**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background of Study**

While reading the news online one day, I came across the headline that some homosexuals in Nigeria were planning a protest over the decision of the Nigerian 7th National Assembly to criminalize same sex relationship in Nigeria. My initial reaction was to laugh at the 'stupidity' of those planning the protests and to wonder whether they thought they were in the Western world where people hide under international human rights to do whatever they liked in the name of sexual rights. I equally felt that they have forgotten that Africa has a long cherished culture that condemns same sex relationship.

I was still consumed with my condemnation of the planned protest when the United States Supreme Court ruled that same sex marriage was now legal in the US. The judgment brought back my earlier thoughts on the planned protest by homosexuals in Nigeria and while I was pondering on the implication of the judgment, I started asking myself some random questions: first, do I even have right to impose my African concept of sexual orientation on another culture and country? Second, if I impose that on another culture, am I a cultural imperialist?

While looking for answers to the above two questions, another bigger question came to my mind: what is to be done when generally accepted international human rights standards conflict with long standing cultural practices? Same sex marriages challenge a long standing cultural practice in Africa where marriage is seen as a union between a man and a woman (or women). However, while many African countries have placed a ban on same sex marriages, some countries in

Europe and America view such ban as a violation of the right to sexual orientation and gender identity.

If I continue to defend my values as a Nigerian born in Africa with defined tradition on what constitutes marriage, and Nigeria refuses to accept the American definition of sexual rights, where do we go from here, which authority will bail us out as an arbiter acceptable to all the sides in the debate? Put succinctly, this controversy can be summarized as a conflict between the concepts of the universality of human rights and cultural relativism. In search of an arbiter on whether acceptable social practices should define reality for a people, I decided to browse the internet to search for philosophers who have dealt with similar controversies and there was Richard Rorty with his claim that each society defines its own truth.

From Richard Rorty's point of view, truth is inter-subjective agreement among the members of a community, put succinctly; each society defines its own truth. In his view, this inter-subjective agreement permits the members of the community to speak a common language and establish a commonly accepted reality. Hence, from this point of view, if the Americans accept the reality of homosexuality, it becomes true for them, and if Nigerians reject same sex relationship, then so be it.

Expounding this view further, Richard Rorty maintains that truth is "to be sure an absolute notion, in the following sense: 'true for me but not true for you' and true in my culture but not in yours'… so is true then but not now" .[1] Thus, homosexuality is not accepted in my culture as a way of life, thus it is not true within the Nigerian legal definition of human rights that restricting same sex relationship is an infringement of right to sexual orientation, whereas within the American culture, the contrary is the case.

Rorty's claim as outlined above was greeted with resentment by many philosophers. One point where the submission leaves much to be desired is on the issue of universality of practices. For instance, how do we resolve the conflict between the American acceptance of same sex relationship and Nigeria's rejection of same? Apart from the above, another major reason for the criticism that trailed Rorty's position is the fact that it questioned the very foundation of traditional epistemology. Against the prevailing viewpoint in Anglo American philosophy which assumed that the world consisted of natural kinds of items and that our task was to achieve a correct mapping of these types, Richard Rorty called for abandonment of traditional epistemology and averred that the contingencies of selfhood, language and liberal community made it imperative that we must abandon objectivity for solidarity as defined by social practices. For him, "you cannot aim at something, cannot work to get it, unless you can recognize it once you have got it."[2] Furthermore, he averred that:

> We shall never know for sure whether a given belief is true, but we can be sure that nobody is presently able to summon up any residual objections to it, that everybody agrees that it ought to be held. There are, to be sure, what Lacanians call impossible, indefinable, sublime objects of desire. But a desire for such an object cannot be made relevant to democratic politics .[3]

Based on the foregoing, he asserted that "Truth is just such an object. It is too sublime, so to speak, to be either recognized or aimed at".[4] Hence, for Rorty, philosophers' search for absolute truth understood as truth that remains true for all ages and for all cultures is a mirage. Put succinctly, Rorty's argument is that each society produces its own truth. The above position has grave implication for traditional epistemology and it is for reasons such as the ones itemized below that Rorty's claim raised serious concerns. From the views expressed by Gary Gutting, Rorty's position is a questioning of three central modern assumptions namely:

i.   That truth is a matter of a special relationship of representation between mind and world

ii.  That justification is a matter of special experiences that normatively ground this special relationship

iii. That philosophy is required because it alone can satisfactorily explicate the special relationship that defines truth and specify just what sorts of experiences justify our truth claims.[5]

Despite the foregoing, it must be pointed out that the question concerning the nature of truth and whether it is relative to a culture or not did not start with my wonder; neither did it start with Rorty. The nature of truth has remained a problematic issue in the history of philosophy. According to Bradley Dowden and Norman Swartz, "this philosophical problem of truth has been with us for a long time. In the first century AD, Pontius Pilate (*John* 18:38) asked "What is truth?" but no answer was forthcoming".[6]   Indeed, some philosophers have defined philosophy itself as quest for truth just as many philosophers devoted their whole life to this quest. Perhaps, the continuous disagreement among philosophers on the nature of truth is at the background of all philosophical controversies, and is indeed the mental chow-chow that philosophy feeds upon for its existence.

Ancient philosophers sought truth through thought and reason, hence questions were raised and various answers proffered on the questions (like the basic stuff that the Ancient thinkers pondered on).  Thus, reflecting on the question of the nature of truth, Plato's answer to the question led him to propose one of the earliest versions of the correspondence theory of truth. His intention was to distinguish between true belief and false belief.  In his example, the sentence "Theaetetus flies" can be true only if the world contains the fact that Theaetetus flies. In the

Scholastic period, the Angelic Doctor, Thomas Aquinas re-echoed Aristotle's view, in arguing that, "*veritas est adæquatio intellectus et rei*" (truth is the conformity of the intellect to the things) [7]. Equally, many thinkers within this epoch associated God as the source of truth. However, as science gained upper hand during the Age of Enlightenment, a new form of truth emerged. Consequently, many thinkers were interested in defining the scientific truth which was created by observation. Galileo and Newton led the way in this direction. Another notable thinker who pursued truth during this period was Kant. Anthony Kenny confirmed this point and noted that "one man who devoted his whole life to the pursuit of absolute truth was Immanuel Kant: indeed, apart from this pursuit, he submits that there is little to tell about his biography."[8]

Immanuel Kant, often credited as one of the most important philosophers of the Enlightenment, had insisted that the most important task for the epoch was to bring humanity to maturity. Enlightenment thinkers placed a great premium on the discovery of truth through the observation of nature rather than through the study of authoritative sources, such as Aristotle and the Bible. Prior to the transformation that took place during that period (Enlightenment), it was widely believed that essential practices of assessing actions as good or bad, better or worse, worthy or unworthy depended for their very intelligibility on being grounded in the authority of a special kind of thing: God. In advance of the second transformation, it was widely believed that essential practices of assessing empirical claims as true or false, more or less justified, rationally credible or not, depended for their very intelligibility on being grounded in the authority of a special kind of thing: objective reality.

Despite the promise of the Enlightenment period, it could not resolve the issue of objective truth. Thus, when thinkers like Hume raised questions about the ability of the self to objectively

comprehend reality, Kant attempted an explanation by arguing in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that knowledge depends on structure of the mind because categories exist therein by which we are able to comprehend reality. The failure of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to completely resolve the issue of how to guarantee that the perception generated by the mind truly corresponds to reality led to the collapse of Modernism and the rise of Postmodern views.

Confronted with the problem of objective truth, Postmodern thinkers started generating their own views. In this regard, American philosophers like Charles S. Peirce initiated attempts to answer the question 'What is truth?' Dorothy Grover quotes Pierce as asserting that truth is that which experts will agree upon when their investigations are final.[9] Many pragmatists such as Peirce claim that the truth of our ideas must be tested through practice. Some pragmatists have gone so far as to question the usefulness of the idea of truth, arguing that in evaluating our beliefs we should rather pay attention to the consequences that our beliefs may have. On his part, another pragmatist, Williams James sees truth as associated with the good. In his view, "the true is a name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief and good too for definite assignable reasons". [10]

Our focal philosopher, Richard Rorty, is among the pragmatists that attempted to answer the question, 'What is truth?' Following the Kantian tradition of Enlightenment period, Richard Rorty argued that the next progressive step in the development of our understanding of things and ourselves is to do for epistemology what the first phase of the Enlightenment did for religion. Rorty thinks that just as we have learned to understand moral assessment in terms of relations among humans without needing to appeal to any sort of authority apart from that manifested in social practices, so we should learn to:

> Understand cognitive assessments in terms of relations among humans, without needing to appeal to any sort of authority apart from that manifested in social practices. From his point of view, the howls of outrage that his claim tends to elicit - the accusations of inviting cognitive irresponsibility, severing our connections to the world, undercutting the distinction between true claims and merely fashionable ones, and so on - are to be compared to the analogous responses of the pious during the first round of Enlightenment. [11]

Many philosophers influenced Rorty's reformulation of truth as social solidarity. For instance  G. W. F. Hegel's willingness in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1977) to abandon certainty and eternity as philosophical and moral goals/ideals inspired him to appreciate the irreducible temporality of everything as well as to understand philosophy as a contingent narrative readable without a moral precept existing behind the storyline. Again, from Darwin Rorty started "dispensing with claims that the real is rational while allowing for a narrative of change understood as an endless series of progressive unfolding. Following from the above, Rorty argued that language should be understood as the use of sentences to achieve a practical goal through a cooperative effort.

In a related development, Dewey was the principal inspiration for Rorty's effort to complete the Enlightenment project of freeing humanity from cognitive idolatry. Also, from his reading of Wilfrid Sellars's attack on "the Myth of the Given" in his essay *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind"* Rorty built his epistemological behaviorism which was basically a repudiation of foundationalism. Equally, Davidson influenced Rorty's thinking that the search for objective truth was a misguided slide back into representationalism.

The quest to pursue this study was informed by the desire to consider the implication of Rorty's position for philosophy.

**1.2 Statement of Problem**

Against the prevailing viewpoint in Anglo American philosophy which assumed that the world consisted of natural kinds of items and that our task was to achieve a correct mapping of these types, Richard Rorty called for abandonment of traditional epistemology and averred that the contingencies of selfhood, language and liberal community made it imperative that we must abandon objectivity for solidarity as defined by social practices. Following a Deweyan narrative of Western Culture coming to maturity, Richard Rorty sought to bring the Enlightenment project to its logical conclusion.

Towards achieving this goal, Rorty was led to accept the necessity of human consensus and to replace the quest for objectivity with the quest for solidarity. Consequently, he submitted that truth should be seen as inter-subjective agreement between members of a society. The above positions raise salient questions. These questions include: whether an abandonment of traditional epistemology was really possible, and how we should understand it? Whether truth is a cultural product? If it is, what is its implication to the study of philosophy? In addition to the above, Rorty's position challenges the validity of the concept of 'universal'. From everyday experience, it is obvious that some social practices are good in themselves, whereas others are called bad in themselves, if we place Rorty's social practice as truth on this balance, will it survive? How do we explain errors (Falsehoods)? Furthermore, Thomas Upton raises another important question about the implications of Rorty's argument. In his *Epistemological Nihilism,* Thomas Upton had reasoned that:

> If truth and justification are determined solely by current social practices,
> and if everything that is known is known simply by optional
> descriptions,… If there are no absolute standards of truth and knowledge
> and no ultimate principles governing rational discourse, then at least

from a traditional point of view, it seems fair to conclude that nothing really is or can be known. [12]

In the light of the above, one is quick to ask whether Richard Rorty is an "epistemological nihilist" [13] as Upton summarized him? Following from the foregoing, the problem of this study can be summed up in these three questions:

i. Is an abandonment of traditional epistemology really possible, and just how should we understand it?

ii. Is truth a cultural product, if truth is a cultural product, what is its implication for the concept of the universals?

iii. Is Richard Rorty's truth as social practice philosophically consistent?

## 1.3.  Purpose of Study

Philosophy is an interactive enterprise. Much of it is carried out in dialogue as theories and ideas are presented and subsequently refined in the crucible of close scrutiny. The above point succinctly summarizes the purpose of this study. Upon closer examination of the problems confronting philosophy, it is discovered that despite attempts by many philosophical schools to proffer an answer to the question about what is truth, consensus is yet to be arrived at on the issue.

In the ongoing dialogue about truth, Rorty's postmodern submission that absolute truth is an absurdity of a sort and that each society produces its own truth raised series of controversy. This study, therefore seeks to expose the conflicting attempts by philosophers of different epochs to deal with the question, what is truth? In doing this, it will examine the background to Richard

Rorty's rejection of the idea of an absolute truth as an absurdity in order to gain an interpretative understanding of Rorty and his view.

Also, the study will re-examine the foundations for Rorty's social practice as truth in order to discover whether in the final analysis he could be rightly designated an epistemological nihilist. In addition to the above, it will evaluate the controversies surrounding Richard Rorty's proclamation that each society produces its own truth using the method of Hermeneutics. The study hopes to show that despite his controversial position on truth, philosophy has gained from Rorty's style and his critic of traditional epistemology.

### 1.4. Scope of Study

This study is principally a work in Epistemology. Like most epistemological works, the focus of this work is on our knowledge of truth. Specifically, this study, far from being an attempt to offer a new theory of truth, seeks to interpret the implications of the answer given by Richard Rorty in order to establish its implication for philosophy and philosophers. Thus, to guarantee a correct presentation of Rorty's answer, an examination of some of his major works will be done. These works include: *Representation, Social Practice, and Truth; Truth and Progress; Philosophy and Mirror of Nature;* and *Universality and Truth;* in addition to *"Rorty and His Critics"* by Richard Brandom.

### 1.5. Significance of Study

This study is significant for a number of reasons. It could be important to Philosophy because it expands the inquiry into the nature and meaning of truth, which is the real concern of

philosophy. In doing this, the study will focus attention on Rorty's views about what constitutes truth.

The study of Rorty is, therefore, significant to development of Philosophy as a study in the history of ideas because it provides another opportunity to cast 'a periodic eye' on Rorty who promoted a new type of philosophical pragmatism with great persuasive power. In achieving the above, he succeeded in re-awakening interest in the thoughts of classical American philosophers especially his hero John Dewey.

Beyond Philosophy, this study will be of importance to researchers in general as it reconsiders the goal and the object of scientific research. Thus, based on its grounding in epistemology, this study will expand our understanding of truth as the object of inquiry. If Rorty had not prophesied about the death of traditional epistemology, the myriads of responses to his view including this study may not have seen the light of the day.

Equally, apart from the obvious inclination to relativism which Rorty's refusal to allow that in speaking from our ethnos we make ourselves answerable to the world entails, his insistence on the ethical right of way of sensitivity over principles, and the significance of expanding the sphere of "us" to include those who before were "them", in addition to his rejection of the tradition that allows the West to dictate the terms of philosophical discourse for all, is an encouragement for African philosophy as the quest for its' self definition and identity continues. Specifically, it implies that philosophers interested in the development of African Philosophy should no longer bother themselves getting their claims about African philosophy to be

answerable to the mirror set by Western Philosophy in the quest for a definition of what is it for a philosophy to be 'African'.

Furthermore, for researchers on Richard Rorty's philosophy, this study may open up a less researched aspect of the study on Rorty, i.e. looking at his positive contributions to philosophy. As will be seen from the review of related literatures, the bulk of the works so far done on Rorty attacked majority of his controversial positions and ended not seeing much good in them. Despite agreeing that most of his positions are to say the least disputable, this study sees in these disputable works some good for philosophy.

## 1.6.    Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics (philosophical hermeneutics) method was chosen because as Ramberg, Bjørn and Gjesdal, Kristin noted, "the main impetus for appropriation and integration of hermeneutics with elements of the analytical tradition has been meta-philosophical. The most influential exponent of this development is Richard Rorty".[14] Going further, they noted that,

> In the hands of Rorty, McDowell and an increasing number of other contemporary thinkers, the resources of philosophical hermeneutics are deployed in an effort to break out of the epistemic, dualistic paradigms of modern philosophy, and to open new philosophical ground no longer haunted by the specters of relativism and skepticism, nor by the dream of foundational justification. [15]

Furthermore, though several versions of philosophical hermeneutics have emerged over the years, this study will adopt Gadamer's brand of hermeneutics which he calls 'dialectical ethics'. This is because he related it to truth and his hermeneutic "identifies that authentic engagement

with reading requires awareness of the inter-subjective nature of understanding in order to promote a reflective engagement with the text".[16] Hence, Barthold and Malpas view Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics (dialectical ethics) as a form of dialogue. While Barthold identified the following as its attributes;

> First, it is focused on the subject matter and does not aim to win the other over to one's side. This implies that also does not aim at a subjective understanding of the other. Rather, both parties open themselves to coming to an agreement about the matter itself. Secondly, it requires that each party possesses a "good-will" to understand, that is, an openness to hear something anew in such a way as to forge a connection with another. In order words, it aims at solidarity. Third, it entails a willingness to offer reasons and justifications for one's views. Finally, it requires a commitment that one "knows one doesn't know." Dialogue requires a humble playfulness in which we get caught up and lose ourselves in the connection with another. A good dialogue is one that, like engaging play, is one we want to keep going. [17]

Malpas averred that it is;

> As a matter of negotiation between oneself and one's partner in the hermeneutical dialogue such that the process of understanding can be seen as a matter of coming to an 'agreement' about the matter at issue. Coming to such an agreement means establishing a common framework or 'horizon' and Gadamer thus takes understanding to be a process of the 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*).[18]

Thus, since the present study is focused on Richard Rorty, it will benefit from this method as the various perspectives on truth as well as Rorty's submission will be subjected to an interpretative scrutiny, thus leading to responsive understanding. Hence, the first Chapter of this study will introduce the entire work starting with the background to the study and expose the problem of the research. Also, the chapter will expose the purpose of the study. Again, it will delimit the scope of the study and show why the work is significant. Some operational concepts will be defined also. Chapter two will review some of the existing literature on the on Rorty's position

on truth, whereas, chapter three will focus on the theories of truth. In Chapter four, the life and time of our focal philosopher, Richard Rorty, will be examined to expose the background influence on him which, in the opinion of the researcher, will help in the understanding of his contributions. Also, chapter five will examine his view on truth. Finally, the main task of this study will be undertaken in chapter six where the actual breaking down and interpretative understanding of the implications of Richard Rorty's stand for Philosophy and Philosophers will be examined.

## 1.7.    Definition of Terms

In order to ensure a better understanding of the issues under study, the following terms will be defined.

### 1.7.1.  Epistemology

Epistemology is derived from the Greek noun '*episteme*' meaning 'knowledge' and the suffix '*logos*' meaning 'the science of' or 'the study of'.  From the above etymological viewpoint, it is the science of knowledge. The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* explains that its central questions include:

> The origin of knowledge, the place of experience in generating knowledge, and the place of reason in doing so; the relationship between knowledge and certainty, and between knowledge and impossibility of error; the possibility of universal skepticism; and the changing forms of knowledge that arise from new conceptualizations of the world. [19]

For the purpose of this study, and in the light of the above understanding, epistemology as a term will be applied in this study to refer to the branch of philosophy that investigates into the nature, extent, scope and source of human knowledge.

### 1.7.2. Social Practice

For Shannon Jackson, Social Practice involves "the valuing of difference as well as the need for shared understanding and agreement; it focuses on the skills, knowledge and understanding that people own in their private, family, community and working lives". [20] Furthermore, she adds that,

> Social Practice is a term that has allegiances with a number of movements in experimental art and performance studies. Those allegiances bring to mind other terms that share some kinship with social practice: activist art, social work, protest performance, performance ethnography, community art, relational aesthetics, conversation pieces, action research, and other terms that signal a social turn in art practice as well as the representational dimension of social and political formations. [21]

For the purpose of this study, the term 'social practice' will be used in the Rorty's sense to refer to inter-subjective agreement among the members of a community, or what he calls "unforced agreement among larger and larger group of interlocutors". [22] Thus, social practice, in the context of this study, means social solidarity.

### 1.7.3. Justification

Although justification is a term also used in the religious circle, this dissertation is concerned with epistemic justification. According to Tim Holt, epistemic justification "is the difference between merely believing something that is true, and knowing it". [23] Furthermore, he argues that to have knowledge, on this account, we must have justification. How our beliefs are justified, he maintains, is among the central questions of epistemology. Having justification for our beliefs, plausibly, is about having good reasons to think that they are true. Holt equally made a

clarification on what he calls, 'inferential justification'. In his view, "for a belief to be justified, it seems, it must be inferred from another beliefs, this type of justification is called inferential justification".[24]

Again, he outlines three conditions that must be met for a belief to be inferentially justified. These are:

1. There must be some other idea that supports it. This other idea need not establish what is believed with absolute certainty, but it must lend some degree of support to it, it must render the belief probable. Without a supporting idea, there can be no inferential justification.

2. We must believe that this other idea is true. It is not enough for justification that there be another idea that supports our belief; if we thought that that other idea were false then it could not possibly help to justify our belief. Inferential justification, therefore, requires the existence of a supporting idea that is believed to be true.

3. We must have good reason for believing that this supporting idea is true. If we irrationally believe the supporting idea, then that irrationality will transfer to the belief that we base upon it; a belief can only be as justified as are the other beliefs on which it is based. For a belief to be inferentially justified, therefore it must be based in a supporting idea that is believed to be true with justification.[25.]

Holt's position succinctly captured the meaning of justification as would be applied in this study.

### 1.7.4. Hermeneutics

According to Anthony Maas, the term 'hermeneutics' is "derived from a Greek word connected with the name of the god Hermes, the reputed messenger and interpreter of the gods".[26] For their

part, Bjørn Ramberg and Gjesdal Kristin explain that "the term 'hermeneutic*s'* covers both the first order art and the second order theory of understanding and interpretation of linguistic and non-linguistic expressions".[27]

Hermeneutics as tool of inquiry gained prominence in the course of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, when hermeneutics emerged as a crucial branch of Biblical studies. Later on, it comes to include the study of ancient and classic cultures".[28] However, as Anshuman Prasad rightly observed, "despite this popular conflation of hermeneutics and biblical interpretation, however, during most of its history, hermeneutics has been much more than merely a theological enterprise".[29]

Ramberg and Gjesdal traced the history of hermeneutics to Ancient period in the works of Plato through the scholastic period in the works of St. Augustine, to the Modern period with thinkers like Martin Luther and Benedict Spinoza as its greatest advocates. During the German Romanticism, hermeneutics was championed by Herder, Schlegel, Kant and Hegel. However, they gave credit to Frierich Scleiermacher for managing to "pull together the intellectual currents of the time so as to articulate a coherent conception of a universal hermeneutics".[30] They identified Martin Heidegger's *Sien und Zeit (1927)* as completely transforming the discipline of hermeneutics. A. Prasad agrees with this point and notes that, "the growth of philosophical hermeneutics is particularly indebted to intellectual labours of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Hans–Georg Gadamer (b. 1900)".[31] Moreover, he averred that "although earlier hermeneutics made a distinction between understanding and interpretation, that distinction is no longer maintained after the emergence of philosophical hermeneutics".[32]

In its contemporary usage, hermeneutics is something much more significant than a method for systematically interpreting texts. As M. Peter et al. put it,

> It proceeds from recognition of the point that interpretation cannot be overcome by some more objective kind of knowing. Against the scientific pretensions of epistemology, philosophical hermeneutics stresses the point that interpretative understanding is humankind's ineluctable way of experiencing a world; a world which is from the start one in which every act of understanding is an implicated one.[33]

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## CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Preamble

This chapter seeks to review the positions of philosophers on some of the underlying assumptions that influenced Richard Rorty's truth as social practice. Understanding the basis for Rorty's truth as social practice requires an examination of the themes around which the conclusions were founded. Rorty's view that each society defines its own truth is founded on two major premises; namely; his repudiation of foundationalism, and his critique of epistemology and philosophy's self image. But how did philosophers react to Rorty's repudiation of foundationalism as well as his critique of philosophy's self image?

This review is divided into three, the first two parts will focus on the above two themes and the reaction of philosophers on the assumptions will be reviewed from two divides namely; those who supported Rorty's position and philosophers who disagreed with his position. The third part of the review will focus Postmodernism which influenced Rorty's claim that each society defines its own truth i.e. truth as social practice and the reactions to it.

