DEWEY AND RORTY ON TRUTH

Alexander Kremer
E-mail: alexanderkremer2000@yahoo.com

1. Truth in the history of philosophy

Truth is one of the most central and largest subjects in philosophy. Truth has been a topic of ongoing discussion for thousands of years. Much of the contemporary literature on truth shows that the most significant theories are the correspondence, coherence and pragmatist theories of truth.

However, despite the theories, my answer to the question, 'What is truth at all?' is that I do not know.

More exactly speaking, I know that in choosing a definition of truth I have already chosen an ontology. I am persuaded that it is worth following this methodological track for a while. *According to my thesis, epistemology and ontology hang together inseparable, especially regarding the question of truth.*

The necessary and inherent connection between epistemology and ontology is beyond question. Epistemology is always determined by the philosopher's ontology. Thousands of different philosophies have been born since its Greek beginnings, but in some kind of form, in a direct or an indirect way, every philosophy addresses the relationship between the human being and the world in general. It seems to be self-evident from the ancient Greek philosophy, through the mediaeval Christian philosophy, to the end of the modern period. We can always find some ontology – usually in a latent form that is without elaboration – also behind the so called contemporary philosophies. Examples include Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre researching first of all the individual and its existence, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Austin, and even the young Richard Rorty, researching mind and language. All based their work on an ontology based in the same question as the first philosophers: "Who is the human being in the world?" I am persuaded that this is the main question of philosophy, because every philosophical theory has been produced by a finite and historical human being who, first of all, wanted to understand himself in the world. Philosophy can be defined in several concrete ways, but I think the essential structure of philosophical thinking does not change. The formal structure of this thinking works not only in the traditional metaphysical philosophies, but also in contemporary analytic and continental philosophies. *The formal structure of philosophical thinking might be regarded as the theoretical and historical self-reflection of the human being that is the permanent condition of existential inquiry. However, if philosophy is a permanent, theoretical self- and world-understanding and interpretation*, then – drawn from its concept! – the ontological question must be the dominant within every philosophy. The reason this is so is that the main structure of the world and our place in the world can only be comprehended on the basis of an ontological principle (which is always an answer to the question: "what is the world like?") which can be found already in the world-view of the

individual. This is a precondition of every form of ontology because ontology can be expounded only from this kind of principle. I consider this ontological principle so general that is used by every individual and human beings are mostly individuals, at least from the time period of the Renaissance.

If we accept this relation between epistemology and ontology and look at truth as one of the key questions of every epistemology, then it becomes clear that we cannot speak in general about the nature of truth because it depends on the philosopher's ontology. *The truth narrative always depends on the ontological narrative.* (It is worth here emphasizing that – in my opinion – the consistence must be required within one philosophical narrative. This may not be the case within other narratives, as in the case of art, religion, or politics, but these do not have necessarily philosophical content.[1]

If we take a look, for example at Plato's, Hegel's and the young Heidegger's philosophies, we can see this quite clearly!

1.1. Plato

As it is well-known, Plato created the so-called "two-world" ontology. He assumed the existence of two, separate worlds. Beside our immanent world he posited a transcendent world, the world of Forms. On the one hand Plato thought of our world as constantly changing, with no unchangeable entities in it. On the other hand, within the transcendent world are the Forms; the pure, spiritual generalities which never change. The material substance wasn't born later than the Forms, but it is determined by the later ones in the sense of methexis which is one of the four posited connections between the two separate worlds (these are methexis, Demiurge, immortal part of the human soul and the doctrine of recollection or "anamnesis").

Since the things of the immanent world are determined by and resemble the motionless, eternal, unchanging Forms, the ultimate objects of recognition cannot be anything else, except these Forms. However, the Forms exist in a different world from the subject of the recognition, that's why Plato had to posit not only the immortal part of the soul but also its reincarnation. Hence we can say that Plato's epistemology, the anamnesis, obviously is determined by his ontology.

All of this also determines his concept of truth, because it is identical with the main Form of Good. - We can say now with Spinoza: Quod erat demonstrandum.

1.2. Hegel

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, one of the main figures of the 19th century German Idealism, created an idealistic ontology, called 'absolute idealism'. The term allegedly was coined by Schelling, but his contemporaries and even Hegel used it as the name of Hegel's own philosophy. It meant the complete identity of knower and known, but, unlike Schelling's philosophy of identity, only in the final stage of the World Spirit which is Absolute Knowing. Hegel thought namely that the Absolute is a cosmic and objective consciousness which he called World Spirit during its historical development.

---

[1] This is one of the differences between philosophical theory and literature. Within a philosophical theory we need a discursive consistence, and in literature we don't need it necessarily. There can be also an emotional consistence enough, or we don't need it at all, if the novel or poem would like to show just the lack of it.

Because this Absolute is the whole universe for Hegel, this means that nothing can exist outside of the Absolute. All entities of nature and society – including also the 'human being' and his institutions – are the objectifications of the Absolute. The only ultimate motion in the world is the self-recognition of the Absolute which is identical with the motion of Being.

For the Absolute, as a cosmic consciousness develops according to the three main laws of the Hegelian dialectical logic (the law of negation of negation; the law of measurement; and the law of contradiction), it is clear that not only his epistemology but also his logic is identical with his ontology. This is a logico-epistemologico-ontology, where everything follows from that ontological position that the Absolute is an objective, cosmic consciousness.

Every new step of recognition of the Absolute in Hegel's philosophy is a new step of its progress towards the final stage which is Absolute Knowing. At the starting point of its development, the World Spirit exists as a being-in-itself, but gradually recognizing itself it becomes a being-in-and-for-itself. From all of this, it follows that the true shape in which the ultimate truth that is the truth of the Absolute exists can only be the scientific system of such truth.[2] Given his Absolute exists not only as Substance, but equally as a Subject[3], Hegel can say that:

> "The True is the whole.[4] But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result* that only in the *end* is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. (namely) to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself."[5]

Quod erat demonstrandum.

1.3. Heidegger

To understand well the young Heidegger's theory of truth, we have to look over more thoroughly his first main work, *Being and Time*.[6] As is well-known, *Being and Time* is an unfinished work. What was published and what we can use, is nothing else but the

---

[2] Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* transl. by A. V. Miller, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1998, p. 3. (Further: Hegel's Phenomenology.)

[3] Cf. Hegel's Phenomenology, p. 10.

[4] We also could say: "the Truth is the whole" – A. Kremer.

