

Meta-philosophy, Once Again

Chapter 1

Historicist and metaphilosophical self-consciousness, I think,
is the best precaution against barren scholasticism.

– Richard Rorty

I

I shall examine what I shall call meta-philosophy. That is, I will make a *philosophical* examination into what philosophy is, can be, should be, something of what it has been, what the point (if any) of it is and what, if anything, it can contribute to our understanding of and the making sense of our lives, including our lives individually and together, and of the social order in which we live.

Strictly speaking, there can be, as Wittgenstein realized, no philosophy that is meta-philosophy as there, by contrast, can be and is meta-ethics or meta-mathematics. In being philosophy this activity could not be meta to philosophy and still be philosophy. It could not be engaging in the same kind of activity or activities and making the same kind of inquiry that is typical of philosophy but is still meta to philosophy, though something which is now *directed at itself* though still in a philosophical spirit. This is a conceptual impossibility. There can be no philosophy that is meta to philosophy as there can be meta-ethics which is meta to ethics or meta-mathematics which is meta to mathematics. *Philosophizing* about philosophy cannot be an activity that is meta to philosophy, though we could have a psychologizing about philosophy which is meta to philosophy or a decription of philosophy which was meta to philosophy.

Historical, sociological, anthropological, economic, social-geographic, and psychological inquiries into philosophy can be meta to philosophy if they stick strictly to their disciplines or to some crisscross of such disciplines. But they could not coherently be called philosophical. Such a so-called meta-philosophical account, say, a sociology of philosophy, could not be philosophical, meta or otherwise. Such sociological, historical, economic, or other strictly empirical accounts, which are in some way empirically testable as a requirement of their being scientific (formal sciences, e.g., mathematics, aside), might slip up and unwittingly make some philosophical claims or assumptions. Then they would be mixing disciplines or, better put, activities. But that mixing of disciplines *without* an acute awareness of what they were doing (after all, they could deliberately mix activities or disciplines and *perhaps* sometimes that could have a point), would be a flaw in them. Moreover, if they did make such a mix, deliberate or not, that would also be a flaw in their *scientificity*, or at least in the purity of that. (We need that last qualification to take a proper account of much of history.)

However, there are relevant things that these social sciences could say about philosophy without themselves becoming philosophical and some of these things could be useful to philosophers, particularly when they are themselves taking a meta-philosophical turn (*philosophizing* about philosophy). Consider history, sociology, social anthropology or social geography (Harvey 2000). They could, for example, characterize how certain philosophers who during their own times were thought to be path breakers (or whom we even now think of as path breakers) lived and thought in relation to the regent philosophy or dominant social situations and attitudes of their time. They could make us clearly aware of the conditions and the context under which these philosophers thought and wrote. They could acquaint us with the characteristic conceptions, philosophical or otherwise, of the times in which these philosophers lived and wrote and of the matters with which they, in one way or another, had to contend.

Sociology (or economics or anthropology or history or social geography) about philosophy could also make us aware of the class or classes from which philosophers come or their social strata and the pressures on them. These disciplines, where their accounts are accurate, could make us aware of the educational environment from which philosophers came. They could also make us aware of the characteristic conceptions philosophical and otherwise of the time in which these philosophers lived and with which they had to contend in one way or another and of what they thought was reasonable. (To say they were reasonable is to do a philosophical thing; to say these philosophers took them to be reasonable need not be.) Sociologists and the like could make philosophers aware of the educational structures from which philosophers come or came and the like.

Philosophers *might* regard all this as irrelevant (I did not say should). They might, and some do, say we as philosophers are interested in *grounds, not in causes* (Cohen 2008). There is, of course, a distinction between grounds and causes, but we cannot determine what the grounds for many things are without taking note, often careful note, of their causes. Think of our grounds for opposing or for accepting deepwater offshore oil drilling or the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ doctrine in the U.S. military or, to be more general, the grounds for rejecting racism or racial profiling. Some philosophers, G. A. Cohen, for example, will say that causes are relevant to grounding in particular cases, but not for ultimate ones (Cohen 2008). Several things should be said here. First, it is unclear that there are any *such* ultimate grounds as Cohen envisages. Second, if there are, it is unclear *what* they are and whether, if the principles that articulate them (if such there be) are so fact-insensitive that we can, or even more extremely must, ignore the causes for these ultimate grounds or for *the* ultimate ground (if there can only be one) and just appeal to reason or ‘the rule of reason’, as if we knew what we are talking about here. Or is it the case that ultimate grounds can have no causes or, if they do, that their causes are irrelevant to ‘ultimate grounding’? We should be very skeptical concerning such talk and of the need (if any) for it. We should ask ourselves whether

we should limit ourselves to getting reasonable justifications (if we can) of the political and moral problems of our times—the specific ones that dominate our lives. And we should wonder if we can do so without worrying about such ‘ultimates’. I think here we should think seriously about taking such a Deweyian turn. But, that aside, and distinctly, we should carefully reflect on and take to heart Wittgenstein’s remark that it is difficult to recognize the extent of our groundless believing. Whether we go the Deweyian pragmatic way or the Wittgensteinian way or somehow amalgamate them, we should abandon (*pace* Cohen) the familiar rationalist assumption that philosophers are, or should be, interested in grounds and not causes. There is too much a Balkanization of our intellectual life here.

II

I shall now turn to meta-philosophy itself (*philosophy* about philosophy). In doing so, I shall turn first to Richard Rorty because he, by attending more to the history of ideas than either Wittgenstein or Waismann (though all three are major contributors to the meta-philosophy discussion), sets a significant bit of his meta-philosophical account against the background of a story of the emergence of philosophy, its development, and its, he claims, becoming a *transitional genre* to what he calls, in a broad sense of ‘literary’, a *literary culture* (Rorty 2007a). (Does not this way of putting matters point to or suggest something of what he takes to be philosophy’s demise or, more properly, Philosophy’s demise, not philosophy’s, as we shall explain and see later?)

How does this go? Intellectuals, or at least those in the West, Rorty tells us, “have, since the Renaissance, progressed through three stages: they have hoped for redemption first from God, then from philosophy, and now from literature” (Rorty 2007a, 91). Redemption, as he characterized it, is locked into gaining, or at least seeking—incoherently or not—‘*redemptive truth*’. By this he means “a set of beliefs which would end, once and for all, the process of reflection on what to do with ourselves” (Rorty 2007a, 90).¹ Religion, or more precisely monotheistic religions

of salvation (Jewish, Christian or Islamic faiths), “offers hope for redemption through entering into a new relation to a supremely powerful non-human person” (Rorty 2007a, 91). Such a person is not only powerful, but supremely good and wise, an omniscient and omnipotent ‘super-person’ who can give significance and purpose to our lives. These religions of salvation have somewhat varying creeds (both internally within each one and between them), sometimes with (as with Quakers or Unitarians) rather minimal creeds. However, the creeds are not what is of central concern for such religious people. What is of supreme importance for them, if they are genuinely religious persons, is their affective relation to God. Rorty has it, not implausibly, that it is their personal relation to God that is of supreme importance to them. Intellectuals (as they came in some form into being) some, at first many, remained religious in this sense and some still do, but most over time have come (whether religious or not) to set aside or to downplay the importance and necessity of *such* a religious orientation, such a passionate, as Rorty calls it, non-cognitive relation with God (Rorty 2007a). Fewer and fewer intellectuals, as time goes by, turn to religion *in such a way*, or at least exclusively in such a way. They came to turn to philosophy, religious philosophy or not. Those who remain religious will *rationalize* their religion. They may in some sense keep their creedal beliefs, but they, in one way or another, will require a philosophical backup for them, a philosophical justification.

For philosophy, however, “true belief is of the essence: redemption by philosophy would consist in acquiring a set of beliefs that represent things in the one way they truly are” (Rorty 2007a, 91). Rorty contends, as does Gianni Vattimo as well, that such a philosophical belief has been undermined in the Twentieth and Twenty First centuries for most intellectuals; and indeed for most sensitive, reflective and reasonably educated persons (in the West at least), religion is becoming somewhat more problematic (Vattimo 2004; see Rorty’s Forward as well.) As time goes by, there are more and more intellectuals who are disenchanted concerning claims to redemptive truth, either from religion or from philosophy or from some blend of them or, for that matter,

increasingly from science. And this, Rorty claims, is as it should be. Intellectuals, he continues, are switching to literature or, more adequately put, to what is, in a wide sense, literary culture where both philosophy and religion are themselves seen as exclusively literary or more generally as cultural artifacts. In such a culture, we are offered redemption, Rorty has it, through making acquaintance with and becoming attuned to as great a variety of human beings as possible with their cultural creations: novels, plays, films, poems, songs, paintings. Here again, as initially with religion, “true belief may be of little importance, but redemption is” (Rorty 2007a, 91).² However, redemption of this broadly literary sort, Rorty has it, comes in different ways than in either religion or philosophy.

A literary culture construes both religion and philosophy, while distinguishing them, as themselves being parts of literary culture which subsumes them both. Religion extensively morphs into philosophy and then philosophy (with or without religion) morphs into a literary culture. Buddhism and Kant’s transcendental philosophy are plainly radically different activities, and they are both different from *Anna Karenina*. But novels, such as one of Tolstoy’s or Flaubert’s masterpieces, more than moral treatises, are becoming our principal sources of moral understanding: George Elliot more than John Stuart Mill. That is the way the *zeitgeist*, with its literary culture, is going.³

Rather than an attunement to an infinite person—an ‘infinite individual’ (if that makes sense) in whom we place our trust and give our love—in philosophy we move towards a belief in a set of practices which supposedly yields not only our attunements to life but the one true description and explanation of the world, the ‘really real’, *the truth* about how things really are in themselves. We have contrastingly, in a literary culture, religion and philosophy becoming themselves just cultural artifacts along with a lot of other cultural artifacts (novels, films, art, music) which answer to our various needs, our orientations, and that which give some enjoyment to our lives and surcease to our sorrows. But they are no longer taken to be sources of ultimate truth or

ultimate reality. Such notions increasingly disappear from the view of intellectuals. We come, more and more, to treat our religious and philosophical narratives *just as narratives*. Moreover, the more and varied we have of those narratives, the better off we are. We should not remain, for example, fixated on one religious narrative project, neither Christian ones of salvation nor Buddhist ones of inner enlightenment. As artifacts, they are just there to answer to, or fail to answer to, our needs and interests. Moreover, if one answers to our needs and interests, the other narratives do not have to fail to do so. They may and indeed do answer to the needs and interests of others. We humans have varied interests and needs that can be met in a great variety of ways. We must recognize we are cultural animals and that cultures vary.

The more and the more varied such artifacts there are, the better. Whether Islamic ones of salvation or Hindu ones of inner enlightenment or the Icelandic sagas, the *Republic*, *Summa Theologica*, *Meditations*, *Pensées*, *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Phenomenology of Mind*, *The Tractatus*, or *The Dialectics of the Enlightenment*, all are treated and viewed as cultural artifacts along with novels, plays, poems and films to be read or viewed or listened to and pondered often, engaging our imaginations and yielding enjoyment as well as enlightenment. And the more and more varied, the better; the more our imaginations are exercised. As I have just put it, it reeks of Western bias. We should abhor the remark that one famous English philosopher was alleged to have made—I do not know how reliable the claim is—in reply to a question about Indian philosophy. He was said to have replied that the only light that comes from the East is the sun. *Some* of that area is principally Moslem, but there is also a rich philosophical tradition and literary culture from Arab lands otherwise situated or, to mention another place that has been neglected by world culture, there is the Caribbean. I do not know as much about these cultural trends as I would like to but I know enough to know that they should not be neglected or patronized. (See Amartya Sen, Tariq Ali, Edward Said and Timothy Brennan in his *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*.)

None of them—Western or Eastern—are to be taken as vehicles of ‘ultimate truth’ or as yielding ‘Ultimate Reality’ or some *final* wisdom or *the truth*. None will yield the last word, that truth about life, that final and complete conception of how the world should be and how society should be organized—the sort of thing that Arthur Koestler throughout his life so desperately sought (Acherson 2010). Even if we immerse ourselves in many such cultural traditions, they will not give us *the* truth about life—for there is no such thing and people immersed in a literary culture have long abandoned such a futile hope as have Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo. What we can achieve, instead, is an enhanced sense of the vast number of purposes and alternative ways of living and viewing life that there are. And we can come to feel the pull that many of them, though surely not for any one of us all of them. We will be in situations where we, the reader, viewer, listener will have, whatever the author’s intentions, no belief, where we have morphed into a literary culture, as Rorty describes it, that one of them will finally show us the really right way to go so as to be the product of the very best possible reasoning or of the argument with the greatest claim to soundness or of the most adequate conceptualization or the one true depiction. Instead, these cultural artifacts, taken together, will enhance our imaginations and our sensitivity to things around us. As we read more and more, listen more and more, view more and more, appreciate more and more, and ponder life in these ways our imaginations will be enlarged and nuanced and become sophisticated as will our sensitivities and cultural understandings. With this enlargement we will increasingly enrich our lives and have a better understanding of our world. No ‘final truth’, whatever that is, is on offer, but just what I said: we will have a better understanding of our world. And that will include some contextualized claims to truth. We will never get ‘a best understanding of the world’, but we can gain new and broader understandings of it and this can go on indefinitely unless, for one reason or another, we become caught in a new Dark Age with a breakdown of civilization, say, one caused by our climate nihilism or a new and vast world war.