### 2.2. Rorty's Repudiation of Foundationalism

The starting point of Richard Rorty's conclusion that each society defines its own truth is his critique of Foundationalism. For a better understanding of the issues at stake, an examination of the concept of foundationalism has become imperative. For Ted Poston, foundationalism "is a view about the proper structure of one's knowledge or justified beliefs. Some beliefs are known or justifiedly believed only because some other beliefs are known or justifiedly

believed".[1] Furthermore, he opines that "foundationalists maintain that some beliefs are properly basic and that the rest of one's beliefs inherit their epistemic status (knowledge or justification) in virtue of receiving proper support from the basic beliefs". [2]

 Richard Fumerton and Ali Hassan succinctly summarized foundationalism thus, "foundationalism is a view about the structure of justification or knowledge". [3] From the foregoing, it is observed that the foundationalist thesis in summary is that all knowledge and justified belief rest at the end of the day on a foundation of non-inferential knowledge or justified belief.

Having explained the meaning of foundationalism, focus will now shift to the key issues raised by Richard Rorty to support his arguments against foundationalism. This will be followed by a review of philosophers who like Rorty argued against foundationalism and those who supported foundationalism.

### 2.2.1 Rorty's Argument against Foundationalism

The major aim of Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and Mirror of Nature,* hereafter (PMN) and *Truth and Progress* was to "undermine the reader's confidence in the mind as something about which we should have a philosophical view and knowledge as something about which there ought to a theory and which has foundations".[4] Thus, the primary point Rorty wanted to make from the works was to set the basis for his rejection of foundationalism. Highlighting the key issues raised by Rorty, Jaegwom Kim points out that;

> Sometimes Rorty attributes this broadly realistic view of truth and knowledge (the Platonic doctrine … according to which truth is correspondence with nature, and knowledge is a matter of possessing accurate representations) to Descartes and the philosophical tradition

stemming from him…, but elsewhere, and more frequently, it is attributed to the Greeks, especially to Plato. Rorty rightly takes the Platonic doctrine as central to western philosophy; it is the core of realism, a view that, in spite of sporadic protests and revolts, has dominated the western philosophical tradition to this day. This is the doctrine, or the "image," that Rorty calls "Man as the Mirror of Nature."[5]

Hence from the views expressed above, it could be argued that Richard Rorty's repudiation of foundationalism began with his rejection of Plato's realism and the Cartesian mental turn. Giving insight into what Rorty called 'the Cartesian Mental turn', Jaegwon further avers that the emergence of the "Cartesian doctrine of the mind as the private inner stage, 'the Inner Mirror', in which cognitive action takes place"[6] the Platonic doctrine of knowledge as representation was transformed into the idea of knowledge as inner representation of outer reality. Thus, he adds that "the Cartesian contribution was to mentalize the Platonic doctrine… the mentalization of Platonic realism inevitably led to skeptical queries".[7]

In order to escape from the skeptical queries that may arise, Rorty submits that, "we need to cease thinking of the mind as a great mirror which holds representations of the world. Once we abandon this account of truth, we will want to focus on beliefs that serve us well".[8]  In this regard, when Rorty talks of beliefs that serve us well, he implied beliefs that members of a community accept as working for them. We shall return to Rorty's view of philosophy as epistemology and his problem with the knowledge as representation later in this work. Let's return to Rorty and his anti-foundational stance now.

Jan Hábl traces the history of foundationalism to,

A simple question that is often legitimately asked in our everyday conversations: How do you know? The normal answer in normal situation attempts to provide some reasonable basis for the claim. For

example, if a friend tells me that the dean of our college is a thief, I might be not willing to believe such a claim without any support, indeed, I might be even offended by such an accusation and require some good explanation without delay. If the answer I get is that Peter said so, it is legitimate for me to ask, how does Peter know? Usually we do not accept an argument such as that Peter heard it from Paul, so the conversation continues till the claim is based on some good acceptable foundation or refuted as unwarranted (malicious gossip – in this case).[9]

Hence, as he further noted, "the above example indicates the traditional motivation for foundationalism that has been formulated as the so called regress argument."[10] In the simplest form, the regress argument says that there must be a basis for all truth claims. This means that in order to know something, it is not enough just to believe it; one needs to have a good reason to believe it. Hence, a good reason to believe 'p', for instance, cannot be 'p' itself (that would be circular reasoning). Instead, a good reason to believe 'p' must be something else that supports 'p'. In order words, reasons require support, and no proposition is supported only by endless regresses of reasons. Therefore, no belief is known unless it is supported by an infinitely long chain of other beliefs. Since it is impossible for one to have an infinitely long chain of beliefs, because human beings are finite creatures, even if one succeeds in having such beliefs, one would never be able to satisfactorily give a justification for any of them, since that would require infinite time. Therefore, we cannot know anything.

For his part, Sosa submits that,

The foundationalism controversy at this time can be clarified by a distinction between "formal foundationalism" and "substantive Foundationalism." Substantive foundationalism is opposed to coherentism but formal foundationalism is opposed not to coherentism but to what I shall label (epistemic) "pessimism." Formal foundationalism may be held with respect to the study of normative or evaluative principles of any sort.[11]

Depending on one's school of thought, it could be observed that the term foundationalism is today used with both disparaging and admiring overtone. Following from the above, it should be expected that Richard Rorty's position as expounded above should have sympathizers and critics. Those who support the foundationalists' thesis are against Rorty but those who are against the foundationalism belong to the same camp with Rorty. We shall now look at the two sides of the divide.

**2.2.2. Philosophers Who Supported Foundationalism**

Foundationalism has a long history. Fumerton and Hasan seem to agree with this claim when they noted that, "the earliest form of foundationalism is Plato's theory of Forms"[12]. The forms for Plato "are eternal and changeless, but enter into a partnership with changeable matter, to produce the objects and examples of concepts, we perceive in the temporal world. These are always in a state of becoming, and may participate in a succession of forms." [13] Thus, true knowledge for him is dependent on the perception of the archetypal forms themselves, which are real, eternal, and unchanging.

For his part, Aristotle also argued in favour of foundationalism on the basis of the regress argument. In his view, "all instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existent knowledge".[14] This implies that there must be a basis for knowledge. Highlighting on his insistence on a foundation for knowledge, Aristotle further submits that:

> Some hold that, owing to the necessity of knowing the primary premises, there is no scientific knowledge. Others think there is, but that all truths are demonstrable. Neither doctrine is either true or a necessary deduction

from the premises. The first school, assuming that there is no way of knowing other than by demonstration, maintain that an infinite regress is involved, on the ground that if behind the prior stands no primary, we could not know the posterior through the prior (wherein they are right, for one cannot traverse an infinite series): if on the other hand-they say- the series terminates and there are primary premises, yet these are unknowable because incapable of demonstration, which according to them is the only form of knowledge.[15]

Thus from the foregoing, he insisted that "since we must know the prior premises from which the demonstration is drawn ....we maintain that besides scientific knowledge there is its originative source which enables us to recognize the definitions".[16]

Claims that toed the line of foundationalism were not lacking also during the medieval period. Although, it is disputable whether or not to classify Thomas Aquinas as among the foundationalists, James Swindal argued that in theology, foundationalism most well known and capable proponent was St. Thomas Aquinas. In his view, Aquinas' claim that "our faith in eternal salvation shows that we have theological truths that exceed human reason"[17] could pass as a foundationalist argument.  Hence, When Aquinas remarked "that faith gives us the greatest warrant for any belief because its warrant is the authority of God, or truth itself, which can neither deceive nor be deceived"[18]  he was laying a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief  in God as foundationalism required.

For Kelly James Clark, the thinkers who insisted on an evidence for rational belief in God are classical foundationalists. According to him, "the claim that rational belief in God requires the support of evidence or argument is usually rooted in a view of the structure of knowledge that has come to be known as 'classical foundationalism". [19] Following from the above we can argue that David Hume who noted that the "wise man … proportions his belief to the evidence,"[20]

Bertrand Russell's claim that "perfect rationality consists . . . in attaching to every proposition a degree of belief corresponding to its degree of credibility,… credibility functionally depending on evidence" [21] and W.K. Clifford assertion that *"it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence"* [22] belong to the above classification.

Towards the dawn of the modern period, foundationalism found its expressions in the works of many philosophers. Douglas Burnham views Leibniz's claim that "truth is simply a proposition in which the predicate is contained in the subject"[23] as an aspect of foundationalism. Going further he quotes him as asserting that "it is obvious that all true predication has some foundation in the nature of things and when a proposition is not identical, that is to say when the predicate is not expressly included in the subject, it must be virtually included in it".[24] For Ted Poston, "arguably, the most well known foundationalist is Descartes". [25] Descartes' affiliation with foundationalism could be deduced from the following arguments;

> Throughout my writings I have made it clear that my method imitates that of the architect. When an architect wants to build a house which is stable on ground where there is a sandy topsoil over underlying rock, or clay or some other firm base, he begins by digging out a set of trenches from which he removes the sand, and anything resting on or mixed in with the sand, so that he can lay his foundation on firm soil. In the way, I begin by taking everything that was doubtful and throwing it out, like sand…[26]

L. Newman argues that Descartes method of doubt complement foundationalism as it ensures that "a system of justified belief is organized to guarantee a foundation of unshakable first principles and a superstructure of further propositions anchored to the foundation via unshakable inference". [27] Restating the important role of Descartes in the development of the foundationalists' theory, Timm Triplett writes that, "Descartes is the philosopher prior to the

twentieth century who is most closely associated with foundationalism. Features such as the subjectivity and indubitability of foundational propositions are clearly apparent in Descartes' epistemology".[28]

The debate over foundationalism received renewed attention in the twentieth century due largely to the furor over the nature of scientific method. Moritz Schilick's argument for "a view of scientific knowledge akin to the pyramid image in which knowledge rests on a special class of statements whose verification doesn't depend on other beliefs" was seen as foundationalist.[29] Providing more support for foundationalism, Moser notes that the Rortian-Sellarsian line on Foundationalism seems to rest on asserting a link between one's own set of propositions with regard to the assertion that X is F and those of the larger social community, but that the way out of this sort of criticism is to claim that "one good reason for accepting the foundationalists' strategy of ultimately basing the justification of propositions on non-propositional justifiers is that it provides the most plausible way of terminating a potentially endless regress of justification due to propositions". [30]

### 2.2.3. Philosophers Against Foundationalism

The philosophical position which rejects foundationalism i.e. rejecting the need to ground knowledge is generally described as anti-foundationalism. Criticism against foundationalism came from different sources. For Nicholas Wolterstorff, "on all fronts foundationalism is in bad shape. It seems to me there is nothing to do but give it up for mortally ill and learn to live in its absence." [31]  On his part, Wentzel Van-Huyssteen, "whatever notion of post modernity we eventually opt for, all postmodern thinkers see the modernist quest for certainty, and the

accompanying program of laying foundations for our knowledge, as a dream for the impossible, a contemporary version of the quest for the Holy Grail." [32]

In a related development, Timm Triplett notes that "in spite of foundationalism being revived once again, another trend and the dominant one in the literature has continued to assume that foundationalism is no longer viable."[33] In addition to the above, he listed "Laurence BonJour (1978, 1985) and Michael Williams (1977), as notable philosophers who have continued to press detailed and extensive criticisms of Foundationalism". [34]

From the forgoing, it is obvious that anti-foundationalism did not start with Richard Rorty's *PMN*. Indeed, it has been popular since the ancient Greek period, in this regard, Adam Wosotowsky claims that "anti-foundationalism is commonly divided into three main categories: Sophism, Pragmatism and Skepticism"[35]. In the words of George Duke, "the primary source on sophistic relativism about knowledge and/or truth is Protagoras' famous 'man is the measure' statement".[36] Duke's interpretation of Protagoras' statement reveals some anti-foundationalist stand. Hence assessing Protagoras' assertion "if the wind, for example, feels (or seems) cold to me and feels (or seems) warm to you, then the wind *is* cold for me and *is* warm for you" [36] Duke remarks that one of the interpretations of the above claim is that "there is a wind that exists independently of my perception of it and this is both cold and warm insofar as two qualities can inhere in the same mind-independent entity".[37]

Also, despite acknowledging that one of the contributions of the sophists to ancient Western philosophy was "the invention of a concept of *logos* that privileged rational thinking and seeking a foundation for prose argument on issues of immediate social concern", [38] F. D. Walters writes

that "anti-foundationalism appears very close to sophistic rhetoric" [39.] In *Belief and Resistance: Dynamics of Contemporary Intellectual Controversy*, B. H. Smith made reference to anti-foundational views of the skeptic Hans Albert who argued that "the efforts to ground the validity of certain norms on a priori foundations is logically untenable, being caught in an infinite regress". [40]

Another school of thought that opposed foundationalism is the coherentists. They rebuffed the traditional foundationalistic building (or pyramid) metaphor where the more basic beliefs provide a foundation for the non-basic ones, and replace it with a net metaphor. From the coherentists perspective, "there is no basic, privileged class of beliefs that serve as foundation for justifying other beliefs but which need no justification from other beliefs". [41] Similarly, nihilism is another trend that implicitly is opposed to foundationalism. In this regard, Pratt notes that "by the end of the century (20th), existential despair as a response to nihilism gave way to an attitude of indifference, often associated with antifoundationalism". [42] Thus, Nietzsche is singled out as an anti foundationalist because of his conviction that "there is no objective order or structure in the world except what we give it". **[43]**

In a related development, some of the American pragmatists also sustained the anti-foundationalist's posture. Supporting this claim, Buruch notes that one implication of the unending nature of the interpretation of appearances through infinite sequences of signs is that the American Pragmatist Charles Peirce cannot be any type of epistemological foundationalist or believer in absolute or apodeictic knowledge. In his view, "he must be, and is, an anti-foundationalist and a fallibilist".[44] Pierce's categorization among the anti-foundationalists is

based on his assertion that "philosophy must begin wherever it happens to be at the moment and not at some supposed ideal foundation, especially not in some world of "private references."[45] For Meyers, "perhaps the best known attack on foundations in recent years is Sellars' criticism of the myth of the given". [46] In what could rightly be described as anti-foundationalist, twentieth century analytic philosopher Wilfrid Sellars alleged that;

> Many things have been said to be "given": sense contents, material objects, universals, propositions, real connections, first principles, even givenness itself. And there is, indeed, a certain way of construing the situations which philosophers analyze in these terms which can be said to be the framework of givenness".[47]

Sellers insisted that he presumes that his critique of 'the given' is not in any way projected to refute that there is a difference between inferring that something is the case and, for example, seeing it to be the case. Rather, his argument succinctly put is that;

> The idea that observation "strictly and properly so-called" is constituted by certain self-authenticating nonverbal episodes, the authority of which is transmitted to verbal and quasi-verbal performances when these performances are made "in conformity with the semantical rules of the language," is, of course, the heart of the Myth of the Given. For the given, in epistemological tradition, is what is taken by these self-authenticating episodes. [48]

For his part, Quine claimed that the project of founding science on sense-data was hopeless, and called for a naturalized epistemology which would in essence reduce epistemology to psychology. [49] According to P. Klein, one of the criticisms raised against Foundationalism is that "it advocates accepting an arbitrary reason at the base, that is, a reason for which there are no further reasons making it even slightly better to accept than any of its contraries".[50]

Borrowing from Quine's critique of the analytic–synthetic distinction and Wilfrid Sellars's attack on "the Myth of the Given", Richard Rorty avers that the naive assumption that representationalism gives us the right picture of our basic predicament is at the heart of the confusion in philosophy. As an escape route from this confusion, he suggested an abandonment of all foundationalist agenda. According to him, we must substitute "the notion of knowledge as the assemblage of representations"[51] with "a pragmatist conception of knowledge". He proffered what he called 'epistemological behaviourism' as his idea of a pragmatic conception of knowledge. We shall turn our attention to this later in the course of this study.

## 2.3. Rorty's Critique of Philosophy's Self image

This aspect of this review will continue the evaluation of philosophers' reaction to Richard Rorty's willingness to put away the whole philosophical endeavor which he considered as epistemological. By this, we mean the view that philosophy is required because it alone can satisfactorily clarify the special link that defines truth and indicate just what nature of experiences validate our truth assertions. This image of philosophy was rejected by Rorty. The arguments that gave rise to his rejection of the above arguments were outlined in his *PMN*.

Rorty began with "a survey of some recent developments in philosophy, especially analytic philosophy, from the point of view of the anti-Cartesian and anti-Kantian revolution". [52] His aim was to undermine the reader's confidence in;

  a. "The mind" as something about which one should have a "philosophical" view,

  b. "Knowledge" as something about which there ought to be a "theory" and which has "foundations," and;

c. "Philosophy" as it has been conceived since Kant.[53]

Many thinkers inspired Rorty's provocative and challenging views about the image of Philosophy. In this regard, Tambornino notes that, "Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Dewey, Quine, Derrida, and Donald Davidson clear the way for Rorty's transcendence, circumvention, deconstruction and dismissal of the dominant tradition in philosophy".[54] Rorty himself acknowledged his indebtedness to many scholars when he noted that his *PMN* was,

> Therapeutic rather than constructive. The therapy offered is, nevertheless, parasitic upon the constructive efforts of the very analytic philosophers whose frame of reference I am trying to put in question. Thus most of the particular criticisms of the tradition which I offer are borrowed from such systematic philosophers as Sellars, Quine, Davidson, Ryle, Malcolm, Kuhn, and Putnam.[55]

For Rorty, "much of western philosophy has suffered from delusion, a kind of megalomania. It has viewed itself as a cultural overseer and judge, capable of assessing all claims to knowledge or virtue made by the various segments of the culture, deciding among them, and handing out prizes for truth and sentences of silence (or worse) for error". [56] The reaction of philosophers to Rorty's rejection of conception of philosophy 'self image as a cultural overseer' (as Rorty himself framed it) will be examined from two perspectives namely: those who supported Rorty's position and those that disagreed with that view.

### 2.3.1.  Supporters of Rorty's Critique of Philosophy's Self Image

Rorty's attack on the image of philosophy in the modern age had admirers. Among them include, Tartaglia who saw nothing ambiguous in Rorty's claims about the image of philosophy. In his view, while agreeing with Rorty's claim that although philosophy is indeed the 'queen of the sciences', she is not a monarch that everyone needs to listen to. Tartaglia maintains that "his essay will be of great interest to anyone trying to understand Rorty's intellectual development,

and it will certainly help to dispel the resilient myth that Rorty started out as a metaphilosophically unreflective analytic philosopher, and turned to metaphilosophy only when he became disillusioned". [57]

Khosrow also joined the league of those who found some justifications in Rorty's project about the image of philosophy. Accordingly, he initiated the project of interpreting Rorty's claim so that we understand Rorty. This led him to argue that contrary to what some critics think about his project,

> Rorty is ready to accept, along with Ludwig Wittgenstein, that philosophy is what philosophers do without limiting it to epistemological or metaphysical matters. If, for instance, one takes the task of philosophy and philosophers to be re-describing social and cultural situations in order to provide us with new vocabularies, then Rorty is ready to admit the necessity of philosophizing.[58]

On her part, Choy sees nothing wrong with Rorty's project on the image of philosophy. In her view, "deconstruction of our philosophical tradition is to dismiss the family of problems associated with that tradition by showing that the very problematic comprising the tradition is bankrupt, fundamentally confused or, at least, no longer interesting".[59] Furthermore, she followed Rorty in tracing of our perplexity to a philosophical tradition based on the following:

i. A fundamentally confused picture of man inherited from the Greeks (the notion that man has a Glassy Essence)

ii. A view which construes the mind as a mirror containing inner representations of an external reality and which understands knowledge in terms of the accuracy of these representations inherited from Descartes

iii. The Kantian project which puts epistemology at the center of philosophy and philosophy at the center of culture. [60]

Following from the above, she argues that Rorty's project was aimed at dismantling the above erroneous views and in its place, advocating "a pragmatic, hermeneutical and quasi-existential approach which aims to reintegrate philosophy with the rest of culture".[61] Choy concludes her celebration of Rorty's work by warning that, "Rorty is not anti-philosophical in the broad sense that he finds no philosophical comments or issues interesting, and it would be a mistake to suppose this carefully crafted and well thought out book opts for nihilism".[62]

For his part, King agrees that there are still relevant parts of Rorty's work that should be looked at with lesser criticism. In addition to that, he attempted to reduce the weight of Rorty's anti-philosophical project by submitting that,

> Rorty believes that although philosophy has no essence, it does have a history, he proposes that foundational philosophy give way to what he calls "hermeneutics, "an activity in which the aim is not certainty but the offering of versions of the "way things hang together." Philosophy must join "the conversation of mankind" rather than preside over it as a kind of hanging judge. [63]

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In a similar vain, Nehaas submitted that Rorty's criticism of the image of philosophy helped to bring philosophical writing to a broad audience. In his view,

> Rorty has functioned as a true "Socratic intermediary." …Whatever one thinks of the details of his view, or even of some of its central elements, one must openly acknowledge that it is a view. And Rorty must be praised for showing that philosophy, even if it is practiced with the aim of abolishing Philosophy, can still be done in the grand manner.[64]

### 2.3.2.  Critics of Rorty's Critique of Philosophy's Self Image

Several scholars disagree with Rorty's approach to solving the problems of philosophy. Rejecting Rorty's whole approach, Taylor notes that,

> You don't just walk away from these deep, pervasive, half-articulated, taken-for-granted pictures that are embedded in our culture and enframe our thought and action. You can't free yourself from them until you identify them and see where they're wrong; and even then it's not always easy. Just saying you've abandoned them, and then not giving them any further thought, `a la Davidson, is a sure recipe for remaining in their thrall.[65]

Taylor was reacting to Richard Rorty's suggestion that to Rorty's suggestion that we abandon epistemology and focus on just something else. In his view, "Rorty's whole approach fails to take account of what has come in modern philosophy to be called the "background," the skein of semi- or utterly inarticulate understandings that make sense of our explicit thinking and reactions". [66] On his part, Gustafson quoted Hilary Putnam as arguing that "Rorty's characterization of everyday and scientific descriptions as ways of "coping" with the environment deprives him of the resources required to do full justice to our conception of what such descriptions accomplish".[67]

In his, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*, Bernstein argued that,

> After Rorty's sustained critique of "professional philosophy" and his attack on the very idea of philosophy (or what he sometimes labels "Philosophy" with a capital "P") as a well-defined Fach with its own distinctive foundational problems, he left us in an ambiguous situation about what useful role (if any) the philosopher might still play in the ongoing "conversation of mankind." He suggested that we think of the philosopher (or her successor) as a "kibitzer," a self-consciously amateurish cultural critic. [68]

From his analysis of Rorty's assertions, he averred that Rorty's claims center on three motives:

a. His continued battle with what he takes to be the legacy of the "bad" foundationalist, ahistorical impulse in philosophy, especially as it is manifested in the preoccupation with the varieties of "realism."

b. His "aesthetic" strain seen in his advocacy of what he calls different "vocabularies" for "coping."

c. His "defense" of pluralistic "post-modern bourgeois liberalism" as seen in his conviction that a liberal democracy that embodies and extends the principle of tolerance and encourages the poetic metaphonic impulse of making and self-creation is-if not the best possible world-at least the best possible world achieved by European civilization.[69]

In his view, sometimes Rorty suggests that if we free ourselves of irrelevant worrying about the wrong issues, and "simply abandon worn-out "vocabularies" that have for too long obsessed philosophers, and realize the benefits and moral progress of liberal democracy, then we can all get on with the playful task of poetizing life". [70] Bernstein ended his disagreement with Rorty's conception of philosophy as cultural politics by charging him of helping "to perpetuate just the sort of fruitless debates that Dewey and the other pragmatists sought to jettison". [71] He is convinced that "Rorty, who has done so much to get philosophers to take pragmatism "seriously" (at least by constantly invoking the names of the pragmatic thinkers), is guilty of a similar tendency of leveling in his light-minded joshing".[72]

On his part, despite conceding that Rorty's view about the image of philosophy is brilliant, Abrams remarks that "within Rorty's own painting of philosophy--for such an attack on the old metaphors--we are left merely with all the anomalies of an old paradigm and very little in the way of a view of the new metaphors, which might thereby enrich the goals of pragmatic thought". [73] Hence, Abrams agrees with so many other critics who accused Rorty of doing very little to articulate that next important metaphor to overcome the mirror despite his dismissal of the old metaphor and calling for a new way of thinking through a new set of metaphors.

