegger in the '20s, and Rorty taught a course on Heidegger during his first appointment at Wellesley College. Any philosopher who thinks that mistrusting the notion of objective truth amounts to being off the rails will find little reason in this volume for believing Rorty was ever on them.

significant part of the career of a highly significant thinker – the part you might well find you like best. The early Rorty has been languishing in old journals, obscure collections and faded memories for too long!

Despite our enthusiasm for early Rorty, however, we must admit that Rorty himself had no interest in seeing his early papers reprinted; he thought they had passed their sell-by date.² On this matter we shall simply have to disagree, noting that his assessment of his earlier work was typically harsh, even allowing for the admirable trait of modesty.³ We also suspect Rorty's dismissal of these early works was influenced by his pragmatic concern to produce a positive effect upon intellectual life; he was reluctant to risk mixing his message. But if that was indeed his concern, he need not have worried. For although Rorty changed his mind about some of the issues discussed in this volume, the things that really mattered to him, namely his pragmatism, his desire to metaphilosophically get behind technical philosophical debates, his unflagging ambition to reconcile apparently divergent strands of thought, his conviction in the importance of the history of philosophy – all these characteristically Rortyan traits are abundantly in evidence here. The more complete picture of Rorty that emerges with these papers is of a thinker with a particularly single-minded vision, in the light of which it becomes easier to believe, and be impressed by, his 1992 statement that, 'I have spent 40 years looking for a coherent and convincing way of formulating my worries about what, if anything, philosophy is good for.'⁴

² We have this on the authority of Alan Malachowski (personal correspondence); Rorty also suggests as much in his 2007 'Intellectual Biography' (in R. Auxier and L. Hahn (eds.) *The Philosophy of Richard Rorty*, Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 2010).

³ See, for example, the later assessment he made of his 1965 introduction to *The Linguistic Turn* ('Twenty-Five Years Later' in R. Rorty (ed.) *The Linguistic Turn*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); or some of his later comments on *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* ('Response to Michael Williams' in R. Brandom (ed.) *Rorty and His Critics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

⁴ *Philosophy and Social Hope*, London: Penguin, 1999: 11.

As regards our selection, we have only included papers published before ‘The World Well Lost’ since Rorty made his own selections after that, and we have tried to select pieces that still stand up on their own, retaining more philosophical than historical interest. We have not included any reviews, even though some are of interest in understanding the genesis of his thought, and we have also missed out some minor occasional pieces, his encyclopaedia entries, a paper on Whitehead, and the introduction to his philosophy of language anthology, *The Linguistic Turn*. The latter, we think, is the only really significant omission, but it remains best read in the context for which it was intended: at the start of the anthology.

Rorty used the introductions to his collections to draw out the moral of his work, marshalling diverse discussions in support of a common pragmatist cause. Obviously we cannot do this for him, so we have instead supplied what we think most readers would most appreciate: discussion of the papers in chronological order of publication.⁵ We will not critically evaluate Rorty’s arguments, since this would not be an appropriate place to do so; this is a collection of papers by Rorty, not about him.⁶ Rather, we will restrict ourselves to providing overviews, making connections and highlighting points of interest, whether from the perspective of on-going debates or of Rorty’s wider projects. We will also provide some bibliographical information. Rorty once said that, ‘[a]ttempts to link up a thinker’s ideas with his or her

⁵ There was too much overlap for a useful thematic organisation, and chronological order of composition, to the extent we were able to determine this, provided no revelations.

⁶ It does not follow that we accept all his views. One of us has argued that Rorty’s thinking ultimately hits a brick wall, since he cannot provide good reasons to accept his pragmatism; he seems to offer plenty but on closer inspection they disintegrate (J. Tartaglia, ‘Did Rorty’s Pragmatism have Foundations?’, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 18 (2010): 607-627.; for an earlier evaluation, see J. Tartaglia, *Rorty and the Mirror of Nature*, London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 224-230). The other has argued that were Rorty’s criticisms of philosophy as a mirror of nature to be made from the viewpoint of the Pyrrhonian sceptic, philosophy might yet retain its autonomy; as an autonomous discipline philosophy does not necessarily stand or fall with a mirroring role (S. Leach, ‘Pyrrhonian Scepticism and the Mirror of Nature’, unpublished manuscript).