This literary culture, Rorty plausibly has it, is replacing or transforming, at least among intellectuals, philosophy, much as philosophy once replaced or transformed religion (though ‘replacing’ would be the more accurate description for philosophy). Philosophy now remains little more than a marginal cultural artifact. It no longer has the cultural weight that it had in the times of Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Hegel or even that to a certain extent it had during Dewey’s time. As philosophy (what Rorty calls big P Philosophy, e.g., metaphysics and the like) is increasingly marginalized; it becomes, he claims, more and more transitional to a literary culture. What is left of it remains mired in a little specialist discipline—a discipline that has an increasingly localized specialized interest. Moreover, it is even within that specialized discipline breaking into sub-disciplines that often have very little, if anything, in common with each other. Rorty, however, is not *merely* making a historical or sociological observation and prediction, but is saying that this is the way that things are going and *should* go, though he might get a little nervous about the categorical sound of the ‘should’.

Rorty is giving us to understand that this morphing is the most reasonable way to view how things are transpiring and that, like religion and philosophy were in their days redemptive, now redemption rests, if it so rests at all, in a literary culture. That itself seems to me to be a philosophical claim with all the difficulties—including that of pragmatic contradiction—that it raises for Rorty. However, this fits well with Rorty’s rejection of Philosophical claims as not necessarily incoherent but *passé* (Engel, Rorty, McCuaig 2007, 32-38; 57-58; 65-66).⁴

Rorty could respond to the charge of pragmatic contradiction by saying that to say something is redemptive *tout court* is to give expression to an illusion. ‘Redemption’ so conceived is to say something that cannot be coherently asserted and to speak of ‘redemptive truth’ is to do the same. We have no way to ascertain that such claims are more reasonable than their denials or of ascertaining whether we should just remain thoroughly agnostic on such issues. That this morphing is going on does not show for its morph, either that it is more reasonable than its

alternatives, or that it is even reasonable, period. Moreover, Rorty is in no position to make or to deny his normative claim about reasonability. But it is evident from what he has just said that he has not shown that he is free of the charge of pragmatic contradiction. He needs a different argument here or a different showing that no argument is necessary. But this is not to say or even suggest that it cannot be done.

Suppose Rorty sticks to his guns and reiterates that to say that something is *redemptive, tout court*, is to give expression to an illusion and that the very idea of 'redemptive truth' is another illusion. But, it can be reiterated, how do we, on Rorty's own way of looking at things, ascertain that? Isn't that itself to make a Philosophical claim? It certainly looks like it. And given his own rejection of big P Philosophy, how can he be in a position to ascertain that (Rorty 1982, xiii-xxi)? Redemption can only be for him, and indeed for all of us, culturally determinate—in our time and place, contextualized by a literary culture, just as it has been previously contextualized by a religious culture or a philosophical culture. There can be no redemption, *tout court*. Redemption, after all, is only in the eye of the beholder. It is clearly culturally dependent, or *at least* centrally partially culturally dependent. That is all it can be for Rorty and rightly so. Moreover, he still faces the charge of pragmatic contradiction. It is such a situation that prompts Vattimo, a close ally of Rorty, to speak, misleadingly I think, of nihilism (Vattimo 2004).

The situation is this: the belief in religious and philosophical redemption has as a matter of fact begun to run dry for an increasing number of intellectuals and sometimes, as well, for other reflective people. However, that is not a philosophical claim, but *a historical and empirical* one. When we look at our cultures they all seem, in large measure and fundamentally, to be form-of-life dependent as indeed all cultures have been. That appears at least to be something that is empirically true. When we take a non-evasive look, this seems, at least, as true for us as it is true for others. Just observe how things go. This is all we get when we reason, even when we reason together, about anything substantive. The above remarks are not Philosophical remarks, namely,

metaphysical, epistemological, methodological remarks or even meta-ethical, normative ethical *theory* or normative political *theory* remarks about how things *must* be: claims to an absolute perspective. They, however, are interpretive as many descriptions are. Still they are empirical matters there for non-evasive observation and examination. But that does not require Philosophy or sometimes even philosophy.

It is important to remember that I am, as Rorty and Vattimo are, and many others are, a *historicist*. But that is not to espouse a silly relativism (not a pleonasm) saying that one belief is as good as another, e.g., 'I prefer kindness in the world and some other people prefer concentration camps and torture centers. It is all a matter of taste or of what you just happen to prefer.' "There is," such a silly relativism goes, "no way ever of saying one judgment is better than another. All we can do is express our preferences and preferences differ" (Rorty 2006a, 126).

Historical relativism, by contrast, claims that our beliefs, or at least many of them, including the most crucial of them, are time and place dependent. We, to echo Hegel, cannot overleap history; we can attain no Absolute perspective, no culturally transcendent substantive Archimedean point which categorically just lays out how it is and must be and should be. We do not even have a coherent understanding of what such things would or could be. Accurate description and careful reflection, *pace* Rorty, is what we need and all that we can have. We cannot escape contingency. We can say, but cannot validate in some culturally and historically free way, how things not only are but must be and should be categorically. Accurate description and careful reflection on it, sometimes with causal explanations, is all we can have. Here we have a TINA. But in saying this we do not make a transcendental or quasi-transcendental claim or something that somehow is beyond contingency. We just make a historically grounded empirical claim while recognizing that like all empirical claims that claim, at least logically speaking, *might* be false. But that is not to say that it *is* false or even likely to be false. However, it will be claimed, there is still no possibility of validating the general claim Rorty has been making without pragmatic contradiction. He is making a claim

about a *historical* relativism, a historical contextualism that he just asserts to be empirically true without validation on his part. There is—or so it seems—no possibility of validating what Rorty has been claiming without asserting it as a Philosophical claim and that involves him in a pragmatic contradiction which means there is no validating it, full stop.

Pragmatic contradiction aside, and I think avoidably as the last two paragraphs show, it seems to me a mistake for Rorty to claim that there is redemption in a literary culture. But whatever its status is, it is not that of an Absolute claim. He does say, as we have seen, that ‘redemptive truth’ is a term “for a set of beliefs which would end, once and for all, the process of reflection on what to do with ourselves” (Rorty 2007a, 90). But our engagement with the world runs against that. Moreover, there is for humanity, as Rorty well realizes, no such once and for all. That is the very thing that a literary culture sets its face against. Moreover, literary culture, with its ever expanding horizons is, Rorty contends, a repeated search for something new, something that would enhance our imaginations, sensitivity and historical awareness. But someone with such an awareness might be wary—very wary—of speaking of redemptive truth or even of hoping for it or thinking it might, just might, be possible or consistently thinkable. But she might well think of what she was striving to achieve as providing the redemptive virtue in the value of the struggle to achieve something of worth. In dropping the idea of ‘redemptive truth’ increased awareness could increase insight into the life around us as well as into our own lives and that practice would be redemptive.⁵

Rorty argues against both the very idea of ‘redemptive truth’ and a claim to redemption without truth (Rorty 2007a, 73-88, 89-104). But could someone immersed in a literary culture abandon the very idea of ‘redemptive truth’ and any redemption once and for all while still reasonably retaining some culturally determinate idea of redemption? That very much depends on what that idea is. But until such a conceptualization is sorted out it remains problematic what if anything could be redemptive, even if we forget about redemptive truth. But how could—or

could—a literary culture be redemptive or any part of it be redemptive as Rorty characterizes ‘redemptive’? How can a ‘once and for all’ which just goes with, for Rorty, the idea of redemptive, be a real option in a world which has abandoned the very idea of an escape from contingency, a culture which has fallibilism deeply ingrained in it? We should ask if redemption as Rorty characterized could come to anything coherent in such a world. And is there for us any reasonable or even coherent alternative to such a world? Redemption for us, as Rorty characterized it, is not something that squares with a literary culture or indeed a thoroughly modernizing culture or, if you will, a postmodernizing culture. We are, or at least I am, at sea about what redemption so characterized is supposed to be in a literary culture and in our disenchanting, thoroughly secular world. And we have no compelling or even reasonably sustainable idea of how to re-enchant it or, for many of us, even the desire to do so. Would it not be better to say that when we have morphed first out of religion and then out of philosophy and gone to literary culture then we have abandoned the very idea of redemption, at least as Rorty characterized it? And, as we have seen, while it is not the only way, and perhaps not the only reasonable way, it is an attractive way for people caught up in our modern world. From a literary culture perspective there is neither a need for, nor the possibility of, an escape from contingency: to gain a view of reality *sub specie aeternitatis*. We will gain this neither in Aquinas’s theistic world nor Spinoza’s naturalistic one. Literary intellectuals, where they do not have much of a trace of the previous *philosophical* culture, have given up such concerns and live, happily or unhappily, in a wonderful variety of literature, art and music and with that an enrichment of their imaginations and a deepening of their sensitivities. We can, and should, such intellectuals would say, ignore claims about what reality just *must* be and even, unlike philosophers, ignore attempts to refute such metaphysical claims. They are best just ignored or, if we go Cavellish, treated as just cultural artifacts and with that we turn from Rorty’s robust and *perhaps* persuasive idea of redemption. It doesn’t square, if you will, with that kind of sophistication. And we cannot go back to the desperate imaginings and a claiming to a grasp of

some 'saving ineffable ultimate truths' that reason cannot know. That, whatever, if at all, its emotional appeal, is to immerse oneself in incoherency (Berlin 1999; 2007). Contemporary literary intellectuals just do not play such redemptive language-games, live in such practices, except *sometimes just*, for some, as imaginative fun. Being part of such a literary culture, it might contestedly be said, is redemption or emancipation enough, if you insist on calling it either. But that shouldn't be insisted on. Indeed, that is reductive and misleading. Moreover, to do so just comes to an arbitrary and misleading persuasive redefinition of 'redemption'. But is this too rationalistic and too focused on intellectual elitism?

People so attuned to and immersed in a literary culture do not take seriously and do not concern themselves with the belief "that the life that cannot be successfully argued for is not worth living or the belief that persistent argument will lead inquirers to the same set of beliefs" (Rorty 2007a, 92). They are not caught up, as Kierkegaard put it, in such Socratism. Literature (literary culture), insofar as it is not still contaminated by philosophy or by religious enthusiasm (think of Georg Hamann), will have neither of these beliefs. Rorty at least seems to be saying we have no need for such beliefs or to be concerned with them, except, perhaps, if we are concerned to characterize them (as Berlin was) as are historians of such ideas. After all, an atheist could be steeped in the history of Catholic, Calvinist or Islamic culture as Tariq Ali exemplifies for Islamic culture (Ali 2002). But the crucial point here is that people can be immersed, without mixed trailings of a philosophical or religious culture, but still knowledgeable about them. They have no need for trying to ascertain the cogency of that idea of redemption, except perhaps to understand it as a historical phenomenon. They have no need for a redemptive relation to the world. Wittgenstein will not even accept that. He would say that there can have no such understanding of it. Where the Romantics thought they had a grasp of ineffable truth, Wittgenstein thought we could only have an inarticulate desire. We are sometimes forced, he has it, to in effect just emit a groan, though he respected some of those groanings. But that interest of Wittgenstein's is very distant

from any cognitive interest, including a historian's interest in it, as long as she sticks to her vocation. But Wittgenstein has no need to make religion reasonable or for that matter unreasonable. And he thinks it is utter folly to try, as John Wisdom did, to bring such discussions up against 'the bar of reason' (Wisdom 1965, 1-22).

Literary intellectuals do not believe in anything like 'cognitive redemption' or, more realistically and more cautiously, self-aware literary intellectuals do not. Novels and films have an important role in such a culture (a literary culture) which, Rorty claims, has become with us the dominant culture of intellectuals (something that Antonio Gramsci said was a growing species). The novel and the film, not the treatise on ethics or a sociological or anthropological account, "has become the central vehicle of moral instruction" (Rorty 2007a, 94).⁶ Human beings, particularly when viewed over space and time, are very diverse; their common core is thin and insufficiently instructive to give us much of a guide as to how we ought to live or structure our social world. So much for natural law or any of its hermeneutical children (Nielsen 1991, 40-99).⁷

Rorty's ideal of a literary intellectual, and mine as well, is someone who "thinks the more books you read, the more ways of being human you have considered, the more you reflect on such things, the more human you will become—the less tempted by dreams of an escape from time and chance, the more convinced you will become that we humans have nothing to rely on save one another" (Rorty 2007a, 94). The great virtue of the literary culture, Rorty has it, is that it tells young intellectuals that the only source of redemption (what, I think, he should call instead 'emancipatory enlightenment') is the human imagination, and that this fact should occasion pride rather than despair" (Rorty 2007a, 94-95).⁸ I would say, rather, that should involve action and engagement, not Rorty's self-described *quietism* (Rorty 2006b, 374). But here perhaps we both are becoming rather too decisionist.

