

# The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth

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While avoiding relativism, Rorty claims that: (1) truth is just for a time and a place; (2) 'truth' and 'rationality' are indexed to a community's standards of warranted assertibility; and (3) there is nothing more to be said about truth and rationality than is contained in a community's procedures for evaluating claims. He makes these assertions because he believes that the cautionary uses of 'true' and 'rational' crucially depend upon the endorsing uses of these terms. I argue that Rorty is wrong in this belief and that the principle of charity assures us that in their cautionary uses 'true' and 'rational' are independent of any idiosyncracies associated with any community's current standards of justification.

## I. Introduction

Pragmatists reject the representationalist picture of thought and language, according to which sentences and beliefs are representations of possible states of affairs in the world. Instead, they think of language in terms of social practices, and of beliefs as adaptations to an environment by an organism. If thoughts and sentences are not representations, then it becomes difficult to understand what might be involved in a belief or assertion 'corresponding' with a bit of the world. So pragmatists have typically rejected an analysis of truth in terms of correspondence.

Some pragmatist philosophers have thought that such an anti-representationalist rejection of a correspondence analysis of truth commits one to a variety of rather extreme doctrines. For example, some have thought that a rejection of correspondence implies that 'there is nothing more to the truth (the being-true) of the occasional truth than the historical fact that on that occasion what is said passes for true . . .', where 'passing for true' means 'either formally sustaining evaluation for truth, or in some other way (e.g. advertizing, TV) being caused to penetrate somebody's practical reasoning . . .'. These views, in turn, have led to radical conclusions concerning the relation between truth and the exercise of power in human societies: 'From the moment that it exists . . . and under the only condition that it does exist . . . truth is essentially situated amid all the major asymmetries of social power.'<sup>1</sup>

If it were the case that there is nothing more to truth than passing for true in some society and that truth is 'situated' amid the asymmetries of

social power, this would have serious implications for our social, political, and academic lives. In particular, these doctrines call into question the possibility, or even the conceivability or desirability, of realizing the enlightenment project of disengaging the rational consideration of contested issues from the influence of power imbalances among the participants of an inquiry. Some find these implications pernicious or incoherent, and on those grounds reject the anti-representationalist pragmatism upon which they are supposedly based. Others accept and attempt to make political use of these conclusions. But many of the participants in this debate simply assume that anti-representationalist pragmatism really does have the implications it is supposed to have. As I am also a pragmatist concerning mind and language, and share the premises upon which such conclusions concerning truth are supposed to be based, but reject the conclusions themselves, I feel compelled to explain just where I think that these self-styled pragmatists have gone wrong. In this paper I do just that.

Many of those involved in such debates look to Richard Rorty as an authoritative figure concerning the implications of pragmatism and its rejection of the correspondence analysis of truth. And Rorty often talks as if the pragmatic rejection of the correspondence analysis of truth did have radical consequences. To be fair, Rorty is more careful and subtle than his epigones, and it is unjust to blame him for the worst of their excesses. Nevertheless, he does make some assertions which lend aid, comfort, and support to this way of speaking, and which, it seems to me, can be shown to be just plain false on his own pragmatic grounds.

For instance, Rorty has recently claimed that 'the rightness or wrongness of what we say is just for a time and a place. . . .'<sup>2</sup> In context, this claim is ambiguous between the contentious, 'the truth of what we say is just for a time and a place' and the less contentious, 'the appropriateness of what we say is just for a time and a place' (i.e. what we say is justified or warranted just in a time and a place). In this paper I will argue that there are good *pragmatic* principles, which Rorty accepts, which imply that Rorty is wrong to assert that the truth of what we say is just for a time and a place. These principles follow from the principle of charity, which in turn is rooted in pragmatism's insistence that mind and language be understood in the context provided by rational action. Perhaps more surprisingly, I will also argue that, on any interesting interpretation of the claim that the appropriateness of what we say is just for a time and a place, these same pragmatic principles imply that *it* is false.

## II. Rorty on Truth and Rationality

Rorty has been 'refuted' before. So why, it might be asked, does the world need another refutation? The answer is that most of these 'refutations' fail

because they are based on a misunderstanding of Rorty's position. In general, critics of Rorty have argued that he is committed either to relativism regarding truth, or to the doctrine that our way of talking makes (for example) atoms exist, and that these positions are incoherent. But Rorty neither holds, nor need he hold, either of these views. In fact he explicitly rejects both of them, and these rejections contradict nothing in his core position.

Rorty avoids the second confusion by pointing out that saying that language 'makes' atoms exist, or that atoms exist 'because' of language, amount to attempts to explain the existence of atoms by appeal to the conditions under which we would be warranted in asserting that atoms exist. But every 'genuine explanation ought to appeal to something whose presence or absence we can test independently of our tests for the presence of the explanandum . . .'.<sup>3</sup> And, Rorty continues, we have no tests for whether or not we are warranted in asserting 'atoms exist' which are independent of our tests for atoms existing, so we can't appeal to the fact that we are warranted in asserting 'atoms exist' to explain the existence of atoms.<sup>4</sup>

Rorty could reply to the charge of relativism in a similarly curt way, and at his best moments he does. If relativism regarding truth is to amount to anything, it is the position that 'true' is to be analyzed as a multi-place predicate with one more place than we thought it had, a place reserved for either a believer, or a language, or a linguistic community, or . . .<sup>5</sup> So, on the relativist view, for the sentence 'Atoms exist' to be true would be for some relation to hold among the sentence and a believer (or a language, or a linguistic community, or a . . .) and, perhaps, a fact, or a world. But, as Rorty recognizes, there are crushing objections to this view which are as old as Plato's *Theaetetus*. So relativism is a menace which Rorty hopes to avoid.

Rorty gives two responses to the relativist menace, either of which would be sufficient to ward it off: (A) 'We Davidsonians don't think that "truth" is a relation at all, so it certainly isn't a relation which involves a place reserved for a believer (or a language, or a linguistic community . . .)'; (B) 'We Davidsonians treat "truth" as a primitive which can't be analyzed in any way, and we are entitled to this move because we Putnamians have generalized Moore's naturalistic fallacy argument from "good" to "true", and shown that no analysis of "true" could be successful, so no relativistic analysis could be.'<sup>6</sup>

If Rorty left the question of truth at this point, he would not have said anything very enlightening but at least he would have avoided error and the appearance of relativism. However, even if it is impossible to analyze 'true', as a good pragmatist Rorty thinks that one can say something

interesting about the way the word 'true' is used, and this leads him to go on. And, in going on he gets himself into trouble.

