



This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights and duplication or sale of all or part is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for research, private study, criticism/review or educational purposes. Electronic or print copies are for your own personal, non-commercial use and shall not be passed to any other individual. No quotation may be published without proper acknowledgement. For any other use, or to quote extensively from the work, permission must be obtained from the copyright holder/s.

Rorty, conceptual schemes, and the traditional aspirations of Philosophy

Lewis John Gordon

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Philosophy in Philosophy

March 2018

Keele University

II

This thesis is dedicated to my Great Grandfather Lewis Hurst - a man who loved to learn,
and who will continue to inspire me.

Abstract

Pragmatism is an anti-representationalist movement in philosophy which has attempted to reform, and in some instances, undermine, philosophy's traditional aspirations, in order to keep the discipline connected with our first-order endeavours. I argue that the method which pragmatism uses to achieve this is not only deeply flawed (as it leads to its own rejection) but also unnecessary; philosophy can be practical without being pragmatist.

I begin with detailed expositions of five different theories under the title of 'pragmatism', from classical to contemporary, identifying the two central commitments which all of these theories share: a commitment to keeping philosophy connected with our first-order endeavours, coupled with the method of rejecting any foundations of knowledge. This serves as a working definition of pragmatism across the board, showing exactly what needs to be undermined in order to undermine pragmatism.

Much of my thesis, however, is focused upon Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism, as Rorty specifically provides a response to the traditional distinction between scheme and content, which justifies the existence of such foundations of knowledge. I argue that there is a tension between Rorty and his use of Davidson in rejecting the scheme/content distinction, which, when exploited, leads to a rejection of the entire pragmatist method. This, in turn, makes our traditional philosophical aspirations once again possible.

I conclude by establishing that whilst pragmatism, as a method, is untenable, its project of keeping philosophy connected with our first-order inquiries should not be left ignored, lest we wish our discipline to fall any further into public disrepute. I suggest a way in which philosophy can use its traditional aspirations to serve our practical purposes, allowing philosophy to be practical without losing centuries of philosophical innovation.

Keywords:

Pragmatism, Philosophy, Representationalism, Rorty, Davidson, Realism, Conceptual Schemes, Metaphysics

Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction (Pages 1-3)

Chapter 2 - Examining Pragmatism (Pages 4-48)

Chapter 3 - The Heart of Pragmatism and the Importance of Objective Truth (Pages 49-62)

Chapter 4 - Rorty, Conceptual Schemes, and Radical Revision (Pages 63-94)

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Future Philosophical Inquiry (Pages 95-101)

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Pragmatism is a significant philosophical movement, originating in the late 19th century with Charles Sanders Peirce, and has had many developments and revisions since. Its significance is due to its enduring attempt to undermine the traditional methods of philosophy, reformulating a new philosophical method in its place. Peirce's original formulation of the pragmatist position, now regarded as 'classical pragmatism', is formed upon a rejection of the wide-reaching 'spirit of Cartesianism', (Murphy, 1990: 10) which Peirce argued is not a suitable platform for modern developments in logic and science. In its place, Peirce provided his pragmatist position, grounding philosophy as an experimentalist, communicative science, bringing philosophy out of the armchair and into the community.

Other forms of classical pragmatism, such as those of William James and John Dewey, took pragmatism in different directions to Peirce. Whilst Peirce's pragmatism focused upon providing an account of the meaning of scientific concepts, James' pragmatism provided a wider application of the pragmatic method in terms of human concerns. Dewey, whilst emulating the 'scientific attitude' (Malachowski, 2010: 23) employed in Peirce's account, used this attitude only as a means to resolve the practical, social problems that humans encounter in their ordinary lives. He provided a reformulated account of the concept of 'experience' to do this. Despite their differences, all three pragmatists offered accounts of meaning, truth, and reality.

Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism, perfected in the late 1970s, is undoubtedly the most radical variation of pragmatism; it does not simply reject the traditional philosophical method, but attempts to undermine many of its traditional philosophical aspirations. The main crux of Rorty's pragmatism is his rejection of representationalism, which he argued covers most of philosophy. In rejecting representationalism, Rorty concludes that traditional

philosophical notions of 'reality' and 'truth', as well as many other philosophical notions, are undermined.

A contemporary variation of pragmatism¹ is Price's New Pragmatism. Price directly responds to Rorty's attempt to undermine the notion of 'truth', arguing that a norm of truth is necessary for the possibility of dialogue 'as we know it'. (Price, 2003: 169)

The main focus of Chapter 2 is to analyse the variations of pragmatism outlined above, identifying both their similarities, and what sets them apart from one another. This will lead us into Chapter 3, where we are led to question how we can define pragmatism due to these differences. I will argue that all of the theories analysed share both the same goal, and the same method to achieve this goal, allowing us to define pragmatism according to these parameters. This is what I will call the 'heart' of pragmatism; without this commitment, the whole pragmatist enterprise collapses. I then will argue that due to this commitment, pragmatism cannot provide an adequate account of objective truth, a notion which is required if we are to avoid serious counter-intuitive consequences. Objective truth was of course Rorty's main target, and he argues that we only find these consequences to be counter-intuitive due to our adoption of an untenable conceptual scheme picture of philosophy, which he believes his arguments undermine.

This leads us into Chapter 4, where we will consider Rorty's Davidsonian argument against the scheme/content distinction, before assessing whether or not it is successful. I argue that there is a tension between Rorty and Davidson which, when illuminated, opens up the doors for a rejection of the entire pragmatist enterprise. As a result, we are able to re-establish the viability of the traditional scheme/content distinction, and thus our

¹ This is not an arbitrary choice on my part; Price directly confronts Rorty's claim that the notion of truth makes no behavioural difference in our linguistic practices, and forms his own pragmatic notion of the viability of truth upon this rejection.

traditional philosophical aspirations, allowing us to secure a notion of objective truth in the ashes of pragmatism.

In our concluding chapter, we reflect upon what lessons we have learned from pragmatism's attack on our traditional philosophical methodology, and how we should conduct future philosophical inquiry as a result. I will argue that philosophy needs to find a way to be more practical without being pragmatist itself.

Chapter 2 - Examining Pragmatism

As identified in the introduction, pragmatism cannot immediately be generalised as one philosophical position. We can therefore ask: what is pragmatism? Is there any definitive definition of the position, or do we only have a collection of different positions misleadingly placed under the banner of 'pragmatism'? (Lovejoy, 1908) In this chapter we examine different theories under the banner of 'pragmatism', from classical to new, before, in Chapter 3, identifying their central commitments.

Peirce's pragmatism rejects 'the spirit of Cartesianism'; (Murphy, 1990: 10) more specifically, Peirce targeted Descartes' foundationalist epistemology, which attempted to rebuild human knowledge upon certain, unshakable foundations. Other beliefs can be inferred from these certain foundations. Descartes attempted this via his method of universal doubt - the method of questioning whether there is even the remotest reasonable possibility of doubting the truth of our particular beliefs.

Peirce responds to Descartes' epistemological position with the 'spirit of experimentalism'. (Murphy, 1990: 11) Philosophy cannot begin with 'complete doubt'; we cannot begin our philosophical inquiries by doubting most of our beliefs, for it 'does not occur to us' (Peirce, 1868: 140) that such beliefs can genuinely be questioned. For instance, consider the belief that 'There are kangaroos in Australia'. There is a distinction to be made between saying that 'I doubt that there are kangaroos in Australia' and *actually doubting* that there are kangaroos in Australia. In order to genuinely doubt this, we need a specific reason to doubt this belief. For example, if I had witnessed on the news that all kangaroos had succumbed to a disease and perished, I would have a specific reason to doubt this belief. Having provided this specific reason, I can then inquire whether the reason for entertaining this doubt is good or not (I could check whether or not the news channel I was watching is reputable, for example.) However, if we begin our inquiry by simply saying

'I doubt that there are kangaroos in Australia' without giving any '*specific reason* for entertaining this *specific doubt*' (Murphy, 1990: 11) it is unclear how to proceed. It is only by providing such a specific reason that we can determine whether or not we have good reason for doubting that belief. Therefore, we must begin philosophy with 'all the prejudices which we actually have', as these doubts cannot genuinely be 'dispelled by [the Cartesian] maxim'. (Peirce, 1868: 140)

Peirce also critiques Descartes' claim that the 'ultimate test of certainty is to be found in the individual consciousness.' For Descartes, certain foundations to knowledge can be established by identifying a belief exempt from reasonable doubt - the certainty of one's own existence, upon which one can infer other beliefs. As Peirce states in describing Descartes' view: "Whatever I am clearly convinced of, is true." (Peirce, 1868: 140-141)

Peirce argues that making people 'absolute judges of truth' is harmful in its elitism; Descartes is claiming only metaphysicians have reached a grade of certainty transcending the sciences - this is not accessible through any other methods. He contrasts this with the experimentalist approach, where inquirers of the physical sciences discuss theories, communally agreeing which to adopt. After the community agrees to adopt a particular theory, the question of certainty is 'idle'; placing the concept of 'certainty' onto that theory is socially useless as nobody left in the community doubts the theory anyway. Therefore Peirce attempts to reformulate philosophy into a communicative science 'in which men come to agreement.' (Peirce, 1868: 141) This is the birth of pragmatism; pragmatism rejects the traditional, metaphysical approach to philosophy, and asks which concepts are socially useful for us.

Peirce also rejects Descartes' claim that a 'philosophical theory should be a single thread of inference'. This follows from Peirce's rejection of Descartes' concept of certainty; for Descartes, his own existence is conclusive; all other inferences follow from this certain

foundation. Peirce rejects this; firstly we should begin with premises which can be subjected to 'careful scrutiny' by the community, not a belief such as the supposed metaphysical certainty of the cogito, which, whilst graspable by individuals *within* the community, cannot be grasped *as* a community. Secondly, we should 'trust to the multitude and variety of... arguments than to the conclusiveness of any one', contra Descartes' claim that all knowledge should be based on the certainty of the cogito. (ibid.: 140-141) In this way, Peirce aimed to reformulate the philosophical method into an experimentalist science, imitating the established sciences rather than criticising their methods.

Peirce's Pragmatism

In 'How to Make our Ideas Clear', Peirce explains how to 'achieve the highest grade of clarity about the concepts we use.' (Atkin, 2016) We need to understand what we think, and the meanings of our ideas, in order to 'become masters of our own thought'. (Hookway, 2013: 22)

The method of mastering one's own thought was, in Peirce's time, imbued with the Cartesian approach of making a distinction between clear and obscure ideas, and distinct and confused ideas. As Peirce's experimentalism is anti-Cartesian, he provides his own method of clarifying our concepts, identifying that many metaphysical concepts are empty/meaningless.

Peirce criticises Descartes' two a priori criteria for truth: 'clearness' and 'distinctness'. A clear idea is defined 'as one which is so apprehended that it will be recognised wherever it is met with, and so that no other will be mistaken for it.' So, for example, if I have 'familiarity' (Peirce, 1878: 286) with the idea of 'water', in as much as recognising particular liquids as 'water' when I perceive them, then this idea is regarded as clear. However, for Peirce, this criterion is of 'little merit', as it only skims the surface of an idea's

meaning; it does not involve an 'explicit awareness of how this idea works.' (Hookway, 2013: 23) For instance, I do not need to know that water boils at 100 degrees celsius, or freezes at 0 degrees celsius, in order to attain this grade of clarity.

As the first grade is ultimately of little use, the second grade of clarity, 'distinctness', is meant to supplement it, by allowing us to precisely define our concepts. For example, consider the concept of a 'triangle'. If one understood that any object which is triangular must have three sides, and that its interior angles must add up to 180 degrees, they have thus succeeded in providing a 'set of necessary and sufficient conditions' (ibid.: 23) for the concept of a triangle, and have therefore assented to 'distinctness' in this idea. (Peirce, 1878: 286) However, in this way, the second grade of clarity cannot offer any more than a merely conditional account of the meaning of our ideas; one can only distinctly define a concept if they already have a clear understanding of all the other concepts that are employed within that definition. So, for instance, for one to have 'distinctness' in the concept of a triangle, they need to first understand the concepts of the number '180', 'degrees', 'shapes' and so on. The issue with this is that having 'distinctness' in understanding an idea will 'not give us all we need' in understanding that idea; not only will this not give us a grasp of the actual content of that idea (unless we already have a clear understanding of all other concepts that constitute the definition of that idea) but, crucially, it does not tell us how we should actually employ that idea in our 'reasoning and inquiries.' (Hookway, 2013: 23-24) As Peirce puts it, 'Nothing new can ever be learned by analyzing definitions'. (Peirce, 1878: 288)

As a result of these deficiencies, Peirce provided a higher grade of clarity, enabling us to know how to practically employ our ideas, and how to identify which ideas are empty/meaningless. To understand this, we need to explain his account of doubt, as opposed to belief.

Peirce defines doubt as an 'uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief'. When in a state of doubt, we have no way of proceeding in our inquiries or our actions, and thus constantly attempt to get out of this troublesome state, to 'acquire a habit of action', attaining a state of belief. Peirce defines this process as 'inquiry'. (Peirce, 1877: 4-5)

For Peirce, the 'irritation' of being in a state of doubt is the 'only immediate motive' for the struggle to attain the 'calm and satisfactory' state of belief. The difference that Peirce is making here from Descartes is, as we have seen, that inquiry cannot begin with 'questioning everything', with universal doubt. Merely putting 'a proposition into the interrogative form does not stimulate the mind to any struggle after belief.' Instead, we need specific reasons in order to genuinely doubt our specific beliefs. Without this 'real and living doubt', then, 'all discussion is idle'. (ibid.: 5) Further, our beliefs should guide our actions to satisfy our desires; any beliefs which do not should be rejected. If a belief does not have a practical purpose, it should be rejected. In rejecting such beliefs, they become doubts. Here the dissatisfied state of doubt begins, only ending when that doubt ceases, becoming a belief.

As the state of doubt is troublesome, and the state of belief 'calm and satisfactory', the only object of 'inquiry', under Peirce's definition, is the 'settlement of opinion'. In this way, the 'production of belief is the sole function of thought.' Although thought 'comes to rest' when one reaches a state of belief, thought does not stay in this static state for long. Instead, belief establishes in us a 'rule of action', (Peirce, 1878: 289-291) which gives rise to further doubt, requiring further thought to make this doubt cease.

Our habits are those rules of action which lead us to act in a particular way. We can identify a particular habit by showing how and when it causes us to act. Despite individual differences, important similarities always occur. Firstly, the stimulus leading us to act at a

particular time is 'derived from perception.' Secondly, 'every purpose of action is to produce some sensible result'. (ibid.: 293)

Therefore, the root of 'every real distinction of thought' is that which is 'tangible and practical'; it is not desirable for us to have an idea which fails to relate to sensible situations and results. Thus Peirce concludes that our 'idea of anything *is* our idea of its sensible effects'. (ibid. 293) Peirce therefore offers the 'highest grade of clarity' about our concepts, now known as the '*pragmatic maxim*': (Murphy, 1990: 27)

'Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.' (Peirce, 1878: 293)

When speaking of the 'object of our conception', Peirce gives examples of properties, such as 'hardness' and 'weight'. By considering all the possible circumstances in which we could call a subject 'hard' or 'heavy' or 'light',² we conceive all the sensible effects, which have practical bearings, of employing that concept. Following Peirce, our idea of 'hardness' *is* our idea of its sensible effects. Therefore, once we have conceived *all* of the sensible effects of employing that concept in every possible circumstance, our conception of all of these sensible effects is the 'whole of our conception' (Murphy, 1990: 28) of hardness.

Every sensible, practical, effect which can be conceived by employing a concept in a particular situation can give a 'prescription for an experiment', predicting that if that act is carried out, an 'experience of a given description will result.' (Peirce, 1905: 161) Consider calling a climate 'cold'; this may have the sensible effect of few other environments being more comfortable for penguins to live in. Consequently, this could prescribe the

²Including, but not limited to, the examples given.

experiment of determining the difference in temperature between this particular 'cold' environment and others which are regarded as cold; the result it predicts is that this environment is colder than most. This same method of experimentation applies to each sensible effect which can be conceived by adopting a concept in a particular circumstance. The meaning of a concept is therefore 'exhausted by knowing its "practical" effects', and these practical effects are either 'direct or indirect, upon our senses'. (Misak, 2004: 3)

One of the main purposes of Peirce's pragmatic maxim, as we suggested at the start, is to show which concepts are empty/meaningless, allowing us to avoid any undesirable 'metaphysical distractions'. We can now see that, for Peirce, much of metaphysics can be ruled out as meaningless on the grounds that it has no 'experiential consequences', and thus cannot contribute to a 'final fixed state of beliefs'. (Atkin, 2016)

So far Peirce has only shown us how to fix beliefs 'in the individual'; (Murphy, 1990: 29) that is, how to produce 'rules of action' (Peirce, 1878: 289-291) in our own thoughts. He also attempted to fix belief 'not in the individual merely, but in the community' (Peirce, 1877: 7) by providing accounts of both 'reality' and 'truth'. (Atkin, 2016)

To objectively fix belief in the community, we must acknowledge an 'external permanency' which our individual thoughts cannot effect.³ Whilst different people in the community may be affected in different ways, if the community uses the scientific method, all will be lead to the same 'ultimate conclusion'. (Peirce, 1877: 9-10)

The scientific method argues there exist 'real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them.... [which] affect our senses according to regular

³ If such a permanency was dependent upon an individual's thoughts, it would not be external, and could not affect everyone in the community.

laws'. Although our perceptions may differ from each other, we can use the 'laws of perception' to reason 'how things really and truly are'; through sufficient experience and extensive scientific reasoning, everyone will reach the same 'one true conclusion'.⁴ (ibid.: 10) Reality is a mind-independent external force, constraining our opinions, making us reach the same pre-determined conclusions. The opinion which the community, by extensive empirical investigation and reasoning, will agree on, is regarded as the 'truth', and the 'object represented in this opinion is the 'real'. (Peirce, 1878: 300)

Prima facie, by inciting the concept of a mind-independent reality, it appears that Peirce has contradicted his pragmatic maxim. However, Peirce is not contradicting his maxim, nor inciting ontological metaphysics. He applies the pragmatic maxim to his own conception of reality, explaining that the meaning of this conception, like all other meaningful concepts, rests in the sensible effects 'which things partaking of it produce.' The only sensible effect which 'real' things have is 'to cause belief'; as the 'real' is an external force which produces our sensations, and as the sensations they cause 'emerge into consciousness in the form of beliefs' the sensible effect real things have is to cause belief. (ibid.: 299)

To clarify this, consider Peirce's Kantian roots. Whilst Peirce rejected Kantian metaphysics, he agreed with Renouvier that Kant's concept of the noumena could still play a role in philosophy and science - the role of a boundary-concept/a limiting concept, which Kant himself assigned to it. (Atkin, 2010) The noumena cannot be understood as a reality beyond the limits of logic and science, beyond the limits of our thoughts, but are understood as the boundaries of inquiry. Therefore, Peirce was a Kantian in this empirical sense, rather than in the transcendental idealist sense. Peirce's position on reality is similar to Putnam's 'Internal Realism'; just as Putnam argued that the truth about the

⁴ See Peirce (1878: 299-300) for his own illustration of this point, of different scientists using different scientific methods to come to the same conclusion.

world is 'an idealization of rational acceptability' (Szubka, 2000: 175) at the end of civilisation, Peirce understood truth as an ideal which we reach at the end of inquiry.

William James' Pragmatism

James' pragmatism also offers an account of both meaning and truth, and a way of settling metaphysical problems, allowing philosophers to '*unstiffen* all our theories'. (James, 1907: 53) He offered pragmatism as a 'more attractive middle ground' (Pomerleau, 2016) between the two extremes of philosophy: the 'tender-minded' approach, and the 'tough-minded'⁵ approach. James believed that most of us want a philosophical position which allows us to 'exercise [our] powers of intellectual abstraction, [but also one that] will make some positive connexion with this actual world of finite human lives.' (James, 1907: 6-8) Such a philosophical position would be 'anchored' in empirical facts, but open to moral and religious values. (Pomerleau, 2016) Pragmatism, for James, is this philosophical position.

Further, pragmatism is a method of 'settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable.' Pragmatism interprets each notion in metaphysical disputes by 'tracing its respective practical consequences.' The pragmatist can ask what practical difference it would make to us if one of these notions was true, and not the other. If no practical difference occurs, the alternative results 'mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle.' (James, 1907: 16) If a debate is serious, we should be able to present some practical difference as a consequence of one being true rather than the other.

For James, 'any concept or hypothesis which has no experiential implications or effects is meaningless, it is unworthy of philosophical concern.' (Sukiel, 2009: 32) However, this does not mean all metaphysical dispute is undermined. Whilst James may appear to be

⁵ See James (1907: 5-6) for the attributes he understands these two extremes of philosophy as having.

taking a similar step to verificationism, he is not; James' conception of what constitutes the experiential implications of a proposition is broader. A proposition's experiential implications are constituted twofold: firstly, by the sensory experiences which would occur given the proposition in question is true, and secondly by the practical effects believing that particular proposition to be true has on the believer's life. It is the second of these which distinguishes James from the logical positivists; if a metaphysical proposition has practical effects upon one who believes that proposition to be true, it is rendered meaningful.