politics or personal life are not irrational, and they may produce truths. But they are optional.’⁷ Thus he thought Heidegger was ‘a pretty nasty character’, but this was irrelevant to his work: he could have written the same books if he had been a hero.⁸ However the fact that Rorty, unlike Heidegger, was not entirely dismissive of biography presumably explains why he wrote two autobiographical essays, gave sociologist Neil Gross access to his papers to write his biography, and why he increasingly added autobiographical notes to his later writings.⁹ Gross argued for a strong connection between Rorty’s thought and biography, but we have no such commitment: we simply include biographical information whenever it seems interesting, and especially when it helps explain how ideas entered Rorty’s work in support of his on-going aims.

The collection starts in 1961 with Rorty’s first published article ‘Pragmatism, Categories, and Language’. Appearing in the *Philosophical Review*, this was certainly an auspicious start for a 29-year-old philosopher. But Rorty already had a reputation as someone to watch; the paper was written at Wellesley College, where Rorty had his first teaching post from 1958, but by the time it was published he was already set to move to Princeton in the fall, having turned down offers from Harvard, Yale, John Hopkins, Connecticut and Texas. At Wellesley, Rorty felt he was ‘behind the times’, for he had done his Ph.D. at Yale, which was then ‘entirely pre-analytic ... the most reactionary of U.S. philosophy departments.’ Consequently now that ‘[a]nalytic philosophy was taking over’, he thought his expertise in metaphysics and history

⁷ E. Mendieta (ed.) *Take care of freedom and truth will take care of itself: interviews with Richard Rorty*, Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 108.

⁸ *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 111. Rorty imagines an alternative, better Heidegger in *Philosophy and Social Hope*, pp. 190-7.

⁹ For Heidegger’s notorious attitude, see Safranski, R. *Ein Meister aus Deutschland: Heidegger und seine Zeit*, Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag GmbH & Co., 1994, p. 15. Rorty’s autobiographical essays are in *Philosophy and Social Hope* and Auxier and Hahn op. cit., and Gross’s biography is *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

of philosophy would no longer stand him in good stead, so he immersed himself in Quine, Wittgenstein and Austin; he ‘retooled’ himself to become an analytic philosopher.¹⁰ This paper finds him trying to reconcile these new-found interests with pragmatism.

The paper begins: ‘Pragmatism is getting respectable again’. As a patriotic 15-year-old arriving at the University of Chicago, Rorty had been shocked to discover that pragmatism, America’s only home-grown philosophy, was looked down upon by the establishment. This was because the establishment was dominated by European émigrés like Carnap, who had ‘simply [taken] over American philosophy departments’,¹¹ and who stood for the ‘hard’ discipline of logic and analysis, not ‘soft’ concerns with historical understanding and social benefits. But Rorty was never a believer in irreconcilable dichotomies, so he sets out in this paper, just as later in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, to show that analytic philosophy can lead to pragmatist conclusions. At the time he was encouraged by Morton White’s recent *Toward Reunion in Philosophy*, which had argued that Quinean holism supported the pragmatist view that inquiry should have prior ends in view. But nevertheless, back in the early ’60s there was considerable wishful thinking behind this memorable opener.¹² Did Rorty succeed in making pragmatism respectable? Not really, for by the time he was associated with it he was no longer a respectable figure in the eyes of the establishment,

¹⁰ Rorty in D. Nystrom and K. Puckett, *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies: A Conversation with Richard Rorty*, Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2002, pp. 53-54.

¹¹ Rorty in Borradori, G. (ed.) *The American Philosopher: Interviews*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 109.