Without philosophy, in spite of what I have said, is it the case that *perhaps* we can reasonably speak of redemption without redemptive truth? We cannot speak plausibly, or even

coherently, of redemptive truth. But in speaking of redemption without redemptive truth, it should come to a kind of orientation to life, a finding of a robust and finely attuned sense of life, without religion or philosophy. It might even come to finding *a* (not *the*) truth about life. Why could that not be redemptive? Perhaps to say so involves an implicit *persuasive* definition? But so what? Rather, we—so the account goes—gain an enhanced understanding and sensitivity and come to affectively relate to other human beings with what is often taken to be an empathetic understanding of very different ways of living and very different attunements to life in different conditions, in different times and climes, with people of different convictions. Either by sustained contact with these different people and/or by soaking ourselves in their literature, art, film and music, we can gain something of this. To gain these kinds of understanding—what has sometimes been called an empathetic understanding—requires no knowledge of redemptive truth or of many (indeed any) philosophical texts, moral treatises, though some of them—Spinoza or Nietzsche, for example—may sometimes be important to put in our repertoire, but not so centrally as the great novels or films of the world. We can, however, in gaining such an understanding, have lost the very idea of redemptive *truth* or never have had it. We can get on—and get on here well—without religion or philosophy. We can also without them give meaning to life; give, that is, sense to our lives. We can by our actions, our ways of living, give an ethical meaning to life (Dworkin 2011). But we must, to adequately gain enlightenment, come to have an empathetic understanding of ourselves, of people and of peoples. This requires in almost all cases an appreciation of the sometimes inchoate and typically desperate struggles people sometimes have to engage in, or think they have to, to make sense of their lives and their world. Here understanding the Romantics, obscure and sometimes obscurantist as they are, may be important (Berlin 1999). In gaining such an understanding (of Romantics, including why we might revise them), we may with luck also gain a clear or clearer understanding of our own situation and the struggle it involves and how it relates to the struggle of very different others and of in what ways, if at all, it becomes a common struggle.

When we become immersed in these matters and when we reflect clearheadedly and realistically on what we are doing, we should come to recognize, or put less moralistically will come to realize, that philosophy—big P Philosophy, that is—is becoming increasingly marginal and now it should be seen as a transitional genre to something else. For Rorty, as we have seen, it is to a literary culture. For me, it is that too, *but it is also and very importantly transitional to an emancipatory social theory and social science*—something that Rorty abjures (Rorty 2007c; Nielsen 2007).

III

In this section I want to set out, comment on and develop certain characteristics of Rorty's conception of how philosophy is a transitional genre and bring to the fore its meta-philosophical import. Rorty remarks that in the 19th Century those who took metaphysics seriously were either idealists (espousing what our philosophy textbooks call 'objective idealism', not 'subjective idealism'; Hegel, not Berkeley) or materialists of various kinds (now routinely called physicalists). Philosophers then were in a situation where Hegel, pretty much for the first time in philosophy, taught us to attend closely to history: philosophy, for him, was our time held in thought. There is, for him, no overleaping history (historicism) and philosophy paints its gray on gray only when its form of life has grown old. Philosophy, that is, if Hegel is on the mark, is always too late to show us the way forward. *In that way* it can never be liberating; it can never be, at least *in that way*, redemptive. Hegel also erected a grand though obscure metaphysical system that soon collapsed and was ridiculed as buffoonery by figures as different as Kierkegaard and Russell. Hegel created a grand speculative system that was just that. The historicist side of it is to Marx's historical materialism—neither a metaphysical theory nor any kind of philosophical one—much as Herodotus was to Thucydides. (See here G. A. Cohen, 2008.) Marx and Thucydides gave us bits of historical science rather than a speculative mythology. As things played out, for those who would

do metaphysics, materialism (physicalism) won out. It became the only metaphysical game in town.

However, by contrast Nietzsche and Kierkegaard prominently in the 19th Century, and the logical positivists, Wittgenstein, Waismann (less clearly and consistently so than Wittgenstein) and Rorty (though in different ways than Wittgenstein) in the 20th Century, reject metaphysics as having no redemptive power, as yielding no insight of any kind and, Rorty has it, at best as being a waste of time (Rorty 2007b, 32-45).

Matters do not end there. There may be something, even after the demise of metaphysics, in Hegel's way of looking at things, with his stress on historicism. Against that Rorty, historicist that he is, rephrases Kierkegaard's point strikingly.

[I]f Hegel had been able to stop thinking that he had given us redemptive truth, and had claimed instead to have given us something *better* than redemptive truth—namely a way of holding all the previous products of the human imagination together in a single vision—he would have been the first philosopher to admit that a better cultural product than philosophy had come on the market. He would have been the first self-consciously to replace religion with philosophy. But instead Hegel presented himself (at least part of the time) as having discovered Absolute Truth, and men like Royce took his idealism with a seriousness which now strikes us as both endearing and ludicrous (Rorty 2007a, 97).

The redemptive ideal did not die with the demise of idealism; even with some materialists or naturalists (physicalists, if you will) the redemptive ideal did not die. These materialist metaphysicians thought that their metaphysics would tell us what the world was really like and provide a thoroughly naturalistic morality as well that will tell us how we should live. Some naturalists (Quine, for example) not going that way concluded that the philosophy of natural science was all the philosophy that philosophy would ever need. But contrariwise, for these materialist metaphysicians, they stuck with the Philosophical tradition. Philosophy had almost always taught that an account that bound everything together into a coherent whole would thereby

also give us a redemptive whole. Going with the flow, most materialist metaphysics of the 19th Century and some of the 20th Century thought that. In that vein, even materialist metaphysicians, though in a disguised and unacknowledged way, retained the idea of redemptive truth. It just went, so it was often thought, but not by Quine, with the very idea of philosophy. (20th Century classical pragmatist naturalism, e.g., Sidney Hook and Ernest Nagel, though again in an unacknowledged way, went that way too. They were not scientistic, Quineian or otherwise.)

Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Waismann and Rorty in various ways put this in question. Indeed, it might be said that they put such redemptive truthism as well as scientism to bed for an eternal rest. For them, natural science did not—and did not try to—tell us how to live our lives or what would be a good or just society, let alone a good world. But that is not to deny, what surely is so, that without natural science our lives would be much worse than they need be. Natural science in various obvious ways is of great instrumental value. But with the creation of nuclear weapons, among other things, it also sometimes has great instrumental disvalue. Think of its relation to global warming and other elements of our ecological situation. Without natural science we would never have these problems, though this is not to deny that we could have natural science and be without them. However, the way natural science has been applied, it is an instrument, even a source, of evil as well as of good. How we should balance these things is not clear. Yet, as Rorty has put it, “the free play of the imagination is possible only because of the substructure literal minded people have built. No artisans, no poets” (Rorty 2007a, 98). Natural scientists and their offshoots—engineers, plumbers, surgeons, pilots, well diggers, pipefitters, carpenters, dentists, etc.—can be and usually are of enormous value to us. Imagine what it was like to have an operation before the invention of anesthesia. Think of amputations, for example. But however useful science is, it will not tell us how we, either as individuals or collectively in societies, should live, though sometimes it is helpful in determining this. Redemption and ‘redemptive truth’,

even assuming there is or even could be such a thing, is not in natural science's sights, though this is not to deny that instrumentally it has often been of value.

However, is social science any better or indeed any different than natural science in this respect? Perhaps it has even been worse. To come at this first indirectly, recall that I, like Rorty, think that philosophy is a transitional genre, though I think it is a transition—or at least should be—to social science and social theory more generally as well as to a literary culture. Rorty thinks that is a mistake and stands his ground about it only being transitional instead to a literary culture (Rorty 2007c; Nielsen 2007). I now have come to think it is, and importantly so, *transitional to both* literary culture and social science. The literary culture side would be inadequate on its own for our coming to grips with the world as well as would the social science side without literary culture be lacking for coming to grips with our world. Literary culture gives us narratives, sometimes splendid, perplexing, compelling, thought provoking and challenging narratives. Even some obscurantist Romantics did this well (Berlin 1999; 2007). But we must be wary of what anthropologists have called *just so stories*: stories that are sometimes compellingly narrated but sometimes empirically in extensive error. To ascertain that takes empirical research and observation, but such observation is not necessarily something to be utilized in imaginative literature or in other Romantic thought. It is sometimes valuable as it was used by naturalistic novelists such as Zola or Sinclair. But imaginative literature need not be off the mark when it is not so used. Zola and Sinclair were indeed famous examples of writers who carefully researched and relied on research concerning the social situations of which they wrote. But not Joyce, Maugham, Roy, Proust or even George Elliot. They wrote out of their own experience without social science checks. Such checks are not a requirement of novelists or dramatists or of a literary culture. Still, it would be useful if we could know whether, for example, Chaucer accurately reflected his time and place, or Turgenev or Dumas theirs. It is not that literary artists are on trial, but we would like to

know if Zola's picture of the miners' situation in *Germinal* was the way miners at that time were situated and lived.

Some novelists have a backup of social science (most particularly of historical) knowledge and indeed often historical accuracy is essential to their work. A striking contemporary novel is Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones* (though even there, manifestly not all parts of it are realistic or seek to be). Moreover, history cannot be just speculation or narrative with only verisimilitude. It must have a contextually sensitive warranted assertability. But again literature, even naturalistic literature, is not history; though for many of us it is our principal source of our historical knowledge.⁹ (But here we should be wary. Don't identify that with truth, though sometimes for some of us it is the nearest thing we can get by way of understanding and justification of historical truth claims.)

Something can be warrantably assertable and false and something can be true and not (at least at the time) be warrantably assertable. But in philosophy, as well as in social science and social theory more generally, there is a desire to get our narratives right—having them say something that is true or probably true rather than what is false or probably false or so incoherent that it could not be ascertained whether it is either true or false. Rorty is right that there is no history and context independent notion of something being so. There is *pace* Thomas Nagel no perspectiveless way of construing things anymore than there is a last word. But even these very claims cannot be set out as beyond question. But we can and should aspire to get something as right as we can. Leave 'eternal truths' to the religious. We often, but not always, want verisimilitude in literature—particularly in novels, novellas, short stories, and plays. However, even if a realistic or naturalistic novelist (Zola, Dreiser, Sinclair, Flaubert, Roy, Steinbeck, Dos Passos, Harkness, or Littell) got some factual detail about the world they were writing about wrong, it would not be a serious flaw, or perhaps not be a flaw at all, in their writing. But it must generally be the case, for someone writing in that genre, that she be responsible to the facts of the situation of

which she is writing, but not necessarily to every detail. They can and do have, of course, characters who are not actual historical agents and they will as well quite properly portray events which did not actually occur as long as they have verisimilitude, are faithful to the situation. If Tolstoy's characterization of the armies of Napoleon occupying Moscow was generally inaccurate, *War and Peace* would, to put it mildly, be flawed. If Melville's depiction of whaling life coming out of Nantucket was unrealistic, *Moby Dick* would be flawed. Some of its characters and elements, such as the great white whale itself or Captain Ahab, are larger than life and that can still be artistically fine, but it would not be fine if the general facts of whaling life were distant from what *Moby Dick* portrays. Zola, Sinclair, Steinbeck, Dos Passos, Roy, and Harkness are paradigm realistic (naturalistic) novelists, and of these at least Zola and Sinclair made meticulous investigations concerning what they were planning to write about. That notwithstanding, if many things were off the mark, not factual or reflected ignorance of important matters, then a naturalistic work would be importantly flawed. Take, for example, Jonathan Little's massive novel *The Kindly Ones*. If its account of the Third Reich and of what went on at the Eastern Front and in Berlin had serious historical errors, his novel, given the type of novel that it is, would be worthless. If his account of the battle around Stalingrad or the murder of Jews and Communists was not on the whole historically accurate, the novel would be deeply flawed. As it is, there are many deliberately fantastic, bizarre things not meant to be at all realistic in the novel. I am not confident that they add anything. But the author surely intends them to do so. They are things that could not have happened and that is plainly so in the narrative and in keeping with the author's intentions. Whether they add or subtract from the novel's power is arguable. But, to repeat, if the main body of the novel—given the kind of novel that it is—was not generally historically accurate, then it would be worthless. The same thing is true of Tolstoy, Melville, and Zola.

Social science accounts themselves (including history), to be genuinely scientific, have to be metaphysics-free and fantasy-free. No just-so stories are allowable. Moreover, they cannot be

dependent in their structure and content on meta-ethics, normative ethical theories, normative political theories, or epistemology. A social scientist, as long as she sticks to her vocation, will neither be a redemptionist nor a robust moralizer—not even in a subtle sense—or perhaps no moralizer at all. But she need not be a quietist either. She will typically (but not always) have a vision of what the society she is writing about can and should be or could and should have been. But that should swing free from, stand independently of, her actual social science. It cannot be a strict part of it. However, it, as well as her political and economic beliefs and convictions, can guide her investigations and determine which hypothesis she will choose to investigate or what she is trying by interpretive empirical descriptions to throw light upon. But she can't, to be faithful to her vocation, just make up things, no matter how realistically, as she goes along. She must, as well, consider hypotheses which, if verified, would falsify her claims (Passmore 1966). Here she differs from a novelist, even a realist or naturalistic novelist, who has the license to make up things as long as they have verisimilitude. Her hypotheses, to be genuine hypotheses, must be testable and sometimes her hypotheses and claims may be shown to be false. The testability claim is always relevant. We philosophers, if we are serious about our deliberations and ruminations, will also want our narratives not to be just-so stories or *just* sentimental or gripping tales; not to be just speculative products, even if products of powerful imaginings. We will want truth as well as vivid imaginings, though, respecting fallibilistic constraints, what we *take* to be true is what is taken to be the most warrantably assertable of the relevant claims.