So, for James, the practical consequences of a belief are not only those which can be observed, but also '*any* kind of consequence' to a believer's life. (Bacon, 2012: 27) In this way, metaphysical statements can be meaningful, unlike Peirce's original formulation of pragmatism.

Pragmatism can be used to establish meaning by 'making it a function of practical consequences'. (Pomerlau, 2016) Before attempting to find a concept's meaning, we should ask what practical difference it would make. Therefore, James' pragmatism can account for the meaning of statements beyond those of the physical sciences, even the meaning of theological propositions, if they have 'practical consequences.' (James, 1907: 28) Consequently, metaphysical claims, such as 'There exists a form of goodness in the realm of the forms' can be deemed meaningful, but *only* if they have practical consequences in the life of someone who believes that proposition to be true, rather than gaining their meaning through correspondence with an independently real reality, and so forth.

James also gives claims about truth a 'much more central role' than Peirce; truth is 'an instrument for getting us into satisfactory relations with experiences'. (Stuhr, 2010: 2) To show this, he rejected both of the traditional theories of truth: the coherence and

correspondence theories, as both regard truth as a 'transexperiential property', existing transcendentally from our own processes of 'testing and utilising beliefs', (Suckiel, 2013) which contradicts his pragmatic account of meaning. He thus provided his own version of the correspondence theory without such metaphysical baggage. He understood correspondence theorists as defining truth as an 'agreement with reality', and provided a new interpretation of the term 'agreement'. For James, 'agreement' did not involve a correspondence between a proposition which someone believes, and an independent reality which it refers to. Instead, it 'designated a property of the believer.' (Suckiel, 2009: 37) So, it is the believers themselves who agree with reality, not the proposition held to be true.

With this new understanding of 'agreement', a proposition is true when it agrees with reality, but not in the way in which the 'tender-minded' (James, 1906: 6) philosophers would understand this.⁶ Instead, James understands this agreement with reality under a more practical interpretation. Firstly, a true idea or belief is one which we can incorporate into our ways of thinking, in such a way that it can be experientially validated. Secondly, this 'reality' to which truths must agree has three different dimensions: 'matters of fact'; '*Relations among purely mental ideas*', (James, 1907: 70) and finally the entire set of other truths to which we are committed.

Thus, James understands reality as being comprised out of our experiences, our mental relations between ideas, and everything else we believe. Furthermore, James is also a fallibilist: all truths are revisable given new experiences. He believes this because all truths, as he has shown, involve 'a relationship between facts and our ideas or beliefs.' (Pomerleau, 2016) As facts, and our experiences of them, can change over time, we should be wary of regarding truths as absolute.

⁶ Such philosophers would argue that our ideas copy the fixed, independent world beyond us, the truths of that reality being fixed.

Furthermore, the main condition for a belief's truth is that it can 'function satisfactorily' in a believer's life; it 'could enhance the believers's ability to satisfy his purposes and interests.' In the context of empirical matters, beliefs can only 'function satisfactorily' if they are 'verifiable'; within a 'specific set of experiences, it could not be disconfirmed.' (Suckiel, 2009: 37) So, true ideas are those we can 'assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify' experientially. False ideas are those which cannot be assimilated, corroborated, or verified. (James, 1907: 67)

Beliefs can also be made true if holding them adds to our personal happiness and fulfilment. Consider a theological proposition, such as 'God exists.' If believing this can 'yield religious comfort to a most respectable class of minds' (ibid.: 26) then the belief that 'God exists' is rendered true.

James also argued that, through a 'conscientious and informed community of inquirers', a society can assent to 'progressively greater degrees of truth' (Suckiel 2009: 37) over time, culminating finally in 'the absolutely true'. (James, 1907: 74) This is a hypothetical concept of 'an ideal end-point of inquiry', (Suckiel, 2009: 37) as achieved by such a community of inquirers. As he says himself:

'.... the absolutely true, meaning what no father experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all temporary truths will some day converge.' (James, 1907: 74)

Prima facie, it may appear that James' notion here is the same as Peirce's understanding of a community of inquirers reaching the same, 'ultimate conclusion'. (Peirce, 1877: 9-10) However, as we have seen, Peirce posited that we can only reach this conclusion through extensive scientific reasoning. James, on the other hand, posits this 'ideal end-

point' (Suckiel, 2009: 37) as that which converges 'all temporary truths', (James, 1907: 74) therefore including any beliefs which function satisfactorily in a believer's life, not exclusively those which are scientific.

One last point to cover is James' position on 'objective truth', which is best illustrated through an example. Imagine that one has a collection of old opinions, but has a new experience, which puts strain on those opinions; one hears facts with which the old opinions are incompatible. This gives the person an 'inward trouble', only escapable by 'modifying his previous mass of opinions'. In the process, he saves as much of his old stock of opinions as possible, for 'in this matter we are all extreme conservatives.' The person in question changes one opinion, and another, until finally 'some new idea comes up which he can graft upon the ancient stock with a minimum of disturbance of the latter, some idea that mediates between the stock and the new experience and runs them into one another most felicitously and expediently.' (James, 1907: 21)

This new idea is adopted as 'the true one', preserving the older collection of truths with minimum change. Even the most 'violent' changes in a person's individual beliefs leave most of this older collection of truths still standing. Thus, 'New truth is always a go-between, a smoother-over of transitions. It marries old opinion to new fact so as ever to show a minimum of jolt, a maximum of continuity.' (ibid.: 18-22)

However, James is careful to point out that such new facts are not immediately rendered true; they simply 'come and are.' Truth is instead '*what we say about them*', so when we acknowledge that they are true, (when they function satisfactorily in our lives) only *then* are they regarded as being true.⁷ (ibid.: 22)

⁷ See James (1907: 22) for his illustration of this point.

So, a new opinion is regarded as being 'true' by gratifying the individual's desire to take in the new, novel opinion in his experience into their stock of older beliefs; a new, novel opinion must both 'lean on old truth and grasp new fact'. This is where the punchline comes in: 'Purely objective truth' is 'nowhere to be found'. For something 'to be true' only means that it performs this 'marriage-function' (James, 1907: 26) between old truths and new, novel truths. In this way, the 'trail of the human serpent is thus over everything'; truths which were considered 'objective' were once also novel facts, meant to rebalance the stock of older truths with the new. In this way, they cannot be the 'concretes' which traditional rationalism posited. James therefore concludes that there is no coherent notion of objective truth; all truths are subject to transformation over time - there is no 'concreteness' (James, 1907: 23-26) to any of them.

Dewey's Pragmatism

Much like Peirce, Dewey was an experimentalist; the meanings of terms, concepts, and propositions should be accounted for by their 'experimental consequences' in our inquiries, (Hildebrand, 2013: 58) when they satisfy our human purposes. To make this position successful, a new understanding of 'experience' needed to be established, as the traditional Cartesian understanding would not be stable enough to ground his experimentalism. The principle reason for this is that the traditional Cartesian understanding suggests that experience is a 'patchwork of disjointed parts'; there are 'rigid distinctions' to be made between the sensory stimulus itself, the idea which that sensory stimulus produces, and the act/movement that follows. Dewey instead wanted these processes to be viewed not as distinct entities in themselves, but instead as functions of a 'larger coordination', as it is only within such a coordination that these functions can gain any significance. (Dewey, 1896: 357-360)

To see this, let us consider an example which Dewey borrows from James. (1890: 24-25)
Imagine a baby seeing a candle, and, being unaware of the dangers of such an object,

reaches out to it, burning his hand on the flame. The traditional Cartesian understanding of experience would suggest that the baby had a sensation of light, which stimulated the response of the baby's arm reaching out to the candle, which in turn caused the baby's hand to burn, to which the arm retracts as a response, and so forth. This, as Dewey points out, is, in an obvious sense, a practical way of understanding this event. However, the problem arises when we ask for this explanation's 'psychological adequacy'. For Dewey, the experience does not start simply with a sensory stimulus, but instead from the 'sensori-motor' coordination within the eye; the eye, head and body muscles determine the 'quality of what is experienced.' In this way, the experience does not begin with a sensation of light; it begins with 'the act of seeing', the act of the baby, through these physical processes, looking at the candle. (Dewey, 1896: 358-359)

However, the crucial difference here from the traditional Cartesian understanding is that even though, in this scenario, the act of seeing stimulates the act of the baby's hand reaching out to the candle, this is only because both of these acts fall within a 'larger coordination'. The hand's ability to reach out to the candle depends upon it being controlled, not just stimulated, by the previous act of seeing. This is because if the act of seeing did not guide the act of reaching, the act of reaching would be 'purely indeterminate, it would be for anything or nothing'; the hand would have no guidance as to which object to reach out to. In the same way, the act of reaching must both 'stimulate and control' the act of seeing; the eye must keep its focus upon the candle if the arm is able to successfully reach out and touch it. In this way, we now have a more enlarged coordination than before; the act that we previously understood as seeing is still nevertheless seeing, but it is now 'seeing-for-reaching purposes'. In the same way, when the arm reaches out and touches the candle, this is the result of the previous 'eye-arm-hand coordination' rather than an entirely new occurrence. Further, it is only because the property of 'heat-pain' joins the same 'circuit of experience' with the acts of seeing and

reaching that the child can learn from this painful experience to avoid such painful encounters in the future. (ibid.: 359)

In this way, in order to provide an adequate account of experience which is stable enough to ground a new experimentalist project, we cannot understand experience in the traditional Cartesian sense, as a series of disjointed parts. Instead, we must posit that our sensory stimulus, and our responses to these stimulus, are all part of a larger coordination. It is through this coordination that the value/significance of our experiences can become 'enlarged and transformed'; the experience which was previously understood as merely 'seeing' the candle is now to be understood as the 'seeing-of-a-light-that-means-pain-when-contact-occurs', allowing the child to learn from this experience. (ibid.: 359-360) In this way, we are not passively perceiving the world; instead, 'active manipulation of the environment is involved integrally in the process of learning from the start.' (Field, 2017)

In providing such a revised experimentalist project, which rejected the traditional Cartesian understanding of experience, Dewey attempted to bring an understanding of 'experience' back to its ordinary, 'idiomatic' usage. Experience under this understanding was, for Dewey, to be understood as 'familiarity with a matter of practical concern', by repeated acquaintance or performance with such practical concerns. So, to have experience, under this Deweyan sense of the term, is to *have had* experiences. (Murphy, 1990: 64)

Dewey gives an example of 'an experience' in terms of those which are both artistic⁸ and aesthetic,⁹ which he terms 'esthetic experiences'. (ibid.: 65) To have such experiences, we need not induce the existence of a priori methods, or transcendental standards, but

⁸ Artistic experiences are those where we produce art (such as writing a poem or painting on a canvas, although Dewey's definition of art, as we shall see, is broader than this.)

⁹ Aesthetic experiences are those where we perceive and enjoy art.

instead can have these experiences via the 'clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience.' (Dewey, 1934: 46)

Whilst Dewey understands paintings and literature as 'fine arts', (ibid.: 3) conversation, and 'all thought and inquiry, when well conducted, is an art'. Life itself can be considered an art, but only when it is 'well lived'. By 'well lived' or 'well conducted', Dewey is referring to those experiences where the materials experienced 'run their course into fulfilment'; this is regarded as 'an experience'. The material of an experience reaches fulfilment when it reaches the 'end for the sake of which it was initiated.' (ibid.: 35) If a person, throughout their life, continuously reaches these end goals, they will have had a 'well lived life'. As this is an example of a 'well conducted' inquiry, their life is also an art itself. (Murphy, 1990: 65)

Dewey also argued there can be different modes of experiencing, some cognised, some not. Peirce's account of inquiry is a cognitive mode of experience; things are 'experienced as known things' as opposed to the aesthetic experiences previously discussed. However, Dewey gives an example of how an experience can be non-cognised. Consider hearing a noise at the window, and being afraid. In such a case, that noise is '*really*' fearsome, as this is what that noise is experienced as being. However, if I advance to the window, and experience the noise as simply being 'the tapping of a shade against the window', I experience the noise as a '*known* thing', thus having a cognised experience. (Dewey, 1905: 394-395)

At this point, one may argue that surely the experience is always cognised; when the person heard the noise at the window, they cognised it as a scary sound, and when they realised that the noise was caused by the 'tapping of a shade', they cognised it as not scary. So, when the person was frightened by the scary sound, they '*knew*' they were

frightened, and in that case, their experience was still cognised. If we are to reject this, how can we say that the person had any experience at all? (ibid.: 395-396)

However, at this point, Dewey makes a distinction between experiencing 'a thing as *cognitive* and one as *cognized*.' The former, a cognitive experience, is defined as an experience which has implications which 'induce and fulfil themselves' in a subsequent experience, where the thing is 'experienced as cognised, as a known object, and is thereby transformed, or reorganized.' For instance, consider the experience of the 'fright-at-the-noise'. This can be regarded as cognitive in the sense that it can induce an inquiry 'in which both noise and fright are objectively stated or presented'. For instance, in this case it induces the person who experienced the 'fright-at-the-noise' to go to their window, subsequently experiencing it as a known object, namely the shade tapping against the window, and at that instance, they have had a cognised experience. Dewey sees no reason however why the 'cognitive' experience of the frightful noise must be regarded as 'cognised'. When we experience the frightful sound, he can ask whether we experience it as 'I-know-I-am-frightened' or as 'I-am-frightened'. As long as we can find at least 'one case' in which the latter is true, we have secured the possibility of cognitive, but non-cognised experiences. (ibid.: 395-397)

Therefore, things are 'what they are experienced to be'; the noise *is* fearsome if I experience it in a cognitive, but non-cognised way, and when the experience is cognised, it *is* a shade tapping against the window. This is a critical diversion from traditional idealism; as knowing is not the only mode of experiencing, it is 'fallacious to say that Reality is just and exclusively what is or would be known to an all competent knower; or even that it *is* relatively and piece-meal, what it is to a finite and partial knower.' (ibid.: 394)

For the traditional idealist, when I experience a tree, I *know* that I am experiencing a tree; I have an idea in my mind representing the real world. However, as not all experiences are

cognised, such idealisms are wrong to assume that reality is constituted by what is known by an 'all competent knower'. (ibid.:394)

We primarily experience things in terms of their practical use or impact upon us, afterwards reflecting upon these experiences with a 'secondary "reflective" experience'. (Murphy, 1990: 68) Consider returning to your car to find its door dented. This is a primary experience, as the object of the experience can be 'treated'; (Dewey, 1925: 21) we can take the car to a mechanic to remove the dent.¹⁰ When we reflect upon this, cognising the experience, we get a secondary, reflective experience; I have to 'stop and think about what it means' (Murphy, 1990: 68) to say that I *know* there is a dent in my car. So, if I think 'I know my car has a dent; the surface of the car was even, now it is not', this is deemed a secondary, reflective experience. Therefore, the objects of our experiences are 'things *had* before they are things cognised.' (Dewey, 1925: 21)

The subject matter of our primary experiences 'furnishes the first data of the reflection which constructs the secondary objects'. For instance, consider a person walking along the street. If a raindrop falls on their head, that person has had a primary experience of wetness. This is an 'isolated detail' caused by the existence of a raindrop, which is the primary object of this experience - the object the person had sense contact with. If the person later reflects upon this experience, the primary object serves to 'furnish the data' of such a reflection, which constructs a secondary object. Here, a secondary object is defined as that which explains the primary objects, allowing us to 'grasp them with *understanding*, instead of just having sense-contact with them.' (ibid.: 4-5) So, if one reflects upon the primary experience of wetness, they may deduce, for example, that the raindrop was part of a storm which they had seen reported on the news, bringing the primary experience of wetness out of isolation, and thus constructing a secondary object of experience.

¹⁰ See Dewey (1925: 21) for more ways in which one can have primary experiences.

To clarify, the secondary objects of experience provide a method in which returning to the objects primarily experienced enhances their meaning, enriching and expanding it, as a result of the method used to return to them. By employing this method, such qualities 'cease to be isolated details'. They 'get meaning contained in a whole system of related objects; they are rendered continuous with the rest of nature and take on the import of the things they are now seen to be continuous with.' (ibid: 5) For instance, consider a palaeontologist walking along a coastline; they hurt their foot on a rock, having a primary experience of pain. They then reflect upon this object of their primary experience (the rock), using their knowledge of palaeontology to consider its appearance and location. They cognise that the rock features the remains of a fossilised dinosaur, confirming their theory that dinosaurs once roamed that part of the Earth. As a result, the phenomena experienced on the coastline gains a greater significance than it previously had; the palaeontologist's theory brings the objects they have primarily experienced out of isolation and fits them into our theories regarding the lives and extinction of dinosaurs, evolutionary biology, and so forth.

Dewey's main criticism of the traditional non-empirical method of philosophy is that it 'fails to use refined, secondary products as a path pointing and leading back to something in primary experience'. As a result of this, such traditional, non-empirical methods fail to enlarge and enrich the meanings of the things of our ordinary experience, unlike in the palaeontology example above. Consequently, philosophy gains public disdain; by not referring back to the objects of primary experience, philosophy is regarded as arbitrary, aloof, and "abstract". It is viewed as a subject which 'occupies a realm of its own without contact with the things of ordinary experience.' (ibid.: 6) By re-invigorating the concept of experience to avoid these issues, Dewey sets the stage for a new kind of philosophy; one which depends upon our primary experiences in a large way.

According to Dewey, valuable philosophical positions should follow two rules. Firstly, the 'refined methods and products' we employ within our philosophical positions should be traced back to our ordinary, primary experiences, so that the 'needs and problems out of which they arise and which they have to satisfy be acknowledged.' Further, the 'secondary methods and conclusions' of our philosophical positions should be brought back to the objects of our ordinary experiences, so they can be verified. If a philosophical position adheres to these two rules, it can be deemed valuable. (ibid.: 36)

When philosophy is carried out empirically in this way, it can be used to identify where our methods, propositions, and concepts originate, and for which practical needs they were created. Thus, for Dewey, philosophy must move away from the traditional, non-empirical understanding of experience. It must be used to identify those 'interpretations [and] classifications... [from] sophisticated thought' which oversaturate the philosophical landscape, which undermine the import of our ordinary life experiences. Having identified them, philosophy becomes a 'critique of [these] prejudices.' It is therefore 'one great object of philosophy' to clarify and free philosophical positions from these prejudices.¹¹ (ibid.: 37) By reformulating the concept of experience to enlarge and enrich the meanings of the objects of our ordinary experiences, Dewey wants philosophy to move on from the philosophical prejudices of the past and satisfy the social problems humans experience in their lives.

As we have seen, Dewey was an experimentalist like Peirce, with one important caveat. Whilst Peirce was scientistic, Dewey was not, arguing there are multiple modes of experience, some cognised, some not. Science is just another set of descriptions of the world, amongst 'other kinds of equally acceptable descriptions', such as art. It would be fallacious to say that one method of understanding the world has exclusive access to what

¹¹ Dewey's project is more of a salvage operation than a demolition of our traditional philosophical propositions; our philosophical prejudices can be deemed valuable, if they are first identified and reflected upon, having the potential to enriching the meanings of our first-hand experiences. See (Dewey, 1925: 40-41) for an overview of this project.

is 'true and real'; science alone cannot assist us in grasping how reality really is. He does however embrace the 'scientific attitude' (West, 1989: 97-98) found in Peirce's pragmatism (by being willing to experiment upon the philosophical beliefs which we hold, via testing whether they are valuable, and revising them in the process to suit the practical concerns in our lives.)

Dewey, in the following passage, also provided an account of truth in terms of coherence:

'...a judgement is called true when it harmonizes with all other judgements; false when it is in some contradiction to some other. Suppose, for example, an individual interprets a distant cloud as a mountain. The judgement is false, because it does not agree with other judgements which he would be forced to make about the presentation with growing knowledge of it.' (Dewey, 1887: 189-190)

However, Dewey is not simply providing an account of 'individual psychological truth', whereby a judgement is regarded as true because it currently coheres with the rest of the judgements in one's mind. Instead, he is offering an account of objective truth; a judgement is regarded as true when it is in harmony with 'present *and all future* known judgements'.¹² (Shook, 2000: 129) This much is evident from the cloud example which Dewey provides; when the individual interprets a distant cloud as a mountain, this statement is false, even if it coheres with the rest of their current judgements, as it would *not* cohere with other judgements they would be 'forced to make about the presentation with growing knowledge of it.' (Dewey, 1887: 190)

Therefore, for Dewey, objective truth is the 'ultimate limit of objective knowledge', when all our judgements are in harmony. This notion is not distinct from human experience; only by

¹² In this way, any claim to knowledge which a person may make cannot be known to be 'objectively true until total knowledge has been attained'. Presently, people can only know that a judgement they make *so far* coheres with 'their system of harmonious judgements'. (ibid.: 130)

human knowledge continuing to grow through experience can particular judgements become false or true, and become known as false¹³ or true. Therefore, objective truth is 'organically related to human knowledge'; whether a particular falsity is false, or a particular truth true, depends fully on whether human knowledge could 'know them to be so'. (ibid.: 129)

Here, it appears that Dewey's understanding of objective truth is similar to Peirce's account. However, Peirce only understood truth in terms of the inquiries of science, whilst Dewey here is understanding a judgement as true if it harmonises with all of our best judgements, including those beyond the inquiries of science. Dewey later extended his account to show that his understanding of the 'ultimate limit of objective knowledge' (ibid.: 129) requires a pragmatic conception of reality, as we shall now see.