[5] Hegel's Phenomenology, p. 14.: "That the True is actual only as system, or that Substance is essentially Subject, is expressed in the representation of the Absolute as *Spirit* – the most sublime Notion and the one which belongs to the modern age and its religion. The spiritual alone is the *actual*; it is essence, or that which has *being in itself*; it is that which *relates itself to itself* and is *determinate*, it is *other-being* and *being-for-self*, and in this determinateness, or in its self-externality, abides within itself; in other words, it is *in and for itself*. – But this being-in-and-for-itself is at first only for us, or *in itself*, it is spiritual *Substance*. It must also be this *for itself*, it must be the knowledge of the spiritual, and the knowledge of itself as Spirit, i.e. it must be an *object* to itself, but just as immediately a sublated object, reflected into itself. It is *for itself* only for *us*, in so far as its spiritual content is generated by itself. But in so far as it is also for itself for its own self, this self-generation, the pure Notion, is for it the objective element in which it has its existence, and it is in this way, in its existence for itself, an object reflected into itself. The Spirit that, so developed, knows itself as Spirit is *Science*; Science is its actuality and the realm which it builds for itself in its own element."

[6] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962. – Further: BT.

existential analytic, namely Heidegger's existential hermeneutics. It can be seen from the preliminary division of the work (BT § 8.), that the train of ideas is disrupted at the very point where the direct treatment of the question of Being should have begun. But in my opinion, Heidegger's existential hermeneutics – without the problem of Being – is an independent unit of Meaning. So, *Being and Time* as a fundamental ontology remained a torso, but it is not so as an existential analytic.

Nevertheless it is one of the philosophical books in the 20th century that had a great impact on different fields of human culture. What did it make possible? Among several reasons, probably its original theme and approach is the first cause for its outstanding significance. Although the new "Uhrwissenschaft" ("science of origin"), that is, Heideggerian *fundamental ontology*, as first questioning the meaning of Being and seeking to overcome Husserlian transcendental phenomenology, has remained a torso, but its starting point, first part and – according to Heidegger's project – its final step, the *existential analytic* of Dasein was completed. His existential-phenomenological approach takes also the philosophical tradition into consideration, opens up the earlier never seen depths of factical structure of human existence. Placing by the earlier philosophers as orphan handled everyday life in the centre of his research; handling understanding as a kind of Being of Dasein; transforming the traditional hermeneutical circle into an existential circle, and interpreting the basic state of Dasein as Being-in-the-world, Heidegger creates philosophical hermeneutics. He ceases the world-less subject of modern philosophy and shows the original unity of the world, Dasein and "Being-in". After writing these constitutive moments, showing them first as parts of a static structure, he presents the dynamic of this factical existential structure in the second division of his work. Heidegger concentrates here not on the inauthentic Dasein, but on ontological concepts of the motion of the authentic mode of Being (Cf. BT, end of paragraph 38). He analyzes first of all temporality and historicality, but also death and guilt.[7]

If we are looking for Heidegger's epistemology, we have to realize that he doesn't have a particular epistemology. *I could even say that he doesn't have an epistemology at all!!* This follows from the nature of his existential phenomenology which is an ontology and a philosophical hermeneutics at the same time. I don't want to get lost too deeply in the Heideggerian philosophy. However, in order to understand his theory of truth, we

---

[7] However, Heidegger always keeps in view his original purpose: the question of the meaning of Being! The question of Being can be raised in a proper way -- according to Heidegger -- if we understand the *authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole of Dasein* (BT 277):

"*Our existential analysis of Dasein up till now cannot lay claim to primordiality*. Its fore-having never included more than the *inauthentic* Being of Dasein, and of Dasein as less than a *whole (als unganzes)*. If the Interpretation of Dasein's Being is to become primordial, as a foundation for working out the basic question of ontology, then it must first have brought to light existentially the Being of Dasein in its possibilities of *authenticity* and *totality*." (BT 276)

Nevertheless, the possibility of Dasein's having an authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole can be made possible only by the anticipation of death. In existential sense death cannot be regarded as a present-at-hand "still outstanding," but death also cannot be considered as an "end," in the sense of "fulfillments," because even "unfulfilled" Dasein ends and vice versa. Death cannot be understood as "Being-at-an-end" of Dasein, but it is "Being-towards-the-end" ("Sein zum Tode"), that is a phenomenon. Death, in the broadest sense, is a phenomenon of life. Death is a way to be, that Dasein takes over as soon as it comes to life. The full existential-ontological conception of death is "Dasein's ownmost possibility -- non-relational, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped" (BT 303).

have to see that the philosophical hermeneutics always has a broader sense, broader meaning than the mere epistemology, because it is a theory of our existential self-understanding and self-interpretation. It also means that recognition only a small part of it, and it is derived from understanding.

Let's summarize the hermeneutical novelty and the importance of the analyses of *Being and Time* from the point of view of my topic:

- Heidegger showed that the Being of Dasein as Care, which includes existentiality, facticity and Being-fallen, is in itself hermeneutical, because the understanding in not only the function of intellect but basically it is a kind of Being, an existentiale. It comes from this that the interpretation as the development of the understanding is regarded also as essential moment of Being of Dasein. (Cf. BT §§ 31-32.)

- The existential understanding and interpretation are based on the ontological Meaning of our Being, on the temporality (Zeitlichkeit) that in this way gives also the foundation of the historicality of our Being. (Cf. BT § 65. and § 74.)

- It follows from the previous reasoning that all real understanding and interpretation is historical; on the other hand it is self-understanding and self-interpretation as well; whatever we understand, whatever we interpret, directly or indirectly we also understand and interpret ourselves (cf. especially with BT § 4. and § 31., and TM p. 340.); thirdly, according to Heidegger the general structure (Vor-Struktur) of the above mentioned circle of understanding is effective not exclusively in an existential aspect, but in every occurrence of the understanding itself.

The essence of Heidegger's truth-theory follows from his existential ontology, and this is the aletheia (ἀλήθεια), that is taking entities out of their hiddenness and letting them be seen in their unhidenness (their uncoveredness).

For we can comprehend only *phenomena* in Heideggerian (and not in a Kantian or Husserlian) sense that is *existential-ontological meanings*, Heidegger denies the traditional correspondence theory of truth. *According to his views, correspondence theory cannot bridge the ontological gap between the judgment's content and the thing:*

"According to the general opinion, what is true is knowledge. But knowledge is judging. In judgment one must distinguish between the judging as a *Real* psychical process, and that which is judged, as an *ideal* content. It will be said of the latter that it is 'true'. The Real psychical process, however, is either present-at-hand or not. According to this opinion, the ideal content of judgment stands in a relationship of agreement. This relationship thus pertains to a connection between an ideal content of judgment and the Real Thing as that which is judged *about*. Is this agreement Real or ideal in its kind of Being, or neither of these? *How are we to take ontologically the relation between an ideal entity and something that is Real and present-at-hand?* Such a relation indeed subsists (bestheht); and in factical judgments it subsists not only as a relation between the content of judgment and the Real Object, but likewise as a relation between the ideal content and the Real act of judgment. And does it manifestly subsist 'more inwardly' in this latter case?