However, now consider historians. Such magisterial historians as Eric Hobsbawm, Perry Anderson and Tony Judt draw moral conclusions from their historical narratives, but they are backed up by historical facts. Their narratives are not just-so stories. But they are, of course, fallibilistic (Hobsbawm 1995; Anderson 2009; Judt 2005)). Realistic fictional writings, as we have seen, are not so bound by that or centrally concerned with warranted assertability, but they must be respectful of the world they are characterizing. Philosophy, by contrast, is typically concerned

not just with verisimilitude as realistic literature is, but with truth. Where that concern is strong, as in pragmatism, for example, it will morph into what in fact is social science, whatever it calls itself. But where it is less fixated on that, it may morph, as it does for Rorty, into literary culture. But it can morph into both and we do not have to decide which is the more important morphing. For me, literature and film mean a lot, but social science, from history to social anthropology, social geography and sociology, mean still more as my aim is to get things as close to being right as possible. My concern most centrally is with warranted assertability.

IV

I turn now to Wittgenstein and to what he is saying in what I will call his meta-philosophy. He does not place, as does Rorty, his remarks in a historical context, though, of course, they have such a context, as does every philosopher's. His own philosophy or, if you will, his anti-philosophy Philosophy (Philosophical rejectionism), may in reality be as historicist as Rorty's. Wittgenstein's meta-philosophy, or indeed his philosophy in general, is so situated in a time and place that we could well call it historicist, though Wittgenstein himself would not call it so. Yet Wittgenstein's reaction to the work of Frege, Russell and the logical positivists and his hostility to scientism (something that, as we have noted, Quine proudly champions) indirectly reflects his Viennese culture, though this is most pronouncedly so in much of his latter work. Yet Wittgenstein writes as if his philosophy and philosophy in general was ageless, as if he were in there discussing with Plato, Augustine or Descartes (though explicitly he does little of that). But some of his examples reflect that. (Think, for example, of Augustine on language learning, time or memory.) But, of course, that is not the way it is. With his utilization of the notions of practices and forms of life, his work is in fact historicist.

I came across Wittgenstein's work late in my PhD studies—the *Tractatus* never had any influence on me—when I was working, after an undergraduate tour of Marx (on my own and not

from my teachers) and the classical pragmatists (principally Dewey, and again largely on my own). In my graduate work, I studied philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap and Hans Reichenbach and, even more extensively, the maverick pragmatist C. I. Lewis, who thought of himself, in contrast to all the other pragmatists, as a 'conceptual pragmatist'. Late in the day for me, a professor of mine showed me a manuscript copy of Wittgenstein's *Blue Book* (it hadn't been published yet nor had his *Philosophical Investigations*). I read it in one sitting, utterly absorbed and as if the scales were falling from my eyes. This led me in my last years of graduate study to doing philosophy in a different way and affected the writing of my dissertation, part of which remains in my *Why Be Moral?*

I never became a Wittgenstein scholar though, in the work I did concerning religion I studied him closely and was deeply influenced by him and by some Wittgensteinians, particularly Peter Winch and Norman Malcolm. In respect to political and social philosophy, Wittgenstein led me to be more contextualist, historicist, holist, perspectivist and suspicious of 'grand theory' of any kind, Marxian though I am. And this plainly is no small influence (see *my* work in Nielsen and Phillips 2005). But, vis-à-vis what I call his meta-philosophy, I was great influenced by him. Along with in effect his setting aside metaphysics, epistemology, meta-ethics, normative ethical and normative political theory, I have taken on his therapeutic attitude toward philosophy. I see (following Wittgenstein) philosophy as analogous to a disease which we need to cure ourselves of by defogging ourselves of what are, in a broad sense, metaphysical views caused by our entanglements in our language when we try to generalize about it. The cure is to come around to clearly seeing how we actually use our language and, in doing so, we will come to see how in philosophizing we, again and again, misunderstand the actual use of our language and, with that, our thought gets fogged. This leads us astray when we try to philosophize, generating various disquietudes.

Georg von Wright and Anthony Kenney, who have forgotten more about Wittgenstein than I know, have convinced me that this is, though, the dominant motif in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy—what I call his anti-Philosophy philosophy (Nielsen 1994). There are other jarring, perhaps even conflicting, motifs as well. A reading again of sections 89-133 of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, his *The Bigtypiscript* (pp. 300-18), and selections from his texts made by Anthony Kenney for *The Wittgenstein Reader* (2nd edition, pp.46-69 and 245-56) will confirm this. However, this therapeutic side is the dominant side of his conception of philosophy and something I have appropriated for myself. I am, as far as conceptualizing philosophy is concerned, a Wittgensteinian therapist. I shall set this account against what Rorty calls and defends as pragmatic Wittgensteinianism (Rorty 2007a, 161). Pragmatist that I am (not a Wittgensteinian pragmatist), I am, with *some* ambivalence, a Wittgensteinian therapist.

I will first set out some pithy, brilliant, often metaphorical characterizations of what Wittgenstein means in seeing his philosophical work as therapeutic.

1. "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness" (*PI*, 255).
2. "A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example" (*PI*, 593).
3. "What is your aim in philosophy? To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (*PI*, 309).¹⁰
4. "...it may look as if we were moving towards a particular state, a state of complete exactness; as if this were the real goal of our investigations" (*PI*, 91).
5. "...our forms of expression prevent us in all sorts of ways from seeing that nothing out of the ordinary is involved, by sending us in pursuit of chimeras" (*PI*, 94).
6. "Here it is difficult as it were to keep our heads up, to see that we must stick to the subjects of our everyday thinking, and not go astray and imagine we have to describe extreme subtleties, which in turn we are after all quite unable to describe with the means at our disposal. We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers" (*PI*, 106).

7. "It was true to say that our considerations could not be scientific ones. It was not of any possible interest to us to find out empirically 'that, contrary to our preconceived ideas, it is possible to think such-and-such'—whatever that may mean. (The conception of thought as a gaseous medium.) And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its power of illumination—i.e., its purpose—from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (*PI*, 109).
8. "The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language. Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep*? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is.)" (*PI*, 111).
9. "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is" (*PI*, 124).
10. "Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.—Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us" (*PI*, 126). [This is behind the claim of Norman Malcolm and others stressing that for Wittgenstein nothing is hidden.]
11. "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (*PI*, 132).
12. "For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this means that philosophical problems should *completely* disappear. The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.—Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by example; and the series of examples can be broken off. Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem. There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies" (*PI*, 133).

There are some further relevant quotations from Wittgenstein given by Anthony Kenny in his *The Wittgenstein Reader* (Kenny 2006).

13. "A philosophical problem is a consciousness of the disorder in our concepts which can be removed by an ordering" (*WR*, 54).
14. "The way I do philosophy, its whole job is to frame an expression in such a way that certain worries disappear" (*WR*, 54).
15. "The problems are, in the strict sense, dissolved: like a piece of sugar in water" (*WR*, 54).
16. "Human beings are profoundly enmeshed in philosophical, i.e., grammatical confusions. They cannot be freed without first being extracted from the extraordinary variety of associations which hold them prisoner" (*WR*, 55).¹¹

I want to attempt to get a reflective grip on these strange and somehow both penetrating and perplexing remarks through returning rather paradoxically to Rorty and to his reaction to this radically therapeutic Wittgenstein. Rorty makes clear that he does not accept Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy as a form of therapy: a view that *dissolves* philosophical problems, by showing their nonsensicality and thereby eliminating or at least lessening the hold that they have on philosophers. (Wittgenstein, however, believes that we can never be freed from the hold they have on us. At most we can get temporary defogging, a quieting for a time of our disquietude.)¹²

Wittgenstein on this view is not putting forth any substantive philosophical views, any theory of telling or trying to tell us what is really real or what we must believe to make sense of ourselves and our world. He is not even trying to give us a theory or a conception of language that will finally free us from our philosophical disquietudes. Rather than saying anything like that or offering any theory, Wittgenstein, or so he thinks, leaves everything as it is and reminds us of what we have in our ordinary languages and in our practices (they come together) and shows us how they suffice without a need for any philosophical theory. On a Wittgensteinian therapist reading, Rorty says, "Wittgenstein was not telling us anything substantive, but rather conducting, as we have

seen, what he called ‘a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language’” (Rorty 2007a, 162).

Wittgensteinian therapists think that to abandon that way of looking at things “amounts to repudiating Wittgenstein’s most important contribution to philosophy” (Rorty 2007, 163). By contrast, pragmatic Wittgensteinians such as Rorty—he only names one other (Edward Minar)—regard Wittgenstein’s “observations on philosophy as expressions of a very particular and idiosyncratic view of its nature, a position detachable from his treatment of specific problems” (Rorty 2007a, 163 quoting Edward Minar 1995, 413).

Rorty goes on to say that the pragmatic Wittgensteinian view of Wittgenstein’s achievement is that “he did not show metaphysics to be nonsense. He simply showed it to be a waste of time” (Rorty 2007a, 163). And, Wittgenstein aside, this is Rorty’s own view of metaphysics, as he makes clear in his debate with Pascal Angel (Angel and Rorty 2007b, 34). Pragmatic Wittgensteinians have no use for Wittgenstein’s claim made in *Philosophical Investigations* that “the results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense” (Wittgenstein 1953, §129).

Both Wittgensteinian therapists and pragmatic Wittgensteinians have legitimate anchors in Wittgenstein’s thought. Wittgensteinian therapists are right about what was his dominant view of philosophy and that much, but not all, of his practice of philosophy was in accordance with that. But pragmatic Wittgensteinians are also right that Wittgenstein, perhaps in spite of himself, made important positive contributions to philosophy (for example) with his critique of ostensive definition, his contra private-language argument and his rule-following argument. Various things that he said have turned out to be in reality positive contributions that anticipate, complement and reinforce Quine’s and Davidson’s considerations concerning the language-fact distinction and Sellars’s and Brandon’s criticisms of the idea of knowledge by acquaintance. (It seems to me bizarre to regard him as an anticipator of philosophers, for example Rawls, who made more

substantial contributions. I wonder what the verdict of history will be.) Be that as it may, these ‘contributions’ mesh very well with the work of Quine, Sellars, Davidson and Brandon. (Again I wonder if Wittgenstein thought of them as ‘contributions’. That sounds very un-Wittgensteinian.) Yet, none of them—the above mentioned philosophers—has much time of day for Wittgenstein’s therapeutic conception of philosophy. Moreover, Quine, and *perhaps* Sellars, wants to set philosophy on the sure road of science. In that way, Quine and (arguably) Sellars are *very* distant from Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein was, as I have remarked, very anti-scientistic and, more importantly, he did not think of what he was doing as science or scientific or as making the way for science. (He did say or suggest that his view of philosophy was anti-scientistic.) Would Quine and Sellars, if they were to abjure a scientistic turn, then by contrast be doing metaphysics in their systematic work? The *status* of what they would be doing is not clear, but they certainly would not be doing transcendental or quasi-transcendental philosophy, whatever those things are, if they are anything coherent. There is for them no transcendental turn.

All of that aside, taken together, these non-atomistic philosophers present a powerful and, in *certain respects*, unified movement in contemporary analytical philosophy and Wittgenstein has, whatever his intentions, made his own positive contribution to this task. But, as we have seen, they do not go along with his conception of philosophy—what I have called his meta-philosophy. This conception is displayed in the numerous quotations I have collected from him.

The crucial contrast concerning philosophy between the Wittgensteinian therapists and the pragmatic Wittgensteinians is perceptively put by Rorty (2007a). Let us look a little more in detail at what Rorty calls the pragmatic Wittgensteinians’ view. They think that there is not such a big difference between philosophy and science as Wittgenstein and the other therapists think. The problems that Aristotelians or Descartes, for example, discussed were not in the pragmatic Wittgensteinian view pseudo problems. Instead, they were just problems to be set aside, benignly neglected (except by historians of ideas), after the accounts of Galileo, Newton and Darwin were

developed and seen to be more scientifically advantageous than those of the Aristotelians or Descartes or even Leibnitz. Cartesian dualism, epistemological foundationalism and the fact-value dichotomy were not the results of conceptual confusions. They, Rorty tells us, “incorporated ideas that played an important part at one time in intellectual progress. By now, however, it is time to replace them with better ideas” (Rorty 2007a, 166). According to pragmatic Wittgensteinians, it would have been better for Wittgenstein to have criticized metaphysics, epistemology and metaethics as *useless* rather than *nonsensical* and as something we need not bother our heads about anymore. Their time has passed. Pragmatic Wittgensteinians thus interpret Wittgenstein in historicist terms. This comes out in his social practice views. But, as we will see, his therapeutic view, though Wittgenstein does not see it this way, is also consistently historicist.