In his own criticism on Rorty's argument enunciated in *PMN*, Ruja notes that "the abandonment of the search after truth will be viewed as an irremediable loss if not a manifestation of disloyalty to the philosophic enterprise". [74] Thus, he views Rorty's project as a betrayal of philosophy. Habermas had strong words against Rorty's project. In his view, Rorty's "program for a philosophy that is to do away with all philosophy seems to spring more from the melancholy of a disappointed metaphysician, driven on by nominalist spurs, than from the self-criticism of an enlightened analytic".[75]

From an assessment of the views of those against Rorty's critique of philosophy's self image, it is obvious that Rorty failed to provide what the next phase of the philosophical enterprise should be if we are to away with the old metaphor as he suggested.  In the light of the above, it must be pointed that that focusing on the old metaphors does not in any way prevent us from focusing or discovering new metaphors. Even Rorty who criticized the old metaphor admitted had admiration for some old philosophers. In the same way, philosophy cannot make progress without revisiting the old metaphors with a view to inventing new ones.

## 2.4. Postmodernism

According to Luke Mastin, Postmodernism was a broad movement in the late 20th century "marked  in general terms by an openness  to meaning and authority from unexpected places, and a willingness to borrow unashamedly from previous movements or traditions…. It was heavily influenced by Continental philosophy movements like Phenomenology, Structuralism    and Existentialism, and it is generally skeptical of many of the values and bases of Analytic Philosophy".[76] Mastin considered Postmodernism as a Philosophical movement with a "pick and

mix"[77] approach whereby basic problems could be investigated from a variety of theoretical perspectives.

For his part, Oji notes that Postmodernism "rejects formalistic scientism and even the strictness of methodological philosophizing".[78] In a related development, while affirming that Postmodernism as a Philosophical movement was a reaction against the philosophical assumptions and values of the modern period of Western Philosophy, Duignan lists the following as the most important of the viewpoints that Postmodernism opposed;

- There is an objective natural reality whose existence and properties are logically independent of human beings-of their minds, their societies, their social practices, or their investigative techniques;

- The descriptive and explanatory statements of scientists and historians can in principle, be objectively true or false;

- Through the use of reason and logic, with more specialized tools provided by science and technology, human beings are likely to change themselves and their societies for better. It is reasonable to expect that future societies will be more humane, just and more enlightened and more prosperous than they are now;

- Reason and logic are universally valid-their laws are the same for and apply equally to, any thinker and any domain of knowledge;

- There is such a thing as human nature; it consists of faculties, aptitudes, or dispositions that are in some sense present in human beings at birth rather than learned or instilled through social forces;

- Language refers to and represents a reality outside itself;

- Human beings can acquire knowledge about reality, and this knowledge can be justified ultimately on the basis of evidence or principles that are, or can be, known intuitively, or otherwise with certainty; and

- It is possible, at least in principle to construct general theories that explain many aspects of the natural or social world within a given domain of knowledge. Furthermore, it should be a goal of scientific and historical research to construct such theories, even if they are never perfectly attainable in practice.[79]

Contrary to the above claims, the postmodern thinkers argue that;

- It is naïve realism to think of an objective natural reality. Any belief about such a reality is a conceptual construct, an artifact of scientific practice;

- There is no such thing as objective truth;

- It is misguided to have faith in science and technology as instrument for human progress;

- Reason and logic are conceptual constructs and are therefore valid only within established intellectual tradition in which they are used;

- All aspects, or nearly all aspects of human psychology are completely socially determined;

- Language is semantically self-contained or self referential: the meaning of a word is not a static thing in the world or even an idea in the mind but rather a range of contrasts and differences with the meanings of other words. Language is not such a mirror of nature;

- Philosophical foundationalism is logically flawed;

- Attempt to go outside human authority to justify cognitive assessment is a dream for the impossible and symptomatic of an unhealthy tendency towards the Enlightenment attitude. [80]

Apart from our focal philosopher Richard Rorty, prominent postmodern thinkers include the following;

### 2.4.1.  Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)

According to Aylesworth, Jean-François Lyotard deserved a pride of place in discussion of Postmodernism because "the term "postmodernism" first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean-François Lyotard".[81] Lyotard abandoned the Western modern period meta-narratives which posited the notion of guaranteed progress through the application of reason. Inspired by Nietzsche's "death of God movement" he proclaimed the death of history and progress as well. The consequence of this demise is that the ideological plans for a unified society must be rejected.

Thus, as Geisler succinctly put it, the summary of Lyotard's postmodern claim is that he "is making a call to reject science as the ultimate which allows making room for creativity, invention, tolerance for the unknown and cultural pluralism".[82] Again, in line with the new understanding of Charles Darwin's evolutionary claims, he further averred that on Lyotard's account, humans do not surrender to God instead;

> Humans are to live in a web of language games and network of expressions. The human being of coherent independence is out of fashion. Humans live in exchanges found in this modern "language game" surrounded by a web of unestablished rules. This 'new freedom' does not bind us to normative ethical or moral values for all people for all times but rather ties him to maximum freedom and creativity pointing away from previously established universality. [83]

### 2.4.2.  Paul-Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

The French Philosopher Paul-Michel Foucault is an influential postmodern thinker. As Franz Hugdahl noted Foucault's work "concerns the matrix of power in the social order and its role in

constructing and changing those concepts". [84] The outcome of his investigation gave him the impetus to demonstrate the inevitability of the ineluctable links between bodies of knowledge and systems of social control. Foucault was very critical of reason, the individual, and truth as important ideals of humanism and enlightenment and repudiated "the idea of portraying history as a grand scheme or master narrative without inconsistencies, ruptures, or fissures." [85]Contrary to the above, he viewed it as a highly differentiated product contingent on many small and apparently unrelated causes. Foucault undermines the stability and pretensions of enduring veracity accorded both to modern, positivist conceptions of madness as an empirical fact and to instrumental notions such as reason and rationality.

For his part, Paul Rainbow averred that Foucault "chose to compare, Aristotle and Nietzsche, and the manner in which he cast the comparison, as exemplars, extreme and opposed cases. Foucault interpreted Aristotle as representing the universal and naturalistic pole".[86] On Rainbow's account, Foucault interpreted Aristotle as arguing that;

> There is an essential pregiven harmony between sensation, pleasure, knowing, and truth. Our perceptual apparatus is constituted in such a way that it establishes a link of pleasure and of (above all visual) knowledge, even when such a link serves no direct utilitarian purpose. The same economy extends all the way up the hierarchy through to the highest form of knowing, contemplation. As posited in the famous opening lines of the *Metaphysics,* the desire to know is essential to who we are, and is ours "by nature." Our nature is to seek knowledge, and we take pleasure through doing so. [87]

On the contrary, Rainbow explains that Foucault saw Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* as a total contrast to Aristotle's naturalism. Accordingly, Foucault insisted that Nietzsche's knowledge *(connaissance)* is not an appropriation of universals but an invention that masks the basest instincts, interests, desires, and fears.

> There is no preestablished harmony of these drives and the world-just the contingent, temporary, and malicious products of deceitful wills, striving for advantage, fighting for survival and engaged in a ceaseless effort to forcefully impose their will on each other. Knowledge is not a natural faculty but a series of struggles, a weapon in the universal war of domination and submission. Knowledge is always secondary to those more primary struggles. It is linked not to pleasure in flourishing but harnessed to hatred and struggle. Truth is our longest lie, our most intimate ally and enemy.[88]

### 2.4.3. Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)

According to Geisler, "Derrida has been given the label Father of Deconstructionism (a.k.a Postmodernism) though he personally disavows the popular meaning. He is usually regarded as a contemporary French philosopher though some have reservations about this title".[89] Furthermore, he listed Derrida's central arguments on rhetoric as basis for language to include the following five points.

1. All Meaning is *Complex*. No pure and simple meanings stand behind the signs (words) of language. If all language is complex, then no essential meaning transcends time and place.

2. All Meaning is *Contingent*. Every object of language and meaning is contingent upon a changing life reality. There is no objective meaning.

3. All Meaning is m*ixed*. No pure experiences exist without reference to transient experience. There is no private mental life that does not presuppose an actual world. One cannot even think about a concept without contaminating it with some reference to our own past or future.

4. There is *no* such thing as a *perception*. Deconstructionists do not reject everyday experience. They reject idealized concepts disconnected from the everyday world. The nature of what is signified is not independent of the sign that signifies it.

5. Rhetoric is the basis of all meaning. All written language is dependent on spoken language. It is not dependent on the meaning of spoken signs but is instead dependent on the pattern of vocalization (phonemics). Phonemes are parts of sound that can be represented by a letter. Without this difference in phonemes, letters are impossible.[90]

Furthermore, he listed the following as characteristics associated with Derrida's deconstructionism;

i. It embraces *conventionalism*—meaning is relative (not absolute or complete) to a culture and situation. There is no meaning prior to language;

ii. It accepts *perspectivalism*—truth is conditioned by one's perspective;

iii. It holds to *referentialism*—no perfect reference or one-to-one correspondence between words and the meanings they confer. Therefore, meaning is ultimately *untransferable* between the writer and reader suggesting that the context is limited.

iv. It is *differentialism*—rational structures leave something out where the reader approaches the text with suspicion looking for some "differences" and in search for "something" that is "not there."

v. It embraces a form of *linguistic solipsism*—inability to escape the limits of language. Linguistic concepts can be broadened but limits of it keep the reader corralled.

vi. It holds to *semantic progressivism*—all possible meanings are never exhausted. A text can always be further deconstructed. [91]

For Charlesworth, "the French-Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida's key idea is the hermeneutical principle that there is nothing outside the text".[92] The development of this idea was influenced by many philosophers notably Immanuel Kant's metaphysics, Friedrich Nietzsche's atheism, Ludwig Wittgenstein's view of language, Friedrich Frege's conventionalism's, Edmund Husserl's phenomenological method's, Martin Heidegger's existentialism, and William James' pragmatism and the will to believe. In addition to the above, Charlesworth adds that,

> For Derrida, since there is no outside reference point by which the meaning of a text can be determined, there can be no 'correct' interpretation of a text since any text allows a multiplicity of interpretations and no one of these discloses a core, or central, or basic, or privileged meaning. In other words it is impossible to 'fix' or determine, once and for all, the meaning of a text. In fact, every text implicitly allows a (limited) multiplicity of meanings and there is always the possibility of 'free play' between the various meanings a text may have – a possibility exploited by poetry. [93]

### 2.4.4. Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007)

The French thinker Jean Baudrillard was another leading postmodern philosopher. He lost fate in the present postmodern circumstance and felt that the future was not looking bright. In his view, we are no longer in touch with the real in various ways that we have nothing left but a continuing fascination with its disappearance. For his part, Douglas Kellner writes that Baudrillard was;

> An extremely prolific author who has published over thirty books and commented on some of the most salient cultural and sociological phenomena of the contemporary era, including the erasure of the distinctions of gender, race, and class that structured modern societies in a new postmodern consumer, media, and high tech society; the mutating roles of art and aesthetics; fundamental changes in politics, culture, and human beings; and the impact of new media, information, and cybernetic technologies in the creation of a qualitatively different social order, providing fundamental mutations of human and social life. [94]

In the light of the above, Dino Felluga noted that Baudrillard pointed out the following factors as contributing to humanity's death knell with the postmodern present:

**i. The Loss of History**

For Baudrillard, "history is our lost referential, that is to say our myth. Accordingly, the great event of this period, the great trauma, is this decline of strong referentials, these death pangs of the real and of the rational that open onto an age of simulation".[95] Kellner also alluded to this point when he averred that for Baudrillard, "in this universe, subjectivities are fragmented and lost, and a new terrain of experience appears and renders previous social theories and politics obsolete and irrelevant". [96]

**ii. Mediatization**

Again, Kellner observed that Baudrillard's "postmodern universe is one of *hyperreality* in which entertainment, information, and communication technologies provide experiences more intense and involving than the scenes of banal everyday life, as well as the codes and models that structure everyday life".[97] Giving insight into this claim, he explains that the sphere of the hyperreal (e.g., media simulations of reality) is more real than real, whereby the models, images, and codes of the hyperreal come to control thought and behavior.

**iii. The Proliferation of Kitsch**

On Dino Felluga's account, Baudrillard is convinced that our culture "has been inundated by trashy, kitsch, mass-market products, which contribute to our society of simulation and consumerism".[98] Consequently, he argued that the explosion of outlandish behavior, which is produced by "industrial reproduction and the vulgarization at the level of objects of distinctive

signs taken from all registers … and from a disordered excess of 'ready-made' signs, has its basis, like 'mass culture', in the sociological reality of the consumer society". [99]

### iv. Consumer Society

For Baudrillard, our society thinks itself and speaks itself as a consumer society. As much as it consumes anything, it consumes itself as consumer society, as idea.

### v. The Cool Smile

Another factor discussed by Falluga is the cool smile. Another important point made by Baudrillard is that "the parodic, self-conscious, self-reflexive elements of pop-cultural forms only aid in their capitalist complicity". [100] He concluded by noting that it is not really clear in the end whether this 'cool' smile is the smile of humour or that of commercial complicity.

### vi. Simulacra and Simulation

In his view, the current postmodern culture has become so reliant on models and maps that we have lost contact with the real world that preceded the map. Reality has begun to merely imitate the model, which now precedes and determines the world. Finally, Baudrillard claim that the world is without meaning and that affirming meaninglessness is liberating and his suggestion that if we could accept this meaninglessness of the world, then we could play with forms, appearances and our impulses, without worrying about their ultimate destination provided the stimulation for Rorty's development of his truth as social practice thesis.

## 2.4.5. Richard Rorty (1931-2007)

In the light of the above positions taken by his peers that Richard Rorty averred that the naive assumption that representationalism gives us the right picture of our basic predicament is at the heart of the confusion in philosophy. As an escape route from this confusion, he suggested an abandonment of all foundationalist agenda. Accordingly, he recommended the necessity to

accept human consensus as authority in cognitive assessment and the need to replace the quest for objectivity with the quest for solidarity. This led him to argue that truth is as defined by social practices of a people.

## 2.5. Reactions to Rorty's Truth as Social Practice

Rorty's view that each society defines its own truth and that the rhetoric of pursuit of objective truth should be abandoned in pursuit of the rhetoric of  social solidarity or "unforced agreement among larger and larger group of interlocutors"[101] as he phrased it,  attracted wide spread outrage. Despite the outrage that greeted this view, it must be noted that some thinkers applauded it as a sound and enlightened view. We shall now briefly examine the two positions.

### 2.5.1.  Supporters of Rorty's Social Practice As True

Rorty's claim that each society produces its own truth seems to be founded on his conviction that "the question of whether there are any beliefs or desires common to all human beings is of little interest apart from the vision of a utopian, inclusivist human community…".[102] Following from the above, Richard Rorty was convinced that as long as we cannot have an inclusivist human community, it is not possible to have an objective truth that will be acceptable to the current and future generation. Rather there is inter-subjective agreement among members of a community on a number of issues. In another development, it is pertinent to note also that another foundation for Rorty's truth as social practice is Davidson's submission that "truth is not a value, so the "pursuit of truth" is an empty enterprise".[103]

Emrys Westacott traced the origin of idea that each society produces its own truth to the Ancient period. In her view, there are similarities between Rorty's social practice as truth and views expressed by the sophists in the Ancient Greece. According to this view, the sophists who were

skeptically inclined (traveling intellectuals) "were struck by the variations in law, mores, practices and beliefs found in different communities. Consequently, they drew the conclusion that much of what is commonly regarded as natural is in fact a matter of convention".[104] Again, she averred that the relativity of truth itself seems to be implicated in Protagoras' famous assertion that "man is the measure of all things of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not."[105] In addition, she added that although Kant is not generally considered a relativist,

> The door to modern relativism was unlocked by Kant's claim in the
> *Critique of Pure Reason* that the only world we can know or talk about
> meaningfully is one that has been shaped by the human mind…. This
> obviously has implications for the traditional notion of objective truth.
> The judgments we call true are true for us and of our world; but to claim
> they are true in the sense of describing an independently existing reality
> is to go beyond what we can meaningfully or justifiably assert.[106]

In agreeing with Rorty's position, Gerson noted that, "Rorty is correct in holding that truth is not 'out there' and also in holding that there are indeed many different but extensionally equivalent sentences representing the same proposition".[107] in his view, some of Rorty's conclusions are "a good deal more plausible than his reasons for thinking that he has reasons for them". [108] For his part, Scialabba argues that Rorty's view on truth has helped to liberate us from illusions about the old metaphors. According to him,

> Rorty's accomplishment has been to help liberate us from the illusion that
> things are otherwise, that we can turn away from terrestrial pain toward
> political truths inscribed in the heavens or in our inmost nature. The tradition
> of all the dead generations of philosophers weighs a little less on those who
> have read Rorty's books, which free us to become who we actually are and to
> turn toward those who need a more than philosophical liberation.[109]

While one is not in doubt about the fact that Rorty's view helped philosophy to re-examine itself, one wonders whether Rorty's inability to offer an alternative to the old metaphor he wanted to free us from will not throw us back from where he was librating us from?

In another development, Bagni identified another important contribution of Rorty's social practice as truth to knowledge. In his view, "the connection between knowledge and social practice is really a crucial issue from the educational point of view, and several issues ought to be considered".[110] In this regard, he wondered whether we can still consider "our pupils' mind as a 'mirror of nature', and make reference to their ' inner representations' uncritically"?[111]

In his view, another important contribution of Rorty's suggestion that we embrace rhetoric of social solidarity is that he "strongly underlined the crucial importance of the community as source of epistemic authority".[112] No doubt, Bagni was right in pointing out that Rorty made a positive contribution by stating the that the community is a source of epistemic authority and showing the link between knowledge and social practice in the process of education. However, the implication of this position to the concept of universal and morality remains unattended to.

In another development, Ghenea notes that in spite of some potential tensions, Rorty's pragmatism and ethnocentrism are coherent and complete themselves. In his opinion, Rorty's social solidarity Rorty is founded on the belief that "truth is related to justification, and that is a normative concept, related to the feeling of solidarity, to the moral need to justify our views and desires to ourselves and to the other members of the community and not to arrive at a single truth or at the thing in itself" [113] Thus, Ghenea points out that for Rorty;

> There are no universal or metaphysically derived standards or criteria to justify the superiority of one culture over another. Since we acquire moral identity, obligations and beliefs from the culture in which we are born,

rationality and morality should be thought of in terms of solidarity toward the community to which we belong, so from the perspective of ethnocentrism.[114]

In supporting Rorty's truth as social practice, Buscemi insists that Rorty's vision is coherent. In his view, "it is the lust for certainty which leads to the Procrustean imposition of uniform norms on all persons and situations, thus creating the chief obstacle to scientific development, personal freedom, social solidarity and political progress". [115] Concluding, Buscemi maintains that apparent contradictions in Rorty's strategies can be resolved. Again, Paul Carls identified Durkheim as one of thinkers that suggested ideas that seem to lend credence to Richard Rorty's view that each society produces its own truth. In his view,

> Durkheim reveals himself to be a cultural relativist, arguing that each culture has a network of self-referential logic and concepts that create truths that are legitimate and, while not necessarily grounded in the reality of the physical world, are grounded within the reality of their respective social framework. Truths of this nature Durkheim calls mythological truths.[116]

### 2.5.2. Critics of Rorty's Social Practice as True

Rorty's Social practice as truth will certainly not stand if weighed on Plato's standard. The Ancient Philosopher in reaction to similar view by Protagoras which we have mentioned before noted that moral relativism is logically unsound. For Plato, it has no ethical or logical ground to stand on, since it refutes itself. In his view, cultural moral relativism undercuts itself by allowing in its own logic the possibility that it is false. Emrys Westacott highlighted this view and submitted that according to Plato, "relativism collapses the distinction between truth and falsity; for if each individual is really the "measure" of what is, then everyone would be infallible, which is absurd". [117]

In order to demonstrate the problem with Rorty's truth as social practice, Westacott queries:

> If the rightness or wrongness of actions, practices, or institutions can only be judged by reference to the norms of the culture in which they are found, then how can members of that society criticize those norms on moral grounds? And how can they argue that the prevailing norms should be changed? [118]

Others who were critical of Richard Rorty's conclusions on truth include Misak who argued that "the theories of truth offered by James and his follower Richard Rorty are best described as theories not of truth but of something else".[119] In his view, often Rorty can be found arguing that truth is solidarity or what is agreed upon in the community, at other times, Rorty's view is that "that we need to abandon the idea of truth; …. Once we abandon this account of truth, we will want to focus on beliefs that serve us well. What we aim at is not truth, but solidarity or what our peers will let us get away with saying".[120] Despite agreeing with Misak's assessment of Rorty's social solidarity, it must be pointed out that Rorty sometimes agrees that what he suggested is not a theory of truth, hence his claim that truth is not a goal of inquiry.

In his own assessment of Rorty's Social practice as truth, Duncan apart from accusing Rorty of deception notes that given his "adamant separation between theory and practice, Rorty must rethink his philosophic commitments once he enters the public sphere".[121] Furthermore, he argues that Rorty must first allow himself to be persuaded by those he opposes before he can hope himself to be persuasive. In his view;

> Given the political culture that he is operating in, I would suggest that it is not in the best interests of his political agenda to remain an avowed antifoundationalist publically because he runs a great risk of not being taken seriously by the people he must ultimately convince to go along with him. In other words, if Rorty means everything he says, then he should stop saying everything he means; furthermore, he may indeed need to say some things he actually doesn't mean.[122]

Tambornino on his part accused Rorty of presenting a version of social solidarity that "seem to be the unbearable lightness of knowledge".[123] Furthermore, he maintains that Rorty "discouraged existential apathy or relativistic paralysis, instead encouraging optimistic pragmatism".[124] The implication of the above in Tambornino's view is that epistemologically, "we accept as truth whatever works best and serves our needs, and that we embrace a variety of forms of knowledge and genres of expression".[125]

In a related vain, Wolin while criticizing Rorty's social solidarity, maintains that his "ethical relativism manifested itself in his claim that values were devoid of transcendent validity".[126] Furthermore, he adds that "by ceding priority to specific contexts, and local practices, Rorty deprived himself of valuable that could help validate the liberal tolerance he held dear".[127] Rorty himself denies the charge of being a relativist. In another development, Boffetti was also critical of Rorty's view on truth. After a careful scrutiny of Rorty view that the "age old "search for truth" becomes a quest for a satisfactory set of beliefs that each individual or each community shapes to make their worldviews cohere for some need or purpose"[128] Boffetti summed up his impression thus; "If this is all Rorty means by his theory of truth that it establishes whose "truth" predominates in the public square and whose is relegated to the private then it leads politics in the direction of the same antisocial, antipolitical conclusions as Nietzsche's will-to-power".[129]

According to Mcdowell, Rorty wanted us to disburden ourselves of the very idea that "in everyday and scientific investigation we submit to standards constituted by the things themselves, the reality that is supposed to be the topic of the investigation".[130] This in his view is analogous to the sense of sin which Dewey freed himself from. Quoting Rorty, Mcdowell submitted that, "if human beings are to achieve maturity, they need to follow Dewey in liberating

themselves from this sort of religion, a religion of abasement before the divine other".[131] In addition, he outlined the basis for Rorty's social solidarity noting that Rorty saw it as humanity coming to maturity. According to him, Rorty saw full human maturity as requiring us to,

> Acknowledge authority only if the acknowledgement does not involve abasing ourselves before something non-human. The only authority that meets this requirement is that of human consensus. If we conceive inquiry and judgment in terms of making ourselves answerable to the world, as opposed to being answerable to our fellows, we are merely postponing the completion of the humanism whose achievement begins with discarding authoritarian religion.[132]

Mcdowell agrees with "Rorty's conviction that we ought to try to get out from under the seeming problems of epistemology in the Cartesian and British-empiricist vein, rather than taking them at face value and attempting to solve them".[133] However, he is quick to point that, "it is possible to go that far with Rorty and still dissent from his suggestion that, in order to avoid entanglement in that familiar unprofitable epistemological activity, we need to discard the very idea of being answerable to something other than ourselves".[134] This study shares Mcdowell's assertion that we can get out of some of the problems of the old metaphor without discarding the idea of being answerable to something outside ourselves.