Rorty claims that the word 'true' has three uses, an endorsing use, a cautionary use, and a disquotational use.<sup>7</sup> So far so good. The endorsing use just codifies the familiar pragmatist point that we often say that a proposition is true just in case we would endorse an asserting of it. The disquotational use, ('*P*' is true iff *P*), is a necessary aspect of our language, which is part of our ability to speak metalinguistically about what we say about the world as well as about the world itself. It is the cautionary use which has supplied much of the impetus for the conceptual development of pragmatism, and which gets Rorty into trouble. We use 'true' to express a cautionary note concerning our own beliefs and practices, as when we say: 'I believe what I just said, and I'm certainly warranted in saying it, given the standards current around here, but for all that we should remember that it might not be true.' In this cautionary use 'true' is contrasted with 'endorsed', or 'warranted', and this is problematic for pragmatism.

The key to Rorty's understanding of the cautionary use of 'true' is an attempt to tie the cautionary use to the endorsing use, which in turn is tied to the standards and practices of one's home community. For Rorty, when we say that some sentence is true in the endorsing use, we are commending its use according to current community standards. But we recognize that, given those very standards, it might in the future become rational to alter both what we would be warranted in saying and the standards we use to evaluate those warrants. So we caution ourselves against this possibility by using 'true' in the cautionary sense in which it is contrasted with (currently) warranted. But, according to Rorty, the requisite contrast here is attained by comparing our current selves with our future selves, i.e. what we might evolve into through a consistent application of our current norms, which, over time, might entail an alteration of those very norms. 'As I see it, the only aspect of our use of "true" which is captured neither by a commonsensical account of its approbative force or by a disquotational account is . . . the "cautionary" use of "true". . . . I take this cautionary use to be a gesture toward future generations – towards the 'better us' to whom the contradictory of what now seems unobjectionable may have come, via appropriate means, to seem better.'<sup>8</sup>

Rorty's understanding of the contrast between 'currently warranted' and 'true' in the cautionary sense is made explicit in a dialogue with Putnam. Putnam had objected to Rorty's claim that '[the pragmatist] does think that in the process of playing vocabularies and cultures off against each other, we produce new and better ways of talking and acting – not better by reference to a previously known standard, but just better in the sense that they come to *seem* clearly better than their predecessors.'<sup>9</sup> According to Putnam, this leaves us with no acceptable notion of 'reforming' our ways

of doing and thinking. In response, Rorty says that 'I want to gloss "come to seem clearly better than their predecessors" as "come to seem *to us* clearly better than their predecessors". But "us" here doesn't mean "us humans – Nazis or not" . . . Rather, it means "language-users whom we can recognize as better versions of ourselves'. And, finally, 'to recognize as better versions of ourselves' is explained as 'recognize them as people who have come to hold different beliefs from ours by a process which we by our present notions of the difference between rational persuasion and force, count as rational persuasion'.<sup>10</sup>

So, for Rorty, even the cautionary use of 'true' is securely anchored in our own contingent practices for warranting assertions. It is only by reference to our *own* current practices that we can give any content to even our cautionary, contrasting use of 'true': for a sentence to fail to be true in this sense, although currently warranted, is for it to be such that at some future date *we* would not warrant assertions of it, and our failure to do so would depend upon rational persuasion rather than force (where what counts as rational persuasion rather than force would itself be determined by our own future selves).<sup>11</sup>

If one grants Rorty this interpretation of the cautionary use of 'true' by way of an internal development of current community practices and standards, then a variety of other points follow. The only use of 'true' which threatens the association with current community practices of warranting assertions is the cautionary use. But, according to Rorty, the only way in which we can give content to this use is by relating it to the rational (according to our current lights) development of our own current practices. But, Rorty argues, this implies a kind of ethnocentrism which asserts 'that there is nothing to be said about either truth or rationality apart from descriptions of the familiar procedures of justification which a given society – *ours* – uses in one or another area of inquiry'.<sup>12</sup> For Rorty the true (cautionary sense) is whatever we will have come to believe in in the future, if the transition to those beliefs has been mediated by rational means. But what counts as 'rational means' is determined by what we currently take to be rational grounds for inference, together with any alterations of those rules and practices of acceptable inference which develop in the future through transitions which we would currently consider to be rational. So the only way we can characterize what it is to be rational (cautionary sense) is by detailing our own practices of warranting assertions, and the only way we can specify which sentences are true (cautionary sense) is by listing the sentences we believe to be true. Because the only content which we can give to the cautionary use of 'true' is derived from the endorsing use, the extension of the cautionary use is seen as *indexed* to the contingent practices of a community, even if the meaning of 'true' is not relative to those practices: "The term "true" . . . means the same in all

cultures, just as equally flexible terms like “here”, “there”, “good”, “bad”, “you”, and “me” mean the same in all cultures. But the identity of meaning is, of course, compatible with diversity of reference, and with diversity of procedures for assigning the terms.’<sup>13</sup>

Rorty thus asserts five linked claims concerning truth and rationality. (1) The cautionary use of ‘true’ depends upon a contrast between our own current community standards of rational acceptance and future standards which might, will, should, or would evolve (the modality is left a bit vague) out of these very standards through (according to our lights) rational persuasion. To say that such persuasion is rational according to our standards implies at least the possibility of a contrast between these standards of rational persuasion and some other standards. (2) There is nothing to be said concerning how we use ‘true’ and ‘rational’ apart from descriptions of our own practices of justification. (3) In so far as the word ‘true’ has an extension, that extension is indexed to particular procedures for assigning that term, procedures which are constituted by contingent sets of community practices. Since which inferences count as acceptable or justified is indexed to current community practice, (4) what one is warranted in asserting and believing is just for a time and place; and since which sentences are true is similarly indexed to those contingent historical practices of justification, (5) what is true is just for a time and place.

The Achilles heel of Rorty’s discussion of truth is (1), the claim that the cautionary use of ‘true’ merely holds open a place for what we will come to believe in the future given repeated application of our currently prevailing norms of rationality (and developments of them according to, for us, rational means). If (2)–(5) are supported, it is only by (1). I will argue, however, that (1) is incompatible with basic principles of pragmatism which Rorty neither wants to reject nor can reject while remaining a pragmatist. The adaptationist understanding of belief and language which is built in to pragmatism commits one to the principle of charity. The principle of charity, properly understood, entails that the implied contrast asserted in (1), between what counts as the future rational extension of our own practices of justification, for us, and what some other would accept as the rational extension of *her* current practices of justification, cannot be made. And, given the impossibility of this implied contrast, there *is* more to say about truth and rationality than is contained in a description of our current practices, and it is wrong to see the cautionary use of ‘true’ as indexed to our current beliefs. Finally, given that (1)–(3) are incorrect, so are (4) and (5), neither the truth nor what is truly warranted are just for a time and a place.