Dewey held that knowing things will lead us to 'action that is adapted to reality'; we act depending on the meanings which we gather from the world. Reality here is 'our own living reality'; the experiences which we have and create meanings from. All claims to knowledge can be falsified. Therefore such claims to knowledge are open to revision, rather than concluding in 'absolute certainties' (Lawlor, 2004: 310) such as the Platonic forms; as we encounter changes in our experience, we can adapt our knowledge claims to these changes.

If such beliefs are adaptable to our experiences, and are thus practically useful, we can still ask if they are true. Dewey explains that it is the 'business of that organic adaptation involved in all knowing to make a certain difference in reality', and this difference is the truth. When a belief is deemed true, it can satisfactorily carry out the 'specific purpose for the sake of which knowing occurs' (Dewey, 1908: 86) - to 'enlarge our functioning/serve

¹³Any claim to knowledge can not only be false, but can also be falsified. For instance, although scientists may currently hold the judgement that the universe consists of matter and energy, it is entirely possible that by further empirical investigation, this judgement will be deemed false.

our practical purposes. (Lawlor 2004: 311) Alternatively, a belief is erroneous if it does not enlarge our functioning. A belief's truth value is therefore determined by whether that belief 'fulfill(s) the intent of the knowing.' (Dewey, 1908: 86)

We can then ask whether truth approaches reality. Dewey's answer is to explain that the 'truth and realness of things is synonymous'; there is no practical difference between a thing being true and a thing being real. Dewey understands the concept of reality as referring to 'our own living reality'. When one has primary experiences, and reflects upon them to create reflections which are 'off the track and beside the mark' this constitutes an existentially real reality, but not a 'good' one. On the other hand, when one clarifies their primary experiences to a 'consistent and liberal or growing functioning', to serve our practical purposes, this constitutes a good reality. Erroneous beliefs/bad realities are those which do not enlarge our functioning; they fail to refer back to our primary experiences, leading our thoughts in directions of little to no practical import. Our true beliefs/good realities do enlarge our functioning; commitment to/known true beliefs or good realities help us understand the meanings of the objects of our experience in a way which refers back to our primary experiences. This therefore serves our practical human purposes, thus being as 'favorable as possible to a consistent and liberal or growing functioning.' Therefore, pragmatically, there is 'no distinction between the truth and realness of things' (Lawlor, 2004: 312) and as Dewey concludes, 'it is this kind, the *true* kind [of belief], which for us monopolizes the title of reality.' (Dewey, 1908: 86)

Truth does not approach reality; true ideas, which serve our practical purposes, are good, and thus possess 'the title of reality.' (ibid.: 86) As explained, reality admits of degrees; there are realities which are good, and those which are bad, depending upon the extent they can enlarge our practical functioning. Those realities which are not good are 'static' and 'ideal', whereas a good reality, such as that represented by the ideas of science, explains that the universe is 'dynamic' and 'evolving'. If we are to understand such a

reality which is dynamic and open to change, the concepts which we employ to understand that reality will also need to be open to change. Thus, for Dewey, 'reality', at least under this understanding, is not static, but in a 'process in the making'. (Lawlor, 2004: 312) However, even if reality is subject to change, individuals are not free to create their own realities; changes to reality can only occur in consideration with all the other existents in reality before making a change to it.

Richard Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism

Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism differs not just in content from other pragmatist positions, but also in its goals. Rather than attempting to reinvigorate the philosophical method, Rorty attempts to undermine many of its traditional aspirations, ending philosophy as a search for objective truth, and the conditions in which we can know that we have reached such objective truth. To show how Rorty does this, we need to explain his understanding of 'philosophy' - Rorty understands philosophy as being the study of the 'Mirror of Nature' (Rorty, 1979) problematic; how our minds mirror/represent the world.

For Rorty, philosophy, as we know it today, is a product of a seventeenth century social problem which occurred in Europe. Before then, a combination of Aristotelean science and Biblical teachings served as the foundation of serious intellectual inquiry; only within the last 400 years has science become a serious contender as the 'best way of acquiring knowledge'.¹⁴ (Tartaglia, 2007: 38) However, seventeenth century scientific theories, unlike Biblical teachings, lacked philosophical foundations. Descartes thus provided science with the philosophical foundations required to have a cultural impact upon the world with his epistemological foundationalism, in the form of the cogito. With the advent of this new form of science, the foundation of our knowledge of reality is found in our own thoughts, rather than Biblical teachings.

¹⁴ See Leveillee (2011: 1-2) for an example of the cultural schism between the Church and science in the seventeenth century.

Thus Descartes firmly placed the mind as the centrepiece of philosophical thought. What follows is a form of representationalism; as all of our knowledge is derived from states of the mind, it is only the mind which can give us knowledge of the world/reality. Consider Descartes' account of ideas; an idea is a mode of thought, representing objects in the world to the mind. Consider witnessing a running dog. When one's senses are affected by the dog's running, an idea is 'immediately perceived by the mind', (Descartes, 1641: 81) and this idea represents the object of that experience to the mind.

Therefore, Descartes is a representationalist; we do not have direct access to the world, but do have an 'epistemic point of contact with the world' (Tartaglia, 2007: 28) via our ideas. Descartes attempted to determine under which conditions our minds accurately represent the world, and thus under which conditions knowledge of the world is possible. Locke, whilst disagreeing with Descartes' explicit rationalism,¹⁵ continued the representationalist project of keeping the mind as the central focus of philosophy. Whilst all knowledge originates from sense experience, we never experience the world directly - the mind 'perceives nothing but its own ideas'. (Locke, 1689: 544) All our knowledge is constructed via the mind, by combining our ideas gathered from experience, continuing the mirror of nature tradition.

Kant continued the mirror of nature project, whilst altering the way in which we understand the mind as mirroring nature. Our mind has two faculties: sensibility and understanding, without which we would be unable to understand the world. As we do not experience the world as it is in itself (the noumena), instead only understanding the world as it appears to us (the phenomena) we cannot legitimately claim that our knowledge/cognition must

¹⁵ See Locke (1689, Book 1) for his rejection of rationalism, based upon his rejection of innate ideas.

conform to the objects of the world.¹⁶ Instead, external objects must conform to our cognition. With the faculty of sensibility, the objects of experience are '*given to us*' (Tartaglia, 2007: 46) through our necessary a priori intuitions of space and time, and, through the faculty of understanding, we are able to think about the objects of our experiences *through* our conceptualisation of those objects. By necessarily experiencing them in this way, we make those external objects conform to our cognition, making them the way they are, rather than us conforming to those objects.

Kant also introduced other concepts to philosophy which became mainstream. The new distinction Kant made was between two kinds of judgement: analytic (those judgements where the predicate is contained within the subject, such as 'All bachelors are unmarried men', which 'make explicit' something already known) (ibid.: 45-6) and synthetic (those judgements which require a synthesis, such as from experience, to join the subject and predicate together, such as the judgement 'Some cats are grey', extending our knowledge.) It is important to note this distinction, because Rorty attempts to undermine it, and this is central to his case against traditional philosophy.

The mirror of nature problematic was continued in the 'linguistic turn' (ibid.: 113) of the 20th century. The linguists shifted their focus to language, via which we express our thoughts. One such philosopher was Ayer, who, through his verification principle, argued that if a proposition is neither tautologous, (trivially true by definition, extrapolating what we already know, such as 'All triangles have three sides') nor can be sensorially verified to be true or false, either in principle or practice, it is meaningless. In this way, traditional metaphysical propositions, such as 'God... [is] infinite in actuality in such a way that nothing can be added to his perfection' (Descartes, 1641: 34) are deemed meaningless, as they 'are not even in principle' verifiable. (Ayer, 1936: 37) However, such linguists can

¹⁶ As we cannot know what objects in the external world are really like, philosophers cannot claim that our cognition must conform to the objects actually out there; we cannot know, for instance, that external objects are really in time and space, so we cannot claim that those objects make us think/ cognise in terms of time and space.

still ask how the physical world is constructed out of our sense contents, as expressed meaningfully in language. In doing so, philosophy can be used to explain the connection between the language we employ and the experiences we have, showing how language structures our experiences of the world.

Against this understanding of philosophy, Rorty directs his critique. Rorty's major argument against the tradition comes from his epistemological behaviourism. This theory is a form of linguistic holism; knowledge is only possible within a social domain. His argument is based on the arguments of Sellars and Quine. The first is Sellars' attack on the myth of the given, used to show that the traditional empiricist project, (the position that all knowledge is based on experience) is a non-starter. The myth of the given is the myth that the senses grasp a fact about the world, which empiricist philosophers such as Locke presupposed in their empiricist theories, by assuming that in having an idea, such as the idea of green, we immediately and automatically know that we are having an idea of green. Locke argued that these 'simple ideas' (Locke, 1689: 98) are the basis of 'all our knowledge'. (Locke, 1689: 109) However, if simple ideas do not make sense of themselves - if the given is a myth - then this whole project must be misconceived.

Sellars argues that empiricism is untenable - the senses are unable to grasp a fact. Knowledge requires one to conceptualise/make sense of the sensations/experiences we have. This act of conceptualisation cannot come from sense experience, because sense experiences just *are*; they are simply things that exist, and cannot conceptualise themselves.¹⁷ As there is no knowledge which is self-conceptualising, there are no atomistic givens; all knowledge requires an act of conceptualisation. This act must occur within a society; knowledge is only possible within the 'holistic web' of language within society, which lacks any given foundations.

¹⁷ See (Sellars, 1997: 20-25) for why he claims that the traditional empiricist idea of a 'sense datum' is a 'mongrel', which does not make any conceptual sense.

As there cannot be any atomistic givens, the mirror of nature way of understanding meaning must be wrong; the world does not give us ideas which constitute our mental states - we only have mental states because we express them within society. Thus, mental states only have cognitive significance when expressed through language within society, allowing society to create public criteria, which society can then agree upon.

Rorty concludes from Sellars that there is a ubiquity to language; as knowledge is only possible within language, language is present everywhere - one cannot step outside of language to find an external anchor for meaning. As there are no atomistic givens, our opinions from our holistic web of language cannot latch onto a reality transcending language/the world itself - the world cannot tell us anything at all. There is only human conversation, and no 'skyhook' to get us out of this to consult reality itself (Rorty, 1991: 38); knowledge is entirely holistic, existing purely within societal conversation.

Rorty also uses Quine's argument, which attempts to undermine the analytic/synthetic distinction, as made mainstream by Kant. Contra the analytic/synthetic distinction, Quine argued that one can revise any statement in light of new experience. If society changes, and if the right experiences occur, any statement is revisable in light of new experience. Consider a statement traditionally considered analytically true, such as 'Bachelors are unmarried men', and consider the following hypothetical scenario. In the future, all refugees are refused UK entry, unless they are married to a British citizen. A charity campaign arises, encouraging young British men, who are traditionally considered bachelors, to marry refugees, allowing them UK entry. These men never have to meet their refugee wives; they sign a document, and continue to live their life as a bachelor. This process becomes mainstream, so that as soon as a man becomes 18, they are automatically married to a refugee. If this occurred, the supposedly 'analytic' statement that 'Bachelors are unmarried men' has been revised in light of new experience; young

men, who are traditionally considered bachelors, are now married men.¹⁸ Therefore, for Quine, the analytic/synthetic distinction is dogmatic; all we have is the 'web of belief', (ibid.: 66) with some beliefs being harder to reject than others due to their centrality to the web (centrality in terms of the many other beliefs which would be effected if that belief was rejected.) The web is completely revisable; there are no beliefs the world forces upon us - we can revise the web as a whole depending upon what is most socially useful for us to believe.

Rorty concludes from Quine that a concept is not a type of representation of an independent reality. As all concepts are revisable, there cannot be any concepts which mirror the way the world really is. Rather, the meanings of our concepts are determined entirely by the web of belief within society, depending on what is most socially useful for us to believe, as long as the web remains coherent.

Sellars has shown that within traditional philosophy, sensations are a kind of atomistic representation, subject to the mirror of nature problematic. As sensations cannot be self-conceptualising, this notion of sensations as representations should be rejected. As all our concepts are subject to revision via new experience, and as society can change their whole web of belief depending upon what is most socially useful, this notion of concepts should be rejected. If we reject the traditional understanding of sensations and concepts, then the Kantian project of determining how sensations/intuitions match with concepts, representing an external reality, is undermined. Rorty concludes that we cannot step outside human conversation and explain how the world really is; knowledge is only possible within, and cannot be taken out of, a social domain.

There is one last part of Rorty's position to cover for now; his position on 'truth'. Rorty argued that the notion of truth has no explanatory power, and replaced this with

¹⁸ I owe this example to Dr. Tartaglia, from our undergraduate lectures on Rorty's Metaphilosophy.

justification alone. In order to show this, Rorty attempted to undermine Putnam's three arguments for why there has to be a notion of objective truth about the world, which Putnam used to support the causal picture of reference.

The causal picture of reference argues that singular terms/names, such as 'Gödel', express the intention to refer to specific objects in the world. When we say the term 'Gödel', we are expressing the intention to refer to the same person Gödel's parents intended to refer to when they named him, through a metaphorical 'initial baptism'.

(Kripke, 1980: 96) Thus, a causal chain is created in our society, of people intending to refer to the original object that was named 'Gödel', which can be traced back to this act of initial baptism.

Singular terms/names are rigid designators, which pick out the same object in every possible world in which they exist, regardless of the different contingent properties such objects may have in those worlds. On the other hand, we can also have non-rigid designators. Whilst the rigid designator 'Gödel' picks out the same object in every world where that object exists, a non-rigid designator, such as 'The American President' picks out whatever satisfies that description in that specific world.

However, whilst the causal picture avoids the mirror of nature problematic, its advocacy of a non-representationalist realism still warrants Rorty's rejection. While the causal picture argues that our words are in causal contact with the world itself, avoiding the representationalist dogmas which Rorty has undermined, it is of course still advocating realism - although our meanings may change over time, the world itself, which our words directly refer to, remains the same. It is this realist notion, of there being an objective truth about the world out there, that Rorty is determined to undermine.

Rorty argues, in three different ways, that the notion of objective truth has no explanatory power. Firstly, Rorty agrees with Putnam that truth cannot be defined in terms of an intra-theoretical notion, and that our ordinary account of truth is a correspondence between our words and reality. As such, he also accepts Putnam's conclusion that truth is a basic, theory independent notion. However, as a result of this, Rorty suggests that the notion of 'truth' has 'no explanatory power'; (Barker, 2012: 200) if the term is basic, it cannot be reformed, nor connect with any of our other words within our language. A notion of objective truth should thus be abandoned.

Rorty also argues that the difference between truth and justification does not make any difference in practice. Consider my belief that there is a tree outside my house. If I doubt this belief's truth, I can only resolve this doubt 'by asking whether it is adequately justified'. Due to this, my assessment of the truth of this belief, and my assessment of whether it is justified, is practically 'the same activity'. (Rorty, 1995: 259) As there is no criterion for a belief being true other than it being justified, there is no explanatory power for the notion of truth - we only need justification.

In order to justify our beliefs to ourselves and others within society, we need to make reference to our own evidential norms within our own web of belief.¹⁹ By being subject to/conforming to these social norms, we can justify the beliefs we hold according to them. We do not need to obey an 'additional norm - the commandment to seek the truth'; (Rorty, 1995: 264) obedience/commitment to a norm of truth produces no behavioural difference from that which is produced by obeying our social norm of justification. Thus, there is no explanatory use/power for the notion of objective truth, and such a notion should be abandoned.

¹⁹ So, for example, to justify my belief that America is to the west of the UK, I could fly across the Atlantic and sensorially verify that America exists over there (as the web of belief holds that our senses are generally reputable.)

However, whilst the term 'true' has no explanatory use, Rorty argues it has three other uses: an endorsing use, a cautionary use, and a disquotational use.

Firstly, the endorsing use. Consider the belief, within the web of belief, that 'There are 8 planets in our Solar System.' Within the web, this belief is well-justified; it coheres with all the beliefs we hold regarding physics. We can therefore endorse it as being a 'true' belief, simply meaning that the belief is well-justified to us. So, when we say that a belief is 'true', we are simply paying a 'compliment' to those beliefs which we think are 'so well justified that for the moment further justification is not needed'. (Rorty, 2010: 230)

Rorty's cautionary account of truth is as follows. Consider again the belief that 'There are 8 planets within our solar system.' If we consider this belief true in terms of endorsement, and yet allow that the web is completely revisable, our standards of justification, which depend upon those beliefs, can also change. We can thus still claim that this belief is 'perhaps not true'; (Tartaglia, 2007: 195) in the future, when society's standards of justification have changed, this belief may no longer be regarded as well justified. So, the beliefs we regard as true now may not actually be true, in a cautionary sense; they may not be true/well justified for a future society.

The disquotational account of truth is as follows: the meaning of the property of truth can be captured in terms of a relation between sentences and dis-quoted sentences; i.e. between sentences mentioned and sentences used. Consider the sentence 'Snow is white'; this sentence is true if and only if snow is white. The words in quotes are in the meta-language; here, we are concerned with the words 'snow', 'is', and 'white' themselves. The words not in quotes are in the object language; we are talking about objects in the world - we are saying that there is snow, and it is white. To get a definition of truth for English, this definition of truth would need to entail equivalences of that form for all sentences in English. Davidson argued that meaning could be accounted for in terms

of Tarskian truth-conditions; compile them all together, and we can derive an account which reveals the meaning of individual sentences. So, to account for the meaning of the sentence 'Snow is white', we would need to inferentially link it up to 'Snow is cold', 'John likes the cold' and so forth. Once we have connected all of these sentences up, Davidson claims that we will know all there is to know regarding the meaning of 'Snow is white'.

(Tartaglia, 2007: 183) What is crucial here is that nothing, except what our sentences say, makes those sentences and theories true; not 'surface irritations' (light projected into our eyes), nor 'the world'. Instead, sentences are made true by the right hand side of Tarski's truth conditions; 'snow is white' is true in virtue of the fact that snow is white.

Crucially, none of these uses for truth require commitment to direct causal relations between our words and the world itself, as these all operate at the level of our language as it is used within society. This means that Davidson's position fits in well with Rorty's linguistic holism.

Rorty therefore concludes that the notion of 'objective truth' has no explanatory power, and thus should be abandoned. The only 'uses' for truth, as we have seen, are the cautionary, endorsement, and disquotational accounts, but there is no theory-independent standard of truth out there in the world. By stripping the realist notion of objectivity away from truth, Rorty thinks that he leaves us with something which humans can practically use within society.

Price's New Pragmatism

Price's pragmatism attempts to undermine Rorty's claim that commitment to a notion of truth, rather than a notion of justification, makes no behavioural difference in practice. Whilst Price admits that the notion of 'truth' is a fiction created by humans, this fiction 'plays an essential role' in our current linguistic practice (Price, 2003: 190); a role which

leads to great behavioural differences in practice apart from merely adhering to the notion of justification.

Price explains that Rorty is making an empirical claim; one could, in principle, test this claim by comparing the behaviour of a community of realists, who have a norm of truth, to a community of pragmatists, who have no such notion. Price identifies two weaker norms we are committed to in linguistic practice in order to show the distinctive role that truth plays, and hypothesises a linguistic practice without the norm of truth. In doing so, he hopes to show that 'by seeing what such a practice lacks, we see what truth adds.' (ibid.: 172-173)

The first weaker norm is what Price calls '*subjective assertibility*.' This norm is characterised in the principle that *prima facie*, it is appropriate to assert *p* only when one believes that *p*. (ibid.: 173) This is as follows:

'A speaker is incorrect to assert that *p* if she does not believe that *p*; to assert that *p* in these circumstances provides *prima facie* censure, or disapprobation.' (ibid.: 173)

Consider the following analogy, of norms which 'operate with respect to utterances which we do not take to be truth apt.'²⁰ Suppose someone in a restaurant orders a burger when they do not really want one. This action is not regarded as inappropriate with regards to a norm of truth, but is inappropriate with regards to a social norm of sincerity - society expects people within it to be sincere in their assertions, rather than misleading others. We cannot say in any meaningful way that 'my expression of saying I want a burger is true', or 'my desire of wanting something other than a burger is true' as these are not truth appropriate, but such expressions and desires *are* subject to a norm of sincerity. If I break the norm of sincerity, I am censured by my peers; when the waitress brings me my burger,

²⁰ Price gives his own example of the coffee shop. (Price, 2003: 173)

and I tell her I do not want it, she will likely express her disapproval. So, the norm of subjective assertibility is one of sincerity, and norms such as these govern our conventional behaviour, leading to censure when broken. (ibid.: 173)

The second weaker norm is of '(personal) *warranted assertibility*'. This can be characterised as the principle that 'p is warrantably assertible by a speaker who not only believes that p, but is justified in doing so.' We can account for this norm in 'terms of subjective coherence'; a belief is justified if it is supported by one's other current beliefs, and unjustified if not. This is what Price means by '(personal) *warranted assertibility*', (ibid.: 173-174) which is as follows:

'A speaker is incorrect to assert that *p* if she does not have adequate personal grounds for believing that *p*; to assert that *p* in these circumstances provides prima facie grounds for censure.' (ibid.: 174)

One whom adheres to both norms has done as much as they can by their 'own current lights' to ensure that their assertion is in order. (ibid.: 174) One's belief could be both subjectively assertible, and personally warranted assertible, but nevertheless not be true.