¹² For the institutional status of pragmatism at the time, see N. Gross ‘Becoming a Pragmatist Philosopher: Status, Self-Concept, and Intellectual Choice’, *American Sociological Review*, 67 (2002): 52-76 (pp. 56-7) and N. Gross ‘Richard Rorty’s Pragmatism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Ideas’, *Theory and Society*, 32 (2003): 93-148 (p. 127).

given his later adoption of a rather less conciliatory stance than he takes here, namely that analytic philosophy self-destructs after leading us to pragmatism.¹³

To try to rehabilitate pragmatism, Rorty discusses Peirce because unlike Dewey and James, Peirce was a logician, and thus the most liable to be viewed as respectable in analytic eyes. However Peirce was the classical pragmatist for whom the mature Rorty had least sympathy owing to the former's lack of concern for moral and social issues, a worry foreshadowed here in an ambivalent footnote.¹⁴ The paper tries to show that Peirce's doctrine of the reality and irreducibility of 'thirdness' shows the way beyond the reductionism of logical positivism towards the more enlightened stance of the later Wittgenstein. Crucially, the latter stance recognises that 'language cannot be transcended' (p. 209), or, in other words, as Rorty would later formulate this most typical of Rortyan claims, that we cannot 'step outside our skins'.¹⁵ With this first paper clearly in mind, Rorty later recalled in withering tones that he 'waste[d]' his '27th and 28th years trying to discover the secret of Charles Saunders Peirce's esoteric doctrine of "the reality of Thirdness" and thus of his fantastically elaborate semiotico-metaphysical "System".¹⁶ However, even if he did eventually find less circuitous ways to unite Wittgensteinian philosophy of language with pragmatism, his direction of travel was clear from the outset, and there is still plenty that remains of interest in this dense and rich

¹³ In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979; Rorty says 'epistemological behaviourism' rather than 'pragmatism' in this work, but he adopted the latter label for his position soon afterwards.

¹⁴ Rorty ultimately decided that Peirce's views were incoherent; see Auxier and Hahn op. cit., p. 8. For an interesting imagined dialogue between Rorty and Peirce, see Susan Haack's "'We pragmatists...": Peirce and Rorty in conversation', reprinted from the *Partisan Review* (1997) in volume 3 of J. Tartaglia (ed.) *Richard Rorty: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, London: Routledge, 2009.

¹⁵ Rorty, R. (1982) *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, p. xix.

¹⁶ *Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 134.

paper, particularly the reflections on vagueness (another concern he later considered a waste of time).¹⁷

When ‘The Limits of Reductionism’ came out later in the year, Rorty had just started at Princeton and become a new father with his first wife, the philosopher Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. The paper is set on the ‘ethereal plane of metaphilosophy’ (p. 104), and finds Rorty concerned with the problem of self-referential consistency for reductionist programmes in philosophy. The best known example of this problem arose for the logical positivist claim that all linguistic expressions are either tautologies, empirical hypotheses or nonsense; the problem was that the claim itself did not seem to fit these categories. Faced with this problem, the reductionist urge to explain the bewildering diversity of the world in terms of a more manageable number of elements is blocked. To unblock it a ‘distinction of level’ must be made (p. 107), such as Carnap’s distinction between internal and external questions, or Kant’s distinction between empirical reality and the things-in-themselves, since then the reductionist claim need no longer be subject to its own strictures. The task of metaphilosophy, Rorty thinks, is to determine the utility of such distinctions of level; philosophy requires metaphilosophy to make these distinctions and keep itself self-consistent, for reductionism reaches its limit when it can no longer provide a metaphilosophical account of itself.¹⁸

¹⁷ R. Rorty, ‘How many grains make a heap?’, *London Review of Books*, January 20, 2005.

¹⁸ It is interesting that Rorty always saw the importance of avoiding self-referential inconsistency, and even tried to develop a general framework to understand how it could be avoided, given that the problem plagued his career in the eyes of some of his critics. For the definitive statement of this criticism, see Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 18-29; and for an assessment of Rorty’s response, see J. Tartaglia, ‘Did Rorty’s Pragmatism have Foundations?’, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 18 (2010): 607-627.