### III. Social Practices and Appropriate Action

Rorty offers two types of descriptions of pragmatism, which highlight different core aspects of the pragmatist tradition. On the one hand, when

he wants to emphasize the social and historically contingent aspect of our norms for appropriate behavior, Rorty tends to offer us some variation of a description which he borrows from Robert Brandom. This description emphasizes the view that what counts as appropriate, in regard to both language and non-linguistic behavior, is to be understood in terms of the practices and norms current in an historical community. On the other hand, when he is discussing Davidson, or emphasizing a pragmatic conception of belief, Rorty tends to highlight the way in which pragmatism thinks of beliefs in terms of the interactions of an organism with its environment. Although in most contexts these two models of pragmatism are compatible and complementary, certain tensions can arise between them on some issues. The status of the cautionary use of 'true' is one of those issues.

Brandom divides all twentieth-century philosophy of language into two parts. 'For the first, or representationalist, school (typified by Frege, Russell, Tarski and Carnap) the essential feature of language is its capacity to represent the way things are.' Representationalists 'take truth to be the basic concept in terms of which a theory of meaning, and hence a theory of language, is to be developed. The second school (typified by Dewey and Wittgenstein [and Heidegger and Sellars]) starts off from a conception of language as a set of social practices. Members of this school start off from assertibility, and then squeeze the notion of truth in as best they can.'<sup>14</sup>

In discussing Davidson, Rorty offers us a quite different distinction between the representationalists and their pragmatic opponents. This second distinction highlights the way that pragmatists tend to think of beliefs in terms of appropriate (in the sense of 'adapted') habitual responses to an environment.

But for Davidson . . . reflection on what a belief is is not 'the analysis of representation'. Rather, it is reflection on how a language-using organism interacts with what is going on in its neighborhood. Like Dewey, Davidson takes off from Darwin rather than from Descartes – from beliefs as adaptations to the environment rather than as quasi-pictures. Like Bain and Peirce, he thinks of beliefs as habits of acting rather than as parts of a 'model' of the world . . .<sup>15</sup>

On this view, beliefs are to be understood through their causal links with an organism's environment, and through their causal links with behavior of the organism which is well suited to that environment.

The notions that the cautionary use of true is indexed to a culture and that we can only discuss 'true' and 'rational' by describing our own community practices are motivated by the social practice aspect of pragmatism. Pragmatism is a view which sees language and thought in the context of actions performed in order to achieve ends. From this perspective, when one evaluates assertions one is primarily evaluating *assertings*, performances on the part of asserters, and the evaluations of what is said in those assertings in some way depend upon these prior evaluations. But

when one evaluates the act of asserting, one is judging whether or not the asserting is, *in situ*, appropriate or not. But appropriate according to which norm? One obvious answer to this question is to suggest that there are a set of semantical rules embodied in the practices of a society of users of a language, which license certain performances in certain sets of circumstances and which disallow others. This is the heart of the social practice position. On this common view, when one evaluates an asserting one is evaluating whether or not a performance of that type is appropriate, or *warranted*, according to community norms, given the situation.

It is at this point that the social practice theorist 'squeezes in' the notion of truth. For Sellars, for example, 'for a proposition to be true is for it to be assertible . . . correctly assertible, that is, in accordance with the relevant semantical rules and on the basis of such additional, though unspecified, information as these rules may require'.<sup>16</sup> On this view, to say of a proposition that it is 'true' is to endorse a certain kind of performance, and one can appropriately endorse that kind of performance just in case such a performance is warranted or *justified* in a given set of circumstances according to community practice. From here it is just a short step to the classical pragmatist definition of 'truth' as 'warranted assertibility'.

Unfortunately language did not turn out to be so simple. One can see the problems in two distinct but related ways. The simplest way is just to repeat the familiar point that, in general, according to most community norms, it *isn't* appropriate to say that a proposition is true just in case it is warranted in the community given the circumstances. From past experience we are all familiar with cases in which, given current practices, we were entirely warranted in making assertions which didn't turn out to be true, and other cases in which we weren't justified in saying something which turned out to be true. And the way in which sentences are used around here takes note of these facts: we just are not entitled to use '*P* is true' iff we are entitled to use 'Assertions of *P* are warranted'. In short, the naturalistic fallacy refutation holds of the attempted definition of truth in terms of warranted assertibility. 'True' is used in a cautionary as well as an endorsing way.

To see why it is we need to look at the second way in which one can see the problem with the attempted pragmatist definition of 'true'. One can get a hint of the problem if one returns to Sellars' account of truth. The trick is that truth is associated with being correctly assertible in light of two sets of factors, semantic rules and additional unspecified information required by those rules. Why do these rules 'require' additional information? A rule takes the form: In circumstances *C*, do *A*. But what sorts of circumstances are those? As soon becomes apparent, virtually all of our linguistic performances are appropriate or inappropriate given a *linguistic* environment. (Indeed, for those pragmatists who attack the 'myth of the



given', such as Sellars, Rorty, and Davidson, this 'virtually all' needs to be replaced with 'all'.) The rules which are involved in linguistic performances are fixed in terms of linguistic antecedent conditions: 'One is entitled to assert *P*, if one is entitled to assert *A* and assert *B* and assert *C* . . . ' Knowing that one is entitled to assert *A*, and assert *B*, and assert *C*, and assert . . . is the 'additional information' required by our rules.

But what is it for us to have this information? Well, we are warranted in asserting *A* only if it is appropriate to do so under the (linguistic and non-linguistic) circumstances. And, in turn, we are warranted in doing that by the relevant semantic rules for asserting *A* and on the basis of such additional information as these rules may require. At this point another characteristic pragmatist doctrine has appeared on the scene, Quine's 'web of belief'. Any inference, any warranted asserting, rests on two factors: the rules for using the sentences we assert and our knowledge that the antecedents of these rules are satisfied. But such 'ancillary' knowledge of the antecedents of our conditionals is itself always to be understood in terms of *their* warranted assertibility, which in turn depends upon the rules for warranted assertibility of *these* sentences and information regarding the satisfaction of those rules' antecedents, which in turn . . . This web of interdependence of our warranted assertings reaches out to encompass the totality of our beliefs and warrants for assertion. If any one of our assertions is warranted, its warrant depends upon the entire system of semantic rules and information concerning the way things are which stands behind it. Another way of putting this same point is that one is warranted in making any given assertion just in case that assertion is *coherent* with the rest of the sentences we are warranted in asserting.

