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Introduction

Richard Rorty (1931 - 2007) was an American philosopher & public intellectual who taught at Princeton University, the University of Virginia & Stanford University. Rorty saw the idea of knowledge as a 'mirror of nature' as pervasive throughout the history of western philosophy. He is noted for his wide ranging critique of the modern conception of philosophy as a Quasi-scientific enterprise aimed at reaching certainty and objective truth. Among his most influential books are *Philosophy & the Mirror of Nature*, *Consequences of Pragmatism* and *Contingency and Irony and Solidarity*.

Philosophy and Mirror of Nature is a visionary work that challenges us to rethink our understanding of philosophical enterprise. It is the single greatest influence on the revival of American pragmatism, one of the most exciting developments in Philosophy today. *Mirror* is a work of enormous scope ranging over epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language etc. Rorty sees philosophy as an attempt to work through the consequences of a conception of knowledge as accurate accurate representation, a conception rooted in the metaphor of mind as mirror of nature. Like Descartes, Rorty calls 'Philosophy as epistemology with its problems, the mind-body problem, scepticism, the nature of truth, etc. His way out of philosophy as epistemology turns on a broadly pragmatic outlook that he calls epistemological behaviourism. He also incorporates a kind of naturalism. The book is

a survey of some recent developments in philosophy , especially analytic philosophy, from the point views of anti-Cartesian and anti-Kantian revolution.

Critique of Representationalism

Representationalist take intentionality at bottom for the matter of representing the world. In their view, the basic notions to account and explain the nature of meaning and content are those of reference and truth.

The tradition can arguably be traced to Descartes epistemological gambits in the meditations and the empiricists theory of ideas, but in its modern, linguistic semantic form its main proponents run from Frege (1892), Russell (1918-19) and the early Wittgenstein(1922).

On the other hand, anti-representationalists are fundamentally to be understood in terms of the patterns of use into which intentional states and utterances are woven. In their view the basic notions to account for the intentionality of mind & language, are those of (warranted) move and /or expression. Though Hegel is occasionally cited as an early forerunner of this sort of view, but is most clearly identifiable in language-oriented philosophy of the twentieth century, with notable proponents like Wittgenstein, Sellars and Rorty.

Critique of Epistemology Method

On Rorty's account, modern epistemology is not only an attempt to legitimate our claim to knowledge of what is real, but it is also an attempt to legitimate philosophical reflection on itself. This is because the result of this kind of interrogation, theoretical empirical knowledge, is so obviously fruitful and also carries with it seemingly uncontentious norms of progress. Its mere presence poses a legitimating challenge to a form of thought and claim to knowledge, that is distinct from it.

Cartesian epistemology in Rorty's view is designed to meet this challenge. It is skeptical in a fundamental way ; skeptical doubts of a Cartesian sort, i.e doubts tht can be raised about any set of empirical claims and cannot be alleviated by experience , are tailor – made to preserve at once a domain and job for philosophical reflection. The core of the argument behind representational epistemology is that, vocabulary is optional and mutable. Rorty sets out to show that this is not the case. His primary challenge and arguments are against mirroring through an extension of arguments from Sellars, Quine, Kuhn, Wittgenstein and Davidson towards a general critique of the concept of the mind inherited from seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophy. For Rorty, if we make the distinction between what is contingent and what is necessary then, we will not know what would count as a 'rational reconstruction' of our knowledge and we will not know what epistemology's goal or method could be.

Rorty's Edifying Philosophy

Rorty in his work 'The mirror of nature' came across the distinction of systematic and edifying philosophy. Rorty calls the mainstream thinkers 'systematic' and the anti-establishment, 'edifying'. The latter are mainly suspicious of systematic philosophy, and the best examples are Dewey, Wittgenstein and Heidegger. They refuse to fall back on the easy path that merely deals with the traditional problems of philosophy as a cooperative, progressive discipline. Instead, they are poking fun at the classic portrait of man in which the systematic thinkers are seeking out universal truths and the 'final vocabulary'. The edifying thinkers often point out that words take their meanings from other words, thus, vocabularies gain their privileges from people who use them, as opposed to the assumption that they are transparent to the real. Systematic thinkers construct an arguments, whereas great edifying thinkers react and offer satires, paradoxies, aphorisms. Great systematic thinkers build for all-time, while great edifying thinkers destroy for the sake of their generation. Systematic philosophers want to walk the secure path of science, while the edifying philosophers want to keep the sense of wonder alive, that it cannot be truly explained or represented, if barely described.

However, Rorty is quick to point out that this distinction between systematic and edifying thinkers should not be mistaken for the distinction between the normal thinkers and the revolutionary thinkers. Rorty says that both the systematic and edifying thinkers are revolutionary philosophers but that they are of two distinct types. One group of revolutionary thinkers assume that the incommensurability of their new vocabulary with the old one to be merely a temporary thing, and that it will be solved once their vocabulary is institutionalised. The other group of revolutionary thinkers is horrified to think that their vocabularies could ever be shrunk down to dry academic language ,or that their writings become commensurable with the tradition.

Thus, the author attempts to dissolve modern philosophical problems instead of solving them by presenting them as pseudo-problems that only exists in the language game of epistemological projects culminating in analytic philosophy. In a pragmatic gesture, Rorty suggests philosophy must get past these pseudo problems if it is to be productive.

Rorty's way out of philosophy as epistemology turns on a broadly pragmatic outlook that he calls " epistemological behaviourism" As an epistemological behaviourist, he examines human thought and language as communicative and knowledge as the result of argument and discussion. Differences lacking practical import have no theoretical significance either.

Rorty's pragmatism incorporates a kind of naturalism. He is a naturalist in his examination of philosophy. He blends linguistics priority, anti- representationalism and historical explanation in a way that analytic philosophers were unused to. In Mirror, Rorty suggests that philosophy becomes Hermeneutics.