Or is the ontological meaning of the relation between Real and ideal something about which we must not inquire? Yet the relation is to be one which *subsists*. What does such "subsisting" (Bestand) mean ontologically?

Why should this not be a legitimate question? Is it accidental that no headway has been made with this problem in over two thousand years? Has the question already been perverted in the very way it has been approached – in the ontologically unclarified separation of the Real and the ideal?" (BT 261)

Instead of the correspondence theory Heidegger offers an existential ontological concept of truth, and he also shows for us, how the correspondence theory originates from the existential ontological relationships of our factical life.[8]

> "*To say that an assertion "is true" signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself.* Such an assertion asserts, points out, 'lets' the entity 'be seen' in its uncoveredness. The *Being-true* (*truth*) of the assertion must be understood as *Being-uncovering*. Thus truth has by no means the structure of an agreement between knowing and the object in the sense of a likening of one entity (the subject) to another (the object).
>
> Being-true as Being-uncovering, is in turn ontologically possible only on the basis of Being-in-the-world. This latter phenomenon, which we have known as a basic state of Dasein, is the *foundation* for the primordial phenomenon of truth." (BT 260-261. Emphasis: A. Kremer.)

Some pages later, Heidegger goes on to say that:

> "Being-true as Being-uncovering, is a way of Being for Dasein. What makes this very uncovering possible must necessarily be called 'true' in a still more primordial sense. *The most primordial phenomenon of truth is first shown by the existential-ontological foundations of uncovering*."[9]

---

[8] Cf. Heidegger, BT 261: "Asserting is a way of Being towards the Thing itself that is. And what does one's perceiving of it demonstrate? Nothing else than *that* this Thing *is* the very entity which one has in mind in one's assertion. What comes up for confirmation is that this entity is pointed out by the Being in which the assertion is made – which is Being towards what is put forward in the assertion; thus what is to be confirmed is *that* such Being *uncovers* the entity towards which it is. What gets demonstrated is the Being-uncovering of the assertion. In carrying out such a demonstration, the knowing remains related solely to the entity itself. In this entity the confirmation, as it were, gets enacted. The entity itself which one has in mind shows itself *just as* it is in itself; that is to say, it shows that it, in its selfsameness, is just as *it* gets pointed out in the assertion as being – just as it gets uncovered as being. Representations do not get compared, either among themselves or in *relation* to the Real Thing. What is to be demonstrated is not an agreement of knowing with its object, still less of the psychical with the physical; but neither is it an agreement between 'contents of consciousness' among themselves. What is to be demonstrated is solely the Being-uncovered (Entdeckt-sein) of the entity itself – *that entity* in the "how" of its uncoveredness. This uncoveredness is confirmed when that which is put forward in the assertion (namely the entity itself) shows itself *as that very same thing. "Confirmation"* signifies *the entity's showing itself in its selfsameness*." (We can say: as a phenomenon in Heideggerian sense!! – A. Kremer.)

[9] Heidegger, BT 263. ("Uncovering is a way of Being for Being-in-the-world. Circumspective concern, or even that concern in which we tarry and look at something, uncovers entities within-the-world. These entities become that which has been uncovered. They are 'true' in a second sense. What is primarily 'true' – that is, uncovering – is Dasein. 'Truth' in the second sense does not mean Being-uncovering (uncovering), but Being-uncovered (uncoveredness)." BT 263 – Emphasis: A. Kremer.)

I don't want to go into the very details of the Heideggerian truth-theory, because it would need an extra lecture, but I think we can see the point. We can see on the one hand that Heidegger emphasizes the contextuality and situatedness of truth, and – as a consequence of his truth-theory – he denies the absolute metaphysical truth:

> "That there are 'eternal truths' will not be adequately proved until someone has succeeded in demonstrating that Dasein has been and will be for all eternity. As long as such a proof is still outstanding, this principle remains a fanciful contention which does not gain in legitimacy from having philosophers commonly 'believe' it."[10]

On the other hand it's clear that his theory of truth is also determined by his existential-phenomenological ontology. – Quod erat demonstrandum.

Why should there be then a different situation in the other fields of philosophy? I am convinced that this is the case also in the analytic tradition of philosophy that could be demonstrated quite well for example on the changes of Wittgenstein's ontology, epistemology and theory of truth.

I don't think that even the representatives of pragmatism or narrative philosophy could handle the problem of truth in a different way! Hans-Georg Gadamer who was Heidegger's disciple, denied every type of metaphysical framework of the world. In *Truth and Method* he expounded his own philosophical hermeneutics and insisted on *the contextuality and situatedness of truth.* However, since we are speaking now on pragmatism, let us focus on Dewey's and Rorty's theory of truth.

2. Dewey on Truth

As we know, the young Dewey was touched by the neo-Hegelian idealism of George Sylvester Morris at John Hopkins University (around 1882-1884). However, during the second Ann Arbor period of his career (1888-1894), Dewey abandoned the idea of a supra-natural absolute spirit (around 1890-94), at the time at which his ideas about religion became increasingly liberal. His anti-metaphysical views developed together with his instrumentalism and naturalism, especially during his middle years (1899-1924), when he was a philosophy professor at Columbia University in New York City. Although he revised a little his earlier thoughts about traditional metaphysics discussed in the final chapter of *Experience and Nature* (1925), but his standpoint seems to be clear. As Larry Hickman (director of the Center for Dewey Studies) wrote in his excellent article about Dewey:

---

[10] BT 269-270. Beside that it is worth looking at BT 272: "Both the contention that there are 'eternal truths' and the jumbling together of Dasein's phenomenally grounded 'ideality' with an idealized absolute subject, belong to those residues of Christian theology within philosophical problematics which have not as yet been radically extruded. - The Being of truth is connected primordially with Dasein. And only because Dasein is as constituted by disclosedness (that is, by understanding), can anything like Being be understood; only so is it possible to understand Being. - Being (not entities) is something which 'there is' (es gibt – A. Kremer) only in so far as truth is. And truth *is* (ist – A. Kremer) only in so far as and as long as Dasein is."