This is, as Price points out, a position which not only a realist could take, but also a pragmatist; for instance, Peirce argues that truth only arises at the level of social agreement, when our beliefs are not merely personally warrantably assertible, but *communally* warrantably assertible, at 'the limits of inquiry'. (Shook, 2000: 130)

Furthermore, Rorty, although replacing truth with communal warranted assertibility, argues, as we have seen, that this only arises at the level of the community. If a belief can be communally warrantably assertible, we can 'make sense of a gap' between the notion of personal and communal justification.²¹ (Price, 2003: 174)

²¹ Rorty would not agree with this; justification for our beliefs only arises at the level of social agreement within society, where the meanings of all of our terms are produced. Our beliefs can become justified within this web of belief, not outside of it. Price's point is that he has shown that justification at a personal level *is* possible.

This shows that realists, and many pragmatists, may agree that 'there is a normative dimension' distinct from subjectively assertible and personally warranted assertible beliefs; despite adhering to both norms, an assertion may still be wrong. However, this alone does not show that this 'normative dimension'/standard needs to be used in ordinary discourse. Pragmatists can argue that we decide upon the beliefs we have based on terms of justification/warranted assertibility, with truth being used only in the 'theoretical notion' of the disquotational theory. It is unclear why the notion of truth cannot be used as a theoretical notion, useful in the disquotational 'expert second-order reflection on linguistic practice', (ibid.: 174) but unnecessary in our general dialectical conversations.

However, if the normative notion of truth was restricted to such second-order reflection of linguistic practice, we would be unable to account for multiple aspects of our ordinary conversational practices, according to Price. If speakers within the community did not recognise such a norm, they would be unable to account for the notion of a belief being true/justified for us now, but not regarded as justified/true for a future society. As we have seen with Rorty's cautionary account of truth, it is possible for our beliefs to be justified now, but wrong according to the standards of a future society. So, there is a relation of improvement between one community's warranted assertible beliefs to that of a future community/society. Therefore, there needs to be a normative standard of truth in our general dialectal conversations, transcending any community, (ibid.: 175) in order to account for this idea of our views improving.

Price formulates this normative notion of truth as follows:

'(Truth) If *not-p*, then it is *incorrect* to assert that *p*; if *not-p*, there are *prima facie* grounds for censure of an assertion that *p*.' (ibid.: 175)

One's claim may be in accordance with the two weaker norms, being well justified for the individual speaker, but nevertheless not true. Consider one's belief that 'The Tree is outside'. This belief may be subjectively assertible and personally warranted assertible, but if it does not fulfil the third norm, it is not true, and utterance of this claim is censured. (ibid.: 175-176)

Price admits that this third norm is hard to distinguish from the two weaker norms; when we judge a person's belief to be right or wrong, we do so on the basis of our own 'beliefs and evidence'. We are not claiming that we judge something to be true or false via a standard of truth, corresponding with reality, but via our own beliefs. As we cannot transcend our beliefs and find a notion of truth corresponding with reality, it seems that application of the norm of truth is no more than either reassertion or negation of the 'original claim' in question.²² Consider the claim 'It is snowing'. When we either agree or disagree with this, the norm we employ is the third norm. To use this norm is to use our own beliefs and evidence to reason why we agree or disagree with this claim. We cannot refer to the realist notion of truth to judge whether our beliefs are true; we can only reason whether we agree or disagree with a claim based on what we think truth is, based on our current beliefs and evidence. It seems at this stage that Price agrees with Rorty that truth is not a norm of inquiry; all we have are our beliefs and evidence, accounted for by the two weaker norms. There does not need to be a third norm, 'truth', distinct from these. (ibid.:176)

Price responds by arguing that the norm of truth *does* constitute more than just mere reassertion of assertion or the negation of any given claim. The third norm is distinct in that it allows for condemnation and criticism of our utterances within our linguistic dialogue, activities which are not possible without a norm distinct from the previous two outlined. However, Price admits that it may be difficult to see 'the immense difference' this

²² Whatever proposition is being asserted in that instance.

norm of truth makes to the 'character or disagreements' in our linguistic practices, as the norm is 'so familiar and basic'. To highlight the difference that truth makes, Price asks us to imagine a linguistic community lacking the third norm of truth. Such a community express their beliefs 'by means of a speech act we call the *merely-opinionated assertion*'/ *MOA*. Such 'Mo'ans' lack the norm of truth; they only criticise each other if they breach the first norm of subjective assertibility and personal warranted assertibility. (ibid.: 176-177)

Even if two Mo'ans disagree upon a particular issue, this does not necessitate that one speaker is mistaken and the other not. One can be mistaken, as his beliefs lack coherence, violating the second norm, but this is not indicative of every scenario; if two Mo'ans disagree upon a particular issue, having conflicting views, but both adhere to the standards of the first two norms, neither of them need be mistaken. Consider two Mo'ans: Mo'an 1 believes cats have eternal lives; Mo'an 2 believes cats have finite lives. Mo'an 1 could be sincere with regards to their belief: when they say 'I believe cats have eternal lives' they may really think this. Secondly, their belief may be coherent with the rest of their beliefs; if they believe that certain animals have god-like attributes, if they believe that eternal life is possible, and so forth, then this belief is personally warrantably assertible to them. The same applies for Mo'an 2; when they express their belief 'I believe cats have finite lives' they may really think this. Further, their belief may cohere with all their other beliefs; if they believe everything is physical, and that everything physical will eventually cease to exist, then this belief is personally warrantably assertible to them. As both Mo'ans have spoken correctly, by the standards of the first two norms, neither are mistaken. In this way, the disagreements of the Mo'ans are of a 'no-fault' kind. (ibid.: 181)

The problem of considering the idea of such a community is due to our 'almost irresistible urge to see the situation in terms of our own normative standards.' We think there really is a third norm; if two people have conflicting views, we intuitively think that one of them must be objectively right, and the other objectively wrong, even if such individuals 'by their

own lights' obey both weaker norms. (ibid.: 178) Even pragmatists would agree to an extent, even if they substitute a notion of someone being objectively wrong with a lack of their beliefs being communally warrantably assertible. So, there is a third norm for us; we think that there is a right answer to disagreements, and that not everything is reducible to a difference in opinion.

Although the norm of truth has a passive use in allowing for the 'conceptual space' to account for the improvement of our views from our society to a future society,²³ the third norm also has an 'active' use; it encourages such improvement of our views, by 'motivating speakers who disagree to try to resolve their disagreement.' Without the third norm, when we disagree, our disagreement would not be about the difference in a view being right or wrong/true or false, but instead would be mere differences of opinion, which 'slide past one another.' One Mo'an has the opinion that Scotland is to the North of England; another Mo'an has the view that Scotland is to the South of England. There is no truth or falsity to these claims in the normative sense; it is just a difference in views, a difference in the coherence of our beliefs. Such disagreements/differences in opinion would be 'as inconsequential as differences in preference'; (ibid.: 180-181) as there is no true position on whether or not Mo'an 1 or Mo'an 2 is correct about the location of Scotland, the difference amounts to no more than to a difference in preference, of one preferring chocolate ice cream, and another preferring vanilla.

However, with the third norm in our conversational practices, disagreement becomes 'normatively loaded'. Whereas the previous conversation about the location of Scotland was a 'no-fault' disagreement, when the third norm is considered, such social situations become unstable; we think there really is a right position to take on this claim²⁴ - one of them must be wrong in their assertion. The only way we can escape this instability and

²³ It enables/holds open the conceptual space for the improvement of our views, but does not show how we actually do improve them in practice. (Price, 2003: 175)

²⁴ Right independently of adherence to the first two norms.

arrive at a settled conclusion to the matter is by 'argument and consequent argument', where we can determine who is right and who is wrong. Thus, the third norm provides an 'immediate incentive for argument'; if one can successfully argue to the truth of the matter, they will be commended by their community, in as much as their community positively evaluating their 'dialectical position'. (ibid.:181)

However, it is possible that, in a disagreement, even if we express the third norm as grounds for disagreement, the person whose view we are contending is free 'not to rise to the bait'. (ibid.: 181) Although we may really think that there is a truth to the matter in our disagreements, the norm of truth is not forced upon us; much like with the first and second norm, we can choose to either adhere or not adhere to it.

Regardless, Price's claim is 'simply that the third norm adds something new to the preferential mix.' This takes the form of a new 'preferential pressure' towards resolving our disagreements; with the third norm in play, if our beliefs can either be correct/true or incorrect/false, we are pressured to resolve disagreements to discover which claims are true and which are false. This pressure can only exist with the third norm; without it there would be nothing to resolve in a disagreement, apart from a lack of adherence to either of the first two norms. Further, this pressure only exists for us because we care about seeking approval of other people in society; if we did not, such as the Mo'ans who do not care if they disagree, this pressure would not be possible. Thus, the third norm 'exploits the fact about us' that we do care about the approval and disapproval of people in our community, making disagreements matter in a way that they could not matter without it. What we have which the Mo'ans lack is the 'disposition to disapprove of speakers with whom we disagree' - this Price calls 'the mark of the third norm'. (ibid.: 181)

So, by having a norm of 'truth', a friction is created between contradicting assertions; what previously was a no-fault disagreement, where our opinions 'slide past' one another, is

now normatively loaded - if two views conflict, one of them has to be true and the other false. In providing such friction to our linguistic dialogue, Price thinks that this 'is perhaps the most interesting fact about truth, from a philosophical perspective'. (ibid.: 182) He does not wish to restart the traditional mirror of nature picture of philosophy, or say that we are in direct causal relation with truth itself - Price is focussed upon the role/uses of truth, rather than naturalistically identifying truth with something else.

If the pragmatist asks questions such as 'What differences does the norm of truth make to our linguistic practices?' Price is now in a position to give a satisfying answer. As we have seen, our linguistic dialogue is not possible without the third norm of truth; without the third norm, there are mere opinions, and thus no real disagreements; there is nothing to get right or wrong - we simply have differences in our own opinions, on the same level as preferring one thing over another. Our kind of dialogue, of actually being able to engage and disagree with one another, and having a conversation about these disagreements, is 'a central part of our linguistic and social lives'. Every dispute we have (above the level of sincerity and the coherence of our beliefs) depends upon our linguistic dialogue; otherwise, our opinions would simply pass by one another. It is our linguistic dialogue itself which makes the greatest difference; the practice of being able to discuss our disagreements with an aim to approach the truth, and thus aiming to converge on particular issues, is so thoroughly ingrained in our society, that without it, our linguistic conversations would be almost unrecognisable. Thus, Rorty's claim that the notion of truth makes no behavioural difference to justification in practice fails in an interesting, significant way, rather than in an insignificant way. (ibid.: 179-185)

A crucial point to note is that Price is a 'fictionalist' about truth; he is claiming that we *think* that there is a norm of truth, which we then adhere to. Truth is something which we make, which makes our linguistic dialogue possible. He refuses however to be either labeled a

realist or antirealist, for this would be to presuppose the very metaphysical baggage which his account of the norm of truth attempts to steer away from. (ibid.:187-190)

Thus, Price's attitude to the realism/antirealism debate is deflationary; there is nothing interesting to say about truth in terms of the mirror of nature problematic. The 'most interesting' thing about truth is its use in making our linguistic dialogue possible, within which our disagreeing views resist one another, rather than simply passing each other by, giving us an incentive to resolve our disagreements. (ibid.: 179-183)

Price's conclusion is that truth is a human creation. However, he denies that in providing a norm stronger than justification (the third norm of truth) that a commitment to truth 'makes no behavioural difference'. Instead, truth plays 'an essential role in a linguistic practice of great importance to us, *as we currently are.*' It is unclear whether we could coherently be otherwise, getting by without the third norm, but if we could, then 'the result would be a very different language game'. All our assertions would be merely opinionated, and dialogue itself would be impossible. Price's main claim therefore is that 'we have not understood truth until we understand its role in the game we currently play.' (ibid.: 190)

Summary of views on Objective Truth

Out of the five pragmatists we have discussed, three retain a notion of 'objective truth' (Peirce, Dewey and Price) while two (James and Rorty) reject the notion entirely. However, none of those that do retain such a notion understand 'objective truth' in terms of being a metaphysically real standard, actually out there in the world. Instead, the notion is to be understood in terms of its practical uses within a societal framework; for Peirce, a scientific ideal which we are working towards; similarly, for Dewey, an ideal of the harmonisation of *all* of our judgements possible via human experience; for Price, a social norm which is a prerequisite for the possibility of our linguistic dialogue within our society.

James and Rorty, who *do* reject the notion of objective truth, also consider the notion practically; the principle difference is that they found that the notion did not have any practical use within society, whilst the others did. They argue that individual claims to truth have pragmatic uses, satisfying our social needs, but not their 'objective' variant; 'objective' truths can be seen as an attempt to constrain our opinions, acting as 'concrete' foundations to our knowledge, which cannot be undermined. Thus, both provide their own means to undermine this notion of 'concreteness', and consequently both reject the notion of objective truth. Furthermore, for Rorty, not only is such a notion undermined, but it has no explanatory use within our inquiries, as there is no practical distinction to be made between a belief being justified and a belief being true. Objective truth, for Rorty, is a result of the mirror of nature problematic, a historical mistake, which holds our society back from social progress towards the anti-representationalist age which he envisages.

So, whilst there is a clear divide between those pragmatists which argue that the notion of 'objective truth' is an important, perhaps (in the case of Price, at least) *essential* part of our interactions with others in society, and those which find that the notion makes no practical difference in society, and should therefore be undermined, all five pragmatists share one common goal: they critique the notion of 'objective truth' in terms of its practical implications in society. All of them wish to avoid the non-practical, metaphysical, traditional way of conducting philosophy, and wish to replace this with a position which does justice to our practical endeavours, whether that be in the science lab or in our everyday lives.

However, is this shared goal enough to define pragmatism, or are there simply too many distinctions to be made between these positions to generalise them all under the same banner? In the following chapter, using our understanding of these five theories, we will attempt to find the 'heart' of these positions, the two central commitments which not only binds them all together, but which is essential to their success. In doing so, not only will

we be able to successfully define pragmatism, but we will also be able to begin our investigations into potential issues surrounding the pragmatist method.

Chapter 3 - The Heart of Pragmatism and the Importance of Objective Truth

In the previous chapter we explained five different theories of 'pragmatism', and their approaches to the topic of 'objective truth'. However, despite gaining a greater understanding of what is regarded as 'pragmatism', we still left the chapter without an answer to two important questions: due to the internal differences between the five theories, can they all be regarded as theories of 'pragmatism'? And if they can, what is the heart of the pragmatic method which unites them all? In short: what makes pragmatism, pragmatism?

To answer this question, let us first consider Cheryl Misak's answer, from the introduction to her book *New Pragmatists*. (Misak, 2009) Misak's work, as the title suggests, is focused upon forms of 'New Pragmatism', such as that found in Price, rather than its classical or neo variants (found in Peirce, James, Dewey ((classical)) and Rorty ((neo)). Therefore, in her assessment of what she calls the 'pillars' (ibid.: 2) of pragmatism, (the central commitments which she believes most, if not all, forms of 'New pragmatism' share) some of these pillars may not necessarily line up with all of the theories we have discussed. However, I shall argue that two of the pillars she identifies apply to all of the theories we have discussed, allowing us to identify both the project and methodology which is common to all five of these positions.

The First Pillar

One pillar of 'pragmatism' which Misak suggests is shared ('at least in theory') by 'all versions of pragmatism' is the commitment of making sure that philosophy is 'connected to first-order inquiry', to our practical endeavours, to our actual life experiences; as Misak puts it, 'to real-life expertise'. (ibid.: 4) Unsurprisingly (given the name 'pragmatism') each of the theories discussed in Chapter 2 feature this commitment to our practical endeavours, despite their individual idiosyncrasies. A clear example of this can be found

within Peirce and James. Whilst Peirce used his account to reform philosophy into a communicative science ‘in which men come to agreement’, (Peirce, 1868: 141) James aimed to provide a ‘middle ground’ (Pomerleau, 2017) between what he regarded as the two extremes of philosophy, and as such broadened his understanding of what constitutes a concept’s experiential implications, allowing concepts to be meaningful if they functioned satisfactorily in one’s life. Furthermore, whilst Peirce understood the concept of ‘truth’ as an ideal we reach at the end of scientific inquiry, James understood particular beliefs as being ‘true’ if they performed a ‘marriage-function’ (James, 1907: 26) between one’s stock of older beliefs and new facts. Nevertheless, despite their apparently different goals, there is a clear narrative thread which binds both of these projects together; both were committed, in their own ways, to re-directing philosophical discourse away from its traditional a priori, metaphysical roots, and reforming philosophy into a discourse which serves our practical needs in society. As such, both philosophers are committed to this pillar.

Although we will not spend any more time here highlighting that the five theories discussed all share in this aim of connecting philosophy with our practical endeavours, (I submit the previous chapter as confirmation of this) more interesting is how all five of these philosophers actually attempt to fulfil this aim. Each ‘pragmatist’ attempts to fulfil this goal by holding onto the same core commitment: a rejection of any certain foundations of knowledge - all of our beliefs, ‘no matter how strongly held, are fallible.’ (Misak, 2009: 2) If we do not reject such certain foundations, our philosophical positions cannot be practically valuable; we invite a metaphysical picture of philosophy which grounds the meaning of our concepts, and truth of our statements, entirely distinct from any of their practical consequences, losing any connection with our actual human activities in society. It is on this basis that each pragmatist develops their own arguments to undermine the philosophical tradition, (which supports such foundations) reforming philosophy into a discipline which serves our practical purposes in society.

The Second Pillar

Let us now evaluate whether this pillar/commitment to a rejection of certain foundations of knowledge can be found within all of the forms of pragmatism discussed. It is clear that Peirce's pragmatism supports this pillar; his position begins with a rejection of epistemological foundationalism, specifically that of Descartes - the position that knowledge must be founded upon certain foundations, from which all other beliefs can be inferred. Instead, Peirce argued that inquiry should begin with those premises which can be carefully scrutinised by the scientific community, and that we should trust to a variety of arguments rather than 'to the conclusiveness of any one'. Furthermore, the concept of certainty is devoid of practical use; once the community agrees to adopt a particular theory, the question of its certainty is 'idle'. (Peirce, 1868: 141) Therefore, for Peirce, there are no certain foundations to knowledge. Consequently, when one reaches a state of belief, where thought 'comes to rest', (Peirce, 1878: 289) our thoughts do not stay in this state for long, as further doubt can arise. As a result, all our beliefs are fallible. As Peirce both rejects such certain foundations and is a fallibilist, his theory adheres to this pillar of pragmatism.

For James, any belief which is regarded as 'true' is regarded as such only because it serves our practical purposes, in particular by performing a 'marriage-function' (James, 1907: 26) between our stock of old opinions and new fact, and this applies to even the most ancient parts of truth. In this way, purely objective truth 'is nowhere to be found', (ibid.: 25) meaning that certain foundations of knowledge, which are beyond any reasonable doubt, are not possible. In this way, James is also a fallibilist; all existential truths, even those we are strongly committed to, can be subject to change given new experience. As James both rejects certain foundations of knowledge and is a fallibilist, he is also firmly committed to this pillar of pragmatism.

Dewey, whilst retaining a notion of objective truth, would also reject the notion of there being certain foundations of knowledge. By reformulating the concept of 'experience' to adequately ground his experimentalist project, he proposed an understanding of philosophy which only deemed valuable those philosophical positions which used their 'refined, secondary products as a path pointing and leading back to something in primary experience.' (Dewey, 1925: 6) Under this understanding, the position that there are certain foundations of knowledge would not be deemed philosophically valuable by Dewey; such a position undermines the import of our ordinary life experiences, failing to assist us in serving our practical purposes. Dewey would therefore reject such a foundationalist notion. Furthermore, he was also a fallibilist regarding our beliefs; our human knowledge can continue to grow through experience, holding the ideal that when all of our judgements are in harmony, we reach 'the ultimate limit of objective knowledge' - objective truth. (Shook, 2000: 129) As our judgements can only become true or false, and become known to be true or false via experience, all of our claims to knowledge can be falsified given new experiences. Therefore, Dewey also adheres to this pillar of pragmatism.