Metaphilosophy is also the subject of ‘Realism, Categories, and the “Linguistic Turn”’, published in 1962. This was a troubled year for Rorty, since his father suffered a nervous breakdown and became psychotic, remaining so until his death in 1973, while Rorty himself began treatment for obsessional neurosis which continued until 1968.¹⁹ It was also the year Rorty started approaching publishers with his idea for *The Linguistic Turn*, and just as in the introduction to that anthology, this paper defends analytic philosophy’s preoccupation with language, while setting the distinction between ideal and ordinary language philosophy within a metaphilosophical framework. Rorty begins by trying to allay the suspicions of Aristotelian realists that the linguistic turn was a misguided product of Cartesian subjectivist premises. Rather, he argues, it was justified by two key ideas we have already encountered: the impossibility of transcending language and the need to avoid self-referential inconsistency. There are good reasons for taking the linguistic turn, then; moreover doing so does not require realism to be abandoned, for although ideal-language philosophy does indeed lead in that direction, ordinary-language philosophy offers realism new and powerful support.

In 1963, Rorty published two papers on A.N. Whitehead, a philosopher of great significance to him as a graduate student; his MA dissertation at Chicago was about Whitehead, and was supervised by Charles Hartshorne, one of Whitehead’s students, while his Ph.D. at Yale was supervised by Paul Weiss, also one of Whitehead’s students. The paper we have included, ‘The Subjectivist Principle and the Linguistic Turn’, finds Rorty pointing out affinities between Whitehead’s metaphysics and Wilfrid Sellars’s analytic philosophy.²⁰ In 2007, he

¹⁹ N. Gross, *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 216.

²⁰ The other paper, ‘Matter and Event’, is more narrowly focused on the interpretation of Whitehead’s philosophy. We judged that one paper about Whitehead would probably suffice.

remembered this as one of only two papers from the '60s, along with 'Pragmatism, Categories, and Language', that he still liked; both attempted to 'fuse the horizons of seemingly opposed philosophers'. And this particular fusion was particularly significant to Rorty, since Sellars was his new hero: while immersing himself in analytic philosophy he had soon found that 'the one analytic philosopher I really cared for was Wilfrid Sellars' and he later recalled that 'for the next twenty years most of what I published was an attempt to capitalize on his achievements'.²¹ This paper, then, announces Rorty's new affiliation with Sellars and analytic philosophy. He still sympathised with Whitehead's aim of overcoming the substance-property framework of traditional metaphysics, for he saw both Whitehead and Sellars as grappling with the 'central task of contemporary philosophy' (p. 153), namely to show that we can have knowledge of an independent reality despite our inability to 'step outside our skins'. But Rorty now thinks Whitehead's metaphysical approach has been superseded. The personal significance that this had for him can be gauged by the fact that the previous year he had proposed, to the outrage of his old teacher Hartshorne, to give a lecture entitled, 'Why Whitehead is Good but Wilfrid Sellars is Better'.²² The key Sellarian claim in the paper, namely that knowledge relates to facts, not substances or properties, was later to play a prominent role in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

'Empiricism, Extensionalism, and Reductionism' also appeared in 1963. Its aim is to show that empiricism and extensionalism have been unjustly tarred with the same brush as reductionism, but when suitably disentangled, we see that only reductionism should be rejected. Rorty begins by arguing that the empiricist view that distinct ideas can be traced back to distinct sensory impressions, and hence that 'there is no real indefiniteness in our

²¹ Auxier and Hahn op. cit., p. 11; Nystrom and Puckett op. cit., p. 53; Auxier and Hahn op. cit., p. 8.

²² Gross op. cit., p. 166.

thought' (p. 178), naturally leads to the extensionalist view that the world can be described in exclusively extensional language, that is, language in which co-referring terms can be freely interchanged without changing the truth-values of its statements. Typical examples of non-extensional language involve mental states. For example, it is true that 'Danglars believed the Count of Monte Cristo was rich' but, until he discovered that they were one and the same, he did not believe this of Edmond Dantès; thus the sentence is not extensional. This suggests an indefiniteness in language, on the grounds that since the terms for Dantès cannot be freely substituted, they cannot simply be being used to discriminate features in the world. However Rorty provides two alternative strategies he thinks will always allow us to 'fix it so that each difference in words can be correlated with a difference in the world.' (p. 180) The possibility of such extensionalist reconstructions is all empiricism requires, he thinks, and although they might lead to the *ad hoc* positing of new entities, or perhaps even 'a new language to suit the occasion' (p. 184), this will not be perceived as a problem except by those held captive by Sellars's 'Myth of the Given', who think experience provides the means to construct a unitary, reductionist language adequate to the timeless nature of the world. But 'this world is well lost' (p. 185) says Rorty, just as he would nine years later.