"Dewey's naturalism leads him to argue that everything that is known or knowable exists in relation to other things. There is therefore no such thing as an absolute existence or absolute value. At the level of human life, it is the business of communication (which Dewey terms the most wonderful of all affairs) to generate the meanings by which natural events are enabled to pass beyond their existence as mere occurrences and become pregnant with implications."[11]

As we can see, there is not anything absolute, everything is relative and relational in Dewey's philosophy. That is why Dewey found the term 'truth' (like 'knowledge') a misleading term, one that smacks of finality, certainty, and correspondence with reality. Instead of using concepts 'truth', 'belief' and 'knowledge', he wrote rather about 'warranted assertibility' from his 1938 book, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* on:

"What has been said helps explain why the term 'warranted assertibility' is preferred to the terms *belief* and *knowledge*. It is free from the ambiguity of the latter terms." (LW 12:16)[12]

As Hickman says, Dewey's 1938 book has the reputation of being one of his most difficult works. There can be little doubt that this attempt to refine and advance the instrumentalist logic of his 1903 *Studies in Logical Theory* and his 1916 *Essays in Experimental Logic* ran against the grain of received logical theory. It "treated propositions as something to be abstracted from contexts in which inference was attempting to move toward judgment. It treated truth pragmatically, that is as contextual and provisional." (Hickman, 167.) Hickman also analyzes Dewey's new expression, *warranted assertibility*:

"Dewey discarded the term "truth" because of what he considered its unfortunate connotations. In its place he proposed "warranted assertibility." The "warranted" portion of the phrase points to the past, to experimental inference already accomplished and judgments already rendered. The "assertibility" portion of the phrase points to the future, to novel conditions and tests not yet conducted. Warranted assertibility thus takes account of inquirential work accomplished and asserts, provisionally, that its results are sufficiently general that they will be applicable to future situations." (Hickman, 167.)

---

[11] Larry A. Hickman, 'John Dewey, 1859-1952', in: *The Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 162.

[12] "In the case of *belief*, the main ambiguity is between it as a state of mind and as *what* is believed–subject-matter. In the case of *knowledge*, it concerns the difference between knowledge as an outcome of "competent and controlled inquiry" and knowledge supposed to "have a meaning of its own apart from connection with, and reference to, inquiry"." Dewey wrote this footnote to the paragraph, when he quoted it in 1941 in his answer to Bertrand Russell, 'Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth'. (In *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 2, ed. by Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998, 211.)

Dewey's 1938 book, *Logic* was not well received, but he stuck obviously to his view in the rest of his life. In his 1941 response to Bertrand Russell, *Propositions, Warranted Assetibility, and Truth* he gave a clear summary of his standpoint:

> "The position which I take, namely, that all knowledge, or warranted assertion, depends upon inquiry and that inquiry is, truistically, connected with what is questionable (and questioned) involves a skeptical element, or what Peirce called "fallibilism." But it also provides for *probability*, and for determination of degrees of probability in rejecting all intrinsically dogmatic statements, where "dogmatic" applies to *any* statement asserted to possess inherent self-evident truth. That the only aleternative to ascribing to some propositions self-sufficient, self-possessed, and self-evident truth is a theory which finds the test and mark of truth in *consequences* of some sort is, I hope, an acceptable view. At all events, it is a position to be kept in mind in assessing my views. "[13]

David Hildebrand evaluates the development of Dewey's comprehension to truth in the same way as Larry Hickman. Hildebrand quotes Dewey's reluctant definition of truth from his 1939 essay, *Experience, Knowledge and Value: A Rejoinder* and analyzes his words:

> "The 'truth' (of any present proposition) is, by the definition, subject to the outcome of continued inquiries; *its* 'truth', if the word must be used, is provisional; as *near* the truth as inquiry has *as yet* come, a matter determined *not* by a guess at some future belief but by the care and pains with which inquiry has been conducted up to the present time." (LW14:56-7)

> "Notice how Dewey's definition directs attention back upon the *process* of inquiry, the *event* of truth-making. Truth is a label characterizing what *inquiry* has come up with – in *that* situation, for *those* purposes. But since new problems crop up all the time, we should never expect to be finally confident about the certainty of any belief inquiry has produced. 'The attainment of settled beliefs', Dewey writes, 'is a progressive matter; there is no belief so settled as not to be exposed to further inquiry' (LW12:16). If we need to honor a statement by calling it 'true' or 'knowledge', let us follow science in thinking that we honor it because it is settled enough to be a *resource* for future inquiries. To say it is *true* that 'Fresh bread, when eaten, provides nourishment' is to announce that this belief can be used reliably as a conceptual ingredient in future inquiries. It is not a statement about the way the world really is.
> There is a function to 'truth' that needs to be preserved; we need to identify which assertions have proved useful or reliable. For these reasons, Dewey begins to use 'warrant' or 'warranted assertibility' to capture the element in his theory closest to traditional truth (or 'knowledge' in its honorific sense of true-belief). Saying that a

[13] John Dewey, 'Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth', in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 2, ed. by Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998, 203.

statement or proposition 'warrants assertion' is useful but not misleading, as it indicates that inquires which rely on it can proceed with confidence."[14]

We can summarize Dewey's truth comprehension in a way that it was in a continuous development, but on the one hand it always developed together with his instrumentalism and naturalism. On the other hand it was always an organic part of his theory of experience and inquiry:

> "…my whole theory is determined by the attempt to state what conditions and operations of inquiry *warrant* a "believing," or justify its assertion as true; that propositions, as such, are so far from being cases of believings that they are means of attaining a warranted believing, their worth as means being determined by their pertinency and efficacy in "satisfying" conditions that are rigorously set by the problem they are employed to resolve."[15]

As we can see from all of this, Dewey's comprehension of truth is determined by his version of pragmatism that is by his instrumentalism and naturalism. Quod erat demonstrandum.

3. Rort on Truth

As is well-known Richard Rorty was an analytic thinker and only later, in the 1970s became a neopragmatic philosopher. In contrast to the traditional foundational philosophers, Rorty hailed first of all Dewey, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Derrida as the most important philosophers of the twentieth century.

According to Rorty, as we can see it also in his book of 1989, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*[16], *pragmatism* is an *anti-essentialist, historicist constructivism*, since we create both language and truth about the world. That is why we should be constantly interested in reconstructing language to make it more useful and rewarding and to make our experienced world more satisfying to our desires.

He believes that the '*supporting-pillars' of our human existence*, *language*, *self* and *community* are *contingent*,[17] and he, as every pragmatist, is also a *pan-relationist*. He expounds in his article, *A World – without Substances or Essences* (published in 1994) that the gap between the so-called 'analytic' and so-called 'Continental' philosophy shows not too many signs of being bridged, although the best works being done in these two traditions overlap to an important extent.

---

[14] David Hildebrand, *Dewey*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2008, 60-61.