Rorty's pragmatist project was focussed upon undermining the traditional understanding of philosophy, as a study of the mirror of nature. In doing so, he rejected any attempt to accurately describe the world. Epistemological foundationalism, by claiming to find a level of certainty regarding how the world truly is, is one of these positions, and as such Rorty is heavily opposed to it. Rorty invoked Quine's argument to undermine the analytic/synthetic distinction, arguing that every belief, no matter how strongly held, can be revised given new experiences. In this way, we should adopt a picture of knowledge which does not have firm, static foundations, upon which all else is built, but instead a metaphorical web, with some beliefs merely being harder to reject than others due to their centrality to that web. As all beliefs are revisable given new experience (even those traditionally considered concrete, analytic truths) there are no certain foundations of knowledge for Rorty, and due

to the revisability of every belief in the web, all of our beliefs are fallible, showing that Rorty is strongly committed to this pillar.

Price's 'New Pragmatism', although diverging greatly from Rorty on the key issue of whether objective truth is a norm of inquiry, is also committed to this pillar of pragmatism. For Price, the norm of 'truth' is a human creation, a fiction which makes our linguistic dialogue possible. As such, Price is explicitly rejecting the existence of foundations of knowledge; if such foundations are understood as being absolutely true, transcending human intervention, and corresponding to a metaphysically real world, Price would be strictly against this line of thought. He is concerned only with the role that truth plays in society, not with identifying truth with any foundations of knowledge, of representing a real world, or anything similar. The most interesting thing to say about truth is the role it plays in our linguistic practices, in making our linguistic dialogue possible. Consequently, as the norm of 'truth' is a human creation, rather than cemented in terms of certain foundations, Price is clearly a fallibilist regarding truth. Since 'truth' is a creation of society, and as he is disinterested in claiming that there is any metaphysically 'real', unchangeable standard of truth 'out there' in the real world, it would not cohere with the rest of Price's project to conclude that some of our beliefs cannot be revised. Therefore Price's position is connected with this pillar of pragmatism in a significant way.

Issues with the Pragmatic account of Truth

At this point we can agree with Misak that each of these theories share two essential commitments, providing us with a working definition of pragmatism: the project of keeping philosophy connected with our first order endeavours, coupled with the method of rejecting certain foundations of knowledge. Without the project of reforming philosophy into a more practical discipline, none of these positions would have any motivation in the first place to attack our traditional metaphysical approach to the notion of truth. Further, without the method of rejecting such certain foundations, none of these positions would be

able to get off the ground, as it is precisely this which ties philosophy to its traditional metaphysical discourse.

However, now that we have a working definition of pragmatism, we can ask the following question: does pragmatism provide an adequate account of truth? Although each theory of pragmatism treats the notion of truth differently, we can confidently assert at this point that pragmatism as a whole is anti-representationalist regarding truth. By rejecting any foundations of knowledge, and by understanding a belief as true *only* if it serves some practical purpose within our society, each of the pragmatists *depends* upon a rejection of any notion of truth as a correspondence with something out there in the real world. If they did not reject such a notion, the entire pragmatic method would collapse. We thus can question if one can provide an adequate account of truth whilst being an anti-representationalist. In the following, I will suggest various reasons for why a realist, such as myself, would think that there needs to be more to the notion of truth than pragmatism, in any of its forms, allows. My argument for realism, and thus my justification for the realist intuitions shown hereafter, will be presented in the next chapter.

One potentially troubling consequence of being an anti-representationalist regarding the notion of truth is that it places truth-claims regarding the past in jeopardy. As we have seen, the pragmatist rejects the realist notion of truth, of a statement being true because it corresponds with a real world actually out there. Instead, a statement's truth depends purely upon it serving some practical purpose within society. There are two obvious problems with this position. Firstly, it leads to counter-intuitive conclusions; can it really be the case that it is true that Hitler invaded Poland because it serves some practical purpose for our society, as a whole, to believe that he invaded Poland? Our common-sense realist intuitions suggest that this statement's truth depends upon a real-world event, referring to something that actually happened in the past, rather than just depending on our society's

own standards of justification, or whether believing that statement to be true has any practical consequences in our everyday lives, and so forth.

There are further counter-intuitive implications for truth claims regarding the past when the pragmatist equates truth with serving our practical purposes in society. Consider the statement 'An Iguanodon fell over in this location 125 million years ago.' Regardless of our current circumstances, our common-sense realist intuitions tell us that this statement is either true or false; this statement either refers to something that actually happened in the past or it does not. So, if construction work had begun yesterday in the location the statement referred to, destroying any potential evidence to show that this statement was either true or false, our common sense realist intuitions still tell us that the statement is either true or false, regardless of our inability to prove it either way. However, the anti-representationalist pragmatist, as we have seen, equates the notion of truth with serving our practical purposes in society; if we have no evidence to prove this statement to be true or false, then there is no practical difference between regarding the statement to be true, or regarding it to be false. In that case, the statement 'lacks a truth value.' (Kirk, 1999: 137) Once again, this is counter-intuitive to the realist; surely this statement is either true or false, either refers to an actual event or fails to refer, regardless of whether we can provide any evidence either way?

However, a deeper issue arises when we understand truth in the way of the anti-representationalist pragmatist. So far we have established that the pragmatist's attitude towards truth leads to counter-intuitive implications; not only does it suggest that a statement is only true or false depending upon whether a society finds it useful to *believe* that it is true or false, but also whether it actually has a truth-value to begin with depends upon us. A deeper issue however is that the pragmatist's enterprise seems to suggest that we create history as we go along. Consider again the statement 'Hitler invaded Poland'. Suppose that our current conditions entailed that it was more useful for us to believe that

this statement was false rather than true. In that case, such a statement would become known as false, regardless of any historical evidence which may suggest otherwise.

At this point one may argue that such a wealth of historical evidence may prevent this hypothetical belief from becoming useful; it would be too hard to induce this belief with all the evidence suggesting otherwise. However, given the right conditions, could not the belief in the validity or import of such historical evidence also be revised? Keeping with Rorty's doctrine of the web of belief he inherited from Quine, if it is more useful for us to believe that Hitler did not invade Poland, we could alter our web of belief to disregard such evidence entirely. To the realist, this not only seems absurd (as here we have an instance of a statement being regarded as false regardless of what actually happened in 1939, as if history is 'up for grabs') but is also reminiscent of the following exchange between O'Brien and Wilson in George Orwell's 1984:

"There is a Party slogan dealing with the control of the past' he [O'Brien] said. 'Repeat it, if you please.'

'Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past' repeated Winston obediently.

'Who controls the present controls the past' said O'Brien, nodding his head with slow approval. 'Is it your opinion, Winston, that the past has real existence?'

Again the feeling of helplessness descended upon Winston. His eyes flitted towards the dial. He not only did not know whether 'yes' or 'no' was the answer that would save him from pain; he did not even know which answer he believed to be the true one.

O'Brien smiled faintly. 'You are no metaphysician, Winston' he said. 'Until this moment you had never considered what is meant by existence. I will put it more precisely. Does the past exist concretely, in space? Is there somewhere or other a place, a world of solid objects, where the past is still happening?'

'No'.

'Then where does the past exist, if at all?'

'In records. It is written down.'

'In records. And — — ?'

'In the mind. In human memories.'

'In memory. Very well, then. We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not?'" (Orwell, 260: 1949)

As this passage suggests, if history is 'up for grabs' in the way that the deconstructionist, anti-representationalist pragmatist suggests, we invite a whole host of ethical issues. If society as a whole agrees, for instance, that it is more useful to believe that Hitler was a war-time hero, and that the Holocaust was morally justified, then both of these statements are true. If society as a whole agrees that capital punishment is a justifiable punishment for all crimes, then this statement is also rendered true. As Putnam puts the point - 'If the moral of a deconstruction is that *everything* can be "deconstructed", then the deconstruction has no moral'. (Putnam, 1992: 200) In other words, if society adopted the pragmatist attitude towards truth, an attitude which claims that there is not an objective standard of truth 'out there' in the real world, but that instead the very notion of 'truth' is dispensable, at least in any substantive sense, then it is entirely possible that pragmatism may be used to justify all kinds of (what we would consider) immoral acts, not least those aforementioned.²⁵

I am well aware that the intuitions I have been providing above presuppose that there is a real world out there, that there are real events for our words to correspond to, and that there is an objectively real standard of truth that pragmatism misses out. All of this, as we have seen, the anti-representationalist pragmatists would reject, for various theoretical

²⁵ Of course Rorty could reply here that in a society which justifies such acts, those acts would not be immoral; whether an act is moral or not depends completely upon whether society, as a whole, agrees them to be so. In order to adequately respond to Rorty here, and to establish the possibility that an act's moral standing does not depend upon the other beliefs we hold in society, we need to establish a fixed notion of truth which depends not upon us but upon the world. Ultimately, we need to justify representationalism, as we will attempt to do in the following chapter.

reasons. One main component of this rejection across all of these pragmatic theories is that asking questions about a real world, and a real standard of truth which is actually out there, is not practically useful to us. Such questions only serve to distract us from satisfying our social needs; they make use of concepts which have no practical application whatsoever. Instead, the concepts which we employ, including the notion of 'truth' should have their meaning grounded within their practical implications in society, allowing us to fulfil our social needs. This means we must reject our traditional philosophical methodology, which grounds meaning via a relation with reality itself, rather than the practical consequences of employing our concepts in society.

Secondly, the project of grounding meaning via certain foundations of knowledge is untenable; as we have seen, for the pragmatist, every belief, no matter how strongly held, is fallible/open to revision. As all of our beliefs are capable of being revised, we cannot coherently make any claims to an objective standard of truth out there in the real world; the truth of our beliefs depends on whatever is most useful for us to believe within our current socio-linguistic society, rather than corresponding with a real world actually out there. Even if this aspect of revisability may seem counter-intuitive to a realist (as illustrated above with the examples of truth-claims regarding the past and potential ethical problems) the realist only sees this as counter-intuitive due to their adoption of an incoherent notion of objective truth grounded via foundationalism, which should be rejected.

Further to this point, the entire project of the mind corresponding with the real world appears to have been undermined by Rorty; we cannot escape our current socio-linguistic web of belief and 'step outside our skins', (Rorty, 1982: xix) consulting with reality itself. The world cannot tell us which concepts to adopt, or which beliefs are true; we can only consult with our peers in society, changing our 'web of belief' (Rorty 1991: 66) depending on whatever is most practically useful for society, as a whole, to believe. Therefore, when

we claim that our truth-claims regarding the past must refer to the real world, this presupposes a notion of correspondence, which Rorty, due to the 'Mirror of Nature' (Rorty, 1979) problematic, argues is untenable. As a result of these strong theoretical considerations, the pragmatists can hold their ground against our accusations of counter-intuition. Even if it may appear counter-intuitive to abandon our realist intuitions, this, Rorty argues, is only because we are 'held captive' (Rorty, 1986: 326) by an untenable conceptual scheme picture of philosophy. If that entire picture of philosophy is untenable, no real issues are apparent for the pragmatist.

The connection between Foundationalism and Conceptual Schemes

We have now considered various counter-intuitive implications of adopting the pragmatic attitude to truth, as well as the general line of attack which the pragmatist can respond with. However, as suggested in the previous section, realists may only hold such accusations of counter-intuition due to their adoption of the scheme/content picture of philosophy, a position which, as we will see, stands in direct opposition to the second pillar of pragmatism. The conceptual scheme picture posits that there is a principled distinction to be made between the world (the content) and the theories we attach to that world (the scheme.) As we will see, if the scheme/content picture can be defended successfully, the existence of foundations of knowledge is made possible, thus undermining the pragmatic method.

As argued earlier, each of the pragmatic theories analysed depends upon a rejection of certain foundations of knowledge; without this rejection, the pragmatic method cannot get off the ground. If we can therefore successfully establish the existence of foundations of knowledge, pragmatism, as a method, is undermined, and our realist intuitions are no longer challenged. We can continue, for all the pragmatists have said, to believe that there is a real world out there, and thus there exists an objective standard of truth about that

world, allowing us to claim to have understood the real nature of that world to a greater or lesser extent.

In order to proceed with this critique, we first need to see the integral connection between a rejection of certain foundations with a rejection of the scheme/content distinction. Having shown this connection, in the next chapter we will focus our attention specifically upon Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism, as Rorty provides a direct response to the scheme/content picture, attempting to undermine it, reaffirming pragmatism's crucial rejection of any foundations of knowledge; in effect, Rorty supplies the missing argument which programmatic statements of pragmatism require. We will provide a response to Rorty which attempts to revitalise the scheme/content distinction, thus justifying the possibility of foundations of knowledge, undermining the pragmatic method as a whole.

As we have seen in the previous chapter within our exposition of Rorty, Rorty attempts to undermine the whole 'mirror of nature' picture of philosophy. He specifically rejected the scheme/content distinction, which originated with Kant, and was continued throughout the logical positivists and even Quine himself. For an adopter of the conceptual scheme picture, there is a distinction to be made between the scheme which we impose upon the world (our theories about the world within our languages) and the content (the world itself - what actually exists out there.) Under this understanding, our schemes can match/represent/mirror the world to a greater or lesser degree; for example, one may argue that within Ancient Greek physics, Aristotle had a conceptual scheme that included 'natural downwards motion', which represented the real world (the content) less accurately than our modern day conceptual scheme which includes 'gravity' does in respect of what we call 'gravity' and Aristotle called 'natural downwards motion'.

The important thing to note here is that within the philosophical tradition, the content (the world itself) serves as the foundation of many of our philosophical theories. A clear

example of this, as we mentioned earlier, are the logical positivists, such as Ayer. For Ayer, a statement is meaningful if it can be verified by experience; for example, the statement 'The grass is green' can be verified by looking outside at the grass, and confirming that it is indeed green. Here the content (in Ayer's case, sense data) is crucial for this theory to work at all: if there are no sense data to which our words 'grass' and 'green' correspond, we cannot verify that grass is actually green. Similarly, a common-sense realist view, such as Kripke's causal theory of reference, may entail that a statement is true if it corresponds to a real world out there; when we say that 'It is true that Hitler invaded Poland', this is because these words causally latch onto/refer to a real world event, thus constituting this statement's truth. Once again, the content serves as the foundations of this theory; without the existence of a real world out there, there is nothing for our words to latch onto/refer to.

In this way, representationalism and the scheme/content distinction are irrevocably linked; the 'content' (the real world) serves as the foundations²⁶ which make many of our traditional philosophical theories possible. As pragmatism depends upon a rejection of such foundations, of there being a real world out there which we can represent to a greater or lesser degree, and as conceptual schemes depend on the existence of such foundations, the onus is on the pragmatists to reject the scheme/content distinction - and that is exactly what Rorty tries to do. Hence, in the next chapter we will specifically investigate Rorty's argument for the rejection of the scheme/content distinction, questioning whether our realist intuitions are actually confused. Does Rorty successfully undermine the conceptual scheme picture of philosophy, or is the scheme/content distinction actually viable, justifying the realist intuitions previously stated? I will argue, contrary to Rorty's thought, that his Neo-Pragmatism actually implies the possibility of the scheme/content distinction, and as a result, the existence of foundations of knowledge,

²⁶ Here I am using the notion of 'foundations' in a loose sense, meaning our sense data of the world, or the objects in the world that our words causally refer to, and so forth. I am not attempting to justify the possibility of foundations in the strict Cartesian sense, that is, of indubitable sources of knowledge.

justifying our realist intuitions. With this argument, I aim to undermine the 'pragmatic method' as a whole, rendering our traditional philosophical aspirations, which up to this point have been under attack, once again viable.

Chapter 4 - Rorty, Conceptual Schemes, and Radical Revision

In the previous chapter we established the connection between conceptual schemes and foundations of knowledge; within the scheme/content distinction, the 'content' serves as the foundation (in our loose sense) for many of our traditional philosophical theories. If we reject the existence of such foundations, we also reject the existence of the external, real world (the content), and the scheme/content distinction collapses. The success of the scheme/content distinction is therefore essential to the foundational picture of knowledge.

On the opposing side, the success of the pragmatic method, as explained in Chapter 3, depends upon a rejection of any certain foundations of knowledge. The onus is thus on the pragmatist to undermine the scheme/content distinction, which advocates the existence of such foundations. This is precisely what Rorty, with aid from Donald Davidson, attempts to achieve, as we shall investigate in this chapter. Firstly, however, it is important to understand the direction from which Davidson is entering the debate. We begin by investigating Davidsonian semantics - Davidson's account of meaning and truth, which feeds directly into his rejection of the scheme/content distinction.

Accounting for meaning and truth within Davidsonian Semantics

Donald Davidson, with aid from Alfred Tarski's disquotational theory of truth,²⁷ developed a holistic account of meaning which did not depend upon any metaphysical correspondence with the real world, but instead functioned purely within the limits of our language. In order to establish the truth of a sentence, we need to establish the equivalences between quoted and disquoted sentences, such as the following:

'Big Ben is in London' is true iff Big Ben is in London.

²⁷ For Tarski's original disquotational theory of truth, see: Tarski, A. (1956).

The quoted sentence (*'Big Ben is in London'*) is regarded as the 'meta-language'; (Malpas, 2015) we are talking about the words involved in the sentence; 'Big Ben', 'is', 'in' and 'London' in this example, rather than the actual world itself. On the other hand, in the disquoted sentence (*Big Ben is in London*) we are talking about the world itself, the actual entities these words refer to; we are talking about the object known as Big Ben, and asserting that it exists in a city named London.

So, a sentence such as 'Big Ben is in London' can only be true if, and only if, Big Ben is in London. However, to make this a candidate for truth across any of our natural languages/ 'object languages', (Davidson, 1967: p23) such as English, French, German and so forth, this definition of truth must entail equivalencies of this form for all sentences within that language. So, examples of equivalent sentences to that aforementioned would be 'The cat is black' is true if and only if the cat is black, and 'Le chat est noir' is true if and only if le chat est noir.

Thus, for Tarski, truth is not to be understood as a correspondence between our words and the real world itself; to establish a working definition of truth, this definition needs to entail equivalencies of the form mentioned previously for every other sentence in our natural language. Davidson uses this groundwork set out by Tarski to provide his own theory of meaning; we need to combine all of the Tarskian truth-conditions for our language, showing how they infer one another, in order to establish a theory of meaning for a natural language, such as English. So for example, consider again the following sentence:

'Big Ben is in London' is true iff Big Ben is in London.

Big Ben being in London is the truth condition of the quoted sentence; the sentence is only true if this truth condition is met. If we inferentially connect these truth conditions with

other truth conditions of the same form in our natural language, we can establish a theory of meaning for that language. For example, if we can inferentially connect the sentence 'Big Ben is London' with the sentence 'London is the capital of the UK' and so forth - if we can inferentially connect '*all* sentences of [this] form' (Davidson, 1967: p308) in English with all other Tarskian truth-conditions of this form, we will then have produced a theory of meaning for the English language.

Therefore, for Davidson, sentences only get their meaning as contained within a whole: we can only specify the meaning of a sentence such as 'Big Ben is in London' by inferentially linking this sentence with all equivalent sentences in the English language. In this way, Davidsonian semantics is a 'holistic view of meaning'; (ibid.: 308) meaning can only arise at the holistic level of sentences within language.

Rorty's Support of Davidsonian Semantics

As implied earlier, Rorty is in support of Davidsonian semantics, as both a theory of meaning and as a use for the notion of truth. The reasons for this are manifold, but the driving cause for his support is due to Davidson's dismissive attitude to and avoidance of the mirror of nature problematic. Firstly, Davidson makes no attempt to link up the meaning of our words to the real, external world itself. Unlike correspondence theorists (such as Kripke and Putnam within the causal theory of reference), our words do not get their meaning by corresponding to the real world, but rather are meaningful holistically via their inferential connections with other sentences in our language. We thus avoid the traditional picture of one's ideas, within the mind, corresponding to a real world; a sentence is meaningful simply in virtue of its connections with other sentences in our language.

Furthermore, by establishing meaning holistically in this way, we entirely avoid the myth of the given. Traditionally, as explained in our earlier exposition of Sellars' attack on the

given, philosophers argued that the world itself gives us meaning. However, as Sellars argued, the senses are unable to grasp a fact - an act of conceptualisation is required in order to make sense of the experiences we have. As this act of conceptualisation cannot come from experience (as sense experiences 'just are') Sellars instead posited that it must come from society, in a community of language users. This coheres with Davidson's grounding of meaning holistically within language. Therefore, as Davidsonian Semantics is 'not at all infected by the Myth of the Given', (Tartaglia, 2007: 154) it gains Rorty's support.

The Traditional Scheme/Content Distinction

However, as one may expect by this point, establishing truth and meaning holistically, without reference to the real, external world, at the very least *appears* to have multiple issues. In Chapter 3 we identified various counter-intuitive implications of rejecting the existence of any external standard of objective truth out there in the real world, instead grounding truth purely within the limits of our current socio-linguistic society. However, as also identified in the previous chapter, Rorty would argue that this is simply because we are held back by an absurd conceptual scheme picture of philosophy, which falls foul of the mirror of nature problematic, and which advocates the untenable existence of foundations of knowledge. If this picture can be undermined, so are our realist intuitions, and we are now in a position to see how Rorty, with aid from Davidson, attempts to do precisely this. Before we do this, however, it may be helpful to briefly re-iterate the traditional distinction between scheme and content, to remind us exactly where Davidson is directing his critique.