But what does the web of belief have to do with the relation between the endorsing and the cautionary uses of 'true'? The answer to this question turns on the fact that the system of our beliefs is not a closed system. Given that one accepts all of the various doctrines articulated above (the rejection of the myth of the given, the web of beliefs, etc.), it may be the case, as many pragmatists argue, that no sentence is justified or warranted except by its relations (via semantic rules) to other sentences, which in turn are justified by their relations to sentences, without end, but it is certainly also the case that we are *caused* to assert and believe some sentences by factors other than their relations with other sentences. So the web of our beliefs, in order to remain coherent, must be continuously re woven so as to take account of this second sort of 'additional information'. Coherence needs to be maintained. Sometimes this involves rejection of the sentences we are caused to believe in by the environment, and sometimes this involves rejection of some previously warranted sentence, but in any case none of our sentences are immune from changing status. So, even if some particular sentence is currently warranted by its placement in a coherent system of

semantic rules and accepted sentences, we also recognize that this system is itself constantly in the process of being upgraded to take account of new beliefs which we are caused to have by our extra-linguistic environment. So, just because a sentence is currently warranted assertible, we are not warranted in saying that it will be tomorrow. And with this the cautionary use of 'true' has made its appearance in the social practice pragmatist scheme of things.

For the social practice view, that we are caused to assert some sentences in some definite non-linguistic circumstances is not, however, unmediated by the practices of our community. Rather, our training in language includes being trained to utter certain sentences in certain environmental conditions, and through this social mediation a causal link is established between those types of conditions and uttering and believing the corresponding sentence. I say and believe what I do in these environmental conditions because I have been trained to say and believe this in these conditions by the senior members of my community. Among the practices of my community are included not merely entirely intra-linguistic practices, but also the practice of saying something on the occasion of being affected in some definite way. But this means that any incoherence which develops in the web of our beliefs as the result of our causal interactions with the environment involves not merely a tension between our beliefs and the environment, but rather a tension among those practices themselves. And what must be made coherent is the sum total of our practices, both intra-linguistic and those which involve 'language entry'.

The cautionary use of 'true' marks the fact that our interactions with the environment might lead to incoherence in our web of belief. Because of this ever-present possibility, we must distinguish between 'is warranted by our current practices' and 'true', where 'true' cautions us that it might become necessary to alter what we consider warranted in the future. But, for the social practice theorist, if our interactions with the environment necessitate such alterations in our warrants, this very necessity is mediated by another branch of this same group of practices, the practices involved in conditioning the members of our community to believe and assert what they do in varying environmental circumstances. So *that* some interaction with the environment is an *appropriate* occasion for changing (some of) our beliefs is *itself* a partial function of the practices current in our community; that we have reason to change our beliefs is indexed to our own current practices.

The situation is, however, even more complicated than this picture suggests. It is not enough to recognize that the fact that it is rational to change one's beliefs is a function of practices current in a community. It is also the case that the norms which determine when it is rational to change beliefs are themselves liable to reason-driven development, and that, for

the social practice theorist, the rationality of that development is indexed to the overall norms current in a community. That it is appropriate to do  $A$  in  $C$ , or assert  $P$  in  $C$ , is as much a belief of ours as any other. And we are warranted in asserting these, or performing in accordance with them, only under certain given conditions  $C^*$ , and whether or not  $C^*$  obtain depends upon whatever 'rules' govern *these* performances, together with the additional information these require. That is, the 'semantical rules' of a community are as much a part of the web of beliefs of that community as any other assertion. And, as such, they are as liable to alteration in order to preserve coherence as any other. When such rules do change in *this* way, that is, when a community alters one sub-group of its practices for warranting assertions in order to preserve coherence with the rest of its practices of justification and warrant, it is appropriate to say that there was a rational motivation to change the semantical rules of the community, rational according to the current rules of that community. Since all rules of inference can be thought of in the same way as semantical rules, it is appropriate to say that the standards of what counts as warrant, justification, and rationality can internally evolve rationally. For the social practice theorist, however, the 'rationality' of any such evolution must be seen as a rationality for the members of the community which engages in the practices which have come into tension.

Since there is no reason that a community could not recognize this ever-present possibility that there is a difference between the standards it in fact uses to determine what is appropriate and warranted, i.e. what, according to its own standards, counts as being 'reasonable', and the standards which it should be rationally motivated to adopt (according to its own lights, of course), such communities must distinguish between 'our standards of appropriateness', and 'being rational', as well as between 'warranted assertible' and 'true'.

At this point we are in position to understand why it is that Rorty and his adherents feel compelled to the ethnocentrism which in turn leads them to claim that truth and rationality are only for a time and a place, or that the cash value of 'true' is 'passes for true'. Even if one recognizes that it is possible that what *we* ought to accept today (both in regard to matters of fact and norms of justification – which can't be clearly separated anyway) might not be what we ought to accept tomorrow (and thus introduce the cautionary sense of 'true'), it is still *we* who ought to accept this appropriateness of change, and even our cautionary use of 'true' is indexed to our home community. And even if one recognizes that there is a distinction in principle between 'the principles of inference and warrant acceptable within our society' and 'the principles of inference and warrant it would be rational for us to accept', such rationality is still indexed to *us*, and what *we* ought to accept. For the extreme social practice theorist, the

cautionary use of 'true' refers us to what, given a rational development of our own norms and procedures for warranting assertions and beliefs, we ought to adopt. But what counts as a 'rational' development of norms is itself dependent on our current practices of warranting beliefs. So, what it would be rational to believe in the future (which is identical with the cautionary use of 'true') is what a better version of ourselves *would* believe in the future if left to ourselves and the future course of our own inquiries.

But all of this is too hasty. The notion that the extension of 'true' or 'rational' is indexed to community practices, the notion which sounds like relativism, depends upon the supposition that the *cautionary* uses of these terms are in some important sense dependent on the norms current in a community. And this supposition flies in the face of another core pragmatist principle which we have not yet discussed, the principle of charity.