With Wittgenstein’s late post-Tractarian views, particularly his increasingly social practice oriented views, what in effect became evident was his unacknowledged *historicism*. But this fits badly with his ahistorical conception of how philosophers, where they have come to have a clear conception of what their aims should be, will conceive of themselves and conduct themselves. On Wittgenstein’s view, they will become therapists of philosophy, defoggers of the conceptual confusions that bewitch some people, including themselves, when they, as they inevitably will be, if they are reflective, driven into philosophy. When they, that is, have caught its disease or, if you will, are suckered into philosophy. The aim, Wittgenstein has it, is to cure those conceptual maladies that disquiet us or at least contain them. We will be cured when we come to see that they are rooted in our misuse of our language when we try to philosophize. This, however, is surely not what most philosophers think they are doing. But Wittgenstein can well say they are mistaken—in fact, deluded.

However, Wittgenstein claims, in a very ahistorical manner, this therapeutic defogging is what we should be doing when we philosophize. It is not, he emphasizes, a question of reform of our language, but of coming to see that we have in philosophizing come to have misused our

language: unwittingly befogged ourselves. Our natural language stands in no need of reform. It is alright as it is. What needs to be done, if possible, is to eradicate our misunderstandings of our use of language, misunderstandings that arise when we are driven to philosophize and that we must resist. There, as Wittgenstein says, the engine is idling. But these perplexities—these disquietudes, as Wittgenstein characteristically refers to them—are not there in our ordinary life but only when our language is not functioning as smoothly as it usually and routinely does. How, for example, can we ever grasp the present—the sheer now of things—when, by the time we grasp it, it is already past? Here in our philosophical puzzlement we fail to retain a good understanding of the way ‘present’, ‘past’ and ‘future’ are actually used quite unproblematically in everyday life, as when we say ‘Our present situation is intolerable’ or ‘The present moment with the sunset and the birds singing is really wonderful’. We understand these utterances even if we think the claims they make are mistaken or exaggerated. But there is no philosophical puzzlement. We don’t need to determine how the present is present or whether there is only ‘the specious present’, let alone whether time is really real. We recognize readily enough that the engine is idling there, while it is not with the two prior ordinary sentences. The philosophical therapeutic task is to show ‘specious present-talk’ and ‘time is unreal-talk’ like ‘sleeps faster talk’ is just plain nonsense, not disguised nonsense about some unfathomable hidden truth—such truth that, as McTaggart thought, only philosophy will enable us to understand. Wittgenstein, unlike Waismann, does not think that there are hidden things in philosophy (Waismann 1968, 32).¹³

However, just as ‘Obama sleeps faster than Bush’ can be *given* a use by stipulation, so ‘The present time is specious’ or ‘Time is unreal’ can be *given* a use. But that will be without undermining the ordinary uses and is there any point in such stipulations? Someone who has (say, McTaggart) *given* a use to ‘time is unreal’ will not dispute the intelligibility and perhaps even the truth of ‘The life span is longer in Japan now than it is in Russia now’. But *stipulations*, as Wittgenstein saw, will not solve or dissolve our philosophical problems concerning time or any

other philosophical problem. This raises the question of whether there is *any* place where time is unreal-talk, even if it, given a use by adroit stipulation, can come to have a point. Rather than say it is unintelligible, we should say it is just plain rubbish or pointless. But isn't this to side with the pragmatist Wittgensteinians? This strengthens Rorty's pragmatic point that such talk is, except for playing philosophical games, the pointless worrying about, for example, whether its alleged intrinsic nonsensicality makes such talk and conceptualization something to be avoided. All we can be confident about, says Rorty in good pragmatic fashion, is that such talk is pointless and a waste of time.

The social practice conception of philosophy attributed by some (including Rorty) to the later Wittgenstein fits badly with the therapeutic conception of philosophy for the social practice conception shows—or at least seems to show—how there is in Wittgenstein's thought a positive conception of philosophy as well as a negative one. The social practice conception in Wittgenstein's thought stresses that these various social practices are just there like our lives and that there are no *ur-practices* or for that matter some *super-practice* or *cluster of super-practices* governing everything. There are, that is, no super-practices with super-concepts or super-conceptions which do or should govern our lives and show how things should be ordered. Such notions are philosophical illusions which arise when we try to stand free of or somehow above these diverse social practices and look at things, Spinoza like, from 'the aspect of eternity'. There are just these diverse practices rooted in a particular time and place (historicism again). There are scientific practices (including social scientific ones), mathematical practices, moral practices, political practices, and religious practices, practices often interacting with each other and still having a distinctive non-Balkanized life of their own (Nielsen and Phillips 2005). They each in their own domains help give life its sense. The thing is just to see them for what they are. This seems at least to be very different from the deployment of a therapeutic conception of philosophy. Yet they are both in Wittgenstein. And both emphasize that we cannot gain a defogging perch where we have

command of a complete clarity and, with that perch, can rid ourselves of historicism gaining something like what Spinoza, for example, sought. Such a metaphysical grasp of things has been tried without success by Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, Descartes and Spinoza, Kant and Hegel, down to Henry Sidgwick, Thomas Nagel and G. A. Cohen. Nobody anymore with the least bit of historical realism (I am not speaking of philosophical realism) puts much stock in these notions.¹⁴

But, again, should the central issue be concerning whether these central claims fail because of their being nonsensical or through their being seen, as time went on, as useless or pointless? On neither view did they contribute to our knowledge or do much to enrich our lives: to show us what a better world would come to. Should not philosophers—I mean as we philosophers are situated now—instead with a sense of historicity non-evasively describe our situation and reflectively try to assess, without philosophy, where we stand and try to figure out where we should go? Come to grips, as John Dewey put it, with the problems of men, particularly concerning where we should try to go, how we should try to live, how our societies should be, and how they should be related to each other? We should do this as forcefully and as clearly and determinedly as we can; we should benignly neglect the issue between him and Wittgenstein over uselessness versus nonsense. We should not try to resolve it, but just ignore it. Good pragmatists will say what makes no practical difference is no difference.

Should we not seek to become instead what Edward Said characterized as public intellectuals doing, in our own small way, what Dewey, Russell, Chomsky, Sartre and Fanon did? I say ‘in our own small way’ because if we are not delusional we will recognize that we (the vast majority of us) are not world historical individuals. Yet we too will wish to do our bit in changing the hell our world is, even when our own part of it is not so bad. Indeed, perhaps particularly, when that is not our situation. Those making the equivalent of one dollar a day have little time for trying to change it. They just have to try somehow to survive. That is, we who are better places want to

agitate—shake up—our world, though not, of course, without understanding it. But we do not need or indeed cannot have some Absolute perspective enabling us. Moreover, we should not think that is the way to solve or dissolve or cure our *philosophical* disquietudes.¹⁵ We should become anti-Philosophy philosophers (*rejectionists, not quietists*) focusing with all our might on the actual problems of human beings as Russell did particularly in his old age, though we philosophers in doing this should use our philosophically nurtured capabilities including our capacities for clarity. But we should not fetishize this in a search for ‘complete clarity’—there is, as Wittgenstein came to realize, no such thing—but there can be clarity, properly contextualized. We should, that is, make it reasonably clear what we are saying and why. (‘Reasonably’ will be contextualized.)

Wittgenstein, though he gave birth to it, surely would have no truck with that. That will not relieve our own deep philosophical disquietude. But shouldn’t he? He surely would say that is not what would satisfy or answer to his and to our, if we are genuinely philosophically driven, philosophical disquietudes and compulsions, let alone solve, dissolve, or cure them. Dewey, he would think, is on the wrong track *here*. What I have said at the end of the last paragraph is, after all, not philosophy at all, but in a broad sense a defense of social agitation and political commitment. It is about what the aspiration or task of philosophy should be where philosophers have the sense of historicity and an awareness of its inescapability that Hegel distinctively among modern philosophers started reasoning in accordance with, only to cop out, and of the political and social aims that Marx and Dewey aspired to.

With that, should we not switch disciplines and for *some* of us, as Isaiah Berlin did, become historians of ideas? We should, if we do the latter, seek to gain a thorough and deep historical understanding and knowledge and with that put ourselves in the shoes of the great, usually dead philosophers along with, and equally importantly, those of other intellectuals (someone like Said or Chomsky) and take careful note of how these various figures have responded to the intellectual, social, political, racial, and ethnic exigencies of their times. Take note of how some of them engaged

in the struggles of their time and to help others to learn from them. And, as *non-quietist*, seek, where we can, to apply what we have learned from them. Should we not, that is, not just for others but for ourselves also do this intelligent and informed agitation for our own particular time and place? In short, should we not become more political? Indeed, much more political? But we should not claim that that is a way to solve or cure our *philosophical* disquietudes? I think we will not do this political thing if we are really hooked on philosophy. But perhaps with luck we can become unhooked.

That aside, an individual philosopher (including Wittgenstein himself), if he proceeds with things as Wittgenstein does, may overcome his philosophical disquietudes for a time or be able to set them aside for a time (as Hume also did) and gain for a time philosophical peace. But, if he has a penchant for (or an obsession with) philosophical questions—questions that always bring themselves into question—he will soon be back in the stew without philosophical peace. His activity will not bring permanent peace and enable him to free himself from philosophy.¹⁶ Philosophical disquietude is not (*perhaps pace* Wittgenstein) *the* human condition, but it is *a* human condition (a condition of some people). And freedom—to whatever degree—from this condition may be a form of liberation. This has in fact been so for some people. But the important thing, as I have said above, is not that, but to become, as did Russell in his old age, as near as we possibly can to be public intellectuals struggling for humanity. Don't go philosophical here and ask what that is. We well know what it is. Skepticism here is out of place.

The history of ideas, no matter how perspicuously done, will not yield such a liberation; will not so reorient us. That is not what it sets out to do. After all, its objective is a historical matter and fundamentally an empirical task. Notwithstanding its unavoidable interpretiveness, someone working in the history of ideas wants, as much as she can, to get some of the historical record straight. The historian of ideas wants to decipher some part of the history of thought; get its great figures as nearly right as can be achieved. Catch, as well as she can, the philosophical and other

intellectual currents of a time. There *may* be no fundamentally right answers in philosophy and philosophers *may* take this just to be the way things go in philosophy. But perhaps not so for history and historians. They will, if they can be realistic, be fallibilists as will many present-day philosophers, but they may still accept the idea that, more and more, it will be possible to get the historical record right—not non-fallibilistically right, but right all the same. For philosophers, most particularly Wittgensteinian ones and Rortian ones, the very idea of a philosophical record moving toward the truth (increased comprehensive warranted assertability, if you will) is at least a fundamentally contestable matter as it is for Vattimo as well. They do not think anything like that is viable. But they would not deny that we could get Maimonides' or Descartes' ideas right or nearly right, for example. But Wittgenstein and philosophers philosophizing in his wake do not have John Dewey's sense of progress in philosophy. For Rorty, Deweyian that he proclaims himself to be, it is a more complicated matter. There *may* be progress in philosophy without there being progress in Philosophy.

Philosophers such as the logical empiricists, and sometimes Wittgensteinians and sometimes pragmatists, thought philosophers went down the garden path when they failed to understand the conditions of linguistic significance or scientific reasoning or both. With a good grasp of those matters philosophers will be able to recognize, if they can be steadfastly rational, that philosophical problems will dissolve, as Wittgenstein says, like sugar in water. The logical empiricists sought to do this in terms of the verifiability (testability) theory of meaning, but they never worked that out, at least on the scope and with the precision they wanted. They also saw, or thought they did, philosophers going astray in getting metaphysical or ontological when they failed to understand the logical syntax of language—an understanding without which one, they thought, could not grasp the conditions of linguistic significance. Later we came to see that there was no such thing as the logical syntax of language.

However, Wittgenstein relied (in his later thought) on no such thing. He neither wanted a theory of meaning nor a theory of anything. He told us ‘to look for the use and not for the meaning’. He didn’t tell us that meaning was use. He didn’t have a theory or an account of meaning. We should, instead, attend to our linguistic behavior (though we have no need of a *theory* about it and any theory would have no philosophical significance) and take note instead, where we have philosophical troubles, how we use the troubling terms involved when our language is not idling—as he took it to be when we are doing philosophy. What we philosophers need, whether we recognize it or not, is accurate descriptions of the use of our language in the area where it troubles us—where, for example, we speak of our intentions. We will, where we are caught here, want more. But there is nothing more *philosophical* we can have. If we can come to acknowledge this firmly and to take it to heart, we will free ourselves from what in reality are philosophical disquietudes. This will enable us to say goodbye to Philosophy (what Rorty, following Wilfrid Sellars, calls big P Philosophy, namely, metaphysics, epistemology, meta-ethics, normative ethical theory, and normative political theory) and get on with our lives *and* with what Sen (following Rawls) called the use of public reasoning about actual public affairs. (What Wittgenstein, and Austin as well, would say as expressed in the paragraph prior to this one is not in conflict with what Rawls and Sen have been saying. Remember Rawls on travelling philosophically light (Rawls 1999, 388-12).)