[15] John Dewey, 'Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth', in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 2, ed. by Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998, 208.

[16] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. – Further: CIS.

[17] "The line of thought common to Blumenberg, Nietzsche, Freud, and Davidson suggests that we try to get to the point where we no longer worship *anything*, where we treat *nothing* as a quasi divinity, where we treat *everything* – our language, our conscience, our community – as a product of time and chance." (CIS 22.)

Additionally, Rorty claims that 'everything is a social construction' and 'all awareness is a linguistic affair'.[18] Rorty draws from this not only the conclusion that it is hopeless to get behind appearance to the intrinsic nature of reality, but he also claims that there is no such thing as the absolute intrinsic nature at all. (Cf. ibid. 50. and 63.) The anti-essentialists, as also Rorty is, even cannot believe that human reason would be a special faculty for penetrating through appearances to reality. As he wrote: "We anti-essentialists, of course, do not believe that there is such a faculty. Since nothing has an intrinsic nature, neither do human beings." (Ibid. 63)

Let us focus now on the question of his truth theory. *According to my theses, (1ˢᵗ) Rorty's ontology is nothing other than his world-description; (2ⁿᵈ) Rorty's truth-description can be regarded as a special combination and improvement of some characteristics of the pragmatist and analytic truth theories; and (3ʳᵈ) Rorty's truth-comprehension is also determined by his ontology.*

3.1. Rorty's ontology is nothing else than his world-description

If we concentrate first on Rorty's ontology, it follows from his above mentioned views that he represents a kind of *naturalism* and *nominalism*. As is well-known, Rorty regarded himself as an inheritor of Enlightenment, and the ultimate goal of his neo-pragmatism was to promote with philosophical arguments the new development of human culture as the next step of the enormous plan of Enlightenment. His pragmatism is, like its classical antecedents, itself a form of *naturalism*. Contrary to the representationalist vocabularies, he regarded vocabularies that is our world- and self-descriptions as tools, employed by natural creatures in a natural world. Different vocabularies give us beliefs that are more or less use in coping with the environment in various aspects. However, as Brandom says, Rorty "follows Kant in sharply distinguishing issues of *causation* from issues of *justification*. Enforcing this distinction between the natural and the normative (according to the lessons he learned from Sellars' "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind") is what leads Rorty to insist that our environment can at most *cause* us to form beliefs, not *justify* them. In his reliance on this fundamental distinction, Rorty is a Kantian, even as he deploys this tool to criticize the epistemological tradition Kant represents."[19] All of this entails that Rorty appropriates essentially Sellar's *psychological nominalism* which includes an antifoundationalist critique of the Myth of the Given. As we have seen above, in Rorty's opinion 'everything is a social construction' and 'all awareness is a linguistic affair'. He told me in an interview in 2005, that "you can discuss the relation of some sentences to other sentences,

or that of beliefs to other beliefs, but you cannot discuss the relation between beliefs or sentences and non-beliefs and non-sentences".[20]

If we can have only a linguistically mediated world-view; if we never can step out of it, then the next main logical consequences follow and characterize his *nominalism*:

1) *Reality is not identical with world. It means that we can never know what reality is in itself and in its wholeness.* However, we do not even need this knowledge for our life which is our practice in a broad sense. We are able to know only, how the world is given to us, and how we describe ourselves within it and our relations to this world.

2) That is, why for us finite and radically timely and historical human beings, it never cannot be proven any *unchangeable intrinsic nature or Final Reality*. The *world* (not *reality*!) is given to us always only through our descriptions, and these descriptions can show us only the relations of things. *That is, the things of the world are given to us always in a relational way.* Every logically thinking man should accept that nothing can be non-relational. (Cf. e.g. PSH 50 and 53-54.)

Rorty does not stand alone with this view, since – as he writes – philosophers as diverse as William James and Friedrich Nietzsche, Donald Davidson and Jacques Derrida, Hilary Putnam and Bruno Latour, John Dewey and Michael Foucault – and Richard Rorty, of course – are anti-dualists. There is an overlapping among those American and European thinkers who are trying to replace the world pictures constructed with the aid of metaphysical dualisms inherited from the Greeks (essence and accident; substance and property; appearance and reality, etc.) with a picture of a flux of continually changing relations. (Cf. PSH 47.)

3) If everything is in *flow and flux* than it is obvious that even reasons do not have any final natural order. (Cf. PSH 36.)

4) The concept of *objective* also cannot be defined as a relation to the intrinsic features of things. The new concept of *objective* is given by Rorty as *intersubjective agreement*. (Cf. PSH 15, 50-51.)

5) If nothing has any unchangeable, intrinsic nature, then truth cannot mean correspondence between a sentence and a real feature of a thing. *The intrinsic nature and the correspondence theory of truth stand and fall together*.

It follows from all of this that Rorty's *naturalism and nominalism* goes together with the denial of the traditional representational epistemology, but he cannot be considered a solipsist philosopher. He does not deny the existence of the world, as it entails from his famous passage of his *Contingency* book:

> "We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there. To say that the world is out there, that it is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states. To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations.

---

[20] Alexander Kremer, 'An Interview with Richard Rorty', in Alexander Kremer - John Ryder (eds.), *Self and Society*. Vol. IV. Central European Pragmatist Forum. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi Press, 2009, 228.

Truth cannot be out there – cannot exist independently of the human mind – because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own – unaided by describing activities of human beings – cannot." (CIS 4-5.)

My claim is that, although Rorty refuses to write a special ontology or even ontology at all, for he wants "to argue that cultural politics should replace ontology, and also that whether it should or not is *itself* a matter of cultural politics",[21] his world-description can still be considered a kind of ontology. It does not matter how he calls that he creates, he still takes a stand on the existence of the things on the one hand, and on the rejection of solipsism and that of any kind of absolute, the intrinsic nature of the things and the ultimate causal order of the world on the other. Hence, in my opinion, we still can find an ontology in Rorty's philosophy – although it is not a systematically explained, separate ontology –, but it takes stand on the basic ontological questions of being and entities. *Rorty's world-comprehension, world-description can be considered his ontology.*

3.2. Rorty's truth-description can be regarded as a special combination and improvement of some characteristics of the pragmatist and analytic truth theories

When I describe these pragmatic and analytic effects, draw first of all on his article, 'Truth – without Correspondence to Reality'[22] (1994), supplemented by lines of thought also from other articles.

a) Pragmatic features:

The pragmatic effects can be grasped in *two features* which characterizes not only Rorty's neo-pragmatism, but also the traditional pragmatism. *On the one hand, only those beliefs can be true which are provably good in our personal and/or community practice, and justification is much more important than truth, on the other hand.* In pragmatist sense only those beliefs can be considered true, which – even if very indirectly – can change also practice, that is useful in wide sense. For from pragmatist point of view those questions have a point "which meet William James's requirement that any difference must *make* a difference. Other questions, such as those about the ontological status of constellations or of moral values, are 'merely verbal' or, worse yet, 'merely philosophical'."[23] (PSH 58)

All of this is tied closely to pragmatist *meliorism* according to which the first and foremost goal of philosophy is not to find an eternal substance above history, but the constant struggle to make our lives better both on the private and the social level, and regarding this goal philosophy itself is a tool. In the *Relativism* article we can read the following:

---

[21] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 5. (Further: PCP)

[22] Richard Rorty, 'Truth – without Correspondence to Reality', in *Philosophy and Social Hope.* London-New York: Penguin Books, 1999. – Further: PSH.