#### IV. Successful Action and the Principle of Charity

For the pragmatist, the web of beliefs which must be coherent isn't really a web of beliefs at all. Rather, it is a web of beliefs and *desires*, or *ends*. Pragmatists understand mind and language in terms of action. When we think of behavior as action, we think of it as performed for the sake of some end, in light of some beliefs, and the behavior is action only to the extent that the beliefs and desires of the agent together make the action reasonable or rational. What primarily must be coherent is our activity, and our activity is coherent only if, by and large, there is a consistent pattern in our acts. This consistency is of two sorts: the actions must make sense in light of the beliefs and desires, and the totality of the agent's beliefs and desires must, in general, be consistent. To the extent that an agent's actions, beliefs, and desires do not form a consistent pattern, it is wrong to see the agent's behavior as action. Davidson puts these familiar constraints on action as follows:

The belief and desire that explain an action must be such that anyone who had that belief and desire would have reason to act in that way. . . . The cogency of teleological explanation rests . . . on its ability to discover a coherent pattern in the behavior of the agent. Coherence here includes the idea of rationality both in the sense that the action to be explained must be reasonable in the light of the assigned desires and beliefs, but also in the sense that the assigned desires and beliefs must fit with one another.<sup>17</sup>

What is it that we discover when we discover 'a coherent pattern in the behavior of an agent'? It is a necessary condition on there being a coherent pattern in the behavior of an agent that most of what the agent does must be interpreted as *successful* in attaining its ascribed end. There may be more to rationality (more to having a reason to act) than instrumental

rationality, but for a pragmatist there is never less to rationality than instrumental rationality. For an entity to act rationally is for that entity to have a belief and desire, and to act, such that 'anyone who had that belief and desire would have reason to act that way'. Now, a belief may be false, and on that account an act might fail to attain the desired end, or a desire might be wrong-headed, in the sense that actually attaining the desired end results in a situation in which most of the agent's other desires are thwarted. But if too many of an agent's acts are unsuccessful or contradictory with the rest, then we cease to have any reason to think that there are any reasons at all for it doing what it is doing. This is the original 'principle of charity': Since an agent must have a decent degree of instrumental rationality, it must be interpreted so that most of what it does is successful at reaching its ends, and thus an agent's desires must be mostly consistent and most of an agent's beliefs true. An agent's beliefs and actions must be adapted to its environment, in the sense that most of its actions are, in that environment, successful in attaining their ends, on pain of not counting as an agent.

These facts allow us to understand in a second way the point of codifying the possibility of the need to alter our beliefs and procedures in the cautionary use of 'true'. Consider an impossibly simple case. Let us say that our current community standards license an assertion of 'The store is two blocks east of here'. This assertion not only plays a role in warranting further assertions, it also is a warrant, according to current standards, for walking two blocks east, *if* one wants to get to the store. Pragmatists are committed to the role of warranted assertions in warranting non-linguistic action by their adaptationist principles. As Brandom puts it: 'Without the possibility of language exits through non-assertional performances, theoretical or intralinguistic inference would lose much or all of its point.'<sup>18</sup> And so, one walks two blocks east and, unfortunately, one doesn't find the store (i.e. your interactions with the environment cause you to believe there is no store there). Given that one still wants to get to the store, for one's actions to be consistent one must at this point alter one's beliefs, and actions, to preserve coherence, and one way to do this is to alter one's acceptance as true of the assertion that 'The store is two blocks east of here', regardless of the fact that it was warranted by community standards at the time.

Now, imagine a 'community' of agents with practices for language entry which in this situation did not license a change in the belief status of 'The store is two blocks east of here'. Given the causal role of belief in teleologically explaining action, as long as one holds the desire to reach the store constant, such a society would need to be comprised of members who, in the given circumstances, acted in a way which systematically failed to reach their end. As long as *most* of what these people did was adapted

to their environment (according to our lights, of course) this would be a tolerable situation. But if there were no possible total interpretation of the verbal and non-verbal behavior of the members of this community which assigned language entry rules and semantic rules to them which supported the judgment that their behavior was well adapted to their environment, we would no longer be able to interpret members of this 'community' as agents at all.

If members of any 'community' did not alter their beliefs in light of their further causal interactions with their environment so as to maximize successful action, they would very quickly cease to count as *acting* at all. The 'coherence' which community practices must possess is not merely or primarily formal coherence, it is the coherence of action in the face of an environment. And this necessity that community practices be adapted to an environment places a norm on those practices themselves. Any 'community' which spoke a 'language' which did not have rules which warranted changing beliefs appropriately (i.e. adaptively) to its environment, would not be flexible in its behavior in response to the environment, and to that extent would not count as composed of agents who spoke a language at all.

The necessary holism of any interpretation of belief, desire, and action guarantees that for the pragmatist what is true of beliefs in general is true of semantic beliefs. Any community's rules and practices for altering when a belief is considered warranted must be coherent with its environment. It is equally the case that any society's rules for altering *the rules* for determining when a belief is warranted must, in general, be coherent with its environment. If there are socially based norms which govern when members of a society are warranted in asserting a sentence, there are adaptive norms which govern when a society is warranted in following the practices and rules which it actually follows. And if there are socially based norms which govern when it is rational to alter the rules within a society which determine rationality, there are adaptive norms which govern when these societally based norms for changing what counts as rational are themselves rational. Davidson's comment that '[t]he distinction between a sentence being held true and being in fact true is essential to the existence of an interpersonal system of communication . . .'<sup>19</sup> is as applicable to the distinction between a sentence being believed (appropriately according to current norms) in a community and a sentence being such that it ought to be believed in that community as it is to the distinction between a sentence being believed (rationally given her other beliefs) by an individual and the sentence being such that she ought to believe it. The cautionary use of true codifies *both* of these distinctions.

As we have just seen, the original form of the principle of charity assures us that most of an agent's actions must be interpreted as successful, and

for that reason most of what she believes must be true. But, as agents are continually interacting with a non-linguistic environment, they remain rational only to the extent that they alter their beliefs in such a way as to remain successful in their actions. The more familiar semantic form of the principle of charity falls out of this more basic principle. The semantic form of the principle asserts that a linguistic agent must be interpreted in such a way that most of what she says is true. 'A theory of interpretation cannot be correct that makes a man assent to very many false sentences: it must generally be the case that a sentence is true when a speaker holds it to be true.'<sup>20</sup> Assent and assertions are acts, acts which are performed in order to attain ends. The end of an act of assertion (as opposed to the linguistic acts of telling a joke, say, or acting in a play) is to communicate with others regarding the way things are. As we have seen, for a pragmatist an asserting of an assertion warrants assertings of other assertions and, ultimately, non-linguistic performances. If it weren't the case that most of these warrants were valid, that is, if it weren't the case that action in conformity with these assertions were mostly successful, then most of these acts of assertion could not be successful, and if most of them were not successful then the agent could no longer be correctly interpreted as asserting at all. So most of what a speaker says must be *true*, in the sense that most of what she says must, properly interpreted, supply adequate warrant for action. But to supply adequate warrant for action, ultimately, must be understood as leading to, or providing reasons for performing, actions which are successful in achieving their ends.