An advocate of the scheme/content distinction holds that we always understand the world in terms of some conceptual apparatus or other - what is termed a conceptual scheme. For instance, consider looking directly in front of you and experiencing what you believe to be a 'tree'. Here a transaction has occurred between the individual and the world; the

world has impacted in some way upon our sensory organs, and in response to this triggering, we react by imposing upon our experiences certain concepts, such as 'green', 'tree', 'tall' and so forth. Hence advocates of this traditional picture argue there is a distinction to be made between the content (the real world which causes such sensations) and our schemes (the theories we apply to our experiences in order to cognise/make sense of the world).

Under this understanding, it is obvious that our conceptual schemes have *changed* throughout time. Consider the Ancient Greeks' notion of the four humours. For the ancient Greek physician, this notion suggested that the human body contains four distinct elements: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile, providing a theory of the phenomena one experiences when investigating the human body. An advocate of the conceptual scheme picture may argue that we now have a different conceptual scheme for understanding our experiences of the human body in the world, one which includes modern developments in biomedicine. This conceptual scheme can approximate the content (the real world) much more accurately than that of the Ancient Greek physician. Again, in two thousand years time, it is possible that society may have another conceptual scheme, which approximates the real world much more accurately than our current, more confused conceptual scheme. So, under this conception, there can be multiple ways of understanding the same real world.

Within this understanding, our language embodies our conceptual scheme; we have words, within our conceptual scheme, such as 'cats' and 'hills' which allow us to make sense of the objects that we experience in the world. As the ancient Greek physician's conceptual scheme included the four humours, this allowed them to understand the human body in terms of this notion. In the same way, for the modern physicist, whose conceptual scheme includes notions from modern developments within biomedicine, this allows them to understand the human body in terms of such notions. In both scenarios we

are making sense of the same world; the difference is that we are organising the content of that world differently through our distinct schemes. Likewise, under this conceptual scheme picture, *truth* becomes not a relation between sentences within our language, but a relation between our words and the world; a sentence is true if it is part of a conceptual scheme which matches up accurately with the real world itself. In this way, the conceptual scheme picture fits naturally with the correspondence theory of truth; a statement is made true by it representing the world accurately. Hence, we can measure a sense of improvement in our understanding of the world throughout time. Whereas the ancient Greek physician did not accurately represent the human body in terms of the four humours, our modern developments within biomedicine, within our current conceptual scheme, match the world much better than any efforts of the past.

The Rejection of the Scheme/Content Distinction

Now that we have the conceptual scheme picture all lined up, we can investigate Davidson's specific argument against the scheme/content distinction. Davidson begins his critique by making use of Quine's 'indeterminacy of translation' (Quine, 1960: 69) argument, arguing that the only way in which a field linguist can decipher what a foreign language speaker is saying is by first translating that speaker's utterances into our own natural language, such as English, and then evaluating these utterances within our own terms. For instance, consider that we landed on a planet in a distance galaxy, and encountered an alien species. As the field linguist stands in front of the alien, a spaceship flies by, and the alien points towards the spaceship, uttering the sound 'Hautav'. The only way that the field linguist, who has not encountered the Alien's language before, can decide whether the Alien has said something true is by translating this word, for instance, as 'That's a spaceship' and evaluating whether it is true according to our own standards. In this case, as a spaceship, according to our own standards in English, did indeed fly by, we can determine that the Alien has said something true.

However, if we can only determine that the Alien's sentence is true by translating it into our terms, and evaluating its truth according to our own terms, there is no prospect of the Alien's sentence being true but untranslatable. If a sentence, in any foreign language, can only be understood as being true after we have translated it into our own language and evaluated it according to our own terms, the idea of a foreigner speaking a radically different language, but saying something true, becomes incomprehensible. The only way to establish that they are saying something true is by first translating their utterances into our own language, and then evaluating them. If we cannot establish this translation in the first place, we are not in a position to assert that they are saying something true.

Therefore, if they are saying something true, it must be something translatable; and if it is something translatable, then *they must be saying the same things that we do.*²⁸

However, returning to the traditional conceptual scheme picture, one could simply counter-argue that the Alien culture *could* be saying something true about the world, even if it is untranslatable to us - they could be cognising the world differently to us through a radically different conceptual scheme. Say that the Alien begins to utter words such as 'Bureb' and 'Kalaskwa', and despite the Field Linguist's best efforts, they fail to distinctly correlate these utterances to any of the phenomena around them at that time. The supporter of the scheme/content distinction could reply that the field linguist's failure to translate the Alien's language does not necessarily mean that they are not saying something true. They could be cognising the world in a radically different way to our own, and yet still saying something true about that same world, something that we cannot recognise, as our conceptual scheme does not match up with that of the Alien. So, just because we cannot 'verify the existence of a language which gives a true description of the world unless it is translatable into our own', (Rorty, 1979: 305) this does not show that there cannot be such a language.

²⁸ This point is crucial to our main argument which we will begin shortly; I will be challenging this claim directly, arguing that one could be saying something true despite it being completely untranslatable to us.

However, Davidson argues that we have to apply the principle of 'Charity' in order to make any sense of what a foreign language speaker is saying - we have to assume that most of what the foreign speaker is saying (in this case the Alien) is true. The reason for this is that if we assumed on the contrary that most of what they say is radically false, we would 'risk not making sense of what the alien is talking about'. (Davidson, 1967: 313) To see this in practice, consider the previous example again. If a spaceship flies overhead, and the alien points and says 'Hautav' we have to assume that they are probably saying something true about the spaceship flying overhead in order to make any sense of what they are saying. If we did not apply the principle of charity assumption, allowing that they could be saying something radically false such as 'there is a purple ostrich', we would never be able to make sense of/translate what they are saying.

Following on from this, if we are unable to translate the language of a radical alien such as that aforementioned, then we could never be in a position to state what such a speaker means by their utterances, or believes. However, if translation completely fails in this way, we can never be in a position to state that they are saying something true but untranslatable, contrary to the supporter of the scheme/content distinction. In other words, we could never be in a position to state that the speaker has a radically different conceptual scheme from our own, as the evidence required to show this is impossible. Therefore, for Davidson and Rorty, we could never be in a position to verify the existence of alternative conceptual schemes. As Rorty puts it, the 'notion of an untranslatable language is as fanciful as that of an invisible colour.' (Rorty, 1972: 653)

However, as Rorty acknowledges, one may respond here that Davidson's argument rests on an 'implausible verificationism'; (Tartaglia, 2007: 174) his argument merely establishes that we could never verify the existence of such an untranslatable language, but this does not show that 'there *cannot* be one'. (Rorty, 1979: 305) In this way, it could be possible

that such an alien is making use of a radically different conceptual scheme to ours, even if we cannot verify this to be the case.

At this point however, Rorty provides a defence of this verificationist stance, justifying Davidson's conclusion. He does this by formulating his own version of Moore's Naturalistic Fallacy argument. For Rorty, there is a distinction to be made between our ordinary and philosophical senses of most of the 'key philosophical terms' (Tartaglia, 2007: 174) that we employ in our everyday discourse. For instance, consider the term 'true'. This term, in our everyday, ordinary sense of the word, this term is roughly understood as "what you can defend against all comers". (Rorty, 1979: 308) The ordinary senses of such words are not of much use to the philosopher, as they are always vague and multifarious. As such, philosophers attribute their own exclusive sense to such words, rendering them ideal and thus 'indefinable in terms of anything worldly'; (Tartaglia, 2007: 174) we can only ever approximate such ideals, but never live up to them.

As a result of this, such philosophical senses fall to the naturalistic fallacy, for they 'render serious' (ibid.: 174) those questions which ask whether we really have, for example, grasped the 'truth' of the matter, or whether a particular act, which our entire society agrees upon, really is good or not. In this way, we can never reduce the philosophical sense of 'true' or 'good' to anything else, as such terms are, ultimately, indefinable in terms of anything within our everyday practical lives.

However, as we have seen, Rorty thinks that his alliance with Davidson has served to undermine the traditional understanding of there being real answers to these questions. As Rorty puts it: 'The world does not speak. Only we do.' (Rorty, 1989: 6) As such, we are now in a position to 'give up on otherworldly guidance', (Tartaglia, 2007: 175) and with this, the philosophical senses, which rely on the picture of such transcendent ideals beyond our reach. Therefore, we *should be* verificationists about such philosophical

senses, including the inherently philosophical sense of radically different conceptual schemes.

If we follow Rorty's advice and remain verificationists about conceptual schemes, we reach the conclusion that the very *assertion* that there are alternative conceptual schemes/radically different languages is meaningless, as we could never be in a position to verify the existence of such radically different ways of understanding the world. As such, Davidson's argument, by establishing that we could never be in a position to verify radically different conceptual schemes, leads us to the conclusion that such conceptual schemes do not exist at all.

As the assertion that there exist such radically different, untranslatable languages is meaningless, Davidson invites us to conclude that there can only be one idea of language - our language. For this reason, both Davidson and Rorty conclude that the scheme/content distinction must be an illusion. The traditional picture, which suggests that there is a real world out there which our conceptual schemes, throughout time, better and better represent, and which suggests that the real world may be characterised radically differently by others, is completely undermined.

A Tension between Rorty and Davidson?

We have now seen Davidson and Rorty's attempt to undermine the scheme/content distinction and considered the ramifications of this for our traditional way of conducting philosophy. Up until this point, we have been questioning the consequences of their argument, if it is successful. However, now we will question whether it is successful at all. Our method of approaching this question is to identify what appears to be a tension between Rorty's anti-philosophical project, and his use of Davidson's rejection of the scheme/content distinction. We will argue that this tension actually paves the way for the possibility of radically different conceptual schemes, undermining not only the

Davidsonian rejection of the scheme/content distinction, but also the pragmatic method itself. If *this* argument is successful, it may be possible to revitalise our traditional philosophical aspirations, contrary to Rorty's aim of undermining much of the way in which we traditionally conduct philosophy.

Rorty uses Davidson's rejection of the scheme/content distinction to conclude that there cannot be any radically different ways of understanding the world from our own, as we could never be in a position to verify the existence of such a language. As such, our language - in a broad sense, which captures all of the various natural languages, such as English, French, Greek, and so forth, which people have spoken over the years - our collection of sentences which inferentially imply one another, is the only possible language. Even if we were to meet an advanced alien race, they would still have to be talking about the same things as us.

Now consider Rorty's use of Quine. Returning briefly to our exposition of Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism in Chapter 2, we established that Rorty made use of the arguments of Sellars and Quine to establish that the world cannot give us knowledge (in other words, empiricism is undermined, as there is no myth of the given) and that the world has no preferred way of being described (by establishing that there is no analytic/synthetic distinction; all of the beliefs within the web of belief can be revised.)

Quine argued that there are no analytic statements which are immune to experience, as we have seen. There is no distinction to be made between those statements which are traditionally considered analytic and those considered synthetic; all of our beliefs are within a metaphorical web, with some beliefs being more central to that web than others. Nevertheless, no matter how central they are in the web, they can be revised given new experience. This means, contrary to the original picture, that the meanings of our words are not fixed given the web of belief which we have; regardless of how strongly we hold

the beliefs within our web, they can be revised by making adjustments throughout our system of beliefs. Therefore, if we have new experiences which challenge our beliefs, we can change our web of belief in response to those experiences.

Quine here is advocating the scheme/content distinction. The web of belief is a conceptual scheme, even if it is not fixed, as our experience of the world, as a whole, dictates which theories we then attach to that world, forming our web of belief. Whilst we still have a choice as to which beliefs we reject and which we retain (through whatever is most useful for us to believe) our belief system, as a whole, can still be driven to change via new experiences. So, whilst new experience does not dictate *which* beliefs we change in response to such experiences, our experiences still drive us to adjust our belief system, in whichever way is most practically beneficial to us, to keep the web, as a whole, coherent. So, we adjust the web of belief to line up the web (our scheme) with the content (the world) to make the web as useful to our community as possible. Thus we still have a distinction between the world itself (which produces our experiences) and the scheme which we attach to that world (through which we cognise the world in a certain way.)

Davidson's response to this, as we have seen, is that the scheme/content distinction is a 'dogma'; we can never be in a position to verify that 'others had concepts or beliefs radically different from our own'. (Davidson, 1973: 11-20). Rorty supported this, concluding that there must only be one idea of language, in the broad sense described previously - our language. This is not a web of belief, as it *bears* no *external* relation to the real world; both meaning and truth are determined internally purely by our language (of which there can be no radically different alternative) rather than in response to how the world is in some way or other. Instead, when we say that a statement such as 'The grass is green' is true, we are simply saying that the grass is green. We are not corresponding these words to a real world out there (and thus invoking the scheme/content distinction) but are simply relating this sentence to other sentences within our language. We are not

even, as Quine would argue, trying to make our scheme coherent, and hence useful, in response to the world (the content). Therefore Davidson is not invoking the scheme/content distinction; instead, both truth and meaning are necessarily intra-linguistic.

At this point it appears that Rorty used Quine as a halfway house; his argument was useful in illuminating the dogma of the analytic/synthetic distinction, but, as Davidson made clear, the scheme/content distinction, which Quine made us of, is also a dogma. So, Rorty agrees with Quine that there is no belief which is foundational, which is immune to revision, (a commitment which is crucial to the success of the pragmatic method) but, going further than Quine, agrees with Davidson that there is no scheme/content distinction at all.

However, by using Quine in this way, Rorty appears to unintentionally open the doors to the scheme/content distinction once more. If Rorty agrees with Quine that there is no belief within our language which is foundational, this seems to suggest that there can be radically different ways of understanding the world. To see this, imagine the following scenario. Say that an alien race on a distant planet decided to adjust their language in such a way that they abandoned all logical truths. They decide to abandon the principle of sufficient reason, for example, the principle of non-contradiction, the principle of self-identity, and so on. In order to abandon these beliefs, they gradually adjust their language in such a way that none of these beliefs remain, and eventually, by making such changes, they would share no beliefs in common with our own.

Due to this, Rorty's position directly contradicts Davidson's position in two important, related ways. Firstly, if language is radically revisable (as Rorty must allow to avoid any form of foundationalism) then we must be following the web of belief picture once more, where every belief is subject to change. However, if we are following a web of belief picture, then we are inviting the scheme/content distinction back to philosophy; as seen

earlier, Quine's notion of the web of belief invokes a distinction between the world itself (which produces our experiences) and the scheme which we impose upon that world (through which we cognise the world in a certain way). This puts Rorty's position in direct contradiction to that of Davidson, who is directly opposed to the scheme/content distinction.

Secondly, if every belief within the web is revisable, this directly contradicts Davidson's point that there can only ever be one language - our language. Rorty's position implies the possibility that, through gradual adjustment to the web of belief, a community could adjust their web to such an extent that they share no beliefs in common with our own. In that case, they would have a radically different way of understanding the world/be making use of a radically different language from our own.

However, although Davidson concluded (and Rorty agreed) that there can only be one way of understanding the world, this is of course to simplify, as both philosophers allowed that language can change, non-radically, throughout time. Although foreign speakers, such as an alien race, must be talking largely about the same things as us (in order for us to establish that they are uttering a language in the first place, as Davidson argued), it is possible that they may have some beliefs that we do not. To see this, consider the analogous situation between the 'ridiculously small' amount of beliefs that have changed, as opposed to those which have remained intact, between the 'educated classes of Europe' between the 13th century and now. (Rorty, 1972: 660) Refined matters, such as our understanding of 'morality and physics' (Tartaglia, 2007: 175) indeed have changed, but the basic language still remains the same: our 13th century ancestors still distinguished cats from houses, horses from chairs, and so forth, just as we do now.

In the same way, if we were to meet an alien race which possessed technology far superior to our own, they may indeed have some beliefs which we do not, such as the

belief that there are more chemical elements in the universe than we think, and so on. Nevertheless, the bulk of their language *must* still be the same as ours; they must be, for example, still distinguishing between doors and cats, hills from grass, and so on, for if they were not, we would not be in a position to posit that they are speaking a language at all.

This, however, does not affect our basic point: that the re-introduction of the web of belief picture to philosophy undermines the Davidson-Rorty conclusion that there can only ever be one language - our language. For we are positing a radically different way of understanding the world, one which shares no beliefs with our own at all - not one which is merely different around the edges from our own. As these minor changes in language are all that Davidson and Rorty can allow, and yet the web of belief picture, which we have shown to be viable, allows for the possibility of radical change between languages, their conclusion that there can only ever be one basic language, our language, is undermined.

Therefore, due to these two contradictions, Rorty's Neo-Pragmatist alliance with Davidson is clearly unstable. If Rorty's project implies the possibility of radically different webs of belief, and yet Davidsonian Semantics is strictly against this line of thought, one cannot support Rorty's position whilst rejecting the scheme/content distinction.

Implications Of The Possibility Of Radically Different Webs Of Belief

However, if one cannot couple Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism with a rejection of the scheme/content distinction, where does this leave our traditional philosophical inquiries, which had, up until this point, been at the risk of being undermined? And furthermore, where does this leave Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism, and pragmatism as a whole?

Firstly, as Rorty needs to accept that every belief is revisable in order to avoid any form of foundationalism, we are forced to accept Quine's web of belief picture once more.

However, this serves to be extremely problematic for Rorty, since Quine endorsed

physicalism, a form of metaphysical realism. To begin with, consider the following passage:

'I am a physical object sitting in a physical world. Some of the forces of this physical world impinge on my surface. Light rays strike my retinas; molecules bombard my eardrums and fingertips. I strike back, emanating concentric air-waves. These waves take the form of a torrent of discourse about tables, people, molecules, light rays, retinas, air-waves, prime numbers, infinite classes, joy and sorrow, good and evil.' (Quine, 1957: 1)

Here we have a picture of knowledge as a response to sensory stimulation; there is a real, external, physical world out there, which impacts our senses. We then respond to this bombardment upon our sensory organs by applying a scheme which makes sense of that content - in this instance, by understanding those physical forces as people, tables, light rays, and so forth.

However, at this point we can question whether Quine really should be interpreted as a physicalist here. If we have the picture of a world which impinges upon our sensory organs, at which point we then conceptualise that impingement in a physical way (by understanding that sensory stimulation as light rays, people, chairs and tables and so forth) is Quine here suggesting that our 'theories are *only* instruments' (Sinclair, 2017) which we use to make sense of our experiences? This much seems evident from the following passage, where Quine appears to assert exactly this:

'Our talk of external things, our very notion of things, is just a conceptual apparatus that helps us foresee and control the triggering of our sensory receptors in the light of previous triggering of sensory receptors. The triggering, first and last, is all that we have to go on.' (Quine, 1981: 43)

Therefore we may still doubt that Quine really is advocating a kind of realism about physical objects; it appears that he is arguing that our scientific world-view is simply an instrument for getting by in the world, a way of making sense of our experiences, rather than claiming that the objects that 'it claims to tell us about really exist'. (Sinclair, 2017) If Quine is an instrumentalist in this way, the scientific theories that we employ to understand our experiences are simply a 'useful fiction', (Hylton, 2014: 19) as they allow us to successfully make predictions within the world. This would therefore square with Rorty's pragmatist, anti-representationalist interpretation of Quine, as a realism of physical objects is not asserted.

So, the instrumentalist holds that there is a distinction to be made between two kinds of entities: one which is 'held to be real', and another kind of entity to be held as no more than a useful fiction which helps us to 'attain knowledge' of those real entities. Under this view, an instrumentalist could hold that the entities described within our scientific world-view, as well as ordinary objects such as tables, lamps, and people, are all fictions which we posit in order to 'facilitate the real entities given to us by experience.' (ibid.: 11) So, if this is what Quine is saying, the objects of science are not real: they are simply posits for helping us to get by in the world, and thus, under this understanding, Quine avoids any kind of physicalism.

However, at closer inspection, Quine cannot be an instrumentalist, as he makes no such distinction between the realness of the stimulations upon our sensory organs and the fictitiousness of physical objects. Instead, for Quine, sensory surfaces '*are* physical objects'; (ibid.: 19) the stimulations that reach our nerve endings are physical events themselves. Whilst Quine accepts that there is no knowledge which is simply 'given' to us, (the objects which trigger our sensory receptors do not provide a theory to us; we provide the theory, for instance in terms of science) we still do not know about these stimulations

independent of a theory. As such, our sensory stimulations can 'hardly be thought of as more real than the entities presupposed by the rest of our theory'. (ibid. 19)

Following from this, Quine argues that it is only by establishing such a coherent theory/web of belief of the world, such as that of the scientific world-view, that we can make a distinction between that which is real and not real in the first place. As Quine puts it himself:

'We cannot significantly question the reality of the external world, or deny that there is evidence of external objects in the testimony of our senses; for, to do so is simply to dissociate the terms "reality" and "evidence" from the very applications which originally did most to invest those terms with whatever intelligibility they may have for us.' (Quine, 1976: 299)

In this way, whilst Quine agrees with the instrumentalist that we select those scientific theories that 'best predict sensory input', we are still nevertheless committed to 'affirming the reality' of those objects described by our best scientific theory. Indeed, we may, in the future, by further reflection upon our conceptual scheme, decide to replace some of the planks of Neurath's boat; 'electrons and other hypothetical entities may, with the continuous revisions of science, come and go' (Quine, 1953: 309) but this is only to replace these planks/ideas with other sets of ideas of 'the same fundamental status'. (Hylton, 2014: 20) Thus Quine, far from being an anti-representationalist instrumentalist, actually adheres to physicalism, arguing for the reality of the external objects of our best scientific theory: as Quine says himself, 'there is nothing we can be more confident of than external things—some of them anyway: other people, sticks, stones.' (Quine, 1981: 43)

However, if Quine's understanding of the web of belief is imbued with physicalism, and Rorty needs to support the web of belief picture to avoid any accusations of

foundationalism, Rorty ends up advocating a kind of metaphysical realism; there is a real world out there which our minds can correspond to to a greater or lesser degree, depending upon our best current scientific world-view. However, this in itself is in direct contradiction to Rorty's anti-representationalist project that he has been providing throughout *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*; by advocating conceptual schemes, he is forced to accept that our minds can mirror the world. Therefore, as Rorty's dependence upon the rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction actually opens the doors to the possibility of radically different ways of understanding the world, his position reinforces the correspondence picture of philosophy, and does not undermine it.