For Rorty, along with his fellow pragmatic Wittgensteinians, this pragmatic conception of Wittgensteinian philosophy is a more fertile one than the therapeutic conception. It does not try to dissolve all philosophical problems but to solve *some* of them. The pragmatic Wittgensteinians argue that “any utterance can be *given* significance—given a use—by being batted around long enough in more or less predictable ways” (Rorty 2007a, 172). The sentence ‘Obama runs faster than Bush’—true or false—has an obvious use. ‘Obama sleeps faster than Bush’ does not. Perhaps we should say ‘runs faster’ has a use ‘sleeps faster’ does not. The obvious nonsense of the second

sentence taken literally is plain. Moreover, if we try to take it non-literally, it takes a bit of fancy footwork to do so. But 'sleeps faster' can be *given* a use by stipulation. But it has no literal use just taken as it is. *Giving a use is one thing; having a use is another.* Moreover, we can only give something a use when we have a background of established linguistic practices. This seems, at least, to vindicate Wittgenstein's and Austin's claims.

To translate into the concrete, 'Obama sleeps faster than Bush' can readily be *given* a use, for example, 'Obama gets up earlier than Bush does after sleep, more refreshed and ready to go'. Again, that statement may be false, but it could also be true and it is certainly not nonsense. Moreover, it is plainly verifiable.¹⁷ But why put ourselves in contortions by starting out saying 'Obama sleeps faster than Bush'? That's the way, exemplified with a crude example, how philosophy goes or mis-goes. 'The Absolute develops through history' is a disguised—though only thinly so—bit of metaphysical nonsense. 'Being not beings is the fundamental reality' is another. Any such conceptualization here that is taken without some stipulation is nonsense. They can be *given* a use. Perhaps it can be shown that it has been given a use in some Hegelian system or some Hegelian-like system. But it is not embedded in our language, our linguistic practices, as is 'Crises develop with over-accumulation' or 'Languages tend to simplify as they develop'.

Perhaps the obscure talk of Hegel, Heidegger, Gadamer, Adorno, Derrida, Jamenson or Althusser can be usefully deciphered with hard work. Perhaps their obscure talk can be shown to have uses in their systems or to have been given plausible uses by some sympathetic interpreter and commentator on their work, trying honestly to fathom their intent and, by utilizing stipulations, do something to show how their key points make some linkage with our natural languages—our ordinary understanding as embedded in our ordinary linguistic practices. Since this is always a possibility and sometimes it may be an actuality, should we label their talk nonsense? Moreover, or so I am told, being able with such fancy footwork to grasp the nettle of their obscure thought *may* give us some deep insight otherwise not available. Perhaps? But I remain skeptical.

However, matters are not that simple. Stipulations may, of course, be employed, *persuasive* definitions used, and uses given to words or noises. But this could be done only if in our practices, where language becomes alive and where it centrally remains so, words and other expressions have a use: where great masses of them, without stipulation, have a use, indeed interlocked, stable, but not unchangeable, uses. Only with this background could words or expressions be given a use. *Stipulations and persuasive definitions* piggy-back on our practices which are linguistic but are not *just* our linguistic practices unless the very notion of 'linguistic' gets inflated. (Perhaps it is better to say that our practices are all linguistically structured.)

What I have said about practices and stipulations is importantly related to Peirce's and Davidson's claim that *most* of our beliefs must be held to be true, though *any* one of them, though not all or even most of them, could at one time be held to be false (Davidson 1984, 183-98). In the case of uses of words, we must, Wittgenstein and Austin have it, come back to ordinary use: to our everyday use of language embedded in our actual practices. Otherwise, we would have no understanding at all, even of scientific matters, and therefore no ability to make stipulations to give puzzling expressions a use or, where they have something of a use, a clearer use.

A thinking through of this makes for a bad day for metaphysics and the like, though perhaps not a showing of its impossibility. Explicitly, à la Rorty, and setting more securely, *pace* Wittgenstein, on their pointlessness or uselessness but not on their nonsensicality. Still, until *given* a use, such philosophical remarks remain not just pointless but unintelligible, nonsensical.

Wittgensteinian therapists, including the New Wittgensteinians, all of whom call themselves *resolute* Wittgensteinians, take it as part of our very human condition that we will, if we are reflective, become entangled in philosophical perplexity (Crary and Read 2009). We, they believe, will repeatedly be in need of philosophical therapy, as Wittgenstein himself was (the therapist in need himself of therapy—something that not infrequently obtains in psychoanalysis).¹⁸ We are caught, the New Wittgensteinians believe, in endless asking of questions about questions, *perhaps*

always of pseudo-questions as the logical empiricists used to say, but at any rate somehow of questions that endlessly provoke still further questions, pseudo or not, that in turn give rise to still further questions that compulsively provoke new questions (or superficially new questions) without end, where philosophers will find no peace as Wittgenstein hoped for. This treadmill of questions is what made John Gray, like his mentor, Isaiah Berlin, give up philosophy, though not the intellectual life (Gray 2007a; 2007b; 2009).

As Rorty puts it in characterizing such a conception, “On this view, philosophy is not just one area of culture among others, an area some people find of interest and many others do not, but rather a trap into which anyone who begins to reflect is bound to fall. The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language ... are deep disquietudes” (Rorty 2007a, 174, quoting Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, section 111).

Rorty sensibly, and I think rightly, remarks that this disposition is not widespread even among philosophers. Indeed, less and less so as philosophy goes on, becoming more plainly a transitional genre and at the same ever more professionalized. It is certainly not something that is just fixed in the human condition, even among intellectuals, even among public intellectuals. Still, it is something that leads many people into philosophy and often, after a bit, leads many of them back out. (Perhaps this is why many that start out as philosophy majors end up as religious studies majors.) I think it, in part, at least, led me into philosophy and generated what was once my fascination with Wittgenstein. Still, Rorty says, and I agree, the Wittgensteinian therapists are on to something (Rorty 2007a, 174). Rorty remarks:

That is the fact that many, though hardly all, people who find philosophy intriguing are in search of the ineffable—something that cannot be put into words. Sometimes this is a vision of the Good or of God. In recent times, however, partially as a cause and partially as an effect of the linguistic turn in philosophy, it has expressed itself as a desire for contact with “the World” that is not mediated through language. I think Wittgenstein felt this desire very deeply but recognized, early and late, that it could not possibly be fulfilled. So I think that Conant is on the right track when he says that “the aim of

[the *Tractatus*] is to show us that beyond ‘the limits of language’ lies—not ineffable truth, but rather... *einfach Unsinn*, simply nonsense (Rorty 2007a, 174).

It is impossible (logically impossible), except deceptively, to satisfy this need to—putting it metaphorically—shove language aside and *grasp reality ‘directly’*. This is not only impossible to satisfy, it is not even coherently characterizable or thinkable (Nielsen 1994). We have no understanding, the Romantics to the contrary notwithstanding, of what it would be to come to grasp the ineffable, the unthinkable, the unsayable (Berlin 1999). If something is unsayable, we shouldn’t try to say it; if it is literally unthinkable, we shouldn’t try to think it; and if it is really ineffable, we shouldn’t try to make it effable or to try to articulate it or grasp it. As Wittgenstein famously said, ‘Whereof one cannot speak we must remain silent’ and Frank Ramsey to the point added, ‘And we should not try to whistle it either’. We should not try to do any of these things because they are logically impossible (Nielsen 1994; Nielsen and Phillips 2005).

Still, that some people have—and very intensely—that impossible-to-satisfy desire, that incoherent desire, certainly does not mean that everyone—not even every reflective person, intellectual, or philosopher—has such a desire. Democritus, Montaigne, Hobbes, Bacon, Bentham, Condorcet, Hume, Nietzsche, Marx and Dewey were not so afflicted, to name just a few luminaries. And it would certainly be false to say—and even arrogantly so—that none of them were deeply probing philosophers, not really philosophically knowledgeable, and not deeply reflective. It is not evident that the philosophers listed above were more superficial than the ones with the deep disquietudes. If that is secularism, so be it (Nielsen 1994; Nielsen and Phillips 2005).

James Conant, a very resolute Wittgensteinian therapist of some considerable ability, thinks that this impossible-to-satisfy desire is a manifestation of our “confusions of soul” (Conant 2000, 196). Rorty remarks, and again I think rightly:

Wittgenstein was certainly convinced that this was so. But this conviction may tell us more about Wittgenstein than about

philosophy or the human condition more generally. The more one reflects on the relation between Wittgenstein's technical use of "philosophy" and its everyday use, the more he appears to have defined "philosophy" to mean "all those bad things I feel tempted to do" (Rorty 2007a, 175).

However, at least since the Enlightenment, fewer and fewer people, even religious people, are so tied to, are so enchanted by, the ineffable. The increasing secularization of intellectuals has put a damper on that. We can't justifiably read that into the human condition or, except by an unjustifiable *persuasive* definition, say that those religiously attuned philosophers or other religiously attuned intellectuals who are really deep will have such a longing for the ineffable (Note that 'really' here tokens a *persuasive* definition. See Charles Stevenson 1945, 206-26.) It is no longer plausible to have such a philosophical penchant or feel that we must in some way break away from 'the mist of words' and grasp reality as it really is, come to know 'the really real', 'the truer truth'. (Some might say such phrases are not intelligible or at best not even respectable.) There are plenty of reflective and non-reflective believers and there are plenty of reflective and non-reflective non-believers. But there is no good reason to think that non-believers are generally less reflective and more superficial than believers or that it is only among believers that you really find 'the deep ones'. That is just a religious prejudice. There is no good reason to believe—though that is often thought—that a Dostoevsky-type, or indeed Dostoevsky himself, is deeper than a Turgenev-type or Turgenev himself.

Rorty, Wittgenstein, pragmatic Wittgensteinians, and pragmatists generally, as well as Wittgensteinian therapists, reject metaphysics, epistemology, natural theology, meta-ethics, normative ethical theory, normative political theory, and the great speculative systems of the past as viable ways of thinking, as something that is *now*, acceptable—something that we, if we can be well informed, rigorous in our thinking and non-evasive, should accept.¹⁹ These matters, they all believe, are not sources of truth. But they do it for what they take to be quite different reasons. For Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinian therapists, such a mode of thinking conceptually entangles us. It

is a conceptual disease from which, if that is possible, we must be cured. We have with Philosophical beliefs something that is in reality nonsensical and a nonsense from which we can free ourselves only with great difficulty. On the best reading of ‘nonsense’ here, what Wittgenstein and these resolute Wittgensteinians mean by ‘nonsense’, is *not* something with a sophisticated philosophical meaning, but they mean by it *einfach Unsen*, simply nonsense. This does not tie their use of ‘nonsense’ to some philosophical technical account of ‘nonsense’ that a philosophically untutored person might not understand: something like a violation of our ‘logical syntax of language’, but to something that G. E. Moore would call ‘nonsense’, like the claim to be able to levitate. Perhaps we should call it instead gobblygook or gibberish.²⁰

For Rorty, these philosophical notions—whatever nonsense is taken to be—have simply come to be for us *passé*, dead ends, useless, no longer worth the trouble to try to give them a coherent articulation, even if we have some vague idea of how to do so. It is time, Rorty claims, that we go on to better things—a better understanding of how to view the world or of how to be more imaginative, more aware of alternatives in deciding how to live our lives and how the world should be ordered. We should give up on what he calls big p Philosophy, i.e., metaphysics, epistemology, meta-ethics, normative ethical theory, and normative political theory, all Philosophical theory (Rorty 1982, xiv-xv). “It would have been better,” Rorty remarks, “for Wittgenstein to have criticized the kind of philosophy he disliked on grounds of its uselessness than on its alleged ‘nonsense’” (Rorty 2007a, 173).

Seeing philosophy as Rorty does will lead us to seeing philosophy as a *transitional genre*—seeing that in its traditional sense it, like theology, has had its day and is being replaced, Rorty has it, by a literary culture or for me *also*, and perhaps more importantly, by being transitional to social science, namely, a blend of history, political economy, sociology, social geography and social anthropology (Harvey 2000). This is a different way for it to morph. But it is compatible with philosophy also morphing into a literary culture. We need both in moving from philosophy to an

activity—perhaps a cluster of disciplines—where there is a felicitous blend of these activities. We centrally, but not exclusively, come to see Philosophy as useless in seeing it as being marginal and as having become for its technical sense (as Philosophy) something that is usually nonsensical in a plain sense as well as useless—useless in the straightforward sense and sometimes useless because it is nonsensical. We should all now become historicists and anti-Philosophy philosophers (Nielsen 1994). The Enlightenment has room for both Flaubert and Condorcet. But what of Rawls and Sen? What are they doing when they do what they take, quite unexceptionally, to be philosophy? They don't seem to be vulnerable to either Wittgenstein's or Rorty's critiques. Are they doing Philosophy or philosophy, as characterized by Sellars and Rorty? That they are doing either seems doubtful. Are they, that is, doing something very different? How is it to be characterized? In any case, they at least seem to stand as glaring adversaries to what I have been saying. I must sometime return to that.²¹ Right now I do not know what to say. But some things suggest themselves. I do not think it is a momentous problem.