For Wilkinson, Rorty's social practice as truth is "a case study in the use of false alternatives for rhetorical gain".[135] He accused Rorty of presenting us with an awfully weird and unappealing choice. "Either one can make up a story about oneself in which one's life figures in the life of a bigger community, or one can think about standing in a certain direct relationship to the mind-independent world. If you go in for the first, then you like solidarity. If you go in for the second, you like objectivity". [136]

Wilkinson traces the justification for Richard Rorty's presentation of his repudiation of objectivity in terms of what our contemporaries will allow us to get away with to Rorty's grounding in pragmatism. Summing up his rejection of Rorty's truth as social solidarity, Wilkinson avers that,

> Once one sees the additional alternatives, and unbundles Rorty's packages, the force of Rorty's argument evaporates. Even if Rorty is granted key points it turns out that his view is either unintelligible or internally self-defeating. Rorty, having given up on reason and rational persuasion, is left, like the sophists, with bald rhetoric and force. Despite employing the rhetoric of genuine philosophy, the essay is not a philosophical attempt to rationally persuade, but is a mere piece of rhetoric designed to move the reader to reject the grounds for rational persuasion and thus to feel liberated to accept Rorty's vision on other, a rational, grounds.[137]

Mendieta quotes Rorty as arguing that "truths, which are neither to be discovered nor found ought to be replaced by compelling, transformative, generative narratives, or stories, in other words that provide us with far more interesting ways of seeing ourselves, or reimaging ourselves in new personas, characters, goals, solidarities and more expansive loyalties".[138] Hence, he summed up his review of Rorty's solidarity as truth by referring to Rorty as "a uniquely American anomaly" [139]

For his part, Williams while disagreeing with Rorty's submission that each society defines it own truth, maintained that "if our beliefs do not answer to the world, truth is something we make: the idea of objective truth goes by the board".[140] He further accused Rorty of abandoning the possibility of continuing the pragmatic project by abandoning Piercean notion of truth which he earlier accepted. In responding to the charge of forfeiting the conception of progress, Rorty insists that "progress is measured from where we were, by reference to problems solved,

anomalies removed, lines of inquiry opened up and so on and not by checking the distance between our current opinions and the End of Inquiry". [141]

Other critics of truth as social practice include Hillary Putman and Jurgen Habermus. While Putman argued that discussing questions of truth, knowledge, and rationality in a thoroughly descriptive, non-normative way amounts to "mental suicide" and "intellectual passivity", [142] Habermas insisted that "a commitment to truth like commitment to sincerity is a necessary condition of successful communication". [143] No doubt, their reasons for disagreeing with Rorty is not far removed from why many others repudiated him, namely; that Rorty's conclusion is contrary to his view that there are no such things as human nature and objective truth.

In summary, this study agrees with Conant who noted that "all criticisms against Rorty's social solidarity and other issues he raised should aim at demonstrating to him that;

1. His way of leaving philosophy behind fails to accomplish its purpose, and

2. His way of rejecting philosophical problems does not enable us to care about the very sorts of goods that he thinks we should care about instead. [144]

In other words, Conant rightly showed that the most effective way of pointing out the issues raised above to Rorty would be to,

1. Show that his sincere belief to the contrary notwithstanding, his thought remains controlled by the philosophical controversies he wishes to put behind him; and

2. Show that the consequences of his views for the things he thinks we should care about are not only not what he believes and wants them to be, but are in fact roughly the opposite of what he believes and wants them to be. [145]

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that although much has already been written about the philosophy of Richard Rorty that one might wonder whether there will be much new left to say, it is also true that there are still aspects of Rorty's thought to explore. In this regard, much attention still needs to shift to establishing whether an abandonment of traditional epistemology as Rorty wanted is really possible. Also, the question of whether truth is a cultural product, and if it is, its implication for the concepts of universals and falsehood needs to be answered. Again, another important aspect of Richard Rorty's truth as social practice that requires further questioning is whether Rorty's position is factually and logically consistent. This study hopes to take up these identified lacunae and attempt at filling them.

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## CHAPTER THREE

## CONTEXTS AND THEORIES AS FRAMEWORKS FOR INTERPRETATION

Every philosophy develops within a context and is inspired by developments around the period of the emergence of the philosophy. Also, several prevailing theories equally inspire the emergence of ideologies either in support of existing theories or against them. Rorty's theory on truth is not an exception. This section will evaluate the contexts and theories that provided the structure upon which Rorty's views were developed.

### 3.1.    Contexts as Framework for Understanding

In order to appreciate the contexts within which Rorty came out with the idea of truth as social practice, it has become imperative that we look into his background to understand the influences that inspired him. These influences will include issues surrounding his birth, upbringing, educational institutions attended as well as the books and philosophies that he was acquainted with.

### 3.1.1. Biography of Richard Rorty

Richard Rorty was an important American philosopher of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century who blended expertise in philosophy and comparative literature into a perspective called "The New Pragmatism" or "neopragmatism."[1] He was born on October 4, 1931 and he had a long and diverse academic career. Brian Duignan notes that Richard Rorty attended the University of Chicago and Yale University, where he obtained a Ph.D. in 1956. Following two years in the army, he taught philosophy at Wellesley College (1958–61) and Princeton University (1961–82) before accepting a position in the department of humanities at the

University of Virginia. From 1998 until his retirement in 2005, Rorty taught comparative literature at Stanford University.[2]

Rorty was also educated at the University of Chicago and Yale University. He had strong interests and training in both the history of philosophy, as well as contemporary analytic philosophy, the later comprising the main focus of his work at Princeton in the 1960s. While at the University of Chicago Richard Rorty set out for himself the task of finding intellectual framework to hold reality and justice in one single vision. He also sought to how to better express the fundamental goal of Philosophy as initiated by Plato. American intellectuals and academics were rapidly assimilating and confronting new waves of European thought; these developments led him to review many books which later shaped his philosophy. Among the books he reviewed include;

a. John Blewett's *John Dewey: His Thought and Influence*;

b. Raymond Aron's *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*;

c. Edward Moore's *American Pragmatism: Peirce, James, and Dewey*;

d. Paul Goodman's *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals*;

e. Edward Madden's *ChauancyWright and the Foundations of Pragmatism*;

f. H. D. Lewis's *Clarity Is Not Enough: Essays in Criticism of Linguistic Philosophy*.

Rorty borrowed from his interpretation of most of the texts he read and was thus influenced to promote philosophy as the art of the politically useful leading to policies that are best. He tied theoretical creativity to pragmatic hope. Rorty was pragmatic and his motivation was politically on the liberal side. This led him to propose three characteristics associated with pragmatism.

i. When applied to truth and knowledge, it needs to be based on non-essentialism, thus denying an intrinsic property tied to the object;

ii. He denies any difference between facts (what *is*) and values (what *ought* to be).

iii. He recommends that there be an unlimited inquiry not held to constraints. It is here that it can be observed that he is Postmodern; he rejects the notion of man as an independent thinking being (as promoted by Kant).

Confirming this point, Edward Grippe, writes that "Rorty was initially attracted to analytic philosophy. As his views matured he came to believe that this tradition suffered in its own way from representationalism, the fatal flaw he associated with Platonism. Influenced by the writings of Darwin, Gadamer, Hegel and Heidegger, he turned towards Pragmatism".[3] The American Philosopher died on June 8, 2007.[4]

### 3.1.2. Background Influence on Richard Rorty

As Grippe rightly noted, although the writing of any philosopher will have countless influences, there are generally only a handful which stand out as major inspirations. Rorty is no exception".[5] From the biography of Richard Rorty, it was obvious he came under contacts with different schools of thought and equally was attracted to earlier philosophers like Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Derrida, James, Quine, and Kuhn.

However, Rorty's study of G. W. F. Hegel, Charles Darwin, Martin Heidegger, John Dewey, and Donald Davidson contributed significantly in shaping his response to issues of concern to contemporary philosophy. We shall now briefly examine how some of these thinkers shaped his philosophy.

### i.  Influence of Hegel

Among many thinkers that shaped Richard Rorty's thought, Hegel stands out as the most significant. Richard Rorty confirmed this fact himself when he acknowledged in *Trotsky and the Wild Orchids* (1992) that **"**for quite a while after I read Hegel, I thought that the two greatest achievements of the species to which I belonged were *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Remembrance of Things Past* (the book which took the place of the wild orchids once I left Flatbrookville for Chicago)".[6]  Grippe also alluded to this fact and pointed out the specific contributions of Hegel to the development of Rorty's version of pragmatism this way;

> It was G. W. F. Hegel's willingness in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*
> (1977) to abandon certainty and eternity as philosophical and moral
> goals/ideals that inspired Rorty to appreciate the irreducible temporality
> of everything as well as to understand philosophy as a contingent
> narrative readable without a moral precept existing behind the storyline.[7]

Hence, the dramatic turn that Rorty envisioned for philosophy i.e. "the change of focus from epistemological stasis,…. to interpretive processes opened the way for subsequent intellectuals to envision their task as that of constructing a better future rather than the discovery and conforming to a static idea of the Good Life."[8] This implies that from Rorty's standpoint, "Hegel helped us to begin to substitute pragmatic hope for apodictic knowledge"[9].   Despite Hegel's influence, it must be noted that Rorty did not entirely accept his "pantheistic fantasy that attempts to maintain a "closeness of fit" between word and world by rendering humanity as the mere manifestation of the Divine Mind",[10] in order to remedy this contradiction, he turned his attention to Charles Darwin.

### ii. Influence of Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory is significant in Rorty's development of his anti-representationalism. In *Truth and Progress*, Rorty notes that since "the pragmatists, unlike the idealists, took Darwin and biology seriously; they had an additional reason for distrusting the idea that true beliefs are accurate representations. For representation, as opposed to increasingly complex adaptive behaviour, is hard to integrate into an evolutionary story."[11] Acknowledging the Darwinian influence on Rorty, C. Guignon and D. Hiley pointed out that "drawing on a wide range of thinkers from Darwin and James to Quine, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Derrida, Rorty has injected a bold anti-Foundationalists' vision into philosophical debate". [12]

For his part, Grippe noted that Rorty credited Darwin as having naturalized Hegel by "dispensing with claims that the real is rational while allowing for a narrative of change understood as an endless series of progressive unfolding".[13] Following from the above, Rorty argued that language should be understood as the use of sentences to achieve a practical goal through a cooperative effort. By so doing, Grippe concludes that "borrowing from Darwin, Rorty naturalizes language". [14]

### iii. Influence of Martin Heidegger

According to Kremer, Heidegger had great influence in the development of the views of early and later Rorty. Buttressing this, he claims that Rorty "wanted to write a book on Heidegger, but he never completed this Heidegger monograph".[15] Also, he claims that this influence could be seen from the many times Rorty wrote on Heidegger independently. From his record, Heidegger;

> Occurred in his writings from the 1970s in Consequences of Pragmatism (CP), through the pages of Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (PMN), Essays on Heidegger and Others (EHO), Contingency, Irony and Solidarity (CIS) and Philosophy and Social Hope PSH) to his posthumous work, Philosophy as Cultural Politics (PCP). We can also mention his interviews and lectures, in which Rorty evaluated and criticized Heidegger several times.[16]

Following from the above, Kremer concludes that "Heidegger is one of the thinkers who influenced Rorty's philosophical development very strongly: both his confrontation with analytic philosophers and his neo-pragmatic renaissance".[17] Similarly, Smith also acknowledged the influence of Heidegger on the development of Rorty's idea about hermeneutics. Hence, he writes that "as we all know, hermeneutics begins with Heidegger and continues with his student Gadamer and others". [18] Thus, Rorty's treatment of hermeneutics is seen from Smith's point of view as resulting from his reading of Heidegger.

### iv. Influence of John Dewey

Brandom traced Rorty's development of his campaign against epistemology from John Dewey. Hence he insisted that "an illuminating context for Rorty's campaign against epistemology is a Deweyan narrative of Western culture's coming to maturity".[19] Going further, he explains that Dewey sought to free himself from a reflection of a religious stance according to which human beings were called on to humble themselves before a non-human authority, a posture Dewey described as immature. Thus, Brandom interprets this to imply that "if human beings are to achieve maturity, they need to follow Dewey in liberating themselves from this sort of religion, a religion of abasement before the divine other". [20]

Following from the above, Rorty's rejection of epistemology centered philosophy from Brandom's perspective is a response to Dewey's wake up call. This narrative by Brandom further reveals that what Rorty takes to identical authoritarian religion is;

> The very idea that in everyday and scientific investigation we submit to standards constituted by the things themselves, the reality that is supposed to be the topic of the investigation. Accepting that idea, Rorty suggests, is casting the world in the role of the non-human other before which we are to humble ourselves. Full human maturity would require us to acknowledge authority only if, the acknowledgement does not involve abasing ourselves before something non-human. The only authority that meets this requirement is that of human consensus.[21]

Perhaps, this idea that human consensus is the only authority that frees us from immaturity of abasing ourselves before something non human may have inspired Rorty to conclude that each society defines its own truth. To do any other thing to the contrary will in Rorty's view amount to "merely postponing the completion of the humanism whose achievement begins with discarding authoritarian religion". [22]

### v. Influence of James, Wittgenstein, Donald Davidson, Sellars, Quine

It must be noted also that another thinker who influenced Rorty's views is William James. Commenting on this, Brandom noted that "Rorty's intellectual vision and sensibility, no less than his prose, are thoroughly Jamesean". [23] Commenting on the influence of Dewey and Wittgenstein, Guignon and Hiley observed that "throughout the 1970s, Rorty published papers that blended the ideas of Dewey, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein in a crusade against any concept of philosophy that gives legitimacy to mainstream philosophical debates about truth, knowledge, and realism".[24]

Also, they added that "from Quine, Rorty takes the critique of the analytic synthetic distinction, the distinction between sentences that are true solely by virtue of the meanings of the words they contain and others that are known through experience".[25] Giving insight into how Sellars writings influenced Rorty, Guignon and Hiley argued that "the second building block of Rorty's epistemological behaviorism is Wilfrid Sellars's attack on "the Myth of the Given" in his essay *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind"*.[26] On how Davidson influenced Rorty, Grippe explains that "it is through a Davidsonian holistic view of language that Rorty, *contra* Davidson, takes "truth" as a misguided slide back into representationalism".[27] Ramberg also, noted the importance of Davidson in the development of Rorty's view on truth. In his view, Rorty rejected William James's famous definition of truth in terms of what is good in the way of belief. He followed Davidson's lead to "explicitly rejects all attempts to explicate the notion of truth in terms of other concepts".[28] Apart from the specific philosophers mentioned above, Rorty's association with American Pragmatism and Analytic philosophers shaped his views too.

### 3.1.3 Richard Rorty's contribution to the intellectual World

Richard Rorty is one philosopher who influenced the intellectual world greatly. His controversial publications especially *Philosophy and Mirror of Nature* sparked off outrage resulting in series of publications for and against his position. Rorty's influence could be deduced from the following works by Rorty and works about Rorty.

    a. **Some of the major works by Richard Rorty are:**

1. Rorty, Richard, Ed., *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

2. Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

3. Rorty, Richard. *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

4. Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

5. Rorty, Richard. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers, Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

6. Rorty, Richard. *On Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers, Volume 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

7. Rorty, Richard. *Truth and Progress*: *Philosophical Papers, Volume 3*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

8. Rorty, Richard. A*chieving our Country*: *Leftists Thoughts in Twentieth-Century America.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998.

9. Rorty, Richard. "McDowell, Davidson, and Spontaneity." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58: 2, (June, 1998): 389-394.

10. Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and Social Hope.* London: Penguin Books, 1999.

11. Rorty, Richard. *Take Care of Freedom and Truth Will Take Care of Itself: Interviews with Richard Rorty*. Ed., Edwuardo Mendieta. Stanford: Sanford University Press, 2006.

### b. Works about Rorty

1. Brandom, Robert B., ed. *Rorty and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

2. Calder, Gideon. *Rorty and Redescription*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003.

3. Geras, Norman. *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humanity.* London: Verso, 1995.

4. Goodman, Russell B., ed. *Pragmatism*: *A Contemporary Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

5. Hall, David L. *Richard Rorty*: *Prophet and Poet of the New Pragmatism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

6. Malachowski, Alen, ed. *Reading Rorty*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

7. Murphy, John P. *Pragmatism: From Peirce to Davidson*. Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1990.

8. Saatkamp, Herman J., ed. *Rorty & Pragmatism: The Philosopher Responds to His Critics*. Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995.

**3.2**. **Theories as Frameworks for Interpretation**

Several prevailing theories about truth inspired Rorty's project of truth as social practice. Indeed, the study of truth is surely among the crucial issues in both the philosophical tradition inherited from the Classics and modern philosophical debates. Philosophers are interested in an array of questions concerning the concept of truth. Attempts to provide satisfactory answers to the questions about what constitute truth resulted in the emergence of many theories on truth. According to M. Glanzberg, "it will be impossible to survey all there is to say about truth in a coherent way".[29] Thus, given the impossibility of surveying all there is to say about truth, the theories and positions taken by different schools of thought on truth will be discussed under these headings;

   a.  Inflationary Theories

   b.  Deflationary Theories

c. Tarski's theory of Truth

## 3.2.1. **Inflationary Theories**

According to D. W. Agler, "a theory of truth is considered inflationary if it considers the notion of truth as referring to a property of propositions".[30] Going further, he adds that according to inflationary theorists, "truth like being black or being white is a property that refers to a relational property that belongs to propositions".[31] The theories that are classified here affirm the existence of truth but concern themselves mostly with defining the nature of truth. Some of the theories of truth classified as inflationary are;

a. Correspondence Theory

b. Coherence Theory

c. Pragmatism Theory

i. **Correspondence Theory of Truth**

The correspondence versions of truth according to J. Randall and J. Buchler hold "that truth consists in the agreement of our thought with reality".[32] Also, they noted that this view "seems to conform rather closely to our ordinary common sense usage when we speak of truth".[33] For M. David, "narrowly speaking, the correspondence theory of truth is the view that truth is correspondence to a fact—a view that was advocated by Russell and Moore early in the 20th century."[34] However, he further adds that "the label is usually applied much more broadly to any view explicitly embracing the idea that truth consists in a relation to reality, i.e., that truth is a relational property involving a characteristic relation (to be specified) to some portion of reality (to be specified)".[35]

Giving insight into the multiplicity of versions and reformulations of the theory, David submitted

that those who support correspondence theories of truth;

> Employ various concepts for the relevant relation (correspondence, conformity, congruence, agreement, accordance, copying, picturing, signification, representation, reference, satisfaction) and/or various concepts for the relevant portion of reality (facts, states of affairs, conditions, situations, events, objects, sequences of objects, sets, properties, tropes).[36]

Some schools of thought trace the history of correspondence theory of truth to the ancient period

in the history of Western philosophy. In this regard, Crivelli argues that;

> Aristotle sounds much more like a genuine correspondence theorist in the *Categories* (12b11, 14b14), where he talks of "underlying things" that make statements true and implies that these "things" (*pragmata*) are logically structured situations or facts (viz., his sitting, his not sitting). Most influential is his claim in *De Interpretatione* (16a3) that thoughts are "likenessess" (*homoiosis*) of things. Although he nowhere defines truth in terms of a thought's likeness to a thing or fact, it is clear that such a definition would fit well into his overall philosophy of mind.[37]

On his part, A. Cline notes that "the Correspondence theory of truth is probably the most

common and widespread way of understanding the nature of truth and falsehood not simply

among philosophers, but even more importantly in the general population as well".[38] In his view,

"the Correspondence Theory argues that "truth" is whatever corresponds to reality. An idea

which corresponds with reality is true while an idea which does not correspond with reality is

false". [39] Apart from Aristotle and Plato, other philosophers associated with supporting the

correspondence theory of truth include; Russell, early Wittgenstein and Alston.

**Criticism of Correspondence Theory**

Despite the apparent popularity of the   correspondence definition of truth, J. Randall and J.

Buchler opines that "the flaws in the definition arise when we ask what is meant by "agreement"

or "correspondence" of ideas and objects, beliefs and facts, thought and reality". [40] A. Cline quoting Eubulides submits that "the Correspondence Theory of Truth leaves us in the lurch when we are confronted with statements such as "I am lying" or "What I am saying here is false". [41]

In his view, "those are statements, and hence capable of being true or false. However, if they are true because they correspond with reality, then they are false — and if they are false because they fail to correspond with reality, then they must be true. Thus, no matter what we say about the truth or falsehood of these statements, we immediately contradict ourselves". [42] Other critics of Correspondence theories include L. W. Beck and R. L. Holmes who queried "how, on your principles, could you know you have a true proposition?" … or … "How can you use your definition of truth, it being the correspondence between a judgment and its object, as a criterion of truth? How can you know when such correspondence actually holds?" [43]

J. Hospers also wondered if "a true proposition corresponds to a fact in the way that the color sample on the color chart corresponds to the color of the paint on the wall? No, there is certainly no resemblance between a proposition and a state-of affair". [44]

**ii. Coherence Theory of Truth**

According to A. White,

> The coherence theory is characteristic of the great rationalist system-building metaphysicians Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, G. W. F. Hegel, and Francis Herbert Bradley; but it has also had a vogue with several members of the logical positivist school, notably Otto Neurath and Carl Gustav Hempel, who were much influenced by the systems of pure mathematics and theoretical physics. [45]

Furthermore, he argues that for the coherence theorists, "to say that a statement (usually called a judgment) is true or false is to say that it coheres or fails to cohere with a system of other

statements; that it is a member of a system whose elements are related to each other by ties of logical implication as the elements in a system of pure mathematics are related". [46] Cline agrees that the development of coherence theory of truth is traceable to Hegel and Spinoza and remarks that the theory "often seems to be an accurate description of how our conception of truth actually works. Put simply: a belief is true when we are able to incorporate it in an orderly and logical manner into a larger and complex system of beliefs". [47]

In a related development, Agler affirms the earlier position taken by White and Cline that truth for the coherence theorists is "a property that belongs to propositions and a proposition has the property of being true when it "coheres with" (is consistent with) a set of propositions. Coherence theories take the notion of truth to a relation between propositions and other propositions."[48]

**Criticism of Coherence Theory**

This second theory was also strongly criticized by many thinkers. For instance, C. Ewing notes that "advocates of the coherence theory are well aware that complete coherence must be regarded as an unattainable ideal …"[49]  For his part, H. H. Joachim submits that "the coherence notion of truth on its own admission can never rise above the level of knowledge which at the best attains to the 'truth' of correspondence"[50] On his part, Karl Popper avers that "… coherence cannot establish truth". [51]

**iii. Pragmatism Theory of Truth**

According to Bradley Dowden, "a Pragmatic Theory of Truth holds (roughly) that a proposition is true if it is useful to believe. Peirce and James were its principal advocates."[52] Also he adds

that "utility is the essential mark of truth. Beliefs that lead to the best 'payoff', those are the best justification of our actions that promote success, *are* truths, according to the pragmatists".[53] Thus, giving an insight into the pragmatic theory of truth, Pierce insists that, "the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality". [54]

Commenting on this point raised by Pierce, C. Hookway explains that "Peirce's pragmatist clarification of truth offers an alternative conceptualization of 'being constrained by reality'. It is explained in terms of this fated agreement of convergence through the process of inquiry rather than in terms of an independent cause of our sensations".[55] For William James, 'the true', to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving, expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole, of course". [56] James' elucidation of the pragmatic view on truth has been described as a more dynamic and practical interpretation of the concept of truth. Hence, A. Cline notes that "James, however, moved this process of belief-formation, application, experimentation, and observation to the very personal level of each individual. Thus, a belief became "truth" when it proved to have practical utility in the life of a single individual." [57]

Highlighting further on the "Jamesian" version of truth, W. P. Pomerleau writes that "for James, the "reality" with which truths must agree has three dimensions: (1) matters of fact, (2) relations of ideas (such as the eternal truths of mathematics), and (3) the entire set of other truths to which we are committed". Thus, he adds, "to say that our truths must 'agree' with such realities pragmatically means that they must lead us to useful consequences".[58]

**Criticism of the Pragmatic Theory of Truth**

Several criticisms have trailed the pragmatic theory of truth. Some thinkers consider the theory as an indicator or a sign of truth, not a theory of truth. Beck and Homes, on their part, maintain that the usefulness angle introduced by the pragmatists in explaining truth misses the point. In their view, "a lie is not true, however much it helps a man to get out of a scrape." [60] For M. Perkins the "criticisms of the pragmatic theory of truth (and, indeed, of their philosophy in general) have focused upon three assertions which have been credited to the pragmatists". [61] He listed the assertions as the following:

1) Truth is the same as verification.
2) The true is the useful or satisfactory or successful (in beliefs).
3) The truth or falsehood of a belief or statement is not fixed and eternal but is mutable.[62]

**3.2. 2. Deflationary Theory**

For Agler, a deflationary theory of truth holds that "truth is not a property that belongs to propositions; rather, to affirm that a sentence is true ("snow is white is true") is just to affirm the sentence ("snow is white")."[61] Again, he adds that "deflationary theories contend that when we affirm that a sentence is true, we are doing nothing more than affirming that sentence". [63] For D. Stoljar and N. Damnjanovic, according to the deflationary theories of truth, "to assert that a statement is true is just to assert the statement itself". [64] Hence they argued that "for example, to say that 'snow is white' is true, or that it is true that snow is white, is equivalent to saying simply that snow is white, and this, according to the deflationary theory, is all that can be said significantly about the truth of snow is white".[65]

Supporting the above views, P. Ramsey asserts that "*true* generally makes no substantive contribution to what is asserted in a statement".[66] Hence as he illustrated, "It is true that Caesar was murdered' means no more than that Caesar was murdered". [67] From the forgoing, it is obvious that the deflationary theories of truth treat the truth predicate as having only a logical or grammatical function, it does not really carry metaphysical significance on its own at all.