Secondly, note something ironic about the above. Rorty needs to accept that every belief is revisable in order to avoid foundationalism. But in accepting that every belief is revisable, he is advocating the possibility of radically different webs of belief, a position which makes use of the scheme/content distinction. In this way, he is advocating that there are foundations to our knowledge, in the form of the 'content'/the real, external world. So, in attempting to avoid foundationalism, and thus save the pragmatic method, Rorty actually ends up justifying the existence of such foundations.

Thirdly, if Rorty's alliance with Davidson is broken, and he is unwittingly justifying the scheme/content distinction, and with it the possibility of foundations of knowledge, where does this leave the pragmatic method? In Chapter 3, we identified that all five of the pragmatic theories analysed depended upon a rejection of foundations of knowledge; knowledge must have no foundations in order for any of the theories to get off the ground. However, if there does exist a real, external world (the content) which serves as the foundations to our knowledge, we are therefore securing a notion of *objective truth* which our schemes can, in principle, approximate. This is because if there exists a real, fixed, external world 'out there', there must be objective truths *about* that world.

If there are objective truths about the world, however, we open the *possibility* that there exist foundations of knowledge, for there is a real, fixed way that the external world actually is. If we can establish the conditions under which we have very good reason to believe that our scheme is accurately representing reality, this would open the possibility that we are grasping such foundations of knowledge (in our loose sense). This, however, could deal a devastating blow to pragmatism, which depends upon a rejection of such foundations. We will investigate in the following whether this is possible.

It may be suggested, as Rorty indeed does, that as we cannot ‘step outside our skins’, (Rorty, 1982: xix) and transcend our conceptual schemes, we cannot know that we have got the world right. As we can only ever view the world through some conceptual scheme or other, we can never adopt a standpoint through which we have a direct, unfiltered access to the real world. As we cannot access this standpoint (because we are always viewing the world through some scheme or other) we can never know how the world really is.

However, it does not follow from the fact that we cannot step outside of our conceptual schemes that we cannot have knowledge of reality itself/knowledge of objective truths about the real world. Although we can grant the sceptic that we must cognise the world through our conceptual schemes, it does not follow from this that we are unable to have epistemic access to the real world itself. This would, as Sankey argues, only be entailed if all of our representations of the real world were ‘necessarily mistaken’. (Sankey, 2016: 40) Indeed, if our conceptual schemes were necessarily wrong representations of the real world, then we could never know how the real world really is. However, it does not follow from the fact that we have to think through some conceptual apparatus or other in order to understand the world that all of those conceptual apparatuses are mistaken. Thus, it is entirely possible that, despite always viewing the world through one scheme or other, that one of our schemes *could* accurately represent the real world.

Despite this, the question of how we know that our schemes have lined up with reality accurately still remains unanswered. Even if we can reply to Rorty that it is *possible* for our schemes to line up with reality accurately, how can we know that they indeed have done so? We are still therefore left with the possibility that we are wrong about the world, that our concepts are mistaken, even though, unbeknownst to us, they may be correct.

However, whilst Rorty can indeed argue that as we cannot 'step outside our skins' (Rorty, 1982: xix) and consult reality itself, we cannot know that our schemes have lined up with reality accurately, this, as Sankey argues, is a 'specious' move for one to make. For apart from a form of radical scepticism, what reason would one have for claiming that all of our schemes may be inaccurate representations of the real world? (Sankey, 2016: 41) The problem at this point is that Rorty, as well as the other pragmatists, are dismissive of radical scepticism. As we have seen, Peirce was anti-sceptical in his rejection of the Cartesian method of doubt; inquiry cannot begin by complete doubt; we must start where we are, with all the 'prejudices' we currently have. (Peirce, 1868: 140) We can only genuinely doubt a belief if we have a specific, 'positive reason' (Hookway, 2013: 22) for doubting that specific belief. Likewise, as we have seen, James posited that when a new experience puts our old collections of opinions under strain, we may be led to accept a new belief as true if it preserves the stock of our older opinions with minimum modification. (James, 1907: 21) Again, this is anti-sceptical; much like Peirce, we need a specific, genuine reason in order to disturb our established belief structure. Dewey, by establishing that only those philosophical positions which refer back to, and verify, our primary experiences, are valuable, is also anti-sceptical; we should 'clarify and free' (Dewey, 1925: 37) philosophy of those traditional prejudices which serve to undermine the import of our ordinary everyday experiences. Price's anti-sceptical tendencies are also clear in his treatment of the norm of truth. Whilst he admits that truth is a human creation, he refuses to be labelled as either a realist, or an anti-realist, for to

do so would be to fall back into the very metaphysical tendencies he wished to avoid.

(2003: 187-190) In this way, he refuses to engage in anything remotely related to scepticism, and instead simply tries to show the difference that such a norm makes to our everyday inquiries.

Rorty himself argued that the issue of scepticism arises only when we assume that our 'language or thought is a tertium quid standing between the self and the world'. In other words, scepticism, the issue of determining if our representations accurately represent reality, of course only arises when we adopt the representationalist picture of philosophy. However, since Rorty thinks that he has undermined the representationalist project, we need not adopt this picture of philosophy, and consequently 'the problem of scepticism is "optional"'. (McDermid, 2000: 3)

However, if we follow the advice of the pragmatists and either flat out reject or dismiss radical scepticism, we are left without any reason to claim that our schemes may be radically inaccurate representations of the real world.

However, even if pragmatism was in a position to adopt radical scepticism (which we have argued it is not) what specifically is wrong with radical scepticism? A major issue is that to adopt such a form of scepticism, claiming that our concepts fail to represent anything real in the real world, would leave us 'without a viable explanation' of our successful everyday interactions with the world. (Sankey, 2016: 41) For example, consider a person climbing up Mount Everest. On their ascent, they wear warm clothes in order to avoid freezing, they make use of their oxygen tank to help them survive altitude sickness, and they consume food and drink to prevent starvation or dehydration. By making use of concepts such as heat, oxygen, and food consumption, and thinking that these concepts apply to real things in the world, the climber is able to use the objects at her disposal to survive the ascent up Mount Everest. In this way, we can say that the climber, by using such

common-sensical, everyday concepts in order to survive, successfully interacts with the world. However, if we adopt extreme scepticism and claim that none of the climber's concepts refer to the real world, we are left without an explanation as to why the climber was successfully able to climb the mountain, rather than fall off and die.

If the only reason to claim that all our schemes may fail to match up with reality is to account for radical scepticism, and yet radical scepticism fails to explain our successful interactions with the world, it seems untenable to seriously entertain this possibility in the first place. It appears that in order to account for such successful interactions, we need to suppose that such concepts *really do refer* to objects in the real world. This means that, generally, the conceptual schemes which we adopt in our society, when we successfully interact with the environment, do indeed accurately represent the real world. If we do not grant this, we are left without any explanation as to how such successful interactions can occur.

Therefore, we can conclude that the fact that we cannot stand outside of our conceptual schemes, and consult reality independently of any conceptual apparatus, does not entail that we cannot have very good reason to believe that our schemes are lined up with the real world. Instead, we have very good reason to believe that our conceptual scheme lines up with reality itself when it allows us to successfully interact with our environment. Subsequently, we have good reason to believe that our scheme fails to accurately represent the real world when it does not allow for such successful interaction. We can therefore establish, far from conceptual relativity, that some conceptual schemes *are* better than others, as they serve to accurately represent the world better than their alternatives.

The Return of the Pessimistic Meta-Induction?

Note earlier that I argued that our current conceptual scheme must 'generally' represent the world accurately. The reason for this qualification is that it is entirely possible that our conceptual scheme may need further adjustment in the future in order to represent the world more accurately than it currently does. For instance, consider the conceptual scheme of the 4th century, which included Aristotle's notion of natural downwards motion. This helped the ancients to successfully interact with their environment, (for example by advising them to not walk off cliffs) and thus they had good reason to believe that it largely was an accurate representation of the real world. However, this success was improved upon by our modern day conceptual scheme which includes the notion of Einsteinian gravity, which, by cohering with the rest of our advances in physics, represents the world more accurately than that of Aristotle's notion. It is therefore also possible that, in the future, we may adjust our conceptual scheme again in order to improve the success of our concepts' application to the world, and thus better accurately represent the real world.

However, one may counter-argue here that if our beliefs can be gradually revised, becoming more and more distinct from their contemporary counterparts, is it not possible that in the future we may realise we were entirely wrong about the world? And if that is possible, is it not possible that those in our future society may also appear primitive to their own future counterparts, who also realise that they were almost entirely wrong about the world, and so on ad infinitum? A future society in 1,000 years time may realise that our best scientific understanding of the world, in the 21st century, was an almost entirely inaccurate description of the world, and a society even further into the future may realise the same about their own ancestors. Thus, if our conceptual schemes are always subject to revision, we never can know that our schemes have lined up accurately with the world. It seems that we are just talking about our own relative social constructions at that particular period of time. This is the issue of the pessimistic meta-induction.

Rorty himself was dismissive of the meta-induction, arguing that it both *could not* be resolved, and that it *did not need* to be resolved. Firstly, we cannot resolve the meta-induction as we are unable to 'step outside our culture and evaluate its place relative to the end of inquiry'. We are always trapped within our current socio-linguistic understanding of the world; to claim that we could 'step outside' of our language in this way and view the unmediated world as it is in itself is to fall foul of the representationalist tendencies Rorty has attempted to undermine throughout *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. (Rorty, 1979: 285-286)

Secondly, the meta-induction, for Rorty, does not need to be resolved. Say that our future descendants, in 1,000 years time, discover that our 21st century scientists got the word almost completely wrong; there do not really exist molecules, atoms, genes and so forth: instead, all that exists are 'space-time bumps'. (ibid.: 286) Here, a realist may argue that we need to establish a notion of objective truth in order to end the cycle of the meta-induction, but Rorty is entirely satisfied with arguing that all we need is justification. Our future descendants can decide, with all the evidence available to them, whether our 21st century understanding of science is justified. If they conclude that all that exists is space-time bumps, then, according to their own standards of justification, our 21st century science is unjustified. It has to be up to our descendants to decide whether our views are justified, not us, as we cannot 'step outside our own skins'; (Rorty, 1982: xix) we cannot possibly think, as we are now, that our own views are not justified. Therefore, not only is the meta-induction irresolvable, but, pragmatically, it does not need to be resolved either.

However, Rorty's response to the meta-induction will not do for our present purposes; if Rorty is correct, we cannot secure a notion of objective truth, as we can never be in a position to evaluate that we have approached or reached the end of inquiry. We will now argue that the pessimistic meta-induction does not succeed in undermining the notion of objective truth, as we do not need to evaluate that we have approached or reached the

end of inquiry in order to secure such a notion. Further, we will argue that although our conceptual schemes are indeed subject to change throughout time, we can still have good reason to believe that we are understanding most of the world correctly, even if our schemes can better represent the world over time.

We can admit to the extreme sceptic that it is indeed possible that we may be completely wrong about the world; our current conceptual scheme may, in all of its representations, fail to accurately line up with the real world itself. We cannot assert this with any certainty, just as we cannot assert the antithesis, that we have got the world completely right, with any certainty either: such is the irrefutable nature of extreme scepticism. However, what we can confidently assert at this point is both that it seems highly *unlikely* that we have got the world completely wrong, and that we have no reason to seriously consider the opposite. Firstly, as we have argued earlier, if we were completely wrong about the world, we would be left without any explanation for our everyday successful interactions with our environment. As such, when we are able to successfully interact with the world, it is highly likely that we are successfully tracking the objective truth about that world through our conceptual scheme, even if we can never be *certain* that this is the case.

Secondly, as also previously argued, the only reason to suggest that our conceptual scheme may be completely wrong about the world is to take radical scepticism seriously. However, neither our own position, (due to the reasoning outlined above) nor pragmatism does so. As such, there is therefore no motivation for us to consider scepticism, and thus the pessimistic meta-induction, as a real threat to our position.

We began this discussion with questioning where Rorty's unintentional justification of the scheme/content distinction leaves the pragmatic method, and in Chapter 3, we identified that the success of the pragmatic method depends upon a rejection of any foundations of knowledge. The scheme/content distinction, as we identified, secures the existence of a

real world out there, and consequently, there must be objective truths *about* that real world, which our schemes can approximate. The existence of these objective truths opens the *possibility* that there are foundations of knowledge. Our subsequent arguments have established that we have very good reason to believe that our conceptual scheme is accurately representing the real world, and thus tracking objective truths about the world, when the concepts which we employ allow us to successfully interact with our environment. We have further established that we have no reason to seriously consider the sceptical alternative.

To claim that we have very good reason to believe that our scheme is accurately representing the real world in this way opens the possibility that we can grasp the way the world really is, or in other words, foundations of knowledge (in the loose sense identified earlier.) This, however, directly contradicts the entire pragmatic method, which, as we have seen, depends upon a rejection of any such foundations. Indeed, we cannot be certain that we are grasping such objective truths about the world, but we do have very good reason to believe this to be the case, and no motivation to assert the opposite. In this way, the pragmatic method, of undermining the existence of such foundations, is undermined itself, as we have very good reason to suggest that we are successfully grasping such objective truths about the world, and no motivation to revert to scepticism and assert the opposite.

A Verificationist Rejection?

We have argued thus far that if our position is successful, pragmatism is undermined, and our traditional philosophical aspirations are once again possible. However, in the final section of this chapter, we will consider an option which Rorty may still be able to use against us, questioning whether our attack on the pragmatic method really has been successful.

We have posited that as every belief within the web of belief is radically revisable, it must be hypothetically possible for one to adjust every belief, one by one, until they no longer have any beliefs left in common with our own. At that point, we would have to assert that they have a radically different web of belief/conceptual scheme to our own.

However, up until this point, we have not explicitly replied to the verificationist argument posed by Davidson and Rorty against the existence of radically different webs of belief. This, it seems, could be used as a counter-argument against our position, as we are presupposing a priori the possibility of a radically different language, a move which Rorty and Davidson would argue we are not justified in making.

Davidson has argued that in order for us to verify that a foreign speaker is speaking a language, we need to be able to translate what they are saying into our language. However, in order to do this, we need to assume the principle of charity, presupposing that most of what they are saying is true. If they are saying something true, however, then they must be talking about the same things as us, just with different sounds.

However, we have posited the possibility of an alien culture which shares no beliefs at all in common with our own; if they shared a significant number of beliefs with us, we could not reasonably assert that they have a radically different language than ours. In that case, however, if an alien had no beliefs in common with our own, they would be unable, according to Davidson's argument, to say anything true. This is because, according to Davidson's definition of truth, in order for them to be saying anything true, they must be talking about the same things as us. If they are not, we can never establish that they are speaking a language in the first place, as all attempts to translate what they are saying will radically fail. Therefore, Davidson and Rorty can still deny us the possibility of radically different webs of belief on the basis of verification; we could never be in a position to verify

that such an alien is saying something true but untranslatable, as the very *assertion* of a true but untranslatable language is meaningless.

Can we not respond here by reminding Rorty that he did grant us that every belief is revisable, (as to give privilege to any of them would be to claim a kind of foundationalism which he is strictly against) and that therefore surely radically different webs of belief are possible?

Indeed, we can, but this is not likely to persuade Rorty that we are right. Consider the alien example again. For instance, if this alien race had advanced their scientific methods further than our own, they may have discovered that there are more chemical elements in the universe than we have previously realised, and so forth. We could still verify that these aliens are generally talking about the same things as us, and thus speaking a language, as the majority of their beliefs would be shared with us. When their beliefs diverge from our own, we can verify these changes incrementally. For instance, if they pointed out 118 chemicals, which translate into our own language, and then continued to point out more until they had pointed to 200 more elements that we have never encountered before, we would be incrementally verifying a change in their language. Thus, we can still verify the changes in any belief according to Rorty's picture, and as such, it remains the case that no belief is privileged. The end result would be that we have verified that the alien's language is largely the same as ours, with some minor differences on the outside. However, what we could not verify is a radical change, to the extent that such aliens shared no beliefs in common with our own, as at that point, we would not be in a position to claim that they are speaking a language at all. Therefore, in this way, Rorty seems to be able to protect his position on the revisability of our beliefs, without compromising to the possibility that there are radically different languages.

However, Rorty appears to run into an issue here. If we can incrementally verify a change in belief between our language and that of a foreigner, (in this case, the alien) and can continue to verify these changes incrementally, can we not do the same to gradually verify that a foreigner's language shares none of our beliefs at all? Consider again the field linguist meeting an alien for the first time. If the field linguist is able to verify a singular change in belief between our language and that of the alien, one can imagine the field linguist then continuing to translate more of these beliefs as a consequence, until they have verified that the alien has, gradually, changed their language over time, leading their language to have nothing in common with our own. For example, if the field linguist was able to witness the alien's linguistic behaviour in such a way that suggested they regard moving objects no differently than stationary objects, the field linguist would have to conclude that the alien had abandoned any concept of movement. Then, the field linguist, after attempting to communicate in English to the Alien, noticed that whilst the alien looked in his direction whilst uttering various sounds, it then started to utter the same sounds to the rocks and plants around it, as if it was communing with the entire planet. This, coupled with the alien's apparent unification of those objects which moved and those which did not, suggested to the field linguist that the alien had abandoned any understanding of individual, distinct entities, and instead now considers everything to be one giant whole. Whilst this appears strange to us, it would cohere with the alien's earlier behaviour regarding those objects which we regard as being stationary and those which were in motion. The field linguist continues to observe the alien's linguistic behaviour, verifying the alien's radically different beliefs incrementally, until he eventually concludes that the alien's behaviour suggests that it has completely abandoned everything we understand, ultimately sharing no beliefs in common with our own.

In the case above, the field linguist will have incrementally verified that the alien has gradually changed their language in such a way that they share no beliefs in common with our own. In that case, the alien must be speaking a radically different language to us. In

order to get out of this, Rorty would need to argue that there is some point at which we can no longer translate the alien's language, disabling us from verifying that they share no beliefs with us at all. However, to claim that there is indeed a point at which we can no longer translate would appear to simultaneously claim that there is a point at which the alien's linguistic behaviour ceases to be a language; for the only way in which we can verify that they are speaking a language is by continuing to translate. This, however, seems implausible; if the field linguist has succeeded in verifying that the alien is speaking a language up until that point, why would the sounds the alien is uttering suddenly cease to be words?

It therefore seems that the verificationist critique from Rorty and Davidson does not do enough to undermine the notion of radically different languages. As one can imagine a field linguist incrementally verifying that a foreigner, such as an alien, shares no beliefs in common with our own, radically different webs of belief are in principle verifiable. As it is not clear that Rorty can rebut this claim without reaching an implausible conclusion, our argument still goes through, and as a consequence, the scheme/content distinction remains re-instated.

Conclusion

Having defended our position, we can now conclude that pragmatism, as a method, has been undermined. By establishing the possibility of radically different webs of belief, and in the process revitalising the scheme/content distinction, we were able to show that foundations of knowledge are possible. As the pragmatic method defined in Chapter 3 depends upon a rejection of such foundations for its success, our position has led us to reject this method and secure once more the possibility of our traditional philosophical aspirations, which until now had appeared under threat from pragmatism.

However, although we have now managed to secure our traditional aspirations from the clutches of pragmatism, how should philosophy progress from here? What lessons should we learn from pragmatism, and can anything from the pragmatic attack on philosophy be salvaged? In the next chapter, we will consider a way forward for future philosophical inquiry, which learns lessons from pragmatism, without being pragmatist itself.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Future Philosophical Inquiry

One of the major aims of this thesis was to establish whether or not pragmatism's attack on our traditional philosophical aspirations was successful. In order to answer this question, we first defined exactly what pragmatism is, as both a goal, and a method to fulfil that goal. We established that pragmatism can be defined as the *goal* of connecting philosophy with our first order inquiries, coupled with the *method* of undermining certain foundations of knowledge.