## V. The Cautionary Uses of 'True' and 'Rational'

The social practice theorist recognizes one role for the cautionary uses of 'true' and 'rational'. That role serves to distinguish our own current beliefs and grounds for acceptable inference, established by and through current community norms and practices, from what we would come to believe in the future if left to the internal, rational development (according to our own lights) of those norms and practices in response to future information. For the social practice theorist, the cautionary uses play ourselves off against our future rationally (for us) developed selves, and thus remain anchored in what we currently consider true and rational. Seen from the standpoint of the principle of charity, however, the cautionary uses of 'true' and 'rational' mark a second difference as well, the difference between what we believe and consider rational and what would be adaptive for us to believe and consider rational. And these distinctions point to a quite different understanding of these cautionary uses.

Recognizing the distinction between 'being believed' and 'being true' requires recognition of the possibility that what one holds to be true (what one believes) is not true (should not be believed). As Davidson has argued,<sup>21</sup> the recognition of this possibility regarding our own beliefs arises not merely, or even primarily, in the context of recognizing that our own beliefs might change in the future on the basis of further evidence, but also in the context of interpreting the intentional life of another agent. I attempt to figure out why some other entity is doing and saying what she is doing and saying. To do this, I must assume that the other's beliefs agree with my own. But no other does and says *just* what I would in all circumstances, and this difference must be explained. If my explanation is an intentional one, this can only be done by selectively ascribing beliefs to the other which are in conflict with my own. And when I do this I have introduced the possibility, indeed the necessity, of error, of a belief held to be true but not true. The other does and says what she does (which conflicts with what I would do in the circumstances) *because* she has beliefs which conflict with, and, if cogent, exclude, mine. It is, of course, an open issue at this stage exactly *which* beliefs I *should* accept, that is, which belief would better guide my actions. But I mark this open question by distinguishing the fact that a belief is held from its being true, or it being such that I should hold it.

At the cultural level, this same job is performed by the distinctions between 'warranted assertible by community standards' and 'true' (in the cautionary sense) and 'appropriately inferred according to community standards' and 'rational' (in the cautionary sense). These distinctions arise as responses to differences between beliefs and standards which are normative in our community and beliefs and standards which must be ascribed to others to make overall sense of what they do and say. This process of interpretation raises the possibility that one or another of these communities are in error, that it doesn't follow from the fact that this is the way we do it, that this is the way that we should do it. But what is the force of 'should' here? Just the same as it is in the individual case. What we should do is what would be most conducive to success in life. (Given that desires are convertible without loss into beliefs concerning what it is good to do, cognitive equilibrium may require us to alter some of our goals, as well as some of our other beliefs.) And how do we know what that is? How do we know which beliefs are true, as opposed to warranted in a culture? How do we know which standards it would be rational to adopt? Whose rules and criteria operate in this test?

At this point Rorty and his followers interject that we must use our own standards. Whose standards do you want us to use? And this resolution of the issue of how one can, and should, resolve cultural differences supports his distinctive brand of ethnocentrism and the indexing of truth and ration-



ality (in the cautionary senses) to our own community practices of justification. Rorty feels entitled to this response because he feels that there are only two *possible* ways that decisions in regard to conflicting standards of justification could themselves be justified. Either there is some neutral standard for adjudicating such disputes, which is applicable always and everywhere, or one must appeal to some contingent set of practices of justification which apply in some actual human community, inevitably one's own. But, he argues, 'there is no super-language, neutral between . . . conceptual schemes . . . in which we can formulate a criterion of adequacy'.<sup>22</sup> So it must be that, in a situation of conflicting standards of acceptable inference, one is always thrown back on one's own contingent practices of justification.

The problem with this argument is not that there is some possible standpoint of ideal rationality. If one is a pragmatist, it is quite right to exclude this possibility. As Rorty points out, following Michael Williams, 'we have no idea what it would be for a theory to be ideally complete and comprehensive . . . or what it would be for inquiry to have an end'.<sup>23</sup> That is, there is *always* more to be learned from our environment, which *always* may require us to alter our views and rules, so it is *never*, in principle, possible to say that we have come to the end of the road and reached the ideal standpoint. And, since we can't make sense of the notion of an ideal standpoint, we also can't make sense of an ideal rational acceptability. There could never be an ideal situation at which *all* the information was in, and all semantic rules were not held subject to future revision, and so we can't specify, even ideally, any set of standards such that they are in principle acceptable to any rational agent. In Rorty's vocabulary, there are no possible speakers of Peircish, the people whose norms and standards of warranted assertibility are normative for all rational agents.

Rather, what is wrong with Rorty's argument is that it depends upon a false dichotomy. On the face of it, the two options which Rorty outlines are not exhaustive. The options *can't* just be one's own contingent practices of justification and some single, neutral standard of ideal rationality. The contingent, actual, practices of justification within one's own community are enshrined in the *endorsing* use of the word 'rational'. But as we have seen, it is precisely these standards which are called into question through the encounter with the other. Just as the individual agent's encounter with the beliefs of another agent motivates the distinction between 'believed' and 'true', so a society's encounter with another society motivates the distinction between 'the way we do things' and 'rational'. So, it can't be that what it is to be rational is just to act as we do, and the standards which are to be used to decide the dispute between us and the other can't just be the standards we ordinarily use. And for this very reason, the norms for adjudicating the dispute can't be those current in the other society, either.

So neither of the two sets of practices actually current in the opposing communities can decide the dispute between them, and this must be recognized by the members of the two communities. It will be recognized by the members of these communities, that is, if they are rational. Minimal rationality demands this because any group which, in principle, refuses to accept the *possibility* that the way they do things is not the best way, is in no position to learn from the other: they simply can't learn from the other. And any society which has rules for changing inference rules which preclude the possibility of learning from others is as handicapped, in an adaptive sense, as a society which can't learn from experience.

Clearly, the rules which one should use to adjudicate cultural differences must be the rules which it would be rational for one to follow, in the *cautionary* sense of 'rational'. Whenever one is confronted with a different set of practices of justification from one's own, one should resolve the inevitable disagreement by appealing to those rules which rationally develop out of the disagreement itself. That is, one should be rational in the sense of 'rational' which is *distinguished* from 'acting according to one's own contingent practices of justification'.