V

There is one final point I want to make. It will lead me to some remarks about the diversity of what philosophy is and what, if anything, is its importance, transitional genre or not. This will in turn lead me to some comments about Isaiah Berlin and of what he called his departure from philosophy for intellectual history (Berlin 1980, vii-viii). But as a prolegomena to that, I want to note what at first blush is a puzzling remark by Rorty. I shall depuzzle it. It is relevant to what needs to be said about Berlin.

Rorty speaks of the everyday use of 'philosophy' and contrasts it with its technical use, the use that philosophers give it or, more accurately, with what philosophers (people whose *disciplinary* orientation is philosophy) do and believe they should do (Rorty 1982, xvi-xvii; 2006, 369-80). But what does Rorty contrastingly to Philosophy mean by '*the everyday use of*

'philosophy'? I understand the everyday use of language and its more technical uses. But the everyday use of philosophy or 'philosophy'—what is that? Is there something like the everyday use of 'chemistry' as distinct from the use of 'chemistry'? Plainly not, though most non-chemists, unless they are in a science close to chemistry, probably have a rather mistaken understanding or inadequate understandings of what chemistry is. But that is a different matter. Why should the so-called everyday use of 'philosophy' be less untoward than the everyday use of 'chemistry'? It doesn't sound quite as bad, but it still is opaque. There is, however, a somewhat common use that Philosophers employ, as when a Philosopher might say, usually with irony and sometimes with scorn, of someone utterly untutored in philosophy that 'He waxed philosophical' (think of Polonius in *Hamlet*). Is it something like this that Rorty means?

Philosophy—since Plato and Aristotle, and down to Aquinas, Maimonides, Avicenna and Scotus, to Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza, to Kant and, some say, Hegel, to Russell and Husserl—has always been what is more or less a recognizable cluster of activities that are *roughly* (very roughly) common to its practitioners along with a lot of other different things that some but not all philosophers have, e.g. knowledge of politics, of a moral point of view, of physics, biology, psychology, cognitive science, linguistics, modal logic and aesthetics. This somewhat—mysteriously somewhat—common activity has come to be regarded as some sort of expert culture that has been called philosophy, though it is hard, perhaps impossible, to say what makes it 'expert' and, particularly with respect to its practitioners (all of them) what (if anything) counts as 'expert' here or what is in common, if anything, between them. (This would be exacerbated if we add Romantics such as Hamann and Schelling.) What, for example, is there in common between Frege, Dewey and Derrida?

Rorty tells us in the introduction to his 1982 book, *The Consequences of Pragmatism*, that we should distinguish between Philosophy and philosophy: Philosophy big P and philosophy little p. Philosophy is what academic philosophers do, namely, to ask "questions about the nature of certain

normative notions (e.g., 'truth', 'rationality' and 'goodness') in the hope of better obeying such norms. The idea is to believe more truths or do more good or be more rational by knowing more about truth or goodness or rationality" (Rorty 1982, xv). Rorty thinks, as we have seen, this is a very dubious business. It, Rorty has it, will "not help to say something true to think about truth, nor will it help to act well to think about goodness, nor will it help to be rational to think about rationality" (Rorty 1982, xv). But, by contrast, there is something as old as the hills that is unproblematic, Rorty claims, and practiced by everyone, or at least all reflective people, that is not the property of any expert culture (either a Philosophical one or not) and it is something that will never be passé or transitional to something else. It is what we mean by philosophy. Here, we mean simply "the attempt to see how things, in the broadest possible sense of the term, hang together, in the broadest possible sense of the term... no one would be dubious about philosophy taken in this sense" (Rorty 1982, xiv-xv).

This is what *I think* he means by 'the everyday use of philosophy' in contrast to Philosophy, an activity represented by the professional discipline of an expert culture. The latter is a technical use of the term, though I think, considering all the people whom we call philosophers that we would be hard pressed to point to anything common to and distinctive of them except the name 'philosophy' itself. But philosophy, as construed above, is not that. It is not even dependent on Philosophy, the academic discipline which, I have argued, following Rorty, is a transitional genre and not a very clearly demarcated genre at that and one becoming increasingly so

So how does this, if at all, touch the deservedly admired and respected Oxford scholar and intellectual, Isaiah Berlin? He started out in Philosophy (big P Philosophy, of course; what else?) during the period in the United Kingdom of the hey-day of a kind of analytical philosophy called ordinary language philosophy (Berlin 1980). Oxford was the center and Cornell was its American subsidiary. Berlin's colleagues (birds of a feather) were Ryle, Hart, Austin, Strawson and Grice, and on a *somewhat* different track Hampshire and, on an even more different track, Murdoch and

Waismann (but still birds of a feather). Berlin warmly interacted with them, was respected by them and was at home in the philosophical atmosphere at Oxford. He started out doing philosophy in what was a more or less standard way for that time at Oxford. But he gave it up, as I already have noted, for intellectual history which he pursued brilliantly for the rest of his life, saying of his turn away from philosophy to intellectual history, that he wanted to know something more at the end of his career than he did at its beginning. (See his Preface to the 1980 edition of his *Concepts and Categories*, viii-xii.) He attributed this change to a life altering conversation he had with the famous, though eccentric, Harvard logician, H. M. Sheffer, the author of a path-breaking contribution to logic dubbed “the Sheffer stroke”. Sheffer argued “that philosophers bat around the same ideas for millennia and don’t actually add much to the sum of human knowledge” (Kristof 2010, 26). This argument rang true for Berlin and he took it to heart and left philosophy. He became, as Nicholas Kristof puts it, “a masterful historian and critic” (Kristof 2010, 26). His studies of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Machiavelli, Vico, Herder, de Maistre, Hamann, and Herzen are perceptive. But his work was quite different, in both content and style, from the work of his Oxford colleagues in philosophy for whom to do philosophy was to deal analytically with abstract questions. Again, as Kristof well puts it, Berlin “was too absorbed by politics and humanities tribulations to spend his life in a corner of academia. So he abandoned philosophy as it was then practiced for the question of how we should reach moral judgments and make policy” (Kristof 2010, 26). This leads Kristof, following the Oxford philosopher Bernard Williams, to believe that Berlin never did leave philosophy. He merely left what he took to be philosophy. Berlin’s disquietudes were not simply, and sometimes not at all, Wittgenstein’s philosophical disquietudes, but disquietudes concerning society and our political condition. Williams, Kristof and not a few others took Berlin’s disquietudes to be philosophical disquietudes hence the remark that he never left philosophy. But these disquietudes were not what Wittgenstein, and James Conant following him, would call *philosophical* disquietudes. They were not, as we have seen Conant putting it, disquietudes of the soul, though with Romantics, whom

Berlin has discussed in detail, there was some mixing of ‘soul matters’ and ‘political matters’ and some attention to their interaction. Berlin’s concerns were more deeply about how and whether a better world is possible or whether we are limited repeatedly to a partial cleaning up of the mess that one horror after another has left us with. He lived in what Eric Hobsbawm characterized as “the Age of Extremes”—the massive and brutal upheavals and changes of the 20th Century. But even there, Berlin was confronted with these problems through doing intellectual history, e.g., studying Tolstoy, Herder and Hamann. However, Marx, liberalism and rightwing movements were also on his agenda.

Berlin, like Wittgenstein and Rorty, though perhaps not for the same reasons, remained deeply skeptical that there “must somewhere be a true answer to the deepest questions that preoccupy mankind” (Kristof 2010, 26 quoting Berlin). Here we have a skepticism that is common to Wittgenstein, Berlin and Rorty and a skepticism I share. It is a skepticism that—or so I believe—we just need to live with for we are in a TINA here—there is no alternative. But, to be non-evasive, one must acknowledge, says Berlin, in a memorable phrase, “the relative validity of one’s convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly... [that is] what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian” (Berlin 1958, 57). Then Berlin adds that to demand more than this is to want the one true answer to life’s problems. Berlin remarks that that “is perhaps a deep and incurable metaphysical need; but to allow it to determine one’s practice is a symptom of an equally deep, and more dangerous, moral and political immaturity” (Berlin 1958, 57).

I want, in winding this final section up, to consider two things: (1) Does what might be taken as Berlin’s unacknowledged philosophical stance just come to adopting the so-called everyday conception of philosophy and avoiding Philosophy in a technical sense (as being a contribution to a putative Philosophical expert culture); and (2) Is Rorty’s conception of the everyday conception of philosophy as unproblematic and ubiquitous, as he takes it to be, something that all reasonable and civilized persons must seek to act in accordance with?

For the first consideration, note that Berlin does, in fact, adopt the everyday conception of philosophy. He wants to see, and to perspicuously show, how things hang together and in this way to make sense of our lives and of our social and political world. (How the mathematicians and natural scientists make sense of their part of the world can be safely left up to them. Physics, for example, can and does take care of itself without the need of philosophy. Ditto for mathematics, but not, Berlin believes, for politics and political thought.) Moreover, Berlin wants to do more than just Augean stable cleaning. He seeks to enter and to contribute to what he takes to be the conversation of humankind, or at least to a crucial part of it. He takes cognizance of, and indeed in a keen way, what a range of the intelligentsia (principally historians, novelists, philosophers and religious thinkers) have brought to that conversation and how they have pushed it along in certain ways. Along with that depiction, he also steps back, though *not* through attaining, or even attempting to attain, some ahistorical perch, as by contrast does Henry Sidgwick, where Sidgwick seeks to adopt the 'point of view of the universe,' or Thomas Nagel, with his 'view from nowhere' or his notion of the last word. Berlin's perch is historical and contextually rooted in his moral reflection without trying, à la Wittgenstein, just to perspicuously describe (something which, as *Philosophical Investigations* shows, he did not strictly adhere to). Berlin quite overtly makes moral judgments concerning what he has interpretively described and perceptively characterized; and he tries to assess what he has described and interpreted. He makes in such an account moral and other normative evaluations concerning what is hopefully being perspicuously described. (Where interpretation just goes with such descriptions it tends to have a normative element.) With that in hand, though always fallibilistically and with an awareness of one's inescapable historicity, Berlin makes moral and other normative judgments. He, in a quite typical and unavoidable way, uses thick descriptions, but these descriptions will not be what they cannot be, namely, normatively untangled descriptions.²² 'Pure descriptive ones' that are utterly neutral are impossible to give if an account is to be rich enough to adequately describe most actual situations (Berlin 1980, 103-41; Putnam

2002). Think of the Nazi concentration camps as being described as places where people were harmed and sometimes killed. That is true enough, but it is not how someone entering those camps at their liberation would and should describe what she saw. It is no more adequate as a description than to describe a doctor as someone who can practice first aid.

Berlin's 'conversation of humankind' is principally with other intellectuals (past and present) while the everyday conversation for everyday philosophy could be between persons no matter how untutored as well as between intellectuals and university students (some potential intellectuals). Proceeding as Berlin does may unavoidably and unintentionally skew things in a certain way—ideology is difficult (perhaps impossible) to stand free from. And for an adequate worldview, we must find some way to nullify that ideology where it is, as it frequently but neither invariably nor definitionally is, distorting. But Berlin's approach was to converse not with all human beings, or any human being, period—something that may well be impossible—but, more in the realm of possibility, with intellectuals as different and as culturally diverse as possible. And as he entered into the conversation, he strove to travel as Philosophically light as possible vis-à-vis metaphysical, epistemological and the like orientations. That is, he sought to avoid resting his critical case on what John Rawls calls metaphysical conceptions—namely, any controversial philosophical views in the technical sense of 'Philosophy' (Rawls 1999, 388-414). (Note that this in some way takes us back to Wittgenstein.) So Berlin's philosophizing in the mode of what Rorty would call 'conversational philosophy' is compatible with but additive to so-called everyday philosophy, or what Rorty has so labeled. Berlin's use of 'philosophy' does not contradict or even hold as problematic anything in the Sellarsian-Rortian conception of little p philosophy.²³ But Berlin also does a bit—a considerable bit—of critical intellectual history, where some of those whom he studies did (sometimes in extravagant ways) big Philosophy. But that need not put Berlin in conflict with what has been called 'everyday philosophy' or lead him to do Philosophy himself. But it does mean when he does little p philosophy he does it in a way different from

'everyday philosophy' in being philosophy of a distinctively history oriented, scholarly and normative kind.

Now for the second issue, namely, the acceptance and ubiquitous unproblematicity of what Rorty called little p philosophy. Is Rorty's account sound? Is it as ubiquitous and as unproblematic as Rorty takes it to be? I think Michael Williams—a sympathetic, informed and fair-minded commentator on Rorty as well as a philosopher in his own right—is on the mark in taking it not to be as unproblematic as Rorty takes it to be. Williams is in this way on the mark when he says:

It seems to me that Rorty is just wrong to claim that no one would be dubious about 'philosophy' but only about 'Philosophy'. Sextus was dubious about both and so, in our own time, was Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's recurrent emphasis on the diversity of our practices should be read not as endorsing a pluralistic metaphysics but as expressing a willingness to do without a sense of how things hang together, to live without a synthesis as well as without a foundation. Strawson's 'catholic naturalism' is a closely related outlook. In Wittgenstein, the turn away from both syntheses and foundations finds expression in the theme of acceptance and acknowledgement: 'My *life* consists in my being content to accept many things.' And his consistently deflationary approach to philosophical problems co-exists, as his notes reveal, with a marked contempt for 'scientism' (Williams 1986, 22).