In Chapters 3 and 4, we identified both the counter-intuitive consequences of adopting pragmatism, as well as the threat that pragmatism poses to our traditional philosophical aspirations. We then followed this with an argument which attempted to undermine the pragmatic method, and restore the viability of our traditional philosophical aspirations, before defending our position against some potential Rortyan responses.

Having defended our position, we can now conclude that pragmatism, as a method, is undermined, as foundations of knowledge (in our loose sense) are possible. However, where does this leave the pragmatic goal, of connecting philosophy with our first-order inquiries? Have our previous discussions taught us that we should pay more attention to this goal, even if pragmatism's method to achieve this goal is fundamentally flawed? Or should this goal be abandoned with the pragmatic method? Further from this, even if our traditional philosophical aspirations are indeed once again made viable by our position, should those aspirations change, or at the very least be mediated by an incentive to serve our practical needs? In short, what lessons can we learn from pragmatism's attack on philosophy?

The Remaining Pragmatic Goal

This thesis has been focused upon undermining the pragmatic method, the way in which pragmatism attempted to undermine our traditional philosophical aspirations.

However, even if the pragmatic method is undermined, what of the pragmatic goal?

We have identified the pragmatic goal as keeping philosophy 'connected to first-order inquiry'. (Misak, 2009: 4) In other words, pragmatism aimed to make philosophy better serve our practical needs in society, rather than focus upon those traditional metaphysical inquiries which served to distract us from these needs. The pragmatists attempted to achieve this goal by undermining the possibility of foundations of knowledge, an attack which our position has itself undermined. Whilst this leaves pragmatism as an unachieved goal, that alone does not make this goal unachievable; we simply need to find another way to connect philosophy with our practical endeavours. But, we can ask from a meta-philosophical standpoint: should we attempt to do this in the first place? Does pragmatism's attack on our traditional philosophical endeavours teach us that we need to pay more attention to connecting philosophy with our everyday lives, or does it teach us instead that we should abandon this pursuit, as the attempts to do so thus far have only served to threaten our entire philosophical outlook?

My own position here is that we should not, to use an old turn of phrase, throw the baby out with the bathwater.²⁹ Indeed, pragmatism served as a serious threat to the traditional way we have historically conducted philosophy, but this does not highlight that there is anything specifically wrong with the goal of connecting philosophy with our first-order endeavours itself; the issue we have taken with pragmatism is the way in which this goal was to be achieved, by attempting, and failing, to undermine our traditional philosophical aspirations. It was therefore the way in which this goal was approached that threatened

²⁹ I would suggest in fact that pragmatism, by attempting to abandon our traditional philosophical aspirations in order to achieve the pragmatic goal, threw the baby out with the bathwater; this goal could have been achieved without losing centuries of philosophical innovation, as I will argue shortly.

our philosophical aspirations, not this goal itself. This goal itself, I think, should not only be recognised, rather than blindly abandoned, but also attempts should be made by contemporary philosophers to satisfy this goal, making philosophy more practical whilst remaining true to its metaphysical roots. In the following, I will therefore provide various reasons for why I think this goal should be both recognised and satisfied.

Bringing Philosophy Back into the Limelight

We have seen throughout this thesis that the general pragmatic attitude to our traditional philosophical inquiries is that they are so abstract that they fail to account for our practical everyday needs. However, it is not just the pragmatists who think this; there is a growing consensus among philosophers and non-philosophers alike that our traditional philosophical aspirations are of little real, practical use to our everyday lives. For instance, philosophers of the 'No Progress' movement argue that, as the name suggests, philosophy 'does not move forward at all.' (Dietrich, 2011: 332) Unlike the contemporary sciences, such as physics, which clearly has advanced over the ages, philosophy is still filled throughout with defenders of Aristototle, Descartes, and Kant's various theories. This can be seen most evidently, Sterba (2005: 1) thinks, in the study of ethics; if one entered a philosophy of ethics classroom today, they would find defenders of Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, Kant's Deontological position, and Mill's Utilitarianism. You would very rarely, if ever, however, enter a physics classroom and hear a student defending Newtonian gravity. This suggests that philosophy 'has not progressed one iota', (Dietrich, 2011: p333) whereas knowledge within biology, chemistry, and physics has progressed greatly throughout the years, allowing us to understand the world around us better than before, serving our practical needs in society. Indeed, contemporary scientists, most prominently Steven Hawking, appear to concur; as he puts it:

'....philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics. Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge.' (Hawking, 2011: 13)

Even if you disagree that 'philosophy is dead' in this way, the fact remains that philosophers are viewed by many as living in ivory towers. In order to avoid philosophy being viewed in this way in both the academic and public sphere, we need to make clear that philosophy can be used practically, to solve issues in our everyday lives.

Simultaneously, we need to stay true to our traditional philosophical aspirations; otherwise we risk philosophy slipping back into the clutches of pragmatism, an enterprise we have identified as untenable. In other words, we need a metaphysics which both makes use of our traditional philosophical methodology, whilst still satisfying our first-order endeavours. Philosophy needs to remain abstract, but needs a clear way of using these abstractions to satisfy our everyday purposes, rather than just contributing to the old debates, if the general consensus is to view philosophy as having any practical import. We need a kind of practical metaphysics.

Prima facie, the name 'practical metaphysics' may sound like an oxymoron; surely metaphysics is the least practical enterprise a philosopher can partake in? Here I would disagree. Although not obvious in the first instance, metaphysics *can* be used to satisfy our practical purposes in our everyday lives. One way in which this has already been attempted can be found from L.R. Baker, who argues, through what she terms 'Practical Realism' (Baker, 2009: xiv) that metaphysics, when applied through practical realism, can be used to understand the everyday world in a straightforward, commonsensical way, securing the reality of the everyday objects we experience, rather than by 'reinterpreting ordinary experience in alien ways'. One of the targets that Baker has in mind here is physicalism, an area of what she terms the 'anti-common sense tradition' of metaphysics. To see her point, consider a physicalist explanation of the infamous collision between The

Titanic and the iceberg. For a physicalist, the most 'metaphysically accurate' description of this collision may be that of two 'intersecting trajectories of particles', one arranged shipwise and the other icebergwise.³⁰ Here we have re-interpreted our ordinary experience in an alien way; we deny that the objects which we normally experience, such as ships and icebergs, are 'irreducibly real', and instead substitute this common-sense understanding with an anti-commonsensical form of metaphysics, claiming that the most metaphysically accurate description of what we experience in the world is actually 'unrecognisable to most of us'. (ibid.: 7)

What is ironic about the above is that the general populace seems to accept physicalism, a form of abstract, anti-commonsensical metaphysics, as our best explanation of the world, whilst simultaneously condemning our traditional, abstract metaphysical inquiries. Sure, one could argue that despite being abstract, physicalism is still practical, for it explains the world around us in a way that modern science can use, to conduct experiments and so on. In this way, physicalism seems a lot more practical than a metaphysical position such as Berkleian Idealism, which claims that all of the ordinary objects, such as trees, mountains, and chairs, which we think to exist materially, are actually just 'collections of ideas'. (Berkeley, 1710: 30) Whilst I would agree that it can indeed have more practical applicability than something like Berkleian Idealism, this still does not render it common-sensical by any means; areas such as political, social and ethical issues are left 'invisible' to an anti-commonsense metaphysics such as physicalism. (Baker, 2009: 8) To see this, consider the various presuppositions which we make in our everyday lives. We typically think that our words really do have meaning; that we have various bodily sensations (such as taste, tiredness, itchiness and so forth); that physical objects in the world have particular shapes, colours, and sizes; that there are logical and mathematical truths which we can attain, and so on. However, if we adopt

³⁰ However, part of Baker's criticism here is that physicalists are not entitled to terms such as 'shipwise' and 'icebergwise' for this presupposes the existence of ordinary things, which they typically either 'reduce to something else or deny altogether.' (Baker, 2009: 7)

physicalism, none of these terms correctly describe the world; shapes, colours, mathematical truths and so forth do not *really* exist; all that really exists are various collections of particles in space. Therefore, despite appearing overwhelmingly practical at the outset, physicalism actually leaves many of our practical human concerns invisible, violating our common-sense understanding of the world. It turns out that physicalism, contrary to common belief, is actually guilty of the same abstract, anti-commonsensical tendencies that traditional metaphysics is accused of.

So, what do we need instead? The answer seems to be a kind of metaphysics which does not violate our common-sense understanding of the world, and which, as a result, is inherently practical. This would answer both the cries of those who think that philosophy does not serve any real purpose, and prevent our traditional philosophical aspirations from being subject to a threat similar to that of pragmatism in the future. By using her practical realist enterprise to attempt to secure the reality of the everyday objects we experience in our day to day lives (such as persons, chairs and so forth) Baker has already gone some way to do just this. To deny the reality of these objects, as physicalism seems to do, would be to return to the kind of anti-commonsensical metaphysics which fails to satisfy our human concerns, and which brought philosophy into public disrepute in the first place.

In summary, our traditional philosophical aspirations should be used to satisfy the remaining pragmatic goal for a collection of different, but inter-connected reasons. Firstly, as our traditional philosophical aspirations, although viable, are viewed by many as having little practical import, we need to drive metaphysical inquiry into the explicitly practical arena in order to avoid philosophy falling any further into public disrepute. An opportunity to do precisely this is to illuminate the anti-commonsensical nature of the physicalist thesis, which, despite being widely adopted, violates our common-sense understanding of the world, and makes untenable many of our everyday practical endeavours. By showing physicalism's flaws, philosophy can then exclusively provide a new, common-sensical

metaphysical direction for our everyday inquiries which does justice to our traditional philosophical aspirations, whilst satisfying our practical needs in society.

In this way, philosophy becomes more practical, without losing any of its traditions, which we have argued are, contrary to the thoughts of the various pragmatists, still viable.

Further, by satisfying our practical needs in this way, philosophy also protects itself from further large-scale attacks upon the tradition, such as that from pragmatism. If the principal remaining criticism from pragmatism is that philosophy does not serve our first-order needs, and yet philosophy is reformed into a discipline which does precisely this, any opponents of the tradition will need to find a new avenue of attack if they wish to undermine our entire traditional methodology. I do not see this attempt to reform philosophy so much as 'running scared' as 'being prepared'; as philosophers we should be ready to defend our position against all corners, whilst being open to revise our outlook when the need arises.

In conclusion, my thesis has served to undermine the pragmatic method, and in the process re-invigorate our traditional philosophical aspirations. However, despite being re-invigorated, we should not simply sweep pragmatism's attack under the carpet; philosophy could benefit manifoldly by directing its metaphysical discourse towards serving our practical everyday needs. If a metaphysics of common-sense can be successfully achieved, philosophy not only retains its traditional aspirations whilst protecting itself against similar pragmatic attacks, but also has the opportunity to offer a more attractive account of reality than physicalism - an opportunity which, if exercised well, could change society's general outlook on philosophy for the better.

Reference List

1. Aristotle (350BC / 1961). *Physics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Atkin, A. (2016). *Charles Sanders Peirce: Pragmatism*. Available: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/peircepr/>. Last accessed 23rd December 2016.
3. Ayer, A.J (1936 / 2002). *Language, Truth and Logic*. New York: Dover Publications.
4. Bacon, M (2012). *Pragmatism: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
5. Baker, L (2009). *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life: An Essay in Practical Realism* (Cambridge Studies in Philosophy). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Barker, C (2012). *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. 4th ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
7. Bennett, J. (1965). Substance, Reality, and Primary Qualities. *American Philosophical Quarterly*. 2 (1). pp. 1-17.
8. Berkeley, G. (1710 / 1874). *A Treatise Concerning The Principles of Human Knowledge*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott.
9. Brogaard, B. (2016). Against Naturalism about Truth. In: Clark, K.J *The Blackwell Companion to Naturalism*. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons. pp. 262-276.
10. Buchler, J (2001). *Charles Peirce's Empiricism, Volume 1*. London: Routledge.
11. Burgess, J.P. (2013). Natural Substances. In: *Kripke*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
12. Cartlidge, J. (2016). *Kant: Space and Time as a priori intuitions*. Available: https://www.academia.edu/9119706/Kant_Space_and_Time_as_a_priori_intuitions. Last accessed 24th December 2016.
13. Connolly, P.J. (2016). *John Locke (1632—1704)*. Available: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/locke/#SH2c>. Last accessed 24th December, 2016.
14. Davidson, D. (1967). Truth and Meaning. *Synthese*. 17 (3). pp. 304-323.
15. Davidson, D. (1973-1974). On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*. 47. pp. 5-20.
16. Descartes, R (1641 / 1996). *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

17. Dewey, J. (1896). The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology. *The Psychological Review*. 3 (4). pp. 357-370.
18. Dewey, J. (1905). The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*. 2 (15).
19. Dewey, J. (1908 / 1995). Does Reality Possess Practical Character? In: Goodman, R.B. *Pragmatism: A Contemporary Reader*. New York: Routledge. pp. 79-92.
20. Dewey, J (1925 / 1958). *Experience and Nature*. New York: Dover Publications, INC.
21. Dewey, J. (1925 / 2008). Experience and Philosophic Method. In: Boydston, J.A. and Baysinger, P. and Levine, B. *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953: 1925, Experience and Nature*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press. pp. 10-41.
22. Dewey, J (1934 / 1980). *Art As Experience*. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group.
23. Dietrich, E. (2011). There Is No Progress In Philosophy. *Essays In Philosophy*. 12 (9). pp. 329-344.
24. Field, R. (2017). *John Dewey (1859-1952)*. Available: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/dewey/#H2>. Last accessed 27th August 2017.
25. Flage, D.E.. (2017). *George Berkeley*. Available: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/berkeley/#H4>. Last accessed 7th August 2017.
26. Hawking, S and Mlodinow, L (2010). *The Grand Design*. London: Transworld Publishers
27. Hildebrand, D.L. (2003). Beyond Realism and Anti-Realism: John Dewey and the Neopragmatists. Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 167.
28. Hookway, C. (2013). 'The Principle of Peirce' and the origins of pragmatism. In: Malachowski, A. *The Cambridge Companion to Pragmatism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 17-55
29. Hughes, C. (2006). *Names, Necessity and Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
30. Hurka, T. (2015). *Moore's Moral Philosophy*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/moore-moral/>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.

31. Hylton, P. (2014). Willard Van Orman Quine. Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/quine>. Last accessed 13th April 2016.
32. James, W (1890 / 1950). *The Principles of Psychology*, Volume 1. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
33. James, W (1907 / 1995). *Pragmatism*. New York: Dover Publications, INC.
34. Janiak, A. (2016). *Kant's Views on Space and Time*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/kant-spacetime/>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.
35. Kant, I (1998). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
36. Kirk, R. (1999). *Relativism and Reality: A Contemporary Introduction*. Oxon: Routledge. pp. 137.
37. Kripke, S.A. (1980). *Naming and Necessity*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
38. LaPorte, J. (2016). *Rigid Designators*. Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/rigid-designators/>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.
39. Lawlor, M.S. (2004). Dewey, Pragmatism and Economic Methodology. In: Khalil, E. *Dewey, Pragmatism and Economic Methodology*. London: Routledge. pp. 304-326.
40. Leveillee, N.P. (2011). Copernicus, Galileo, and the Church: Science in a Religious World. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*. 3 (5). pp. 1-2.
41. Locke, J (1689 / 1959). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. New York: Dover Publications, INC.
42. Long, G (2004). *Relativism and the Foundations of Liberalism*. Exeter: Imprint Academic. 60.
43. Lovejoy, A.O. (1908). The Thirteen Pragmatisms. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*. 5 (1). pp.5-12.
44. Malachowski, A (2010). *The New Pragmatism*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
45. Malpas, J. (2015). *Donald Davidson*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/davidson/>. Last accessed July 5th 2017

46. McDermid, D.J. (2000). Does Epistemology Rest on a Mistake? Understanding Rorty on Scepticism. *Crítica: Revista Hispanoamericana de Filosofía*. 32 (96). pp. 3-42.
47. Misak, C. (2004). Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). In: Misak, C. *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
48. Misak, C (2009). *New Pragmatists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
49. Murphy, J.P (1990). *Pragmatism: From Peirce to Davidson*. Colorado: Westview Press.
50. Newman, L. (2016). *Descartes' Epistemology*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/descartes-epistemology/>. Last accessed 23rd December 2016.
51. Orwell, G (2000). *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Penguin Group.
52. O'Shea, J (2007). Wilfrid Sellars: Naturalism with a Normative Turn (Key Contemporary Thinkers). Cambridge: Polity Press. pp. 116.
53. Peirce, C.S. (1868). Some Consequences of Four Incapacities. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. 2 (3). pp.140-157.
54. Peirce, C.S. (1877). The Fixation of Belief. *Popular Science Monthly*. 12. pp. 1-15.
55. Peirce, C.S. (1878). How to Make Our Ideas Clear. *Popular Science Monthly*. 12. pp. 286-302.
56. Peirce, C.S. (1905). What Pragmatism Is. *The Monist*. 15 (2). pp. 161-181.
57. Plato (2007). *The Republic*. London: Penguin Books.
58. Pomerleau, W.P. (2016). *William James (1842—1910)*. Available: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/james-o/>. Last accessed 7th August 2017.
59. Preston, A. (2016). *George Edward Moore (1873—1958)*. Available: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/moore/#SH3b>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.
60. Price, H. (2003). Truth as Convenient Friction. *The Journal of Philosophy*. 100 (4). pp. 167-190.
55. Putnam, H (1992 / 2009). *Renewing Philosophy*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

61. Quine, W.V.O. (1951 / 2004). Two Dogmas of Empiricism. In: Gibson, R.F. *Quintessence: Basic Readings from the Philosophy of W.V. Quine*. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. pp. 31-53.
62. Quine, W.V.O. (1953 / 2004). On Mental Entities. In: Gibson, R.F. *Quintessence: Basic Readings from the Philosophy of W.V. Quine*. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. pp. 307-312.
63. Quine, W.V.O (1957). The Scope and Language of Science. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*. 8 (1). pp. 1-17.
64. Quine, W.V.O (1960). *Word and Object*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
65. Quine, W.V.O (1976). *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
66. Quine, W.V.O (1981). What Is It All About? *The American Scholar*. 50 (1). pp. 43-54.
67. Rey, G. (2016). *Analytic/Synthetic Distinction*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/analytic-synthetic/>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.
68. Rorty, R. (1972). The World Well Lost. *The Journal of Philosophy*. 69 (19). pp. 649-665.
69. Rorty, R. (1981 / 2010). Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism. In: Voparil, C.J. and Bernstein R.J. *The Rorty Reader*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 122-138.
70. Rorty, R (1982). *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays, 1972-1980*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press. xix.
71. Rorty, R. (1986 / 1999). Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth. In: Blackburn, S. and Simmons, K. *Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 323-350.
72. Rorty, R (1991). Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
73. Rorty, R. (1995 / 2001). Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry? Donald Davidson versus Crispin Wright. In: Lynch, M.P. *The Nature of Truth: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Massachusetts: A Bradford Book. pp. 259-286.

74. Rorty, R (2003). *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
75. Rorty, R (2009). *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature: Thirtieth-Anniversary Edition*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
76. Rorty, R. (2010). Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth. In: Voparil, C.J. and Bernstein R.J. *The Rorty Reader*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 152-174.
77. Rorty, R. (2010). Solidarity or Objectivity? In: Voparil, C.J. and Bernstein R.J. *The Rorty Reader*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 227-238.
78. Sankey, H (2016). *Scientific Realism and the Rationality of Science*. Oxon: Routledge.
79. Sellars, W & Rorty, R & Brandom, R. (1997). *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. London: Harvard University Press.
80. Shook, J.R. (2000). *Dewey's Empirical Theory of Knowledge and Reality*. United States of America: Vanderbilt University Press.
81. Smith, K. (2016). *Descartes' Theory of Ideas*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/descartes-ideas/>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.
82. Stang, N.F.. (2016). *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/kant-transcendental-idealism/>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.
83. Steinhoff, U. (1997). Truth VS. Rorty. *The Philosophical Quarterly*. 47 (188). pp. 358-361.
84. Sterba, J (2005). *The Triumph of Practice Over Theory in Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
85. Stoljar, D (2010). *Physicalism*. Oxon: Routledge.
86. Stuhr, J.J. (2010). Introduction: 100 Years of Pragmatism. In: Stuhr, J.J. *100 Years of Pragmatism: William James' Revolutionary Philosophy*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. pp. 1-6.

87. Szubka, T. (2000). Idealized Acceptibility versus Superassertibility. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*. 98 (2). pp. 175-186.
88. Tanner, J. (2006). The Naturalistic Fallacy. *Richmond Journal of Philosophy*. 13 (1). pp. 1-6.
89. Tarski, A. (1956). The Concept of Truth in Formalised Languages. In: Corcoran, J. *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics: Papers from 1923 to 1938*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 152-268.
90. Tartaglia, J (2007). Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Rorty and the Mirror of Nature. Oxon: Routledge.
91. Thomasson, A. (2016). *Categories*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/categories/>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.
92. Uzgalis, W. (2016). John Locke. Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/locke/>. Last accessed 13th April 2016.
93. West, C (1989). *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
94. Willem DeVries. (2015). Wilfrid Sellars. Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/sellars/>. Last accessed 24th December 2016.