The obvious problem with this suggestion is that there are no such rules of inference. The only semantic rules one can actually appeal to are those which are *current* in a society. In its cautionary use 'rational' merely points to the possibility that those rules aren't optimal; in no way does 'rational' in this sense mark an alternative determinate way of doing business. But what difference does that make? After all, the question which is provoked by the appearance of an actual alternative set of inference licenses concerns which licenses we *should* accept. The question of how one decides between two competing alternative ways of fixing belief, is a question concerning which of two alternative groups of rules ought to be followed, just as the question concerning which of two alternative beliefs to hold is a question concerning which of the two ought to be accepted. The possibility which is advanced is that the other might be doing things better than we do them, *according to our own lights*. Or at least according to a weighted most of our lights. Just as our causal interactions with the natural environment provoke the need to reweave the web of beliefs, semantic and otherwise, so do our encounters with other communities provoke the need to reweave the web of our beliefs, semantic and otherwise. But to do this is to evaluate some of our beliefs, and some of our norms of rationality, in light of the rest of them and the 'evidence' provided by our encounter with a different community. And to do *this* is to substitute a *norm* of rationality, in the cautionary sense, for rules of rationality in the endorsing sense. To say this is just to repeat the familiar point that, in Putnam's words, 'our norms and standards of warranted assertibility . . . evolve in time'. Part of that process

of evolution is the rational response to different norms and standards of warranted assertibility.

But aren't there still two different notions of rationality floating around here: 'rational' in the cautionary use for group *A* and 'rational' in the cautionary use for group *B*? After all, the cautionary uses of 'rational' evolve out of the endorsing uses, and *ex hypothesi*, these start off as different. Nevertheless, there is only one cautionary use here, and once we see how and why this is so, we will understand why neither truth nor rationality are only for a time and a place, and neither is indexed to a set of community standards.

For us, the set of standards which ought to be used to decide the issues between us and others regarding rationality, and thus, indirectly, truth, are those standards which would evolve out of our current standards if we were rationally to consider the possibility that the other group had a better way of doing things than we do. Such rational consideration involves placing some of our practices under brackets while using other of our practices to evaluate their efficacy. Similarly, the standards which the other group should use are those which would evolve in and through their encounter with us if they were to proceed rationally, according to their lights.

One society, with one set of procedures for warranting assertions confronts another society, with different procedures. This fact, by itself, is sufficient to assure that, if the societies proceed rationally in the cautionary sense, they will re-evaluate the procedures in dispute in light of the evidence provided by the fact of the other. Assume that both societies do proceed rationally, according to their own lights of course, and arrive at new, revised sets of procedures for warranting assertions which are still different from each other. But then, of course, each of the resultant societies now have a good reason for re-evaluating the new procedures in those respects in which they differ from one another. In so far as, and as long as, the sets of warranting procedures remain different, it is rational, in the cautionary sense, for both participants to continue the dialogue until the differences are overcome. So the procedures which one group *ought* to follow are identical with the procedures which the other group *ought* to follow. Only those practices of justification which are the rational development of *both* of the initial practices of justification in the original societies, each according to their own lights, can count as the embodiment of rationality in the cautionary sense for either of those societies.

The standards to be used to decide each disagreement are those which would count *for both sides in the dispute* as the rational development of the standard with which they start the dispute. The standards which we *ought* to use for settling our disputes are the standards which both sides in the dispute could accept as the rational development of their own current standards. Only such agreement on standards dissipates the cloud of doubt

which is placed over our beliefs by the disagreement of the other. So, even though there is no *single pre-existent* set of standards which is always applicable to all conflicts of cultural norms, we suspect that there is always *some* rational way to decide every contest of norms, which does not beg the question between the contestants, although at present we may not know what that decision procedure is.<sup>24</sup>

Since this is the case, it is not right to understand the cautionary uses of 'true' and 'rational' as gestures towards *us* at our best. At least it can't be right if 'us' is supposed to refer to us rather than them. The whole point of these cautionary uses is that they make it possible to put any restricted group of our beliefs and practices in question at any time. Sometimes we do this in response to internal tensions in our own belief and desire systems. But frequently it is necessary to place our own standards and beliefs in brackets in response to differences with groups that do things differently. In such cases, the 'truth', in the cautionary sense, is what should be believed by all of us, us and them. And what we should believe is what it is rational (cautionary sense) for us, all of us, to believe. And what it is rational for us to believe is what we can all (*us and them*) agree we would be justified in believing, using norms of justification to be worked out among all of us.

In addition to these restricted cautionary uses, 'true' and 'rational' have unrestricted cautionary uses. In this use, the 'true' is a norm, always contrasted with whatever it is that we concretely believe now, (warranted by the best current community standards), which holds a place open for what all of us ought to believe in the future, in so far as those beliefs would be warranted by the practices of justification which will have evolved out of all of the conflicts of beliefs and values which will have occurred in the interim. The *point* of the cautionary uses of 'true' and 'rational' is that, operating with the best lights we have, our own, we never know how those lights might need to be modified in the future so as to attain greater success and justification. Perhaps new interactions with our environment might show us the need for different linguistic and non-linguistic procedures. Perhaps we will confront other rational beings who do things differently from the way we do them. If we are, and are to remain, rational, either of these possible alternatives would lead us to examine our own standards of rationality, as it should lead the others to examine theirs. In this conflict of standards, new norms and new beliefs will need to be formed. The 'true' gestures towards those future beliefs of all of us, ourselves and all of our future interlocutors, and the 'rational' gestures towards those future norms, worked out by ourselves and all of our future interlocutors. Those beliefs and those norms which would be acceptable *only* to our future selves, norms which would develop solely out of our own uncontested internal principle of development can never count as true or rational. It is only their

acceptability to any future interlocutors who might happen to have come along which confers the status of true and rational.

How far in the future is 'the future'? Ah, that is the subtle point. The unrestricted cautionary uses of 'true' and 'rational' are *always* futural: there is no time in the future when they can be dispensed with. The future norms of rationality to which these uses refer us are always further in the future than any arbitrarily future time. The possibility of error is built into the fact that we can always discover more, and it is built into the fact that there are always multiple different ways of going about coping with the world. And for all concrete notions of rationality, rationality requires recognition that it may be rational to change one's beliefs and the acceptable grounds for warranting beliefs. So there must always be a distinction between 'true' and (merely) 'warranted given our best standards', just as there always must be a distinction between (truly) warranted and (merely) warranted according to our best standards. These distinctions are rooted in the distinction between us, the members of our current community, and us, the members of the future community we are always in the process of building through our interactions with the environment and with members of different groups who disagree with (the current) us.