[23] Rorty says similar things in different texts. In his article, 'Relativism: Finding and Making' he wrote for example: „Inquiry that does not achieve coordination of behaviour is not inquiry but simply wordplay." (PSH xxv.)

„So, for pragmatists there is no sharp break between natural science and social science, nor between social science and politics, nor between politics, philosophy and literature. *All areas of culture are parts of the same endeavour to make life better. There is no deep split between theory and practice, because on a pragmatist view all so-called 'theory' which is not wordplay is always already practice*" (PSH xxv. – Emphasis: A. K.)

On the other hand, as we had seen it in James, justification is more important than truth. The reason of this relation which can also be found in classical pragmatism is that contrary to those claims which are 'true' in particular relations, 'truth' – according to the Plato-Decartes-Kant tradition in European philosophy – is absolute, eternal and independent from the world of relations. In conclusion, essentially the 'Truth' cannot be defined, and moreover it cannot be articulated in its whole. *Truth is ineffable*. On the contrary to the justification of trueness of given statements and beliefs which however is always relative, timely and historical, since a given statement and belief can only always be justified before a given historical audience. As Rorty says it in one of his interviews:

> „I think it was unfortunate that pragmatism became a sort of theory or definition of truth. It would have been better if the pragmatists had said, 'we can tell you about justification, but cannot tell you anything about truth, there is nothing to be said about truth.' We know how to justify beliefs, we know that the adjective 'true' is that we apply to the beliefs we have justified. We know that a belief cannot be true without being justified. *That is all we know about truth. Justification is relative to an audience regarding truth-candidates, truth is not relative to anything. Just because it is not relative to anything, there is nothing to be said about it. Truth with a capital 'T' is sort of like God. There is not much you can say about God. That is why theologians talk about ineffability, and that is why pragmatists tend to say that truth is indefinable.*" (Rorty on Truth – an interview[24]. – Emphasis: A. K.)

Exactly this distinction is the reason why pragmatists are accused of mixing absolute, eternal truth and justification. According to Rorty, pragmatists answer to this charge essentially in two ways. Some – like Peirce, James and Putnam – think that we can hold on to the absolute sense of 'true' if we mean 'justification in the ideal situation' under it, with the situation which Peirce called 'the end of inquiry' among ideal circumstances. However, others like Dewey, and in a certain sense Davidson, think that not much can be said about the absolute, eternal truth, and philosophers should only *confine* themselves to justification, to what Dewey called 'warranted assertibility'. Rorty chooses consciously the latter strategy, because he thinks that the struggles of Putnam and Habermas in applying the „ideal epistemic situation" do not seems to be more useful than that of the definition of „correspondence to reality" or any other definition which is used by

---

[24] This is one part of a series of interviews with philosophers, writers, scientist and other kinds of intellectuals about the relationship between beauty and consolation. In this part, part 23 (Of Beauty and Consolation: Part 23 – Richard Rorty), the famous American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty is being interviewed.(http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6148968394915050958#docid=809705947612929606)

philosophers to give the definitive explanation of the world 'true'. (Cf. PSH 32.) Rorty summarizes his thoughts on the relationship between truth and justification as follows:

> „To sum up, my reply to the claim that pragmatists confuse truth and justification is to turn this charge against those who make it. They are the ones who are confused, because they think of truth as something towards which we are moving, something we get closer to the more justification we have. *By contrast, pragmatists think that there are a lot of detailed things to be said about justification to any given audience, but nothing to be said about justification in general. That is why there is nothing general to be said about the nature of limits of human knowledge, nor anything to be said about a connection between justification and truth.*" (PSH 38. – Emphasis: A. Kremer)

From this understanding of 'Truth' and the priority of justification at least two consequences can be derived for neopragmatists, including Rorty. These are, on the one hand, *antirepresentationalism*, and on the other hand, the interpretation of our connection to the world as a merely *causal connection*. Because, if we cannot say anything about 'Truth' in a definitive manner, and due to its non-relational and unprovable feature even its existence becomes questionable, than consequently recognition cannot be understood as representation. Rorty thinks, together with several other philosophers, among them with Dewey, Davidson and Goodman, that

> „we should give up the idea that knowledge is an attempt to *represent* reality. Rather, we should view inquiry as a way of using reality. So the relation between our truth claims and the rest of the world is causal rather than representational. It causes us to hold beliefs, and we continue to hold the beliefs which prove to be reliable guides to getting what we want. Goodman is right to say that there is no one Way the World Is, and so one way it is to be accurately represented. But there are lots of ways to act so as to realize human hopes of happiness. The attainment of such happiness is not something distinct from the attainment of justified belief; rather, the latter is a special case of the former." (PSH 33.)

However, the acknowledgement of things existing independently from us in space and time, and the denial of representationalism makes the acknowledgement of at least the causal pressures necessary. Since without this, the acknowledged things which would exist in this way merely in themselves could not be of any effect on us, and the self-contained character of our world-descriptions would be unavoidable for Rorty. As a nominalist who wants to avoid solipsism, Rorty must claim the causal connection at least:

> „So even if there is no Way the World Is, even if there is no such thing as 'the intrinsic nature of reality', there are still causal pressures. These pressures will be described in different ways at different times and for different purposes, but they are pressures none the less." (PSH 33.)