1965 was a breakthrough year for Rorty's career, since he received tenure at Princeton and published 'Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories', a landmark paper in the history of the philosophy of mind, and the only one in this collection to have been regularly reprinted.²³ He later described it as 'an attempt to please [Gregory] Vlastos, and my Harvard- or Oxford-trained colleagues, by contributing to an ongoing debate in the philosophical journals,

²³ Rorty must have written the paper long before 1965, since he submitted it in 1963 for a collection edited by Max Black; Black rejected it (Gross op. cit., p. 186).

eschewing historical retrospection.’²⁴ The debate in question concerned U.T. Place and J.J.C. Smart’s ‘Identity Theory’, which claims that sensations are brain processes, and hence are compatible with a physicalist understanding of the world. Rorty proposed radicalising the theory with a ‘Disappearance Form of the Identity Theory’ which aimed to ‘impugn the existence of sensations’ (p. 33). During the debate that ensued the label ‘eliminative materialism’ was coined to describe Rorty’s position. A similar position had earlier been defended by Paul Feyerabend, but Rorty’s paper remained the *locus classicus* of eliminative materialism, even after Rorty himself abandoned it, until Paul Churchland’s 1981 ‘Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes’ changed the target of elimination from conscious sensations to beliefs and other propositional attitudes.²⁵

In 1967, Rorty finally saw *The Linguistic Turn* published, together with two entries in Paul Edward’s high-profile *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and the long-forgotten but fascinating paper we reproduce here, ‘Do Analysts and Metaphysicians Disagree?’ The topic is again metaphilosophy, and Rorty spends most of the paper trying to show that a principled distinction between analytic philosophers and metaphysicians cannot be drawn. Both deal with the same problems, he thinks, and the only significance to the analyst’s focus on second-order questions about language rather than first-order questions about the world is that ‘there are no methods except attending to actual or possible linguistic behaviour to decide questions about the nature of x’ (p. 44). Unless metaphysicians have ‘an alternative method of inquiry at hand’ (p. 45), then, and Rorty does not think they do, this apparently key difference is just

²⁴ Auxier and Hahn op. cit., p. 11.

²⁵ James Cornman coined it in ‘On the Elimination of “Sensations” and Sensations’, *Review of Metaphysics*, 22 (1968): 15-35. For highlights of the ensuing debate, see volume 1 of J. Tartaglia (ed.) *Richard Rorty: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, London: Routledge, 2009. Feyerabend’s eliminativism is presented in ‘Materialism and the Mind-Body Problem’, *Review of Metaphysics*, 17 (1963): 49-66. For Rorty’s ambivalent rejection of eliminative materialism, see *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, pp. 118-127.

presentational, since analysts are free to follow metaphysicians in claiming to have made discoveries about the world rather than language. Rorty's conclusion is that a 'vague' but 'less misleading' way of drawing the distinction is through their differing attitudes to wisdom (p. 52). Thus the metaphysician does, and the analyst does not, believe that finding answers to the traditional problems of philosophy will make us wise; only the metaphysician retains 'Platonic faith that argument can bring us to truth' (p. 53). The analytic philosopher, by contrast, looks for wisdom in science, art, and the kind of 'speculative philosophy' which aims not at discovering truths, but at 'finding new ways of seeing things through finding new ways of saying things' (p. 40); Rorty's 'edifying philosophy' was later to play this role.²⁶ Thus ultimately, the analyst realises that the philosophical tradition leads 'either to speculative philosophy or to a post-philosophical culture' (p. 52). Rorty was to draw much the same conclusion in the introduction to *Consequences of Pragmatism*, but by then it is the pragmatist who ushers in a 'post-Philosophical culture'²⁷; in this paper the analyst was still the hero.

There were no publications from Rorty in 1968-9. During this time he suffered from clinical depression, but he still managed to remain productive, writing drafts of at least two of his 1970 papers and beginning work on the plot to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, the leading idea of which had already been announced in *The Linguistic Turn*, where Rorty says 'the most important thing that has happened in philosophy during the last thirty years' was not the linguistic turn itself, but rather 'the beginning of a thoroughgoing rethinking of certain

²⁶ *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 360.