The principle of charity assures us that most of what we (any of us) believe at a time must be true and that most of the inferences we make are rational. For that reason, it is always reasonable to *begin* any discussion of truth or rationality with descriptions of our own beliefs and practices of justification. Were the members of any linguistic community asked to list all of the true sentences, the best they could do would be to list the sentences which are believed true in that community, a list which differs from community to community. But every linguistic community must recognize that it is always possible that, in order to remain rational, it will be necessary to change its current practices in response to the challenge of others, and to adjust its beliefs accordingly. Because of this, in so far as they are rational, the members of every community always distinguish the list of sentences which they believe to be true from the list which *is* true, even though they are incapable of actually producing that second list. Given that in every society for a sentence to be true (really) is for it to be capable of surviving challenge (any challenge), among the beliefs current in *every* community is the belief that the list of those sentences which are (really) true is the same in every community. And *that* is a belief which, we can rest assured, *is* true.

We never know which of all of our beliefs are true, and which of our practices of inference are acceptable, although we can be assured that most are. Truth and rationality are thus norms which can be approached asymptotically, but never reached. To be rational is to recognize that the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth is always just beyond

reach. And this is what must be said about truth and rationality apart from a description of our own practices. The 'true' is what will stand up to future tests, even though we can not now list which sentences are true and there is no way to know now what those tests will be. The 'rational' are those rules of evidence and inference which will be worked out on the basis of shared beliefs and norms of justification between ourselves and our future opponents, even though we cannot now know who those opponents will be, or what norms they will follow, or what we will share in common with them. And, thus, it is this slender distinction, between our current beliefs and community standards, and our future beliefs and standards, where 'our' has been expanded to include the descendants of ourselves and all of our current and future opponents, which ensures that *truth* is never indexed to *our* community standards, although *belief* always is, and which ensures us that *truth* and *justification* are never just for a time and a place, although what *we* hold to be true and justified always is.

## VI. Conclusion

The way in which Rorty and his followers interpret the results of the social practice side of pragmatism remains tied to a certain picture of 'community practices' and 'semantic rules', even though in other respects they have cut themselves free of that picture. On this picture, the complex of practices operative in a society constitutes a self-reinforcing system. The norms and semantic rules which govern interactions among community members also govern when it is appropriate to alter these very norms and semantic rules. And, as there is no set of practices or norms which operate outside of and are independent of such concrete systems of practices and norms, there is no possible way to criticize that system from the outside in a way which is rationally binding on that system. So, if one recognizes that every language must distinguish between 'true' and (merely currently) warranted, this distinction must be seen as rooted in the distinction between the current embodiment of a community's practices and the internally motivated development of those practices in the future.

This picture, however, is seriously flawed. In so far as Rorty accepts this model he has failed to learn the most important lesson of the rejection of the last dogma of empiricism, the scheme/content distinction, and apply that lesson to the cautionary use of 'true'. Rorty reifies 'community standards' as if they could confront one another as sealed totalities, which prescribe disjoint standards of warrant and justification. But this can never occur. Differences in standards of justification and belief always occur against a background of agreement and, if we are rational, always prompt rational reflection on our own practices. The norm of rational conversation

is not just a provincial standard which arises only in, and is valid only for, this time and place. It is a norm that is rooted in the principle of charity and the nature of agency. This doesn't mean that we will always engage in rational conversation; but it does mean that we always should do so. And this meta-rule provides a distance between our selves and our better selves, or how we ought to be, which is not merely the distance between our current selves and what we would evolve into, given our own internal principle of development.

NOTES

- 1 These quotes are taken from Barry Allen's *Truth in Philosophy*, forthcoming, Harvard University Press. Allen is hardly alone, however.
- 2 Richard Rorty, unpubl. MS, 'Putnam and the Relativist Menace', p. 29.
- 3 R. Rorty, 'Holism, Intrinsicity, and Robustness', forthcoming, *Festschrift for Dennett*, p. 29.
- 4 Cf., also, R. Rorty, 'Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth', in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 5. (Hereafter cited as ORT.) Of course, Rorty, following Arthur Fine, more prominently uses this same argument to reject the notion that atoms actually existing, or the truth of 'Atoms exist', might explain our being warranted in asserting 'Atoms exist'.
- 5 See my 'Relativism, Context, and Truth', in *The Monist* 67 (1984), pp. 341-58.
- 6 For variants on these moves see R. Rorty, 'Putnam and the Relativist Menace', op. cit., and, in ORT, op. cit., 'Representation, Social Practice, and Truth' and 'Solidarity or Objectivity?'
- 7 See, e.g., 'Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth', in ORT, op. cit., pp. 127-8.
- 8 R. Rorty, 'Putnam and the Relativist Menace', op. cit., p. 29.
- 9 R. Rorty, *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xxxvii.
- 10 R. Rorty, 'Putnam and the Relativist Menace', op. cit., pp. 18-19.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19.
- 12 R. Rorty, 'Solidarity or Objectivity?', in ORT, op. cit., p. 23.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 14 R. Rorty, 'Representation, Social Practice, and Truth', in ORT, op. cit., p. 151.
- 15 R. Rorty, 'Antirepresentationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Liberalism', in ORT, op. cit., p. 10.
- 16 Wilfrid Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics* (New York: Humanities Press, 1982), p. 101.
- 17 Donald Davidson, 'Thought and Talk', in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 155-70 at p. 159.
- 18 R. Brandom, 'Heidegger's Categories in *Being and Time*', *Monist* 66 (1983), p. 406.
- 19 D. Davidson, op. cit., pp. 169-70.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 R. Rorty, 'Representation, Social Practice, and Truth', in ORT, op. cit., p. 155.
- 23 Michael Williams, 'Coherence, Justification, and Truth', *The Review of Metaphysics* XXXIV (1980), pp. 243-72.
- 24 There is, of course, no guarantee that we or the others will act rationally, in either the endorsing or the cautionary sense. The procedures for warranting assertions current in, e.g., Nazi Germany (everyone's, and Rorty's, favorite example) might preclude the possibility of Nazis considering the possibility that Jews or Liberal Democrats might have something to teach them concerning how to live, or learn, or achieve their goals. Good Nazis may never actually consider this possibility or enter into dialogue with their opponents. And 'rationality' can't hold a gun to their head and force them to do so. The argument I have

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offered, however, gives us reason to think that the Nazis are *irrational*, in the cautionary sense, in failing to do so. For the norms for warranting assertions current in the Nazi community themselves stand under adaptive norms, and these norms counsel that in general it is always wrong to establish conditions under which it is impossible for one to learn from one's opponents. A group might get away with ignoring another group's possible lessons under some circumstances, but it is never *rational* to act in such a way that one can't learn from the other.

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