Varieties of theories that have been classified here include;

    a.  Redundancy theory of truth;

    b.  Prosentential Theory of Truth; and;

    c.  Disquotational Theory of truth;

**i. Redundancy Theory of Truth**

S. Blackburn notes that redundancy theory also known as minimalism was fathered by Frege and Ramsey. Furthermore, he maintains that "the essential claim is that the predicate '…is true' does not have a sense, i.e. expresses no substantive or profound or explanatory concept that ought to be the topic of philosophical enquiry". [68]

Also, he submits that;

> The approach admits of different versions, but centres on the points (i) that 'it is true that *p*' says no more nor less than '*p*' (hence, redundancy); (ii) that in less direct contexts, such as 'everything he said was true', or 'all logical consequences of true propositions are true', the predicate functions as a device enabling us to generalize rather than as an adjective or predicate describing the things he said, or the kinds of proposition that follow from true propositions. [69]

For Pierre Le Morvan quotes Ramsey as noting that;

> To say that a proposition is true means no more than to assert the proposition itself. 'It is true that Caesar was murdered' means no more than 'Caesar was murdered.' 'It is false that Caesar was murdered' means no more than 'Caesar was not murdered.' According to this view, 'true' has no independent assertive meaning and the traditional notion of truth as a property or relation is misguided.[70]

Thus, from the redundant theory point of view, the problem of truth is nothing but a linguistic mix-up. Other thinkers that promoted this view include Frege, Soames Ayer, Mackie, and Grover. Frege, for instance, argued that, "it is worthy of notice that the sentence 'I smell the scent of violets' has the same content as the sentence 'It is true that I smell the scent of violets.' So it seems, then, that nothing is added to the thought by my ascribing to it the property of truth".[71]

**Criticism of Redundancy Theory**

Critics often confront redundancy theorists   with the charge that redundancy may not work for all cases. However, supporters of redundancy retort to this charge by stating that their theory recognizes the essential point about needing the concept of truth for indirect reference. The theory says that this is all that the concept of truth is needed for, and that otherwise its use is redundant.

**ii. Prosentential Theory of Truth**

Throwing light into the assumptions of supporters of Prosentential theory of truth, J. R. Beebe argues that, for them, "whenever a referring expression (for example, a definite description or a quote-name) is joined to the truth predicate, the resulting statement contains no more content than the sentence(s) picked out by the referring expression".[72] Clarifying further, he explains

that for the prosententialist theorists, "to assert that a sentence is true is simply to assert or reassert that sentence; it is not to ascribe the property of truth to that sentence". [73]

B. Dowden seems to agree with Beebe's submission on Prosentential theory of truth. In his view, "the Prosentential Theory of Truth suggests that the grammatical predicate "is true" does not function semantically or logically as a predicate. All uses of "is true" are prosentential uses".[74] The implication of the above according to him, is that "when someone asserts "It's true that it is snowing", the person is asking the hearer to consider the sentence "It is snowing" and is saying "That is true" where the remark "That is true" is taken holistically as a prosentence, in analogy to a pronoun". [75]

The origin of Prosentential theory of truth is traced to a publication by Grover, Camp and Belnap which was a reaction to Ramsey's redundancy theory. In agreeing with the above, W.K. Wilson notes that "the Prosentential theory of truth was first put forward in Grover, Camp and Belnap 1975"[76] also, he adds that the inspiring idea behind the theory is that "it is true" and "that is true" function as (molecular) presentences in ordinary English-a form of words that stand to sentences as pronouns stand to nouns- and that our ordinary (non philosophical conception of truth is to be understood in terms of these expressions".[77]

In the 1975 publication, Grover et al had argued that "true can be thought of always as part of a prosentence".[78] Offering an explanation into what they mean by presentences and they work, they introduced the concept of '*anaphora"* which they failed to highlight its meaning also claiming rather that "it is clearly a job for linguists." [79] In the alternative they saw their job as just to "discuss a number of examples". We shall now turn our attention to their examples. Consider the following examples;

1. Mary wanted to buy a car, but *she* could only afford a motorbike.

2. If *she* can afford it, Jane will go.

3. John visited us. *It* was a surprise.

4. Mary said that the moon is made of green cheese, but I didn't believe *it*. [80]

In above example, 'she' simply stands in for 'Mary' in (1), and just as 'she' also stands in for 'Jane' in (2), even though 'she' appears before 'Jane.' In (3) 'it' refers to the event of John's having visited us, while in (4) 'it' refers to Mary's statement. They described the above usage of pronoun 'she' as lazy uses of pronoun. Apart from identifying the lazy uses of pronouns, they also pointed out what they called 'quantificational uses of pronoun'. Example:

5. If any car overheats, don't buy *it*.

6. Each positive integer is such that if *it* is even, adding 1 to *it* yields an odd number.[81]

In these cases, the pronouns do not pick up their referents from their antecedents in the same straightforward way as pronouns of laziness do. Replacing the 'it' in (5) by the apparent antecedent 'any car' or the 'it' in (6) by 'each positive integer' yields the following.

(5') If any car overheats, don't buy any car.

(6') each positive integer is such that if each positive integer is even, adding 1 to each positive integer yields an odd number. (5') and (6') obviously do not express the sense of the original sentences. 'Any car' and 'each positive integer' cannot be construed as referring expressions; rather, they pick out families of admissible expressions that can be substituted into the claims.

Most importantly, defenders of the Prosentential theory of truth claim that English also contains *prosentences*. For example,

(11) Bill: There are people on Mars. Mary: *That is true*.

(12) John: Bill claims that there are people on Mars but I don't believe that *it is true*.

In these examples, 'that is true' and 'it is true' serve as 'prosentences of laziness.' They inherit their content from antecedent statements, just as pronouns inherit their reference from antecedent singular terms. According to Grover et al, "the relation between a proform and its antecedent is called a relation of anaphora." [82]

In her *A Prosentential theory of Truth*, Grover's Prosentential opines that "many other truth theories assume that a sentence containing a truth predication, e.g., 'That is true,' is about its antecedent sentence ('Chicago is large') or an antecedent proposition. By contrast, the Prosentential account is that 'That is true' does not say anything about its antecedent sentence (e.g., 'Chicago is large') but says something about an extralinguistic subject (e.g., Chicago)". [83] Similarly, W. V. Quine despite his disquotationalism, agrees with the Prosententialists that "truth predicate serves to point through the sentence to reality; it serves as a reminder that though sentences are mentioned, reality is still the whole point." [84]

iv. **Disquotational Theory of Truth**

According to the disquotational theory of truth, a good account of the disquotational feature of the truth predicate exhausts what there is to say about truth. For W. V. Quine, "quotation marks make all the difference between talking about words and talking about snow. The quotation is a

name of a sentence that contains a name, namely 'snow', of snow. By calling the sentence true,

we call snow white. The truth predicate is a device for disquotation".[85]

W. V. Quine's (1970) disquotational theory of truth shows the truth predicate as a convenient

device of 'semantic ascent.'   Hence, as Quine noted, when, for example;

> we want to generalize on 'Tom is mortal or Tom is not mortal,' 'Snow is
> white or snow is not white,' and so on, we ascend to talk of truth and of
> sentences, saying 'Every sentence of the form 'p or not p' is true,' or 'Every
> alternation of a sentence with its negation is true.' What prompts this
> semantic ascent is not that 'Tom is mortal or Tom is not mortal' is
> somehow about sentences while 'Tom is mortal' and 'Tom is Tom' are
> about Tom. All three are about Tom. We ascend only because of the
> oblique way in which the instances over which we are generalizing are
> related to one another. [86]

On their part, P. Hugly and C. Sayward noted that according to the disquotational conception of

truth, "the truth predicate is entirely dispensable when applied to sentences via their quotation.

What you say with the sentence itself is exactly what with the sentence which results from

affixing "is true" to its quotation. Attaching 'true' to the quotation of a sentence has the same

effect as would be obtained by simply erasing the quotation marks" [87]

Quine's submission also inspired another thinker to accept his brand of deflationalism. Field's

brand of deflational theory had many distinctive features.  First, it has a strong first person

orientation. In his view, the fundamental truth predicate for a person 'S' is what he calls

'disquotational truth' explaining further, he argues that;

> A person can meaningfully apply 'true' in the pure disquotational sense
> only to utterances that he has some understanding of; for such an utterance
> U, the claim that U is in true (true-as-he-understands-it) is cognitively
> equivalent (for the person) to U itself (as he understands it). [88]

Secondly, it places severe check on the resources available to the deflationist. For instance, he rejects the use of "synonymy" a position he triggered off by his association with Quine's deflationist concern about translation. Thirdly, it links his deflationism about truth to a deflationism about content, insisting that "content can be explained in terms of such things as computational role and indication relations".[89]

**Criticism of Disquotational Theory of Truth**

Many critics have pointed out the limitations of the disquotational theory of truth. Among them include V. Halbach who observed that, "disquotational theories of truth, that is, theories of truth based on the T-sentences or similar equivalences as axioms are often thought to be deductively weak". [90] Gupta shares Halbach's view and notes that the main problem with theory, "lies in the descriptive account it gives of 'true.' The deflationary description of 'true,' when it is taken in the strong and intended way, motivates the deflationary conclusions, but is highly problematic. On the other hand, when it is taken in the weaker way, the description is correct enough, but does not yield the deflationary conclusions". [91]

**3.2.3. Semantic Theories of Truth**

**a. Tarski's Theory of Truth**

The Polish logician and mathematician, Alfred Tarski, also devoted substantial energy to dealing with the problem of truth. Tarski himself acknowledged the difficulty in solving the problem of the definition of truth which he affirmed as an age long problem dating back to the classical problems of philosophy. Thus, in *On the Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages*, Tarski

(1933) explains that his task of constructing an adequate theory of the classical notion of truth is, however, fraught with difficulties. In his view,

> Although the meaning of the term 'true sentence' in colloquial language seems to be quite clear and intelligible, all attempts to define this meaning more precisely have hitherto been fruitless, and many investigations in which this term has been used and which started with apparently evident premises have often led to paradoxes and antinomies . . . .[92]

According to G. Sher, Tarski divides the above philosophical task into two sub-tasks (i) the material task of capturing the exact content of the correspondence notion, and (ii) the formal task of complying with the most rigorous standards of logical consistency and correct definition.[93] Also, in consideration of this task, Tarski further notes that, "the same expression can, in one language be a true statement, in another, a false one or a meaningless expression". Thus, he clarifies that the extension of the concept to be defined depends in an essential way on the particular language under consideration. Towards finding solutions to the two tasks mentioned above, Tarski set out to consider the possibility of the definition of truth in different languages. We shall now consider his treatment of the meaning of true for different languages.

**i. Concept of Truths in Everyday Colloquial Language**

For Tarski, the definition of the concept truth in everyday colloquial language is not only an impossibility, so also is the consistent use of the concept in conformity with the laws of logic. Prominent among the reasons Tarski cited for the difficulty in defining truth in everyday colloquial language is the search for 'semantical definition'. [94] In his view, semantical definition is a definition which we can express in the following words; "a true sentence is one which says that the state of affairs is so and so, and the state of affairs is indeed so and so". [95]

Tarski notes      that "from the point of view of formal correctness, clarity and freedom from ambiguity of the expressions occurring in it, the above formulations obviously leaves much to be desired". [96] Among other reasons adduced by Tarski, the abandonment of the quest for the definition of the concept true in every day colloquial language has become inescapable because it exposes us to the danger of   the necessity of "admitting certain linguistic constructions whose agreement with fundamental laws of syntax is at least doubtful". [97] In the light of the above, Tarski adds that "the possibility of consistent use of the expression "true sentence" which is in harmony with the laws of logic and the spirit of everyday language seems very questionable because of the universality of colloquial language". [98]

## ii. Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages

While acknowledging that an exhaustive and precise description of formalized    languages especially language of calculus  is a matter of considerable difficulty, Tarski calls our attention to some essential assets which all formalized languages possesses, namely;

a. For each of these languages; a list or description is given of in structural terms of all the signs with which the expressions of language are formed;

b. Among all possible expressions which can be formed with these signs, those called sentences are distinguished by means of purely structural 'properties';

c. A list, or structural description, is given of the sentences called axioms or primitive statements and;

d. In special rules, called rules of inference, certain operations of a structural kind are embodied which permit the transformation of sentences into other sentences; the

sentences which can be obtained from given sentences by one or more applications of these operations   are called consequences of the given sentences. [99]

After trying in vain to construct a correct and materially adequate semantical definition of true sentence for formalized languages, Tarski avers that the task failed because, "no definition of true sentences which is in agreement with the ordinary usage of language    should have consequence which contradict the principle of excluded middle". [100]

**iii.Concept of True Sentence in language of Finite Order**

According to Tarski, in order to successfully construct the definition of true sentences in language of finite order, "we must undertake, in every concrete case, the construction of a meta-language and the establishment of the meta-theory which forms the proper field of investigation".[101] For him, a meta-language that meets the above requirement must contain three groups of primitive expressions namely;

i.   Expressions of  a general logical kind (which are evidently indispensable);

ii.  Expressions having the  same meaning as all the constraints of the language to be discussed or which suffice for the definition of such expressions(which enable us translate every concrete sentence or meaningful expression of the language into meta-language); and

iii. Expressions of the structural –descriptive type which denote single signs and expressions of the language considered whole classes and sequences of such expressions or finally the relation existing between them).[102]

Summarizing the principal results of his reflections on definition of truth, Tarski submits that;

A. For every formalized language of finite order, a formally correct and materially adequate definition of true sentence can be constructed in the meta-language making use only of expressions of a general logical kind, expressions of language itself as well as terms belonging to the morphology of language, i.e. names of linguistic expressions and of structural relations existing between them.

B. For formalized languages of infinite order, the construction of such a definition is impossible.[103]

Tarski's definition of truth for a language as B. Armour-Garb succinctly put it, is "materially adequate if, and only if, the definition has, as consequences, all instances of the following schema, where S is replaced by structural-descriptive names of sentences of the language, L, and p is replaced by translations of the sentence named in a different language, ML: (T) S is true if and only if p". [104]

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# CHAPTER FOUR:

## RORTY'S DECONSTRUCTION OF TRUTH

### 4.1. Preamble

As noted in the introductory part of this work, Richard Rorty was convinced that the enlightenment programme was never complete. Following from the above, he initiated a project of deconstructing truth as a way of bringing the Enlightenment programme to its logical end and curing what he called "cognitive idolatry" (the attitude of looking for non-human authority to justify cognitive assessment). In order to enhance a better understanding of Rorty's deconstruction project, it has become necessary to examine the concept of deconstruction.

The concept on 'deconstruction' in philosophy is often traced to Martin Heidegger's idea of '*Destruktion'.* From this Heideggerian perspective*,* Holland opines that "to deconstruct is to take a/ text apart along the structural "fault lines" created by the ambiguities inherent in one or more of its key concepts or themes in order to reveal the equivocations or contradictions that make the text possible".[1] Hence as Holland remarked, "deconstruction is always an ongoing process because the constantly shifting nature of language means that no final meaning or interpretation of a text is possible".[2] Thus, Rorty's project of deconstructing truth should be seen not as destruction of truth but an attempt to dismantle the concept of truth in order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding.

Having gained insight into the idea of deconstruction as applied here, attention will now shift to Rorty's deconstruction of truth. Key steps in Rorty's deconstruction of truth are as follows;

- Richard Rorty's Critique of Epistemology Centered Philosophy;

- Rorty's Adaption of Darwinian Evolutionary Principles to Philosophy of language; and

- Rorty's Completion Phase of the Enlightenment Project.

## 4.2. Richard Rorty's Critique of Epistemology Centered Philosophy

The starting point of Rorty's deconstruction of truth is his critique of epistemologically centered philosophy from Descartes to Kant and its contemporary form, analytic philosophy. The major outlook of the tradition is its basic conception that philosophy, in the first place, is epistemology. Its metaphor, owing mainly to Descartes and Kant, is that of mind as the mirror of nature. The task of epistemology is then to mirror something outside the mind, and to examine (mend or buff up) this mirror, for the purpose of gaining an accurate representation of the world and a valid foundation for knowledge.

From the forgoing, it could be argued that a summary of Rorty's critique of the epistemology centered philosophy from Descartes to Kant is a rejection of the following major characteristics of the tradition:

a. Representationalism

b. The Philosophy of the schools

c. Foundationalism:

We shall now examine Rorty's arguments against the above themes.

### 4.2.1. Anti-Representationalism

According to Weaver, "to understand Rorty, one must view his thought in the context of what it is against… the tradition of representationalism". [3] In this regard, Weaver identified the ancient philosopher Plato as "the first great representationalist who posited a perfect realm of ideals only

imperfectly visible to the untutored eye. To Plato, the project of philosophy, and of all natural science, was to enhance man's understanding of ideal reality." [4]

Accordingly, Weaver argues that since the time of Plato, representationalism has been exemplified by three beliefs namely;

1. **Objectivity-reality**, in principle, may be perceived objectively, without "distortion," through some neutral medium such as language, sensation, experience, etc.

2. **Convergence-** with each new advance, say, in science, the new, better group of beliefs (for example, those of Einstein over those of Newton) is seen as coming closer to reality than the old set of beliefs. This "convergence" of belief with reality is a way of assessing how far along we are toward achieving objectivity.

3. **Privileged discourse-**a special way of speaking is necessary to separate reality from appearance. Our normal way of speaking elides appearance and reality and is too blunt and imprecise to do the surgical trimming necessary to get at the truth of the world.[5]

For Rorty, representationalism is bad because it provides the ingredients necessary for global skepticism. In addition to his critique of Plato, Rorty also rejected the tradition received from Descartes to Kant which holds that Philosophy's first goal is to seek justified knowledge and accurate representation of reality; and to achieve this goal philosophy needs first to discover the foundation of knowledge. In rejecting the above view, Rorty denies that that "the essence of language is to represent or picture reality in such a way that bits of language match up with bits of reality".[6]

Liegland puts Rorty's anti-representational views within context by explaining that it is part of the views of the pragmatist school of thought to which he belonged. For him, "the most efficient way to characterize pragmatism according to Rorty is to state it as a view that questions the legitimacy of a particular set of traditional philosophical issues or problem".[7] He further added that the issues or problems in question were "representationalist in character".[8]

### 4.2.2. Against the Philosophy of the Schools

Following from the above, it becomes expedient that an examination of the framework within which Rorty's anti-representational positions were developed must be done in order to appreciate his views. Rorty's anti-representational meta-philosophy began with his campaign against the Philosophy of the schools. As Grippe noted, Rorty was convinced that the cognitive idolatry ravaging his time was "an outgrowth of the adoption of the correspondence theory of knowledge".[9] Tracing this attitude to Plato's use of perception to analogize the relation of his psyche to forms, Rorty argues that philosophers have fallen into the error of trying to make a word-world connection in order to ground reality in thought. In his view;

> Plato developed the idea of such an intellectual by means of distinctions between knowledge and opinion, and between appearance and reality. Such distinctions conspire to produce the idea that rational inquiry should make visible a realm to which non intellectuals have little access, and of whose very existence they may be doubtful. In the Enlightenment, this notion became concrete in the adoption of the Newtonian physical scientist as a model of the intellectual. Ever since, liberal social thought has centered around social reform as made possible by objective thought of what human beings are like – not knowledge of what Greeks or Frenchmen or Chinese are like, but of humanity as such.[10]

From the Ancient period, Gutting noted that Rorty saw the modern period as replacing the ancient sciences of which philosophy had been the culmination and queen, with the new modern sciences of Galileo, Newton, Dalton, and (eventually) Darwin. Summing up Rorty's conviction,

Gutting writes that "the triumph of these new sciences was quickly seen by many intellectuals – Hobbes and Descartes, for example – as the destruction of the ancient system of philosophy, which by their day had become the philosophy of the schools".[11] Williams agrees with Gutting and avers that Rorty, "Descartes' invention of the mind- his coalescence of beliefs and sensations into Lockean ideas - gave philosophy new ground to stand on".[12]  In his view, "it provided a field of inquiry which seemed 'prior' to the subjects on which the ancient philosophers had opinions. Further, it provided a field within which certainty, as opposed to mere opinion, was possible". [13]

Following from the above, Rorty opined that "Locke made Descartes' newly contrived 'mind' into the subject matter of a 'science of man' - moral philosophy as opposed to natural philosophy". [14] He noted that while later modern philosophers rejected Descartes' dualism of two substances, mind and body, they accepted his understanding of the division between the mental and the physical as between what was conscious and what was not. Kant's intervention attempted to resolve the problem of dualism created by the above position. Rorty thus credits Kant with resolving the problem of dualism by introducing the idea of certainty of *a priori* knowledge and thus placed "philosophy 'on the secure path of a science' by putting outer space inside inner space (the space of the constituting transcendental ego) and then claiming Cartesian certainty about the laws of the inner for what had previously been thought to be outer". [15]

Describing Kant's submission as his Copernican resolution, Rorty explains that revolution was based on the notion that we can only know objects *a priori* if we 'constitute' them". [16] Thus, epistemology as a discipline came of age when Kant replaced "the 'physiology of the human understanding of the celebrated Mr. Locke' with ... 'the mythical subject of transcendental psychology".[17]  Gutting inferred that in Rorty's estimation, it was from this point that,

"Philosophy is no longer, as in ancient times, the *culmination* of human knowing. Rather, it is the *foundation* of human knowing, providing the ultimate justification of all epistemic claims and adjudicating conflicts between rival bodies of alleged knowledge". [18]

From the above, it is clear that an important step in Rorty's rejection of epistemology centered philosophy is his dismissal of the philosophy of the schools. Also, related to the above are his criticism of the scheme-content distinction and the correspondence theory of truth. Rorty thus rejects any philosophical position or project which attempts to draw a general line between what is made and what is found, what is subjective and what is objective, what is mere appearance and what is real. Rorty regards Putman's insistence on using the term "representation" as a mistake. Following Davidson's argument, Richard Rorty thinks that "it is good to be rid of representations and with them the correspondence theory of truth, for it is thinking that there are representations which engenders thoughts of relativism". [19]

### 4.2.3. Anti-Foundationalism

The philosophical position which rejects foundationalism (i.e. the view that there are epistemically privileged basic propositions which are justified for a person) is generally described as anti-foundationalism. Richard Rorty had maintained that "the doctrines of Sellars and Quine properly interpreted and integrated have destroyed the pretensions of the traditional theory of knowledge by which he means in particular the supposition that knowledge needs foundation". [20]

Richard Rorty is not a lone traveler in the journey of rejecting foundationalism. Indeed, his anti-foundational attitude is a reflection of the postmodern outlook of his time. As mentioned in the

review of related literatures, criticism against foundationalism came from different sources. Nicholas Wolterstorff, Wentzel Van-Huyssteen, Adam Wosotowsky, Hans Albert quoted by B. H. Smith, the Coherentists, Nietzsche and C.S. Pierce in supporting Rorty's repudiation of foundationalism argued that;

- On all fronts foundationalism is in bad shape;

- A dream for the impossible, a contemporary version of the quest for the Holy Grail-;

- Sophism, Pragmatism and Skepticism make foundationalism irrelevant;

- The efforts to ground the validity of certain norms on a priori foundations is logically untenable, being caught in an infinite regress;

- There is no basic, privileged class of beliefs that serve as foundation for justifying other beliefs but which need no justification from other beliefs;

- There is no objective order or structure in the world except what we give it; and

- Philosophy must begin wherever it happens to be at the moment and not at some supposed ideal foundation, especially not in some world of "private references";

Borrowing from Quine's critique of the analytic/synthetic distinction and Wilfrid Sellars's attack on "*the Myth of the Given*", Richard Rorty avers that the naive assumption that representationalism gives us the right picture of our basic predicament is at the heart of the confusion in philosophy. As an escape route from this confusion, he suggested an abandonment of all foundationalist agenda. According to him, we must substitute "the notion of knowledge as the assemblage of representations"[21] with "a pragmatist conception of knowledge". He proffered what he called 'epistemological behaviourism' as his idea of a pragmatic conception of

knowledge. We shall examine Rorty's epistemological behaviourism extensively in the next chapter.