²⁷ *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. xl.

epistemological difficulties' which stemmed from 'the traditional "spectatorial" account of knowledge'.²⁸

Then in 1970 five papers were published, all reproduced here. The first, 'Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental', is one of the all-time great Rorty papers; it influenced Daniel Dennett and remains fully relevant to contemporary debates in the philosophy of mind, where intentionality and phenomenal consciousness still dominate the field as putative 'marks of the mental'. Rorty considers many more options than this, but concludes that strictly speaking there is no mark of the mental, although there is nevertheless a family resemblance based on incorrigibility 'that ties the various things called "mental" together and makes it possible to contrast them all with the physical' (p. 421). Following Sellars in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Rorty understands incorrigibility as the linguistic practice of allowing first-person reports of sensations and thoughts to trump third-person judgements. But since this practice might one day cease, it could transpire that there are no mental entities; thus Rorty neatly ties this view in with his eliminative materialism.²⁹

'Wittgenstein, Privileged Access, and Incommunicability' is stylistically atypical for Rorty, a trenchantly analytical piece overflowing with fine distinctions and numbered claims. In it,

²⁸*The Linguistic Turn*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967 / 1992, p. 39. For Rorty's illness, see J. Knobe, 'A Talent for Bricolage: An Interview with Richard Rorty', *The Dualist*, 2 (1995): 56-71. The two papers Rorty drafted were 'Cartesian Epistemology and Changes in Ontology' (Gross op. cit., pp. 203-4) and 'In Defence of Eliminative Materialism' (there is a 1969 draft of the latter in the Rorty archives: Box 8, Folder 9). He says he began *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* during this period in the preface to the book.

²⁹ Dennett acknowledges Rorty's influence in 'The Case for Rorts' (R. Brandom (ed.) *Rorty and his Critics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). For intentionality as the mark of the mental, see e.g., M. Tye *Ten Problems of Consciousness*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995; for phenomenal consciousness as the mark of the mental, see e.g. J. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992. For the relevance of Rorty's views on the mark of the mental to on-going debates, see J. Tartaglia, 'Consciousness, Intentionality, and the Mark of the Mental: Rorty's Challenge', *The Monist*, 91 (2008): 324-46.

Rorty disputes interpretations of Wittgenstein's private language argument by both George Pitcher and John Cook, arguing that the emphasis they place on Wittgenstein's 'hostility to privacy' (p. 205) obscures his real insight. Rorty argues that there is no good reason to deny that sensations and thoughts are private, nameable and knowable, once it is grasped that 'privileged access' to them is fully accounted for by the linguistic practice of incorrigibility. The reason Wittgenstein targeted privacy was that he wanted to 'cut Cartesian scepticism off at the roots' (p. 205), but this aim is already achieved by the realisation that there is no pre-linguistic awareness, and hence that privileged access to mental states cannot be a matter of a linguistically unmediated conscious presence; the latter point, summed up in Sellars's slogan 'all awareness is a linguistic affair',³⁰ was Wittgenstein's real insight.

'In Defense of Eliminative Materialism' finds Rorty responding to critics of his 1965 paper. The objection is that reports of brain states cannot replace reports of sensations without descriptive loss unless the former entail the latter, which they do not. Rorty's response is that this entailment is only insisted upon because his critics are held captive by Sellars's 'Myth of the Given', and hence think we have a pre-linguistic awareness of sensations to which our descriptions must be adequate. But the notion of linguistic adequacy to something of which we are non-linguistically aware is an illusion, an attempt to 'step outside our skins', and to illustrate this Rorty gives his 'Antipodeans' thought-experiment a first outing, arguing that we would be unable to isolate any 'same thing' referred to by both ordinary speakers reporting their mental states and speakers who report only neural states.³¹

³⁰ *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956 / 1997, p. 63.

³¹ The definitive version of the thought experiment is in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, chapter 2.