Not uninformed and not unreflective, humans can be, as they have at very different times been, skeptics, as Sextus and Wittgenstein were and Kierkegaard and Beckett were as well. They in effect were skeptics concerning not only big P Philosophy but of the Sellarsian-Rortian conception of little p philosophy as well. This is something that Rorty says no one would doubt. Rorty is simply mistaken here. Perhaps it is the case that most, even perhaps almost all, would take what Rorty claims to be unproblematic. But the skeptics, few that there are, have included intellectuals over the ages and of not inconsiderable depth. And it very likely includes—though not so well articulated—many of what Moore would call 'plain people', not intellectuals at all.

There is another way in which Rorty's conception of the everyday use of philosophy should be put into question. Little p philosophy should not be taken to mean "an attempt to see how things

in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together, in the broadest possible sense of the term” (Rorty 1982, xiv). The term ‘possible’ should be deleted in both parts of the preceding sentence and perhaps ‘broadest’ as well. The desire for things to hang together and to be seen to hang together is what it is necessary to keep. Many a reasonable person will settle for that and regard going for the broadest possible sense as a slip into ‘the metaphysical’ (e.g., à la ‘possible worlds’) and not something that reasonable persons, or at least all reasonable people, must or should seek. An everyday conception of philosophy should stick with this weaker characterization.²⁴

Notes

¹ This characterization, or perhaps it should be called a definition, of 'redemptive' and 'redemption' might be thought to be what C. L. Stevenson called a *persuasive* definition and thus one that often, but not always, we should be wary of. However, it is something that sometimes should be accepted as being useful or enlightening.

² Here Rorty has unwittingly changed the way he is using 'redemption'. He earlier talked of redemption for the religious and the philosophically oriented in terms of seeking redemptive truth that is, as he put it, seeking "a set of beliefs which would end once and for all the processes of reflection on what to do with ourselves" (Rorty 2007a, 90). This is very different from redemption as making acquaintance with and becoming attuned to as great a variety of human beings as possible with their cultural creations, novels, films, poems, songs, paintings, essays. Here "true belief may be of little importance but redemption is" (Rorty 2007a, 91). We have two different conceptions of 'redemption' here. And they reflect two very different attitudes and stances to life. The latter seems to me very different from how 'redemption' is usually understood.

³ For Rorty's rejection of this view of Wittgenstein, see his 2007a, 160-74 and 2007b, 32-35.

⁴ See Chapter 5 of my forthcoming book, *Metaphilosophy: A Farewell to Philosophy*.

⁵ I am indebted to John Kerkhoven here. See also Dworkin 2011, 42-45.

⁶ John Kerkhoven has well remarked that the age of the novel has arguably waned. Both Rorty and I are mistaken in giving so much weight to the novel in contemporary literary culture. That was true for times past—the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. Now, at least arguably, the art film has replaced the novel. (By 'art film' I mean the sort of film that gets played at film festivals and in centers throughout the world like the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.)

⁷ Empirical yes, but also interpretive. Some will say that this also makes them philosophical, perhaps even Philosophical but not necessarily or even usually either big P or little p philosophical. There are plenty of interpretive claims, e.g., 'The soup is too hot' or 'The Canadian Olympic ski track was too fast; it was dangerous'. These sentences, if used to make statements, are empirical, interpretive and normative. And they, like millions of claims like them, are empirically testable. The crucial thing here is to recognize that being interpretive does not make a claim philosophical (Putnam 2002).

⁸ John Kerkhoven perceptively asks of my above remark, "Is nothing at stake in cultural enterprises of whatever kind? What is the itch—think of Peircian doubt—that drives inquiry, participation and practice in literary culture?" Surely he is on the mark. Many, *pace* Rorty, who are involved in literary culture are not just looking for something new.

⁹ John Kerkhoven responds, "Maybe redemptive truth is impossible, but not redemption." And he goes on to argue that I am not clear enough about how 'redemption' is best understood. I have accepted, at least for the sake of argument, Rorty's conception of 'redemption' and 'redemptive truth' for the role it plays in his conception of how culture has gone from religious to philosophical to literary. Moreover, I have been concerned with this conception of his and its usefulness in discussing, amplifying and defending his idea of *philosophy as a transitional genre*, and for that sticking with his conception of redemption is appropriate. But Rorty's way of understanding redemption is not the only way. Indeed, it may very well not be the best way. But that is irrelevant for his and my purposes, though surely not for all purposes.

¹⁰ This is something to which Friederich Waismann takes particular and forceful exception. Obliquely commenting on Wittgenstein, he says in a very dismissive way, “To ask, ‘What is your aim in philosophy?’ and to reply, ‘To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle’ is... well, honour where it is due, I suppress what I was going to say; except perhaps this. There is something deeply exciting about philosophy, a fact not intelligible on such a negative account. It is not a matter of ‘clarifying thought’ nor of ‘the correct use of language’ nor of any other of these damned things. What is it? Philosophy is many things and there is no formula to cover them all. But if I were asked to express in one single word what is its most essential feature I would unhesitatingly say: vision.... What is characteristic of philosophy is the piercing of that dead crust of tradition and convention, the breaking of those fetters which bind us to inherited preconceptions, so as to attain a new and broader way of looking at things” (Waismann 1968, 32).

¹¹ There are some remarks in his papers of 1930, collected together under the title *Philosophical Remarks*, which suggest a *somewhat* different conception of philosophy. It should be noted that there we generally have a view that is between the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* and influenced by the Vienna Circle. Note, for example, his remark: “It isn’t possible to believe something for which you cannot imagine some kind of verification” (p. 89). A key remark he makes about philosophy there is the following: “Why is philosophy so complicated? It ought, after all, to be *completely* simple. —Philosophy unties the knots in our thinking which we have tangled up in an absurd way; but to do that, it must make movements which are just as complicated as the knots. Although the *result* of philosophy is simple, its methods for arriving there cannot be so. The complexity of philosophy is not in its matter but in our tangled understanding” (52; see also 81 and 90). This fits well with both his therapeutic philosophy and with what Rorty calls a pragmatic Wittgensteinian view, but it *requires* neither. However, on pp. 52-53, 23 get a view that has disappeared by the time we get to the *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*, namely that (i) it “is possible and necessary to separate which is essential from what is inessential in our language” (52), and (ii) “the chief trouble with our grammar is that we don’t have a bird’s eye view of it” (53). Later he came to see that neither (i) nor (ii) is possible or necessary. All that remains of (i) and (ii) is *an illusory longing for such things*, things which need to be therapized away.

¹² For Rorty’s rejection of this view of Wittgenstein, see his 2007a, 160-74 and 2007b, 32-35.

¹³ I do not want to suggest or imply that after this defogging anything will be left that is still philosophy. That we may still have disquietudes indicates the therapy has not been complete. But we understand what is left is still a disease for which we have not yet found a cure. We know, if Wittgenstein is right, that it is a disease. But see Wittgenstein 1953, 106.

¹⁴ I do not mean to say that these remarks of Wittgenstein’s do not themselves generate disquietudes. For example, sometimes Wittgenstein says that philosophical problems are *solved*. (See 7 from Wittgenstein in my text.) But sometimes—and I think more properly—he speaks of them as being *dissolved*. (See 15 in my text of quotations from Wittgenstein.) It is important to determine what he wants to say and what we should say. Following up on that, he says, “The problems are solved not by giving new information, but arranging what we have always known” (*PI*, 109). (It is evident that he means by ‘the problems’ philosophical problems.) But this sounds like by this arranging we give, *pace* the therapy notion, a bit of philosophy that is not a disease. There is a non-therapy view conveyed “by the disorder in our concepts [that is being] removed by ordering.” Or so it seems. Also what are the particular purposes for which the philosophers assemble reminders? Does this not go (again *pace* Wittgenstein) beyond mere description? I take it that, for Wittgenstein, particular purposes are all therapeutic ones aiming to dissolve philosophical disquietudes that inhibit our ability to “stick to the subjects of our everyday thinking.” But what he says here seems at least not always to fit together with that.

¹⁵ ‘Absolute’ or ‘weak thought’ (terms used by some philosophers), like ‘space-time’, ‘cyberspace’, ‘Facebook’, can be and sometimes are *given* a use. It is not a good argument to say that since a term is not used in ordinary language that we should not use it. Words are introduced all the time and sometimes to good effect. But to do so they have in the justification of their stipulation to be explained by what Moorean-

Wittgensteinian philosophers such as Alice Ambrose and Norman Malcolm have called translation into the concrete, the showing by concrete examples or by the use of ordinary language what is meant by such strange words. But typically with terms like 'Absolute' or 'Being' this is not done while it is with 'natural selection', 'space-time' or 'Facebook'. See my discussion of Waismann in Chapter 2.

¹⁶ Wittgenstein makes this very clear, at least for him. But it hardly seems to be true of most philosophers. Is this for them to be in a state of denial?

¹⁷ Something Wittgenstein stressed in his *Philosophical Remarks*. See pp. 44, 51-55, 61, 89-90. We see here in 1930 the strong influence of logical positivism, something he later distanced himself from.

¹⁸ To be a psychoanalyst, she or he must not only have the regular therapy but also afterwards a training therapy. Moreover, not infrequently psychoanalysts return for more therapy though this is not a requirement for being a psychoanalyst.

¹⁹ I am, as my italicized 'now' signals, not saying that in his time Kant's critical philosophy was unacceptable. He indeed was a watershed in the history of thought even if philosophical thinking soon went beyond him. But I am saying that now taken just as Kant took it, his philosophy is unacceptable. Important philosophers, John Rawls and Christine Korsgaard for example, regard themselves, and properly so, as Kantians. But they make it clear that they do not accept Kant hook, line and sinker and to do so would be to do something that was flawed and of poor service to Kant. We may have some Archimedean points that for some of us now are orientating and reasonable but they do not give us something that must be true of all possible worlds. They do not give us something substantive which is *a priori* true or something that must guide reasonable thought that takes us beyond all contingency.

²⁰ Wittgenstein contends that once we get for a particular purpose a perspicuous description or again for a particular purpose a clear non-theory encumbered view of our conceptual terrain nothing more is needed or should be wanted. Philosophy would come—or so Wittgenstein had it—to an end here or at least should. There is nothing to discover. If we have such a clear view—I didn't say a 'completely clear view'—of the conceptual terrain, our conceptual illnesses will be cured. It will wither away. Our philosophical language must be brought back to our everyday language. John Austin was on to something when he said that, rooted in our practices as it is, ordinary language was always the first word and the last word. All this is, I think, right on, but it yields clarity, though not as sometimes Wittgenstein remarks, 'complete clarity'. There is no such thing. The quest for this is just one more illusory quest. But things are all right without it. Without it there is no threat of chaos.

²¹ See Chapter 5 of my forthcoming book, *Meta-philosophy: A Farewell to Philosophy*.

²² It might be said that this claim is as easily refuted as it is defended. But that depends on a fuller account of what you are defending or refuting. R. M. Hare's defense of the thin and P. Foot's defense of the thick may lead to a bit of a standoff. But for nuanced and more developed discussions of this, perhaps putting an end to such a standoff, see Allan Gibbard, "Reasons Think and Thick," *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. C, no. 6 (June 2003), 288-304 and T. M. Scanlon, "Thickesses and Theory," *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. C, no. 6 (June 2003), 275-87,

²³ Note that we have here two variants of little p philosophy, namely a tutored and an untutored kind. And here we have between the two kinds differences of degree and not a sharp cut.

²⁴ John Kerkhoven's help has been invaluable. He has smoothed away the roughness of my prose, saved me many a slip and challenged me at crucial points. I am grateful to him. I would also like to call attention to an important book by Béla Szabados entitled *Ludwig Wittgenstein on Race, Gender, and Cultural Identity: Philosophy as a Personal Endeavor* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen-Press, 2010). It's off-putting title for a book on Wittgenstein first put me off reading it. But having read it I find it a book of considerable merit. It makes a link in Wittgenstein's writings between philosophy and autobiography, with particular attention to Wittgenstein's understanding of the practice of philosophy as a working on oneself: a struggling to rid

ourselves of false images as philosophers. Here Wittgenstein's notebooks are, Szabados has it, of crucial importance. In these notebooks and diaries Wittgenstein often writes directly and passionately and, in doing so, frequently religiously. These remarks should not be seen, Szabados maintains, as merely of psychological relevance but as philosophical remarks as well. He puts this to good use in his discussion of me on Wittgenstein on religion in his last chapter (211-43). If I ever return to what I have called Wittgensteinian Fideism, I would need to come to grips with what Szabados perceptively and cogently writes there.

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