## 4.3. Rorty's Adaption of Darwinian Evolutionary Principles to Philosophy of Language

In adapting Darwinian evolutionary principles to Philosophy of Language, Rorty insists that Darwinian principles, when substituted with a cultural evolutionary story, far from describing reality,

> Does give us a useful gimmick to prevent people from overdramatizing dichotomies and thereby generating philosophical problems. By pressing an analogy between growing a new organ and developing a new vocabulary … we neo-Darwinians hope to fill out the self image sketched by the Romantic poets and partially filled in by Nietzsche and Dewey.[22]

Rorty identified three ways in which Darwinian evolutionary principles can be useful to philosophy. These are;

a. In demonstrating how to naturalize Hegel

b. In making materialism respectable to public by dismissing vitalism

c. In demythologizing of the human self.

### 4.2.1. Naturalization of Hegel

Richard Rorty traces the narrative of how to naturalize Hegel to Dewey. Dewey had argued that "Hegel's synthesis of subject and object, matter and spirit, the divine and human, was however, no mere intellectual formula; it operated as an immense release, a liberation".[23] Bernstein in showing how Dewey naturalized Hegel opined that, "Dewey's concept of experience as a transaction that spans space and time, involving both undergoing and activity, shows the

Hegelian influence. Subject and object are understood as functional distinctions within the dynamics of a unified developing experience". [24]

For their part, Haskin and Seiple note that Dewey's reading of Hegel and Darwin had the effect of;

> Projecting a view of romanticism as a dialectical phenomenon whose celebration of immediate experiences moves through a negative and "skeptical" phase in which the self is absorbed in the particularity of its own feeling to the point of being alienated from the world, into a positive phase in which the world begins to reveal itself through such particularity, thus reconnecting the self to a larger whole. This more dialectical image of romanticism amounts to a this-worldly, naturalized version of Hegel's story of the passage of Spirit through phases of rupture and reconciliation. [25]

In a similar vein, Hance also agrees that, "from inception, pragmatism has displayed an ambivalent relation to Hegelianism". [26] Accordingly, he argued that the areas of the ambivalent relationship with Hegel as shown from his reading of the works of Richard Rorty are;

I.   A deep suspicion of modern representationalist epistemology;

II.  A conception of intelligence as a form of practice;

III. A commitment to a non-reductionist holistic appreciation of our beliefs about the world and;

IV.  An appreciation of Hegel's conception of the philosophical enterprise as *Nachdenken,* as a kind of edifying recollective summary. [27]

From the foregoing, Rorty's claim is that "the naturalist strain in pragmatism, the attempt to come to terms with Darwin, is thus from a Deweyan point of view important mainly as a further strategy for shifting philosophers attention from the problems of metaphysics and epistemology to the needs of democratic politics".[28] Hence, he opined that all three of the founding pragmatists

combined a naturalistic, Darwinian view of human beings with a deep distrust of the problems which philosophy had inherited from Descartes, Hume and Kant. According to him, they hoped to save philosophy not only from metaphysical idealism, but also to save moral and religious ideals from empiricist or positivist skepticism.

Similarly, Guignon and Hiley offered a deeper insight into how to understand Rorty's appropriation of Darwinian evolutionary principles. For them, Rorty's point is that just as human ancestors learnt skills and developed tools which enabled them to enjoy more pleasure and less pain for survival within the environment, so also were beliefs, words, and languages among the tools these animals have developed. Thus, they averred that to "become fully Darwinian in our thinking as Rorty argued, "we need to stop thinking of words as representations and to start thinking of them as nodes in the causal network which binds the organism together with its environment". [29]

In a related development, Grippe's version of how Rorty viewed Darwinism as a naturalization of Hegelianism is very apt. In his view;

> Darwin has demonstrated how to naturalize Hegel by the former's dispensing with claims that the real is rational while allowing for a narrative of change understood as an endless series of progressive unfolding. Purpose that transcends a given organism is eliminated in favor of a particular organism's fitness for the local environment. It is an evolutionary process, one that fully involves human beings; we are no exception. What we, as creatures of the earth, do and are, Rorty maintains, "is continuous with what amoebas, spiders, and squirrels do and are." [30]

Hence, he also argued that Rorty "abandoned all claims to a privileged mental power that allows direct access to things-in-themselves, and offered an alternative narrative which adapts

Darwinian evolutionary principles to the philosophy of language". [31] The consequence of the adaption was an attempt to establish a thoroughly naturalistic approach to issues of science and objectivity, to the mind-body problem, and to concerns about the nature of truth and meaning. Thus, Grippe affirmed the claim made by Guignon and Hiley to the effect that in Rorty's view, language is to be employed as an adaptive tool used to cope with the natural and social environments to achieve a desired, pragmatic end.

Thus, Rorty is convinced that pragmatists were committed to taking Darwin seriously because they agree with him that human beings are unique in the animal kingdom in having language. Borrowing from his evolutionary principles, they urge that language be understood as a tool rather than as a picture. Hence, a species' gradual development of language is as readily understandable in Darwinian terms as its gradual development of spears or pots. In this regard, Rorty also contended that Donald Davidson was the philosopher of language "whose work is most reminiscent of the classical pragmatists' attempts to be faithful to Darwin". [32]

**4.2.2. Making Materialism Respectable by Dismissing Vitalism**

The second way in which Rorty's adoption of Darwinian evolutionary principles helps in the understanding of his project of deconstructing truth is in the interpretation of Rorty's claim that "Darwin also has made materialism respectable to an educated public once, according to Rorty (*Truth and Progress,* 1998), his "vitalism" is dismissed".[33] Materialism as a philosophical term is seen as the view held by those who argue that "existence is explainable solely in material terms, with no accounting of spirit or consciousness. Individuals who hold to this belief see the universe as a huge device held together by pieces of matter functioning in subjection to naturalistic laws".[34] This view rejects special creation account of the origin of species and in its

place, relies on the theory of evolution to explain itself, making beliefs in materialism and evolution interdependent.

Whereas *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* views vitalism as "the doctrine that there is some feature of living bodies that prevents their nature being entirely explained in physical or chemical terms".[35] In effect, it is the view that living organisms are fundamentally different from non living entities because they contain some non physical element or are governed by different principles than are inanimate things. In dismissing the doctrine of vitalism, Rorty avers that Darwin's detailed account of the way in which both life and consciousness might have evolved from non-living; non-conscious chemical soup gave plausibility to their emergence free from teleology.

Explaining Rorty's argument further, Grippe notes that "taking the new-found respectability of materialism along with the recognition of the human species' full-fledged animality, the search for a non-natural cause for the prolific display of life on earth can be dispensed with as misguided. So too can a hunt for a non-human purpose for human life".[36] It is from this view point that Rorty considered the attitude of looking for non-human authority to justify cognitive assessment as 'cognitive idolatry'.

Summing up Rorty's convictions, Grippe writes;

> Without transcendent standards or intrinsic ends to aspire to, we humans find ourselves radically free to invent the purpose of human life and the means to achieve it. Rorty, well aware of the need for a consistent anti-representationalist narrative, acknowledges that even Darwin's theory of evolutionary change is just one more image of the way things "are," one no more privileged than any other coherent narrative in *representing* reality in-itself—an impossible task.[37]

### 4.2.3. Demythologizing of the Human Self

According to Richard Rorty, another way that the Darwinian evolutionary theory can be useful to Philosophy of Language is in the demythologization of the human self. Indeed, as Grippe summed it up, "the main, albeit unintended, contribution of Darwin is the demythologizing of the human self (considered as part of an unnarrated, objective reality)". [38] In his view, Darwin has helped us to acquire a new conception of the human person and his destiny. In line with this new image, humans were at liberty to take their destiny into their hands. As he puts it, "without transcendent standards or intrinsic ends to aspire to, we humans find ourselves radically free to invent the purpose of human life and the means to achieve it.

Explaining this view further, Cunningham quoting Madigan writes that;

> Darwin… offered us a new account of ourselves. He has argued that human beings, along with the rest of nature, need to be understood as the product of completely natural forces. And his theory asserts not only the natural origin of our bodies, but also the natural origin and development of our mental powers and our moral sense. [39]

Rorty's affinity with Darwin as mentioned before was inspired by his reading of Dewey. Dewey had argued that ever since Plato, philosophers have been in search of some sort of fixed eternal reality beyond the world of appearance and the quest has led them to a search for certainty, immortal souls, unchanging knowledge, all-powerful Creators. The pursuit of wisdom was recognized with eternal life and fixed ends, resulting in dualism (the belief that the mind and body are distinct) coupled with a belief that humans differ from animals in kind, not just in degree.

Towards resolving the dualism, Dewey turns to Darwin for a solution and averred that the influence of Darwin upon philosophy resides in his having conquered the phenomena of life for the principle of transition, "thereby enabling us to renounce the sort of explanation that only abstracts some aspects of the existing course of events in order to reduplicate it as a petrified eternal principle by which to explain the very changes of which it is the formalization".[40] The above comments influenced Richard Rorty position to the effect that,

> The antinaturalistic self image suggested to us by, among others, Plato and Kant have served us well, but they are hard to reconcile with Darwin's account of our origins. I think Dewey was right to suggest that we should try to get along without the remnants of those earlier self-images. We can pursue this experiment by setting aside the subject-object, scheme-content, and appearance-reality distinctions and thinking of our relation to the rest of the universe in purely causal, as opposed to representationalist…[41]

It is pertinent to point out that Darwin followed in the footsteps of other scientific thinkers and empiricists like Francis Bacon and John Locke, who insisted that any theory must be supported by hard evidence and must have more than just explanatory power. The empirical school from which Darwin descended holds that the scientific method is our best road to knowledge, not speculation. Similarly, Dewey's identification with the practical spirit of American pragmatism led him to seek for a way that philosophy could assimilate the impact of science on human life. This made him to take Darwin's evolutionary principles serious.

Thus, while Dewey's reading of Darwin resulted in insistence on an empirical study of humanity's place in nature, Rorty's association with both Darwin and Dewey led him to conclude that Dewey wanted us to "secularize nature by seeing it as non-teleological, as having no evaluative hierarchies of its own".[42] According to this thinking, our intelligence has evolved

and adapted itself over time. It is not a god-like substance or supernatural gift: other animals have forms of consciousness too, and examining the similarities as well as the differences between us can have fruitful results.

## 4.4. Rorty's Completion Phase of the Enlightenment Project

The last part of our consideration of the steps in Rorty's deconstruction of truth is an understanding of his vision of the completion phase of the enlightenment project. For Rorty, the Enlightenment reformers did not completely free man from what Kant calls a "self-imposed nonage" (nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance).[43]

In Rorty's view,

> The Enlightenment program was never completed. It fell short of its goal by keeping one foot in the past. By substituting the notion of Truth as One in place of a monotheistic worldview, the Enlightenment reformers repeated the tradition's error by continuing to seek non-human authority, now in the guise of what Wilfrid Sellers called "the Myth of the Given." Holding that reality has an intrinsic nature, and by advancing the correspondence theory of truth, Enlightenment philosophers turned away from full-blown naturalism, ironically, in service to a scientific objectivity that required a radical separation of the observer from the observed.[44]

Expanding the debate further, Davidson averred that Rorty was influenced by Dewey's agreement with Nietzsche that, "the traditional notion of truth as correspondence to intrinsic nature of reality was a remnant of the idea of the submission to the Will of God".[45] Hence, in supporting the jettisoning of the idea, Rorty's aim as Brandom captured it was to do for epistemology what the first phase of the Enlightenment did for religion. Enlightenment thinkers placed a great premium on the discovery of truth through the observation of nature, rather than through the study of authoritative sources, such as Aristotle and the Bible. Rorty therefore

wanted humanity brought to maturity through extending the enlightenment attitude of understanding moral assessment in terms of relations among humans without needing to appeal to any sort of authority apart from that manifested in social practices to understanding cognitive assessments in terms of relations among humans, without needing to appeal to any sort of authority apart from that manifested in social practices.

In his *Without God or His Doubles: Realism, Relativism and Rorty,* Vaden House also laid credence to the claim that Rorty was convinced that the Enlightenment project was far from being completed. In his view, "Rorty sees the vision of humans living without ontological underpinnings or metaphysical comfort as a completion phase of the project of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment saw itself as the movement of human emancipation".[46] But what does human emancipation entail for Rorty? Richard Rorty turns to his mentor, Dewey for insight into the entailments of total human emancipation.

According to Dewey, total human emancipation requires that humans should free themselves from a religion of abasement before the divine other demanding a posture infantile in its submissiveness before a non human authority. Dewey was convinced that a humanism that will usher in the coming to maturity (emancipation) would be incomplete if it does not include a counterpart secular emancipation as well. Dewey's obsession with coming to maturity or emancipation has been traced to his upbringing by some schools of thought.

In this regard, Posnock notes that "John Dewey's narrative of Western Culture coming to maturity is rooted in his personal struggles to shake off the sense of sin inculcated in him by his God-fearing mother".[47] McDowell also made similar allusion when he noted that "for Dewey's

own growing up, it was important to disburden himself of the oppressive sense of sin inculcated into him by his mother and this feature of his own life shaped his picture of what it would be for humanity at large to come to age". [48]

For his part, Brandom notes that what Rorty takes to parallel the religion of abasement before the "divine other" demanding a posture infantile is "the very idea that in everyday and scientific investigation we submit to standards constituted by the things themselves, the reality that is supposed to be the topic of the investigation". Going further, he maintained that Rorty considered accepting that idea as casting the world in the role of the non-human other before which we are to humble ourselves. Full human maturity would require us to acknowledge authority only if, the acknowledgement does not involve abasing ourselves before something non-human. The only authority that meets this requirement is that of human consensus.

Following from the above, Rorty maintains that the logical conclusion of the task begun by the Enlightenment thinkers lie in ending cognitive idolatry i.e. the attitude of looking for non-human authority to justify cognitive assessment. It is from this background that Rorty argued that if we conceive inquiry and judgment in terms of making ourselves answerable to the world, as opposed to being answerable to our fellows, we are merely postponing the completion of the humanism whose achievement begins with discarding authoritarian religion. Ending this cycle for him, leads to accepting the necessity of human consensus and of replacing the quest for objectivity with the quest for solidarity. This is the basis for his claim that truth is inter-subjective agreement between members of a society which is the focus of our next chapter.

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# CHAPTER FIVE

# RICHARD RORTY'S REFORMULATION TRUTH AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

## 5.1.    Preamble

In the preceding chapter, the background to Rorty's deconstruction of truth was examined. The evaluation showed that Richard Rorty began his deconstruction with critique of epistemology centered philosophy and later adapted Darwinian evolutionary principles to Philosophy of language to show that there are no transcendent standards or intrinsic ends that humans should aspire to. This led him to conclude that humans were radically free to invent the purpose of human life and the means to achieve it. Again, as part of his unbundling of previous notions about truth, Rorty maintains that the logical conclusion of the task begun by the Enlightenment thinkers lie in ending cognitive idolatry i.e. the attitude of looking for non-human authority to justify cognitive assessment. Ending the cognitive idolatry for him leads to accepting the necessity of human consensus and of replacing the quest for objectivity with the quest for solidarity.

In this chapter, we shall now examine what is left of the old notion of truth after Rorty's deconstruction. Following from the points raised in his deconstruction of truth, Rorty concluded that no matter what else we say about truth; there is no way for us to know the truth other than the social practice of giving reasons. In his view, "truth is, to be sure, an absolute notion".[1] Its absoluteness makes it an unserviceable goal of inquiry. In the light of the forgoing, one is quick to ask, if the very absoluteness of truth is a good reason for thinking "true indefinable and for thinking that no theory of the nature of truth is possible,"[2] what then is Rorty's view about truth?

Following the Postmodern attitude of his time, Rorty argues principally that truth is not a Goal of Inquiry because we cannot even recognize it when we find it and that truth is ideal justification. Thus, we should see the quest for truth as the quest for widest possible intersubjective agreement among members of a society. Our discussion of Rorty's new attitude towards truth will be discussed under the following headings;

- Truth not a Goal of Inquiry

- Truth as Ideal Justification

- Truth as Social Practice

**5.2. Truth is Not a Goal of Inquiry**

Following from the above background, Richard Rorty submits that one point that pragmatists must pursue is to argue that "truth is not a goal of inquiry".[3] Rorty owes the development of this thesis to two principal sources. The first source is Davidson who had earlier noted that;

> What is clearly right a point made long ago by Plato in the Theaetetus: truths do not come with a "mark", like a date in the corner of photographs, which distinguishes them from falsehoods.… what we will never know for certain is which of the things we believe are true. Since it neither visible as a target, nor recognizable when achieved, there is no point in calling truth a goal. Truth is not a value… [4]

Borrowing from the above view, Rorty argues that "truth cannot be out there, cannot exist independently of the human mind-because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world are true or false".[5] He compared the desire for objective truth as desire for "what Lacanians call impossible, indefinable, sublime objects of desire", [6] and concluded that "truth is just such an object. It is too sublime, so to speak, to be either recognized or aimed at".[7]  According to Davidson, many factors accounted for the diminishing of the idea of truth in many minds.

First, truth was represented as something grander than it is and endowed with powers it does not have. Accordingly, Davidson claimed that when there was no clear line between philosophy and science, philosophers naturally saw their discipline as being called upon to provide ultimate grounds of justification for knowledge. In addition to the above, another factor that led to the tarnishing of the idea of truth was Plato's obsession with *noumenon*. Davidson accused Plato of compounding the confused idea that philosophy was the place to look for the final and most basic truths on which all other truths, whether of science, morality, or common sense, must rest with his conflation of abstract universals with entities of supreme value. Describing Plato's view as "a category mistake",[8] Davidson insists that "truth isn't an object, and so it can't be true; truth is a concept, and is intelligibly attributed to things like sentences, utterances, beliefs and propositions, entities which have a propositional content".[9]

In his view, "it is an error to think that if someone seeks to understand the concept of truth, that person is necessarily trying to discover important general truths about justice or the foundations of physics. The mistake percolates down to the idea that a theory of truth must somehow tell us what, in general, is true, or at least how to discover truths"[10] Davidson thus claims that it was this category mistake that thinkers like Nietzsche, Dewey and Rorty reacted to as remnant of the idea of submission to the Will of God.

The second source from where Rorty developed the above claim is William James as Rorty himself acknowledged when he wrote that his "grounding premise, that you can only work for what you can recognize, is a corollary of James's principle that a difference must has to make a difference to practice before it is worth discussing".[11]

From the foregoing, it could be argued that Rorty's conclusion that truth is not a goal of inquiry is founded on his assimilation of Davidson's claim that what we will never know for certain is which of the things we believe are true and James's principle that a difference must has to make a difference to practice before it is worth discussing. Hence his assertion in '*Is Truth A Goal of Enquiry? Donald Davidson Versus Crispin Wright',* that "pragmatists think that if something makes no difference to practice, it should make no difference to philosophy. This conviction makes them suspicious of the distinction between justification and truth, for that difference makes no difference to my decisions about what to do".[12]

Emphasizing the above point further, Bilgrami avers that for Rorty, "the cautionary aspect of truth shows that truth is beyond all justification and that is why we cannot ever know when any of our beliefs is true, as opposed to justified".[13]  In addition, he maintains that Rorty thinks that;

> The gap between justification and truth emerges when we find that even when we have satisfactorily justified a certain belief or sentence to the currently available audience, there can always be newer and more imaginative audiences to whom we have still to justify it. The idea of truth will then have to be the impossible ideal of a justification after which no further justification is needed. Truth is not a reachable goal, so no goal at all. [14]

Rorty however disagrees with Bilgrami's assessment of the view he shares with Davidson. Rorty's disagreement was contained in his response to Bilgrami where he noted that the difference between Bilgrami's assessment and the one he shares with Davidson is that both Rorty and Davidson;

> See no point in dividing up our propositional attitudes into the standard setting ones that form part of a "theory of the world" and the non standard setting ones that do not. We see this as just the sort of scheme content distinction which leads to skepticism, relativism,

representationalism, and a lot of other terrible things. Following Quine's lead, we insist that there are no pure white doubt free beliefs to form the scheme or set the standard, but only shades of grey only degrees of actual and potential doubtfulness, of centrality to our belief systems.[15]

The above position points to the conclusion that the point of agreement between Rorty and Davidson is on the cautionary usage of the word truth. The implication of this position is that the cautionary aspect of truth results in the idea that we can never tell which of our beliefs is true because there are inexhaustible audiences to whom we might have to justify a belief of ours. This is why for Rorty; there is no objectivity in truth, for if truth is objective in this sense, then it cannot possibly be a goal to pursue. Hence Rorty's point is that if we cannot possibly know when we have achieved a goal; it cannot with any point remain a goal of ours, hence his claim that truth does not name a goal to be pursued.

## 5.3. Truth as Ideal Justification

Following from his claim that truth does not name a goal for inquiry, Rorty further argued that "the only criterion we have for applying the word 'true' is justification".[16] Rorty's claim that truth is ideal justification was influenced by a number of developments. First as Knutzen noted, "several of points raised concerning truth, belief and justification were first made in the *Theaetetus*, that most modern in Spirit of Plato's dialogues".[17] Plato according to Knutzen thesis had dismantled the claim that knowledge is true belief and in its place identified with Protagoras' thesis that "man is the measure of all things (or that truth for each man is simply what appears to him to be the case".[18]

Another source that inspired Rorty's identification of truth as ideal justification is the coherentists' picture of justification and inquiry which was inspired by Sellars and Davidson. Indeed as Davidson remarked, "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another

belief".[19] This implies that only beliefs are suited to justify beliefs. The linking of truth with justification is perhaps Rorty's clearest statement about a theory of truth.

Rorty has expressed this view in several publications. In *Dismantling Truth: Solidarity Versus Objectivity,* he contended that truth means, "not what corresponds to the facts, as is the dominant definition in Western Philosophy, but what it is better for us to believe".[20] Similarly, in *Universality and Truth,* he also argued that "what philosophers have described as the universal desire for truth is better described as universal desire for justification".[21] Towards a better understanding of Rorty's association of truth with justification, it has become imperative to review the meaning of the concept of 'justification' and theories associated with it.

### 5.3.1.   What is Justification?

What are the standards that render our beliefs fitting, right, or reasonable for us to hold?  Should all beliefs be supported by other beliefs?  Are some beliefs rightly believed apart from receiving support from other beliefs?  What is the nature of the proper support between beliefs?  These are questions that the concept of justification seeks to unravel.  Hence, Watson sees justification as, "the right standing of an action, person, or attitude with respect to some standard of evaluation. For example, a person's actions might be justified under the law, or a person might be justified before God". [22]

For Fumerton, "justification is part of the answer many offer to Plato's question in *Theaetetus* what must be added to true belief in order to get knowledge?".[26]  In addition to the above, he averred that there are not only a host of different theories of justification, there are also radical differences among  epistemologists concerning how they understand what it is to offer such a

theory. Hence, whereas some theories seek to identify properties that constitute having justification, others seek to identify properties upon which justification supervenes. Most of the theories on justification distinguish between epistemic and non epistemic justification, having a justification for a belief and having a justified belief and agree among other things as Foley noted that "the term 'justification' belongs to a cluster of normative terms that also includes rational, reasonable and warranted". [233] For Huemer, there are several sources of justification depending on the philosophical school one turns to.[24] In this regard, he noted that John Locke (*Essays Concerning Human Understanding),* Berkeley *(Of the Principles of Human Knowledge)*, David Hume *(Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy),* Thomas Reid (*Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man),* Bertrand Russell *(The Problems of Philosophy),* J. L. Austin (*Sense and Sensibilia*) identified Perception as source of justification.

Similarly, Norman Malcolm (*A Definition of Factual Memory),* J. Pollock and J. Cruz (*Reasoning and Memory*), B. Russell (*Memory)* and Michael Huemer (*The Problems of Memory Knowledge)* identified memory as another source of justification. Just as Plato (*Meno)*, Immanuel Kant *(Critique of Pure Reason*), Ayer (*The Elimination of Metaphysics*), Quine (*Two Dogmas of Empiricism*), and Carnap (*The Philosophical Foundations of Physics*) argued in favour of reason and a priori as source of justification. In the same vain, Locke (*Essays Concerning Human Understanding),* Hume (*Of Miracles*) and Reid (*Inquiry into the Human Mind*) supported the idea that testimony is a source of justification.