‘Cartesian Epistemology and Changes in Ontology’ is, in effect, a prolegomenon to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, offering an elegant overview of one major thread of argument in his later attempt to historically deconstruct Western philosophy, while also showing where his earlier concerns with reductionism, the linguistic turn and eliminative materialism fit in. Ontology, and thus the problems of metaphysics, Rorty argues, is rooted in Cartesian scepticism; it is an attempt to redescribe the world which only seemed necessary because philosophers bought into the Cartesian notion of mind as an inner repository of representations about which we are incorrigible. The task of ontology became that of doing ‘enough reducing so that the universe looked reasonably neat, but not so much that one had to say such *outré* things as “Numbers are really inscriptions”’ (p. 280). This came to seem unnecessary, however, when philosophers took the linguistic turn and realised that incorrigibility is a contingent linguistic practice, a realisation Rorty identifies with rejecting the ‘Myth of the Given’ (p. 282). Rejecting this myth undermines Cartesian scepticism, allowing us to acquiesce in an exclusively social conception of justification, and thereby obviating any need for ontology.

Although the central argument of ‘Strawson’s Objectivity Argument’ was later repeated,³² this paper remains Rorty’s most sustained engagement with Kant. Rorty thinks P.F. Strawson was right to want an analytical reconstruction of Kant’s transcendental deduction, purged of idealist metaphysics but preserving the insight that the possibility of experience presupposes a world of objects. However Strawson fails to get the job done since his argument remains wedded to the Kantian notion of intuition. Rorty’s preferred reconstruction finds in the transcendental deduction a challenge to the sceptic to imagine a language which does not allow us to make judgements by subsuming particulars under kinds, or which does so without

³² In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, pp. 148-55.

containing names for objects; the aim is simply to shift the burden of proof onto the sceptic. Then, in the final and most interesting section of the paper (pp. 236-44) Rorty turns to a historical diagnosis of Kant as a ‘half-way point between Descartes and Wittgenstein’. Kant advanced beyond the Cartesian notion of experience as ‘self-luminescent’, an automatic kind of knowledge, by showing that knowledge is ‘discursive rather than intuitive’. However he did this by introducing two kinds of unconscious representation, ‘unsynthesized intuitions’ and ‘unsynthesizing concepts’, thereby remaining wedded to representationalism and creating the ‘pseudo-discipline’ of transcendental philosophy whose job it was to work out how these ineffable representations unite. Wittgenstein, however, takes the final step beyond Cartesianism by realising that concepts and intuitions are dispositions to linguistic behaviour abstracted from judgements, and that judgement is the ‘indecomposable unit of epistemological analysis’.

1971 was another turbulent year for Rorty; on the positive side he met his second wife, the bioethicist Mary Varney Rorty, but he also became involved in an acrimonious divorce with his first. The latter accentuated tensions with his Princeton colleagues that had already been brewing, and as the decade progressed, he became both increasingly isolated at Princeton and increasingly prepared to pit himself against the analytic establishment.³³ But there was no accompanying shift in his position; the Wittgensteinian views he had been developing for years remained in place, they were just no longer credited to ‘analytic philosophy’ and ‘the linguistic turn’.³⁴ The paper he published that year, ‘Verificationism and Transcendental

³³ Gross op. cit., p. 200.

³⁴ For one of Rorty’s later attempts to put some distance between himself and analytic philosophy, see ‘Twenty-Five Years Later’ in the 1992 edition of *The Linguistic Turn*. It seems to us, however, that most of the reasons he provides there for downplaying the analyst’s focus on language are reasons he gave back in the ‘60s, and that ‘analyst’, ‘epistemological behaviourist’ and ‘pragmatist’ were little more than different labels he used for the same view at different points of his career.

Arguments', continues Rorty's interest in the anti-sceptical force of Wittgenstein's private language argument and Strawson's analytical reconstructions of transcendental arguments, an interest soon to be usurped by the more radical position he developed in 'The World Well Lost' out of Donald Davidson's rejection of conceptual schemes. In this earlier paper, Rorty accepts the criticism that linguistic anti-sceptical arguments only show that to talk about experiences we must accept that it seems there is a world of objects, not that there actually is, and that to secure the stronger conclusion would require an implausible verificationism, namely that our commitment to objects cannot be mistaken since it cannot be verified to be mistaken. However, Rorty thinks the arguments only require a milder form of intravocabulary verificationism, which says that the sceptic cannot show that our commitment to objects is mistaken unless they can show that we already accept a way of verifying that it is mistaken.