However, the pan-relationism of pragmatism cannot be denied even by Rorty, and as we could see he does not wish to deny it. Hence, claiming the causal pressures he questions

the ultimate natural order of reasons at the same time. Since these dimensions relate to each other logically in a necessary manner. The objective, unchanging reality and its recognition or the natural order of reasons are the preconditions of the representational understanding of recognition (and wiht this the threat of scepticism), which however leads to the correspondence comprehension of truth. *All of this stands or falls as one.* So, if the correspondence theory of truth becomes questionable from a number of causes, than

> „*we shall recognize no such thing as 'our knowledge of the external world', nor any such order as 'the natural order of reasons' – an order which, for example, starts with the 'deliverances of the senses' and works up from there in the time-honoured manner imagined by empiricists from Locke to Quine.* These two notions are interlocked since, as Williams says, 'the threat of scepticism is indissolubly linked to a foundational conception of knowledge' and that conception is indissolubly linked to that of context-free justification. To give up the idea of context-free justification is to give up the ide of 'knowledge' as a suitable object os study – the idea which Descartes and Kant inherited from Plato's *Theatetus*." (PSH 34. – Emphasis: A. K.)

In the academic philosophy after Kant questioning the central role of recognition is a strange effort. But Rorty still does exactly this and rather follows Dewey and Emerson, when with the central philosophical significance of recognition he discards also the need of epistemological certainity. He chooses rather the pragmatist meliorism:

> „*...philosophy should stop trying to provide reassurance and instead encourage what Emerson called 'self-reliance'.* To encourage self-reliance, in this sense, is to encourage the willingness to turn one's back both on the past and on the attempt of 'the classical philosophy of Europe' to ground the past in the eternal. *It is to attempt Emersonian self-creation on a communal scale. To say that one should replace knowledge by hope* is to say much the same thing: that one should stop worrying about whether what one believes is well grounded and *start worrying about whether one has been imaginative enough to think up interesting alternatives to one's present beliefs*." (PSH 34. – Emphasis: A. K.)

b) Analytic features:
If we replace the central role of recognition with hope, since nothing has an unchanging intrinsic nature; if everything is relational and – retaining only the causal pressures – we discard the representationalist interpretation of recognition, than the correspondence theory of truth becomes untenable, too. Instead of this, in the case of Rorty – due to his intellectual heritage – we can only speak primarily of a pragmatically transformed coherence comprehension of truth. *Truth is namely a relation.* My beliefs (my statements, my judgements, my phenomena, that is something human) must be compared to something else. If I cannot compare them eventually to something human-independent, unchangeable intrinsic nature, I can only compare them to each other. And this creates the coherence comprehension of truth, which shows already *the analytic influence* on Rorty:

"We pragmatists, who have been impressed by Peirce's criticism of Descartes, think that both skeptics and foundationalists are led astray by the picture of beliefs as attempts to represent reality, and by the associated idea that truth is a matter of correspondence to reality. *So we become coherentists.* But we coherentists remain divided about what, if anything, needs to be said about truth. I think that, once one has explicated the distinction between justification and truth by that between present and future justifiability, there is little more to be said." (RC 5.)

However, Rorty does not omit to emphasize in the footnote that the coherence comprehension of truth is not necessariliy identical with the coherence *theory* of truth:

„*Being a coherentist in this sense does not necessarily mean having a coherence theory of truth.* Davidson's repudiation of the latter label for his view, a label he had previously accepted, is a corollary of his claim that there can be no definition of the term "true-in-L" for variable L. *Davidson's present view, with which I have come to agree*, is that "[W]e should not say that truth is correspondence, coherence, warranted assertability, ideally justified assertability, what is accepted in the conversation of the right people, what science will end up maintaining, what explains the convergence on single theories in science, or the success of our ordinary beliefs. To the extent that realism and antirealism depend on one or another of these views of truth we should refuse to endorse either." ('The Structure and Content of Truth', *Journal of Philosophy* vol. 87 (1990), p. 309)." (Quoted by Rorty: RC 26-27. – Emphasis: A. Kremer.)

As a neopragmatist, Rorty thinks that the reason people try to make their beliefs coherent in not that they love truth but because they cannot help doing so. Building upon D. Dennett's research, he claims that our minds can no more stand incoherence than our brains can stand neuro-chemical imbalance, which is the physiological correlate of such incoherence. The need to make our beliefs coherent is, however, not separable from the need for the respect of our peers. We strongly demand respect of – at least – certain peers, because we cannot trust our own beliefs, nor maintain our long-term self-respect, unless we are sure that our most important conversational interlocutors agree among themselves – despite some of our strange beliefs – that we are not crazy. Both needs (coherence of our beliefs and respect of our peers) follow – according to Rorty – from the fact that to imagine a form of human life we have to imagine agreement in judgments as well as in meanings. (Cf. RC 15.)[25] Davidson fully supports this idea, which comes from Wittgenstein, when he says:

„*The ultimate source of both objectivity and communication is the triangle that, by relating speaker, interpreter, and the world, determines the contents of thought and speech.*"[26] (Emphasis: A. K.)

---

[25] From all of this we can also see, that Rorty has not only a brilliant, ironic and witty style, but – as a more general analytic heritage – he makes deadly accurate analysis of concepts at the proper points of the train of thoughts.

[26] Donald Davidson 'The Structure and Content of Truth' (*Journal of Philosophy* vol. 87, 1990) p. 325, quoted by Rorty. The whole Davidsonian paragraph sounds as follows: "The idea that the propositional

We would not know what we believed, nor have any beliefs, unless our belief had a place and position in a network of beliefs and desires. But that network would not exist unless we and others could pair off features of our non-human enviroment with assent to our utterances by other language-users and utterances caused by those very features. Rorty and Davidson would like to draw all the conclusions of Hegel's and Mead's recognition that our selves are dialogical all the way down. There would not be language without the mentioned triangulation, and it also means that we could not have any language or any beliefs, without being in touch with both human community *and* non-human reality. (Cf. RC 16.)

> "*Coherence, truth, and community go together*, not because truth is to be defined in terms of coherence rather than correspondence, in terms of social practice rather than in terms of coping with non-human forces, but simply because to ascribe a belief is automatically to ascribe a place in a largely coherent set of mostly true beliefs." (RC 16. – Emphasis: A. Kremer)

It is obvious that the analytic heritage is immediately modified by Rorty's hands. Why can we say that the coherence comprehension of truth is not identical with the coherence *theory* of truth? The ultimate reason of that is that *the traditional coherence theory of truth* is based on a *theory of meaning*, as the correspondence theory of truth, and it can become easily a supporter of realism or anti-realism. But Rorty, together with Davidson and others, applies and develops consciously not the early Wittgenstein's meaning-based theory of language, but the late Wittgenstein's *usage-based theory of language* which is close in several aspects to the pragmatist views.

According to Davidson's comprehension of language, which is accepted by Rorty, there is not such thing as language in traditional sense:

> „*There is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what philosophers, at least, have supposed*. There is therefore no such thing to be learned or mastered. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language users master and then apply to cases... We should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions." (D. Davidson: „A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs," in Lepore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation*, p. 446. Italics from Rorty who quotes it: CIS, p. 15.)