Despite the foregoing, it must be noted for the purpose of our discourse here, we are concerned with epistemic justification as was explained in Chapter one. Epistemic justification for Fumerton, "makes probable the truth of the proposition believed".[25] For his part, Watson submits

that epistemic justification is from the Greek word for knowledge '*episteme'*. Furthermore, he opined that it is "the right standing of a person's beliefs with respect to knowledge", [30] noting that the meaning of 'right standing' has remained a controversial issue. In his view, while "some argue that right standing refers to whether the beliefs are more likely to be true. Others argue that it refers to whether they are more likely to be knowledge. Still others argue that it refers to whether those beliefs were formed or are held in a responsible or virtuous manner". [26]

In addition to the above, Watson claimed that an important concept often used synonymously with justification is rationality. Giving further insight into this claim, he further averred that there are "many types of rationality, some of which are not about a belief's epistemic status and some of which are not about beliefs at all. So, while it is intuitive to say a justified belief is a rational belief, it is also intuitive to say that a *person* is rational for holding a *justified belief".* [27] Richard Rorty seemed to have implied an acceptance of similar view about rationality and justification from his different claims in many publications.

For instance, in *Truth and Progress*, Rorty distinguished three senses of rationality namely;

1. The name of an ability that squids have more than amoebas, that language using- human beings have more than non-language using anthropoids, and that humans armed with modern technology have more than those not so armed:  the ability to cope with the environment by adjusting one's reactions to environmental stimuli in complex and delicate ways. [33] Rorty explains that this first sense of rationality is ethically neutral and is called "technical reason" and sometimes "skill at survival". [28]

2. The name of an extra added ingredient that human beings have and brutes do not. [29] Rorty also explains that this second sense of rationality is distinct because it sets goals other

than mere survival, hence he added that it establishes an evaluative hierarchy rather than simply adjusting means to taken-for granted ends.

3. It is roughly synonymous with tolerance-with the ability not to be overly disconcerted by differences from oneself, not to respond aggressively to such differences.[30] Explaining further, Richard Rorty argues that this third sense of rationality is "quasi-synonymous with freedom"[31] and goes along with;

- A willingness to alter one's own habits;

- A reliance on persuasion rather than force;

- An inclination to talk things over rather than to fight burn or banish;

- A virtue that enables individuals and communities to coexist peacefully with other individuals and communities, living and letting live and to put together new syncretic, compromise ways of life.[32]

In *Universality and Truth, Rorty* averred that philosophers typically explain their use of the word 'reason' by listing three premises constitutive of the ides of rationality. Anyone who doubted any of the premises is often viewed as irrational. The three premises are;

i. There is universal desire human agreement on the supreme desirability of truth;

ii. Truth is correspondence to reality;

iii. Reality has an intrinsic nature (that there is, in Nelson Goodman's terms, a Way the World Is). [33]

Other thinkers who share similar thoughts on rationality with Richard Rorty include Ayn Rand who also saw the virtue of rationality as "the recognition and acceptance of reason as one's only

source of knowledge, one's only judge of values and one's only guide to action.... It means a commitment to the principle that all of one's convictions, values, goals, desires and actions must be based on, derived from, chosen and validated by a process of thought".[34] Similarly, Patrick Rysiew also saw rationality as something unique to humans which other animals do not possess. In his view, it is among our central and most widely used evaluative notions.

For Rysiew, "that humans are "rational animals" is a presumption built into the very name of our species, Homo sapiens; and the thought that humans are rational, perhaps distinctively so, appears to be part of the popular fabric of thought about ourselves".[35] Furthermore, he submitted that despite the fact that rationality is a term that is used in so many ways, and with regard to such a wide range of topics and subjects, it is traditionally divided into two namely; "theoretical or epistemic rationality and practical rationality".[36] Audi explains that theoretical/epistemic rationality refers to "the rationality of cognitions, especially, beliefs".[37] Furthermore, he adds that its essential sources include "perception, memory, consciousness, reason, and testimony". [38]

In his own distinction between practical rationality and theoretical rationality, Wallace avers that theoretical rationality is "reasoning about questions of explanation and prediction. Looking backward to events that have already taken place, it asks why they have occurred; looking forward, it attempts to determine what is going to happen in the future".[39] Theoretical reasoning, understood along these lines, finds paradigmatic expression in the natural and social sciences. Whereas, in practical rationality an agent;

> Attempts to assess and weigh their reasons for action, the considerations
> that speak for and against alternative courses of action that are open to
> them. Moreover they do this from a distinctively first-personal point of
> view, one that is defined in terms of a practical predicament in which

they find ourselves (either individually or collectively—people sometimes reason jointly about what they should do together). [40]

Thus, practical rationality from this perspective, takes a distinctively normative question as its starting point. It is thus concerned not with matters of fact and their explanation, but with matters of value, of what it would be desirable to do. While, "theoretical rationality, interpreted along these lines, involves reflection with an eye to the truth of propositions, and the reasons for belief in which it deals are considerations that speak in favor of such propositions' being true, or worthy of acceptance". [47]

**Theories of Epistemic Justification**

According to Foley, "historically, the two most important accounts of epistemic justification are foundationalism and coherentism".[48] Classification of justification into foundationalism and Coherentism is based on the opinion of thinkers on the structure of justification.

- **Foundationalism**

According to this view, foundationalists argue that "justification has a hierarchical structure. Some beliefs are self-justifying, and as such constitute one's evidence base. Others are justified only if they are appropriately supported by these basic beliefs".[49] In other words, the reigning metaphor for epistemology according to the foundationalists is that of a building whose foundation of basic beliefs supports additional stories of non-basic beliefs. Clarifying this view better, Steup notes that the major claim of the foundationalists is that our believes "are structured like a building: they are divided into a foundation and a super structure, the latter resting upon the former. Beliefs belonging to the foundation are basic. Beliefs belonging to the super structure are non basic and receive justification from the justified beliefs in the foundation."[50]

- **Coherentism**

On the other hand, Foley argued that for the Coherentists, "a belief system is justified if its component beliefs cohere in an appropriate way. Individual beliefs are justified by virtue of belonging to such a set of beliefs".[51] Thus, for them, the reigning metaphor is that of a web made up of and deriving its strength from mutually supportive beliefs. Primary objects of justification in their view are not individual belief systems. Olsson makes a critical distinction between the coherence theory of justification and coherence theory of truth. While the former is "a theory of what it means for a belief or set of beliefs to be justified, or for a subject to be justified in holding the beliefs or set of beliefs", the latter is "a theory of what it means for a belief or proposition to be true". [52]

Furthermore, quoting Bender, Olsson listed the following as the problems and questions that have prompted the coherentists' inquiry;

- The regress problem;

- How can we gain knowledge given that our information sources (senses, testimony etc) are not reliable?

- How can we know anything at all given that we do not even know whether our own beliefs or memories are reliable?

- Given a set of beliefs and a new piece of information (typically an observation) when is a person justified in accepting that information?

- What should a person belief believe if confronted with a possibly inconsistent set of data?[53]

Having delved into the meaning of the concept of justification, we shall now return back to Richard Rorty's claim that truth is ideal justification. For Richard Rorty, one cannot by pass justification and confine one's attention to truth because "assessment of truth and assessment of justification, when the question is about what I should believe now is the same activity."[54]

## 5.4. Truth as Social Practice

Following from his claim that "justification is not a matter of special relation between ideas (or words) and objects, but of conversation, of social practice",[55] Richard Rorty argues that "conversational justification is naturally holistic. Whereas, the notion of justification embedded in epistemological tradition is reductive and atomistic". [56] In his view;

> No matter what else we say about truth (e.g., whether we define it as warranted assertability within a language or as correspondence with reality, or eschew any substantive definition and take it as a primitive), there is no way for us to know the truth other than the social practice of giving reasons. We have no reliable source of truth other than our ongoing conversation with one another.[57]

For Rorty, "the quest for objectivity (or reality) reflects an unwillingness to settle for the best beliefs and reasons that we fallible human beings can muster with our best efforts",[58] it amounted to what he called cognitive idolatry. This informed his comparing philosophers looking beyond mere human reasoning for some transcendent grounds for the authority of science to moralists seeking natural, rational, or divine authority for their recommendations. He considered such quest for transcendent grounds for our beliefs and practices as "both unattainable and uncalled for. Instead, he urges that respect for and reliance upon the sciences be detached from an urge for transcendence. To that end, he asks that we reconceive the sciences as aiming at solidarity with a human community rather than at objectivity or reality". [59]

In the light of the above, we can summarize Richard Rorty's thesis above under three broad headlines;

    a. Epistemological Behaviourism

    b. Cling to Solidarity not objectivity

    c. Truth is Inter-Subjective Agreement among Members of a Society

**5.4.1. Epistemological Behaviorism**

Giving insight into his idea of epistemological behaviourism, Rorty avers that, the implication of Quine's and Sellars' criticisms of the myths and dogmas of epistemology is that we should now see knowledge as a matter of conversation and of social practice, rather than as an attempt to mirror nature. In order words, he argues that "explaining rationality and epistemic authority by reference to what the society lets us say, rather than the later by the former, is the essence of what I call epistemological behaviourism".[60] Furthermore, he adds that "it is the claim that philosophy will have no more to offer than common sense (supplemented by biology, history e.t.c.) about knowledge and truth". [61]

Several scholars attempted to give an interpretation of Rorty's epistemological behaviourism and its source. For instance, while alluding to the influence of Quine and Sellars to the development of Rorty's epistemological behaviourism, Bruce Hunter notes that Rorty;

> Owes most to Sellars' attack on the 'myth of the given' and to Quine's attack on the analytic/synthetic, necessary/contingent, a priori/a posteriori distinctions. Their joint insight (suitably purified by Rorty) is that truth, justification, and knowledge are nothing 'more than what Dewey called "warranted assertability" ... what our peers will, ceteris paribus, let us get away with saying'.[62]

Similarly, Woolfolk equally affirmed that Wittgenstein, Sellars and Quine provided inspiration for Rorty's epistemological behaviourism. In his view;

Building on the work of Wittgenstein, Sellars, and Quine, Rorty is led to the position that a search for the ultimate foundations of thought is futile. Philosophy cannot generate a position independent of or superordinate to the sciences from which to dictate their proper conduct. Nor can rival frameworks within which knowledge is construed be evaluated by a philosophy able to stand outside the social practices and language games of the culture within which that philosophy operates. [63]

Also, Rorty acknowledged that in some way, he was indebted to Michael Williams for helping him understand that "the Cartesian notion of a natural, ahistorical, transcultural "order of reasons" is essential to Descartes' dreaming argument and more general to both epistemological skepticism and the feasibility of epistemology as a discipline".[64] In order words, he implied that it could be argued that the implication of his epistemological behaviourism is that when it comes to the matter of justification of knowledge, we need nothing beyond the commonsense model of being able to give good reasons for our belief. Again, another inspiration for Rorty's claims here was William James who argued that "the true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good too for definite assignable reasons".[65] Hence, Rorty avers that the key point here is that once you understand all about the justification of actions, including the justification of assertions, you understand all there is to understand about goodness, rightness and truth.

Following from the above, Gutting explains that for Rorty, "the norms specifying "good reasons" and "adequate support" are themselves based on the agreement of an epistemic community".[66] For Dimitri Ginev;

Epistemological behaviourism is a kind of non-metaphysical holism that explains each epistemic authority (including that of science) by reference to prevailing social practices (and their language-games). Consequently, the fundamental epistemological notions should be explicated by behavioural terms. Put differently, the production of knowledge

(especially of scientific knowledge) gets explained by studies of forms of interaction taking place in social practices.[67]

Ginev's `submission is a re-affirmation of Rorty's conviction that it is the social practices of an epistemic community that defines truth for them. Also, Duignan viewed Rorty's epistemological behaviourism as the claim that "no statement is epistemologically more basic than any other, and no statement is ever justified "finally" but only relative to some circumscribed and contextually determined set of additional statements".[68]

On their part, Guignon and Hiley explained that Rorty's approach is called epistemological behaviourism because "it rejects the idea that experiences play a crucial role in making sense of our claims to knowledge and proposes instead that we see knowledge as based on social practices".[69] Equally, they re-affirmed Hunter's claim that Sellars and Quine provided the inspiration for Rorty's epistemological behaviorism. For them, "epistemological behaviorism is "the common denominator in the three philosophers Rorty takes as role models for his critique of traditional philosophy – Wittgenstein, Dewey, and Heidegger". [70]

Highlighting further on Rorty's behaviourism, Michael Rohr notes that it is an account of justification but not a theory of truth. According to him, Rorty endorsed James' dictum that "the true is just the good in the realm of belief; there is no general account of why beliefs are true anymore than there is a general account of why things are good". [71] Thus from the foregoing, critical issues raised in Richard Rorty's epistemological behaviourism could be summed up in the following two claims;

a. The view that philosophy has no more to offer than common sense  and;

**b.** The view that epistemic authority is to be explained by reference to prevailing social practices.

A critical look at Rorty's assessment of epistemological behaviorism show that for him, we need nothing beyond the commonsense model to serve as an account of epistemic justification. In his view, justification is just a matter of being able to give good reasons for a belief. Also, the norms specifying "good reasons" and "adequate support" are themselves based on the agreement of an epistemic community.

### 5.4.2. Cling Solidarity Not Objectivity

In his famous article, "Solidarity or Objectivity", Richard Rorty opined that there are two principal ways in which human beings try placing their lives in a larger context, to give sense to those lives. According to him, the first way is by "telling the story of their contribution to a community. This community may be the actual historical one in which they live, or another actual one, distant in time or place , or quite an imaginary one, consisting of perhaps of a dozen of heroes and heroines selected from history, or fiction or both."[72] The second way is by describing themselves "as standing in immediate relation to a non human reality. This relation is immediate in the sense that it does not derive from a relation between such a reality and their tribe, or their nation, or their imagined band of comrades."[73] Rorty described desire for the first way as desire for solidarity whereas desire for the second way is desire for objectivity.  In order to gain better insight into Rorty's view on the desire for objectivity and solidarity, it has become expedient to briefly explain the concept of objectivity and solidarity.

- **Solidarity**

Solidarity implies the unity or agreement of feeling or action especially among individuals with a common interest, mutual support within a group. For Kolers, Solidarity is different from acting in unison. In his view, "the essential condition for solidarity is acting with others, even if one disagrees with the group's chosen ends or means".[74] Thus, he implied that solidarity inverts the usual relationship between endorsement and choice: one chooses an act because it is what the group chooses. On the other hand, acting in unison entails "one acting merely for the sake of some ends or means that individuals happen to share. In this context, people act together because they are in complete agreement about ends and means." [75]

In related development, Gordon Marshall maintained that in an attempt to explain "the source of moral and social order in society the French Philosopher Emile Durkheim sought to elaborate the connection between the individual and society in a time of growing individualism, social dislocation and moral diversification". Towards this goal, Durkheim made a distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity for him is "the social integration of members of a society who have common values and beliefs, these common values and beliefs constitute a "collective conscience" that works internally in individual members to cause them to cooperate".[76] In order words, Gordon highlights that it is "the solidarity of resemblance characteristic of segmented and opaque societies".[77] While organic solidarity is "social integration that arises out of the need of individuals for one another's services".[78] Hence, as Gordon further explained, it is the "solidarity of occupational interdependence in morally dense societies".[79]

- **Objectivity**

Objectivity is a central philosophical concept which means the state or quality of being true even outside of a subject's individual biases, interpretations, feelings and imaginings. According to Ayn Rand, it is "both a metaphysical and an epistemological concept".[80] Metaphysically, "it is the recognition of the fact that reality exists independent of any perceiver's consciousness".[81] Epistemologically, "it is the recognition of the fact that a perceiver's (man's) consciousness must acquire knowledge of reality by certain means (reason) in accordance with certain rules (logic)".[82] This implies as Rand explains that there are no shortcuts, no special revelations and there can be no such thing as a final authority in matters pertaining to human knowledge.

For Mulder, there are philosophical questions regarding the nature of objective reality and the nature of our so-called subjective reality, consequently, "we have various uses of the terms "objective" and "subjective" and their cognates to express possible differences between objective reality and subjective impressions".[83] Thus, he emphasized the need to examine the various applications of the term, "objectivity". For their part, J. Reiss and J. Sprenger despite acknowledging that "the ideal of objectivity has been criticized repeatedly in philosophy of science, questioning both its value and its attainability"[84] gave a tripartite conception of the concept.

According to them, objectivity could be conceived as;

a. Faithfulness to facts;

b. Absence of normative commitments and value freedom and;

c. Freedom from Personal biases.

**Objectivity as Faithfulness to Facts**

For J. Reiss and J. Sprenger, the first conception of objectivity especially in philosophy of science is that "scientific claims are objective in so far as they faithfully describe facts about the world".[85] Furthermore, they explained that the philosophical basis for this conception of objectivity is "the view that there are facts "out there" in the world and that it is the task of a scientist to discover, to analyze and to systematize them".[86] Philosophers associated with this conception of objectivity include; Carnap, Hempel, Popper, and Reichenbach.

**Objectivity as Absence of Normative Commitments and Value Freedom**

Again, they also contended that in order to maintain the view that objectivity is one of the essential features of science and the one that grounds its epistemic authority, it became expedient for another school of thought to argue that for science to be objective, "should be value-free and that scientific claims or practices are objective to the extent that they are free of moral, political and social values".[87] Following the recognition that choice of a research problem is often influenced by the interests of individual scientists, funding parties, and society as a whole, it became obvious that this influence may make science shallower and slow down its long-run progress.

Thus, objective as absence of normative commitments and value freedom implied that;

- Scientists should strive to minimize the influence of contextual values on scientific reasoning, e.g., in gathering evidence and assessing/accepting scientific theories.

- Scientists can at least in principle gather evidence and assess/accept theories without making contextual value judgments.[88]

**Objectivity as Freedom from Personal Biases**

Finally, objectivity is also conceived as a form of inter-subjectivity that is as freedom from personal biases. The implication of this conception is that "science is objective to the extent that personal biases are absent from scientific reasoning, or that they can be eliminated in a social process".[89] Although the supporters of this conception affirm that to some extent, all science is necessarily perspectival, they however insist that scientific results should certainly not depend on researchers' personal preferences or idiosyncratic experiences.

**Development of the Desire for Objectivity**

Having seen different conceptions of solidarity and objectivity, we shall now return back to Rorty and his view on how the pursuit of objectivity as goal of inquiry started. According to Richard Rorty, the idea of truth as something to be pursued for its own sake is central theme running from the ancient Greek period to the Enlightenment period. Rorty traces the development of this attitude to the "growing awareness by the Greeks of the sheer diversity of human communities".[90] Rorty views this tradition in Western philosophy that centers on the notion of the pursuit of truth as "the clearest example of the attempt to find a sense in one's existence by turning away from solidarity to objectivity".[91]

Rorty thus argues that a fear of parochialism and a need to see things with eye of a stranger helped to produce "the skeptical and ironic tone characteristic of Euripides and Socrates."[92] Further, he added that the combination of Socratic alienation and Platonic hope gave rise to the idea of the intellectual as someone who is in touch with the nature of things, not by way of the opinion of his community, but in a more immediate way. In the Enlightenment period, Rorty saw the adoption of the Newtonian physical scientist as a model of the intellectual as a continuation of the attitude of the Greek thinkers.

Towards the eighteenth century, Rorty argued that "it seemed clear that the access to Nature which physical science had provided should now be followed by the establishment of social, political and economic institutions that were in accordance with nature".[93] In this way, Rorty concluded, we became "heirs of this objectivist tradition, which centers on the assumption that we must step outside our community long enough to examine it in the light of something that transcends it, namely that which it has in common with every other actual and possible human community".[94] This tradition in his view, envisages an ultimate community which will have surpassed the distinction between the natural and the social, which will display a solidarity that is not narrow-minded because it is the expression of an ahistorical human nature. Rorty thus, called those who opt to ground solidarity in objectivity, realists, while those who wish to reduce objectivity to solidarity are pragmatists.

Accordingly, he maintains that pragmatists who reduce objectivity to solidarity "see the gap between truth and justification not as something to be bridged by isolating a natural transcultural sort of rationality that can be used to criticize certain and praise others, but simply as the gap between actual good and possible better".[95] This explains why Rorty when confronted with dilemma of whether the pursuit should be on solidarity or objectivity, insisted that we should abandon the pursuit for objectivity and cling to solidarity. He saw the desire for objectivity as "the desire for as much inter-subjective as possible, the desire to extend the reference of "us" as far as we can".[96] Thus, Rorty affirmed that the pragmatist is not a relativist as he is often described by the realists but rather is ethnocentric in holding the view that "there is nothing to be said about either truth or rationality apart from the descriptions of the familiar procedures of justification that a given society –ours- uses in one or another area of inquiry".[97]

### 5.4.3. Truth is Inter-Subjective Agreement among Members of a Society

According to Gueras, Postmodern thinkers claim that "whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate".[98] As a fall out of the above thesis, the postmodern thinker, Rorty declared that "if one reinterprets objectivity as inter-subjectivity or as solidarity… then one will drop the question of how to get in touch with "mind-independent and language-independent reality." One will replace it with questions like "What are the limits of our community?". [99]

Rorty thus hoped that once the old metaphor has been dropped, philosophers will now discover that truth is what our contemporaries allow us to get away with. Thus, his claim that truth is as defined by each society. Furthermore, he adds that "whatever good the ideas of "objectivity" and "transcendence" have done for our culture can be attained equally well by the idea of a community which strives after both inter-subjective agreement and novelty-a democratic, progressive, pluralist community of the sort of which Dewey dreamt".[100]

In taking this position, Rorty agrees with Putnam that there is no God's eye standpoint that reveals reality in itself, neither is there a "skyhook" which takes us out of our subjective conditions to reveal a reality existing independently of our human minds. Thus, while not advocating for an individualistic subjective notion of truth, Michael Albert opined that Richard Rorty denied that "the search for objective truth is a search for correspondence to reality"[101] and urged that it be seen instead as "a search for the widest possible intersubjective agreement".[102] This claim is based on Rorty's conviction that justification is not a matter of correspondence to reality, but warranted intersubjective agreement. The implication of this position taken by Rorty is that objectivity is not a matter of correspondence to objects but a matter of getting together

with other subjects. Thus, his conclusion that there is nothing to say about truth except discussing procedures we use to bring about agreement among inquirers. In Rorty's view, three issues make it imperative that we must abandon objectivity for solidarity as defined by social practices, these are; the contingency of language, contingency of selfhood and contingency of a liberal community.

**Contingency of Language**

From the Rortyian perspective, Donald Davidson has done well by helping us to understand that the world does not provide us with any criterion of choice between alternative metaphors, that we can only compare languages or metaphors with one another, not with something beyond language called "fact." In his view, we need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there.

> To say that the world is out there, that it is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states. To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations. Truth cannot be out there - cannot exist independently of the human mind - because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own - unaided by the describing activities of human beings - cannot. [103]

Highlighting the above points clearer, Rorty argued that the suggestion that truth, as well as the world, is out there is a legacy of an age in which the world was seen as the creation of a being who had a language of his own. Thus, if understand the job done by Davidson very well, then, we will discover in Rorty's view that we need to drop the idea of languages as representations, and to be thoroughly Wittgensteinian in our approach to language i.e. de-divinize the world. In his view, "only if we do that can we fully accept the argument… that since truth is a property of

sentences, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truths". [104]

The fallout of the above argument as Rorty summed it is that it is essential to his view that "we have no pre-linguistic consciousness to which language needs to be adequate, no deep sense of how things are which it is the duty of philosophers to spell out in language".[105] To him, what we often characterize as such a consciousness is "merely a disposition to use the language of our ancestors, to worship the corpses of their metaphors". [106] The main thrust of Rorty's thesis here is that removed from human vocabulary, notions of truth and falsity are simply nonexistent.  In other words, since human language is contingent, descriptions of the world by humans do not relate to intrinsic property of the world being described but belong purely to the human realm of language. Thus all consideration of language in relation to reality should be discarded for deliberations in relation to other vocabularies.