'Indeterminacy of Translation and of Truth', one of three papers from 1972 reproduced here, is Rorty's first critical engagement with Quine. Rorty adopts a similar line against Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of translation to that of Chomsky's famous critique,³⁵ arguing that Quine cannot maintain a principled distinction between the indeterminacy of translation and the general phenomenon of underdetermination of theory by data, and as such cannot consistently reject realism about meaning on the grounds of the former while remaining a realist about physics in spite of the latter. According to Rorty's 'mild "epistemological" interpretation' (p. 453), Quinean indeterminacy is just a consequence of correct translation being underdetermined by all the available evidence, distinguished from scientific cases of underdetermination only by its unexpectedness, given that knowledge of meaning seems, on the face of it, intuitive rather than 'the result of applying a *theory*' (p. 450). Rorty is not

³⁵N. Chomsky, 'Quine's Empirical Assumptions', in D. Davidson and J. Hintikka (eds.) *Words and Objections*, Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969.

misinterpreting Quine, since he knows Quine's intentions were ontological rather than epistemological.³⁶ Rather he is trying to show that Quine is not entitled to his ontological commitments, and concludes by presenting him with a dilemma: either give up on all objective matters of fact, physics included, or else allow them in linguistics. The former, which would emphasise 'the revolutionary character of the Hegelianism which Quine picked up from Dewey' (p. 460) is of course the paradigmatically Rortyan choice.

Daniel Dennett, along with Donald Davidson and Thomas Kuhn, was one of a select group of Rorty's contemporaries whose work he tirelessly promoted, albeit far from uncritically. In 'Dennett on Awareness', Rorty argues that Dennett is mistaken in thinking that insight in philosophy of mind is to be gained by empirically investigating internal functional organisation; by finding out what is going on 'beneath the skin' rather than treating a person as a sealed 'black box', as Dennett thinks previous philosophers had done. The problem, Rorty thinks, is that any functional division of the physical processes inside a human is inevitably metaphorical and arbitrary, and those Dennett defends are motivated by the Cartesian picture of thoughts and feelings as inner causes of behaviour; Dennett is looking for scientifically respectable inner causes to take the place of immaterial Cartesian ones. Rather than attributing the capacities of persons to sub-personal states, Rorty thinks we should explain those capacities socially in terms of linguistic practice.

'Functionalism, Machines, and Incommensurability' continues in a similar vein, but here the criticism of functionalism is more expansive and the target is Hilary Putnam. Rorty argues

³⁶ Pace C. Hookway, *Quine*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988, p. 137.

that functionalism should not be considered a new theory of mind comparable to dualism, and that analogies with machines will not shed light on mental states. The basic problem, as before, is that functional states generally, and those qualifying as ‘logical states’ by reference to a program, are too cheap, given that ‘anything you like is at any time in as many logical states as there are distinct programs you have the patience to write’ (p. 206). Thus there is no natural analogy between the internal states of machines such as computers and the human mind. Rather the ‘animism’ that leads us to apply psychological language to these machines, and which pays off because they have been designed to act in characteristically human ways, is what *creates* the analogy by leading us to functionally described the machine at the same level of abstraction as the psychological language, even though in principle we could use any level of abstraction at all. It is a mistake then, to think we might discover that mental states are really functional states. Rather, our ascription of mental states on the basis of behaviour, whether of a human or a machine, simply makes us interested in functional descriptions of the internal states of the human or machine at a particular level of abstraction.

The fourth paper Rorty published in 1972 was ‘The World Well Lost’, named, we presume, from the subtitle of Dryden’s *All for Love*. It definitely does mark a transition of sorts, because the style is now noticeably bolder, the rhetoric has been ratcheted up a few notches, and Rorty’s Wittgensteinian scepticism about philosophical problems is centre stage for the first time. But otherwise it just reads like a natural outgrowth from the papers in this volume.