Davidson develops namely Wittgenstein's view of vocabularies as tools in a way, that he obviously has doubts about the traditional, before Wittgenstein existing comprehension of language. Davidson – and Rorty, too – refuses the interpretation that language is a medium which expresses or describes meanings and cannot accept the views that

---

content of observation sentences is (in most cases) determined by what is common and salient to both speaker and interpreter is a direct correlate of the common-sense view of language learning. It has profound consequences for the relation between thought and meaning, and for our view of the role of truth, for it not only ensures that there is a ground level on speakers share views, but also that what they share is a largely correct picture of a common world. The ultimate source of both objectivity and communication is the triangle that, by relating speaker, interpreter, and the world, determines the contents of thought and speech. Given this source, there is no room for a relativized concept of truth."

language has a definite task or it is an entity with a clearly defined common structure. *For Davidson and Rorty language is a tool of world adjustment*. Taking our relationship to the world as basically causal, Rorty sees that the right pragmatist attitude in connection with truth is that we do not need more philosophical theory of the nature of truth or the meaning of 'true', than a philosophical theory of the nature of danger or the meaning of 'danger'. Both have the same purpose, namely, to warn people that they may not have seen all the consequences of their proposed action. (Cf. RC 4.)

From all of this follows in Davidson's opinion, that „truth is not an epistemic concept". (PSH 37.) Hence, we never can find an interesting and important connection between the concepts of *justification* and *truth*:

> „The only connection between these two notions is that, *for the same reason that most beliefs are true, most beliefs are justified*. For, a believer who is (unlike a child or a psychotic) a fully fledged member of her community will always be able to produce justification for most of her beliefs – justification which meets the demands of that community." (PSH 37. – Emphasis: A. Kremer)

But in this way we do not get back to some necessary connection of justification and truth. We cannot say that those claims of a community member will be more true, which are more justified and vice versa. On this critical point, Rorty gives his argumentation with deadly accuracy as he usually does in important questions; those arguments shared with Davidson, which makes – in Rorty's opinion – Davidson's philosophy pragmatist (cf. PSH 41-42):

> „The fact that most beliefs are justified is, like the fact that most beliefs are true, merely one more consequence of the holistic character of belief-ascription. That, in turn, is a consequence of the fact that beliefs which are expressed as meaningful sentences necessariliy have lots of predictable inferential connections with lots of other meaningful sentences." (PSH 37.)

We cannot, no matter how hard we try, continue to hold a belief which we have tried, and conspicuously failed, to weave together with our other beliefs into a justificatory web. The best we can do is to distract our own attention from the question of why we hold certain beliefs. For most matters of common concern, however, our community will insist that we attend to those questions; that we think over again those problems. So such distraction is only feasible for private obsessions, such as my conviction that „some day my lucky number will win the jackpot" or to see a black cat means that it brings misfortune. (Cf. PSH 37.) *What is more, such description of the relationship between truth and justification not only harmonizes with the pragmatist view that language and vocabularies are always tools of adjusting our relational world, but it also resists the charge of solipsism, relativism and arbitrariness.* The Davidsonian summary of a truth theory shared absolutely with Rorty sounds as follows:

> „Davidson's claim that *a truth theory for a natural language is nothing more or less than an empirical explanation of the causal realtions which hold between features of the enviroment and the holding true of sentences*, seems to me all the guarantee we

need that we are, always and everywhere, 'in touch with the world'. If we have such a guarantee, then we have all the insurance we need against 'relativism' and 'arbitrariness'. For Davidson tells us that *we can never be more arbitrary than the world lets us be*." (PSH 33. – Emphasis: A. K.)

3.3. Rorty's truth-comprehension is determined by his ontology

Finally, we have to speak about the determinating role of Rorty's naturalism and nominalism, that is his ontology regarding his truth comprehension, since this determines his „bricolage" in the field. In this way I can justify my general thesis that always ontology determines a philosopher's truth comprehension or at least frames it,[27] and Rorty is no exception.

Rorty regards it as a principle that truth is rather made than found. This view is drawn from his nominalism, since nominalism allows neither the existence of some absolute or some universal order of causes, nor even generality's independent existence from human consciousness. However, truth is not particular and situational in lots of cases, but general, which can have its place exclusively in language. But language is produced by human beings. The background of this claim is, according to Rorty, that everything is a social construction, and all awareness is a linguistic affair. This standpoint entails that in his opinion every philosophical problem, even the question of truth, is made rather than found. As he wrote it in his article, 'Relativism: Finding and Making' (1996):

> „This question, the question of the nature of the problems which the Greeks, Descartes, Kant and Hegel have bequeathed to us, leads us back around to the distinction between finding and making. The philosophical tradition has insisted that these problems are *found*, in the sense that they are inevitably encountered by any reflective mind. The pragmatist tradition has insisted that they are *made* – are artificial rather than natural – and can be *un*made by using a different vocabulary than that which the philosophical tradition has used." (PSH xxi-xxii.)

As we can see from all of this, Rorty's comprehension of truth is determined by his version of pragmatism. Quod erat demonstrandum.

References:

Davidson, Donald, „A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", in Ernest Lepore (ed.), *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

---

[27] The severity of determination of truth comprehension depends on the logical severity of the philosopher's ontology, that is on the ratio of necessity and contingency in her ontology.

Davidson, Donald, 'The Structure and Content of Truth', *Journal of Philosophy* vol. 87, 1990.

Dewey, John, (1938) "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry". Repr. in *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953.* Vol. 12. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.

Dewey, John, 'Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth', in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 2, ed. by Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* transl. by A. V. Miller, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1998.

Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

Hickman, Larry A., 'John Dewey, 1859-1952', in: *The Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

David Hildebrand, *Dewey*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2008.

Kremer, Alexander, 'An Interview with Richard Rorty', in Alexander Kremer, John Ryder (eds.), *Self and Society*, vol. IV. Central European Pragmatist Forum, Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi Press, 2009.

Of Beauty and Consolation: Part 23 – Richard Rorty. The famous American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty is being interviewed. (http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6148968394915050958#docid=80970 5947612929606)

Rorty and his Critics, ed. by Robert B. Brandom, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

Rorty, Richard, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Rorty, Richard, 'Relativism: Finding and Making', in *Philosophy and Social Hope,* London-New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Rorty, Richard, 'Truth – without Correspondence to Reality', in *Philosophy and Social Hope,* London-New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Rorty, Richard, 'A World – without Substances or Essences', in *Philosophy and Social Hope.* London-New York: Penguin Books, 1999.