**Contingency of Selfhood**

Another basis for Rorty's repudiation of objectivity and insistence on intersubjective agreement among peers is the fact of the contingency of human selfhood. For Richard Rorty, what Freud, Nietzsche, and Bloom had done for our conscience is what Wittgenstein and Davidson did for our language, namely, exhibit its sheer contingency. By Rorty's standard, Nietzsche was the first philosopher who "explicitly suggested that we drop the whole idea of "knowing the truth." His definition of truth as a "mobile army of metaphors"  amounted to saying that the whole idea of "representing reality by means of language, and thus the idea of finding a single context for all human lives, should be abandoned".[107] Rorty maintains further that following Nietzsche's thesis implied that Plato's ″true world" should be seen as just a fable. He saw Nietzsche's significance

from his helping us to view self-knowledge as self-creation and of fundamentally being the process of "coming to know oneself, confronting one's contingency, tracking one's causes home". [108]

In related development, Rorty explained that Freud's importance is that "he helps us accept, and put to work, this Nietzschean and Bloomian sense of what it is to be a full-fledged human being". [109] Hence, he admonishes that we should begin to understand Freud's role in our culture "by seeing him as the moralist who helped de-divinize the self by tracking conscience home to its origin in the contingencies of our upbringing." [110] According to him, Freud's important contribution is that he helps to;

> Take seriously the possibility that there is no central faculty, no central self, called "reason" - and thus to take Nietzschean pragmatism and perspectivalism seriously. Freudian moral psychology gives us a vocabulary for self-description which is radically different from Plato's, and also radically different from that side of Nietzsche which Heidegger rightly condemned as one more example of inverted Platonism - the romantic attempt to exalt the flesh over the spirit, the heart over the head, a mythical faculty called "will" over an equally mythical one called "reason." [111]

In other words, Rorty's main thesis here is that we all have our sets of beliefs whose contingencies we more or less ignore.

## Contingency of a Liberal Community

In making a case for his liberal community, Rorty acknowledged that he was aware that his ideas about contingency of selfhood and language may be described as irrational and relativist. While dismissing charges of relativism and irrationality, he argues that "the distinctions between absolutism and relativism, between rationality and irrationality, and between morality and expediency are obsolete and clumsy tools - remnants of a vocabulary we should try to

replace".[112] Furthermore, he averred that people often introduce the term "irrational" when they

come across a vocabulary that cannot be synthesized with their own.  In his view;

> The institutions and culture of liberal society would be better served by a
> vocabulary of moral and political reflection which avoids the distinctions I
> have listed than by a vocabulary which preserves them. …The vocabulary of
> Enlightenment rationalism, although it was essential to the beginnings of
> liberal democracy, has become an impediment to the preservation and
> progress of democratic societies. [113]

Rorty claims that the vocabulary which revolves around notions of metaphor and self-creation

rather than around notions of truth, rationality, and moral obligation, is better suited for this

purpose. Hence, his insistence that to "see one's language, one's conscience, one's morality, and

one's highest hopes as contingent products, as literalizations of what once were accidentally

produced metaphors, is to adopt a self-identity which suits one for citizenship in such an ideally

liberal state".[114]   Rorty's claim is that we need to see moral commitment and cognitive

assessment as matters of social habituation by cultural forces, which are in turn ordered by

prevailing human needs and desires of a particular period. He hoped that when members of a

democratic society become more liberal, people would never bother about limiting metaphysical

generalities like 'good', 'moral', 'human nature', or truth but would be allowed to freely

communicate with each other on entirely subjective terms. It is in the light of the above that

Richard Rorty explained that the citizens of his liberal utopia would be people who had a sense

of the contingency of their language of moral deliberation, and thus of their consciences, and

thus of their community. It is in the light of these contingencies that Rorty concluded that each

society should define its own truth.

Having put Rorty's new thesis on truth which is the claim that each society defines its own truth,

i.e. truth is not a matter of correspondence to reality, but warranted intersubjective agreement

among members of a community into perspective, the following questions are now begging for answers;

- Is an abandonment of traditional epistemology really possible, and just how should we understand it?

- Does inter-subjective agreement indicate objectivity? Is truth a cultural product, if it is a cultural product, what is its implication to the philosophical idea of the universal?

- How do we explain errors (Falsehoods)? Is Richard Rorty is an "epistemological nihilist".

- Is it possible for Rorty to maintain his pragmatic views and still call some statements true and others false?

Our concluding chapter will attempt to find possible answers to the above questions.

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## CHAPTER SIX

## EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

**6.1 Evaluation**

In Chapter one of this work, reference was made of Richard Rorty's claim that "truth is not a goal of inquiry"[1] and that truth is "to be sure an absolute notion, in the following sense: 'true for me but not true for you' and true in my culture but not in yours'… so is true then but not now".[2] Following from the above, his view that no matter what else we say about truth, there is no way for us to know the truth other than the social practice of giving reasons led him to submit that each society produces its own truth i.e. truth as social practice. A critical evaluation of Richard Rorty's position as well as some of the views expressed in the literature review has raised more questions for the philosophical enterprise. In seeking to expand our understanding of Richard Rorty, this review will attempt to seek for answers to these questions. Some of the questions are;

- Is an abandonment of traditional epistemology really possible, and just how should we understand it?

- Is truth a cultural product, If it is a cultural product, what is its implication to the philosophical idea of the universal?

- Is Richard Rorty is an "epistemological nihilist".

- Is it possible for Rorty to maintain his pragmatic views and still call some statements true and others false?

**6.1.1. Is An Abandonment of Traditional Epistemology Really Possible, and Just How Should We Understand it?**

As noted in the preceding chapters, in his attempt to deconstruct truth, Richard Rorty set out to challenge traditional views about the mind, knowledge and what the task of philosophy should

be. As Kulp noted, in executing this project, he "draws upon not only Dewey's constructive philosophical theses, but also (and especially) his criticisms of traditional, non-pragmatic philosophers and schools of thought".[3] In addition to the above, Kulp also remarked that in epistemology as traditionally practiced, Dewey;

> Found much of what he deemed wrongheaded about philosophy as traditionally practiced –much of what rendered philosophy disconnected from everyday life and in need of thorough going reconstruction. It is here that many- the Rortyans in particular- find if not the key, at least a key for at once ridding ourselves of traditional theories of knowledge and of developing a thorough goingly pragmatic philosophy that shuns constructive epistemological theorizing…[4]

While affirming that it has become a new orthodoxy for the whole enterprise from Descartes, through Locke and Kant pursued by various nineteenth and twentieth-century succession movements to be viewed as a mistake, Charles Taylor asks a fundamental question that should guide the current discourse at this level; when pragmatists talk about abandoning epistemology, what exactly do they mean? How should we understand overcoming the epistemological standpoint or repudiating the enterprise? Just what is one trying to deny? [5] Rorty's response is that we need to overcome the idea of thinking of the mind as a great mirror which holds representations of the world and repudiate all foundationalist agenda. According to him, once we abandon this account of truth, we must substitute it with a pragmatist conception of knowledge which entails focusing on beliefs that serve us well. In this regard, when Rorty talks of beliefs that serve us well, he implied beliefs that members of a community accept as working for them.

Attempts to put aside traditional epistemology did not start with Rorty. In fact, the American philosopher, W.V. Quine was a leading light in this attempt. His dominant naturalized epistemology classified epistemology as a chapter in psychology. Hence, his description of his naturalized epistemology as "the empirical study of how human beings develop a theory of the

natural world on the basis of their sensory inputs".[6] But as Brown and Luper observed, "much of epistemology traditionally conceived seems to be left out of Quine's picture".[7] In addition to the above, they gave the following as reasons why Quine's (and his ally Rorty) response to how we should understand this call for abandonment/replacement of traditional epistemology cannot be accepted;

- "One of the main concerns of epistemology has been to understand what knowledge is, in the sense of identifying necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing something".[8] This requires an analysis of the concept of knowledge rather an empirical investigation of the natural world as suggested by some naturalized epistemology supporters;

- Quine's naturalized epistemology also neglected the question of "how we do or should acquire knowledge. … Quine appears to neglect the normative issues about how we ought to modify our beliefs in the light of new evidence". [9]

- Quine pays little attention to the traditional epistemological issue of how much knowledge if any, we can have. He instead "recommends treating the issue of the extent of knowledge as internal to science". [10]

Richard Rorty obviously was influenced a lot by his reading of Quine. Perhaps, in an attempt to surmount the limitations of Quine's naturalized epistemology as explanation to why we should abandon traditional epistemology, Rorty suggested that what we need to abandon all foundational agenda. This implies that Rorty's response to the question of what it means to abandon traditional epistemology is that we should understand it to mean an abandonment of all foundationalist theses. This answer would have completely answered the question at hand if the old epistemology was just about foundationalism. Indeed as Taylor observed, there is a wider conception of the epistemological tradition, from whose viewpoint Rorty's suggestion would be

bizarre. According to him, "this is the interpretation that focuses not so much on foundationalism as on understanding of knowledge that made it possible". [11]

As David Truncellito agrees, epistemology deals "with a number of tasks". [12] These tasks relate to questions about the nature of knowledge, that is, what does it mean to say that someone knows or fails to know something?, the extent, source and limits of human knowledge. Rorty restriction of the task of traditional epistemology to the foundationalist thesis thus misses these salient questions. Equally, as McDowell rightly noted;

> The way to cure ourselves of unwarranted expectations for philosophy is not to drop the vocabulary of objectivity, but to work at understanding the sources of the deformations to which the vocabulary of objectivity has historically been prone. If we could do that, it would enable us to undo the deformations, and see our way clear of the seemingly compulsory philosophical problematic that Rorty wants us to get out from under. This would be an epistemological achievement, in a perfectly intelligible sense of "epistemological" that does not restrict epistemology to accepting the traditional problematic. [13]

On the strength of these lapses, it could be argued that given this broader context of the concept of traditional epistemology as remarked by Truncellito, Rorty's conception of traditional epistemology as foundationalism and his subsequent call for its abandonment is a dream for the impossible.

## 6.1.2. Is Truth A Cultural Product? If Truth is a Cultural Product, What is its Implication to the Philosophical Idea of the Universal?

Richard Rorty's claim that truth philosophy should do away with notions of intrinsic nature of reality and correspondence to reality has been interpreted by many to imply that for him, there is nothing like an absolute truth. Rorty himself seems to be arguing in this direction when he claimed that "truth is to be sure an absolute notion, in the following sense, true for me but not for

you and true in my culture but not in yours". [14] The development of the above argument stemmed from Rorty's reading of several authorities.

First, Davidson had earlier proposed his principle of charity as the part for assessing the rationality of another culture. According to this principle, words should attempt "to maximize sense and optimize agreement when invoked".[15] Also, inspired by this principle of charity and his reading of later Wittgenstein, Winch argues that "since standards of rationality in different societies do not always coincide, we should use only contextually and internally given criteria of rationality in our assessment of the systems of beliefs of other cultures and societies".[16] In his view, it does not make sense to speak of a universal standard of rationality because what is rational is decided by a backdrop of norms governing a given language and a form of life. It is within this context for instance that same sex relationship as a fundamental right to sexuality for Americans and criminalization of same sex relationship in Nigeria can make sense.

Davidson's principle influenced thus influenced Rorty's claim that when it comes to assessing the rationality of other cultures, it boils down to questions about the relation between the two following senses of rationality, rationality as;

- The name of an ability that squids have more than amoebas, the language using humans have more than non-language-using anthropoids, and that human beings armed with technology have more than those not so armed: the ability to cope with environment by adjusting one's reactions to environmental stimuli in complex and delicate ways.

- The ability not to be overly disconnected by differences from oneself, not to respond aggressively to such differences. … it is a virtue that enables individuals and communities to co-exist peacefully with other individuals and communities, living and letting live, and to put together new, syncretic, comprise ways of life. So rationality in this sense is sometimes thought as by Hegel, as quasi-synonymous with freedom.[17]

The above clarifications leads Richard Rorty to the conclusion that when it comes that we should abandon the quest for objectivity and cling to solidarity and that truth is as defined by intersubjective agreement among members of a society. This implies that it is the social practices of a people that define what is true. Rorty's rejection of the view that truth is one and his claim that it is intersubjective agreement among members of a society that defines what is true have led to his being charged as a cultural relativist, a charge that he rejects. But, is truth a cultural product, if truth is a cultural product, how does Richard Rorty want us to understand it?

For his part, Simon rephrased the question by noting that inquiries into whether truth is a cultural product amounts to asking; "under what conditions may we judge the practices or beliefs of another culture to be rationally deficient? Is it possible that cultures can differ so radically as to embody different and even incommensurable modes of reasoning? Are norms of rationality culturally relative, or are culture-independent norms of rationality that can be used to judge the beliefs and practices of all human culture"? [18] Giving further insight into the implications of this inquiry, Simon agrees somewhat with Rorty that in order to be in a position to make judgment about the rationality of another culture, we must first understand it. Understanding a different culture raises a lot of philosophical problems. These problems include;

> How do we acquire the initial translation of the language of culture? Can we use categories to understand the social practices of another culture, for instance, our categories of science, magic and religion? Or would the mapping of our categories on to practices of culturally distant societies yield a distorted picture of how they construct social practices and institutions? …What sort of judgments of rationality are appropriate? Judgment about how well agents; actions and social practices conform to the norms of their culture? Or judgment about the norms of rationality of cultures as such? [19]

Cultural relativism is the view that no culture is superior to any other culture when comparing systems of morality, law, politics, etc. "This is based on the idea that there is no ultimate standard of good or evil, so every judgment about right and wrong is a product of society". [20] Another important influence on Rorty's development of his claims was the Greek historian, Herodotus' idea that norms and values are born out of conventions. Following this line of thought, Franz Boas submitted that "the data of ethnology prove that not only our knowledge but also our emotions are the result of the form of our social life and of the history of the people to whom we belong".[21] In the same vain, Boas' view became the guiding norm upon which Herskovits argued that "judgments are based on experience and experience is interpreted by each individual in terms of his enculturation".[22]

Truth is not a cultural product although some of the claims by some cultures can be true. They are true not because of social solidarity but on the basis of the rationality of the claims they make. Rorty's claim that truth is a as defined by social practices amounts to arguing that truth is a cultural product, hence a sort of cultural relativism. As Westacott noted, "if truth is relativized to the individual subject, for instance, the result is a form of subjectivism. If the standpoint is an entire culture, the result is some form of cultural relativism".[23] Cultural relativism has been widely criticized as on so many grounds. First, it is self refuting, "a doctrine is self-refuting if its truth implies its falsehood. Relativism asserts that the truth-value of a statement is always relative to some particular standpoint. This implies that the same statement can be both true and false". [24]

For his part, while agreeing that Richard Rorty's truth as social practice was fundamentally flawed, Hillary Putnam insisted that normal discourses based on reason accept a non-relativistic

notion of truth. In his view, cultural relativism and other relativist theses try to "naturalize" the concept of reason,[25] i.e. they try to discuss questions of truth, knowledge, and rationality in a thoroughly descriptive, non-normative way. Putnam argues that "they take a detached stance and simply report the epistemic customs and practices of different cultures, eschewing any impulse to endorse or criticize them".[26] He concludes his thought on relativism by accusing those who support their thesis of encouraging a certain kind of intellectual passivity and avers that accepting their thesis amounts to "mental suicide"[27] As Westaccot added, attempts to naturalize reason if successful, amounts to "a renunciation of the longstanding project of using reason to criticize existing norms, beliefs, and practices in order to furnish ourselves with better ones". Truth as a cultural product is rejected because it implies an end to objectivity. We are aware for instance, that cultures can differ on their belief about the nature and cause of a disease but this doesn't mean that there is no objective truth about the cause and nature of the disease. It is on account of these flaws that truth cannot be reduced to mere cultural product resulting from intersubjective agreement.

On the second aspect of the question, what is the implication of saying that truth is a cultural product for the philosophical concept of universals, Wellmer puts the dilemma in perspective by introducing his famous "antimony of truth". According to this antimony;

> 1f there is irresolvable disagreement about the possibility of justifying truth claims, about standards of argumentation or evidential support, for example, between members of different linguistic, scientific or cultural communities, may I still suppose that there *are* - somewhere - the *correct* standards, the *right* criteria, in short that there is an *objective* truth of the matter? Or should I rather think that truth is 'relative' to cultures, languages, communities or even persons? While relativism (the second alternative) appears to be inconsistent, absolutism (the first alternative) seems to imply metaphysical assumptions.[28]

While Richard thinks that his anti-realist posture resolves the antinomy of truth, many thinkers like Wellmer think on the contrary. Plato leads the way in thinking that in other to explain the qualitative identity of distinct individuals, we must accept that there is another entity besides the resembling individuals, an entity he calls the "forms". Plato's forms are mind independent abstract objects of which particular objects copies are. Many other thinkers equally alluded to the necessity of a universal standard for assessing rationality. We submit that contrary to Rorty's thinking, denying that there are correct standards leads to the conclusion that truth is relative. On the strength of the possibility of not having a universal standard to appeal to which accepting Rorty's claim imply, we agree with Williams that "if our beliefs do not answer to the world, truth is something we make: the idea of objective truth goes by the board". [29]

### 6.1.3.        Is Richard Rorty An Epistemological Nihilist

On Rorty's account, epistemology has been infected with two problems prior to Kant's revolution namely; Descartes' assumption that knowledge of the external world is a matter of having mental representations that accurately picture that world and, Locke's assumption that the accuracy of a representation depends on the manner of its causal production. Kant's attempt to remedy the deficiencies brought about by both assumptions led to his Copernican Revolution. Kant reshaped the two ideas and submitted that our ideas (e.g., of space, time, substance, causality) accurately represent the world not because they are causally produced by the world but because they themselves are necessary conditions of the mind's non-causal production ("constitution") of the world as an object of knowledge. Knowledge of this constitution and its conditions is unproblematic in view of Descartes' assumption of the mind's privileged access to itself.

Rorty dismissed the above claims and called for its abandonment noting that;

- There is no interesting (nontrivial) theory of truth that we need or can supply;

- Justification has nothing to do with experiences but is merely a matter of intersubjective consensus;

- Philosophy, as it has been understood in the modern Western tradition, has no distinctive role to play in our efforts to know the world.

In dismissing the above claims, he argues in *From Logic to Language to Play*, Richard Rorty that "nothing grounds our practices, nothing legitimizes them, and nothing shows them to be in touch with the way things are".[30] In his views "epistemological dead end leads inevitably to nihilism"[31]. In this section, we will attempt to examine what epistemological nihilism is all about and examine if Rorty's claims qualify him to be tagged an epistemological nihilist. Nihilism derives its name from the Latin "*nihil"* meaning nothing. It is the belief that labels all values as worthless and is associated with radical skepticism. Epistemological nihilism denies the possibility of knowledge and truth, and is linked to extreme skepticism. Skepticism here implies, "the denial that knowledge or even rational believe is possible, either about specific subject matter or in any area whatsoever". [32]

Given the above paradigm, although Pratt in characterizing most postmodern thinkers as nihilist had maintained that "postmodern antifoundationalists, paradoxically grounded in relativism, dismiss knowledge as relational and truth as transitory, genuine only until something more palatable replaces it"[33] we are inclined to ask whether Rorty made claims that should earn him the title of an epistemological nihilist?  Of course, when some of the following claims are properly examined, they lead to the conclusion that Richard Rorty is an epistemological nihilist

having been skeptical about the possibility of attaining truth or knowing its nature. For instance, Rorty had argued that;

- Objective truth' is no more and no less than the best idea we currently have about how to explain what is going on; [34]

- The realist thinks that there is such a thing as Philosophical truth because he thinks that, deep down beneath all the texts, there is something which is not just one more text but that to which various texts are trying to be adequate . . . (the edifying philosopher or the pragmatist) does not think there is anything like that; [35].

- The Platonic notion of Truth is "absurd either as the notion of truth about reality which is not about reality - under-a-description, or as the notion of truth about reality under some privileged description . . ."[36]

- We have no idea what "in itself" is supposed to mean to mean in the phrase "reality in itself"[37]

- "There is no truth, for absoluteness of truth makes it unserviceable as such a goal", [38]

Richard Rorty's views above clearly earned him a place among the epistemological nihilists for as Upton, argued, "if there are no absolute standards of truth and knowledge and no ultimate principles governing rational discourse, then at least from a traditional point of view, it seems fair to conclude that nothing really is or can be known".[39] Following from the foregoing, Rorty cannot escape the charge of being an epistemological nihilist.

### 6.1.4. Is Richard Rorty's Truth as Social Practice Philosophically Consistent?

The question of whether Rorty's Truth as social practice is philosophically consistent requires us to look at his conclusions from the point of view of its factual and logical consistency. From the point of view of factual consistency, we note that there is no proof of how the inter subjective agreement upon which Rorty builds his truth as social practice was arrived at. Whether the intersubjective agreement was arrived at by a social contract or collective experience of a people has remained unexplained by Rorty. For instance, Rorty did not tell us which society gets to define universal truth. In addition to the above, if inter-subjective agreement defines truth within a society, does this mean that a new knowledge has no epistemic value until the society arrives at a consensus on it?

On the issue of logical consistency, we submit that Richard Rorty has many wonderful points to make but, unfortunately he ended on the same grounds that he tried to undermine. The ground upon which Rorty based his claim that each society produces its own truth and his repudiation of the entire philosophical enterprise is logically inconsistent. Rorty's postmodernism is ironically inconsistent with the liberal community he claims to belong. The epistemological standpoint Rorty developed in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* is not adequate to the social democratic political goals he ultimately came to embrace.

On the face value, Rorty has some valid points to make against the Cartesian/Kantian Mirror of Nature; however, his alternative approach is afflicted by the same assumptions behind Cartesian/Kantian view. Specifically, Rorty's while Descartes and Kant turn inwardly to the human mind itself as the source of absolute truth and intelligibility, Rorty who claims to have departed from subjectivity, clings to human subjectivity manifested in social practices. Again,

from this logical point of view, we aver that contrary to Rorty's claim that his Pragmatic views and still allow him to call some statements true and others false, the reverse is the case. Except, Richard Rorty's views are rehabilitated to overcome some of the identified inconsistencies, nothing can be accepted as true.

**6.2 Conclusion**

Following from the foregoing, we conclude by stating that Rorty's claim that truth is as defined by social practices of a people constituted a maximal provocation and it made people think of Rorty as an arch post-modernist, relativist, or even nihilist. This claim is hereby refuted because truth is more than something defined by social practices. Rorty's conversationalist view of truth and knowledge leaves us entirely unable to account for the notion that a reasonable view of how things are is a view suitably constrained by how the world actually is. As O'Hear rightly noted the claim that intersubjective agreement among peers is sufficient to define truth "deprives itself of the resources to criticize barbaric societies".[40] Intersubjective agreements does not prove that there is objective truth. Locke's finding on the possibility of discrepancies between subjective impressions and objective reality point to the fact that Rorty's thesis is flawed.

Again, as Wolin queried, "if Rorty's contextualism was valid, on what basis might one maintain the normative superiority of his deeply cherished postmodern bourgeois liberalism"?[41] Thus if we accept Richard Rorty's truth as social practice as true, upon what basis shall we access the claim by the US that choosing to become gay is part of exercising the universal human right to sexual orientation or the Nigerian government criminalization of same sex relationship? Hence, we agree with Gustafsson that Rorty's brand of pragmatism apart from attempting to lessen and

distort all philosophic distinctions "had the unfortunate consequence of depriving us of the analytic tools needed for clarifying and getting a grasp on important differences that make a difference, and resulted in a weak undifferentiated repetitive holism".[42]  Thus as Wilkinson observed, "even if Rorty is granted key points it turns out that his view is either unintelligible or internally self-defeating. Rorty, having given up on reason and rational persuasion, is left, like the sophists, with bald rhetoric and force". [43]

Following from the above, it is therefore recommended that a way to accept part of Rorty's thesis is to combine his view of that truth social practices of a people rationally lead to some truth claims with a commitment to the idea of universal standards in order to escape the charge of relativism. As has been noted by various critics, Rorty's claim is an exaggeration of cultural diversity as it ignores the fact of the existence of diversity within a culture as in the Nigerian situation. His claim that absolute truth is an absurdity is not only self refuting but also, rests on an incoherent notion of truth. For instance, Rorty did not explain how the inter-subjective agreement among peers was arrived at so as to help determine their rationality.

In conclusion, although Richard Rorty made an obliging distinction between relativism and ethnocentrism, and rejected relativism,  his refusal to allow the thought that in speaking from the midst of the practices of our ethnos, we make ourselves answerable to the world itself collapses his own helpful distinction. Ethnocentrism is the insistence that we speak from the midst of historically and culturally local practices; it amounts to a rejection of the illusory transcendence involved in the image of trying to climb outside of our own minds. This is why despite Rorty's disclaimer, this dissertation still considers his suggestion relativist because his thesis amounts to the transformation of scientific endeavor into a random series of unrealistic, subjective decisions

and a refusal avail humanity the positive rational role that the objective world can play in the formation of intersubjective agreement.

**End Notes**

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4.  *Ibid.,* 2

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8.  *Ibid.*

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*24.  Ibid*

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*26.  Ibid*

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