A CASE STUDY ON THE LIMITS OF IRONIC REDESCRIPTION: RORTY ON WITTGENSTEIN

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In this paper I shall examine Rorty's interpretation of, and his relation to, Wittgenstein. After placing his reading of Wittgenstein into a context of other interpretations, I shall argue that the central issues for Rorty regarding Wittgenstein are representationalism and mysticism. Generally, he is interested in the later Wittgenstein because he provides good arguments against representationalism without mysticism, and he is uninterested in the early Wittgenstein because he is a representationalist and/or a Schopenhauerian mystical thinker. I shall claim that for some of Rorty's central purposes, the most suitable framework is Wittgensteinian. This makes Wittgenstein special among Rorty's heroes in a certain sense. Then I shall argue that even though Rorty's Wittgenstein seems to imply a constructive doctrine, both Wittgenstein and Rorty draw only the negative conclusions of them. Finally, I shall allude to a reading of the *Tractatus* that could well fit into an ironic redescription of the early Wittgenstein which could make him a positive hero of Rorty. However, Rorty intentionally rejects this reading, giving up, in favour of his pragmatism, not only a "thorough Wittgensteinianism" but a thorough Rortyanism as well.

Wittgenstein's role in current philosophy

Rorty claims that "[t]here are profound differences of opinion among contemporary philosophers both about whether Wittgenstein is worth reading and about what one can learn from him" (Rorty 2007, p. 160). Rorty divides how late 20th-century philosophers relate to Wittgenstein into three categories. First, he argues that naturalists (as he calls them) "want to get past the linguistic turn", and hence want to get past Wittgenstein as well. So-called therapist followers of Wittgenstein think that "the importance of the linguistic turn lies in helping us realize that philosophers have failed to give meaning to the words they utter", whereas certain pragmatists called 'pragmatic Wittgensteinians'[1] (most notably, Rorty himself) hold that "replacing Kantian talk about experience, thought, and consciousness with Wittgensteinian talk about the uses of linguistic expressions helps us replace worse philosophical theories with better ones" (Rorty 2007, p. 163). Though pragmatist Wittgensteinians "see no point in picking out something called 'language' as the source of philosophical problems" (Rorty 2007, p. 166), they think that speaking in linguistic terms instead of terms of experience and consciousness helped Wittgensteinians overcoming Cartesian pseudo-problems of philosophy.

Wittgenstein is often used as an authority that gives an emphasis to views that are attributed to him without sufficient evidence that he really held those. There are philosophers who saw Wittgenstein as an ancestor of their own views (in some aspects at least). Dummett (1978), Kripke (1982), Brandom (1994) and Putnam (1999) (or Habermas and Lytoard in the Continental tradition, see Redding (1986)) are Wittgensteinian in some important sense without having close readings of the author.[2] Someone might argue that they directly interpret Wittgenstein's passages but their readings are selective, supporting their own views (or at least the views they attribute to Wittgenstein). They are problem-oriented rather than text-based followers of him who see Wittgenstein as a highly important figure in the

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1 As 'pragmatic' refers to pragmatics rather than pragmatism, below I shall follow my own terminology and call Rorty's pragmatic Wittgensteinians as pragmatist Wittgensteinians.

2 There is no place here for supporting this double hypothesis in details. I would only mention one ironic remark made by the late Sir Michael A. E. Dummett about his earlier period: "I regarded myself, doubtless wrongly, as a Wittgensteinian" (Dummett 1993, p. 171). I find this paradigmatic regarding (once) Wittgensteinians: in my view, beyond the most famous, general views of him, quite a few contemporary philosophers would support Wittgenstein's thinking after having a close reading of at least a considerable part of the approx. 20,000 pages of his *Nachlass* (see Wittgenstein 2000).

history of philosophy, whose work has to be understood in a wider context. This approach is very far from Wittgenstein scholarship in a traditional sense in which Wittgenstein's remarks are important directly by their own right, and in which e.g. superficial inconsistencies between different paragraphs can be treated as historical facts rather than anomalies that have to be eliminated. Problem-based Wittgensteinians are interested in Wittgenstein's arguments rather than his opinion because they are more interested in truth than facts of history of philosophy – they need his texts insofar as those texts support certain views or, on the contrary, provide counter-arguments which have to be refuted by them or their opponents.

Rorty's reading of Wittgenstein: Some methodological remarks

Rorty is definitely closer to the problem-based Wittgensteinians than the historians of Wittgenstein's ideas. He claims that "[p]ragmatic Wittgensteinians do not want to recapture Wittgenstein's own way of thinking, but rather to restate his best arguments in more effective ways" (Rorty 2007, p. 165). As often in the case of other heroes of him, Rorty subordinates his understanding of Wittgenstein to the purpose he attributes to the Austrian philosopher in his picture of history of philosophy, dividing the Great Dead Philosophers into good and bad guys. Wittgenstein is not an exception; moreover, due to the fact that it is used to think we have got (at least) two Wittgensteins, the early and the late, he can be straightforwardly placed into both categories.

However, there is an apparent contradiction between the claim that Rorty is close in reading Wittgenstein to the problem-oriented thinkers on the one hand, and Rorty's own philosophical stance regarding philosophical problems on the other. From Rorty's general approach to philosophy, it would be odd to say that he is more interested in (allegedly eternal) problems of philosophy than a history of philosophy. Rather he is interested in

the history only to a degree to which historical investigations serve as tools for a better future. He is also interested in problems of philosophy only to a degree to which investigations on truth serve as tools for a better future. He claims, nonetheless, that whereas investigations on the field of history of philosophy *do* serve as such tools (precisely because we can apply the views of past philosophers to present problems of ours), investigations focusing on eternal problems do not serve as any such tools. This line of thought seems to suggest that Rorty is closer to the approach of historians than that of the problem-oriented analytic philosophers. But it is not an accident that I have formulated the difference between these two trends as a difference between text-based and problem-oriented views. Even though Rorty prefers dealing with texts to dealing with eternal problems, he also prefers dealing with *contemporary* problems to dealing with out-of-date texts. He finds central problems of philosophy being different from the problems most problem-oriented philosophers deal with. He thinks central problems are *external to* the philosophical tradition; i.e., problems cannot be found in the texts themselves. He follows Hegel in thinking that central problems of philosophy are always up-to-date general problems of the contemporary society. In this sense, he is even less text-based than those problem-oriented philosophers who apply arguments from past texts to (allegedly eternal) problems of recent texts. Problems are out there; all what texts can provide are arguments and other sorts of tool with which we can try to solve our very own problems.

In this spirit, it would be extremely anti-Rortyan to argue that Rorty "understood" or "misunderstood" Wittgenstein. For him, Wittgenstein, as any other thinker, is important precisely insofar as his thoughts support achieving our own goals. Hence, at least in the first instance, Rorty's Wittgenstein can be quite well reconstructed without any serious reflection on Wittgenstein or the literature on him. It is much more important to understand how Rorty's Wittgenstein

relates to Rorty's interpretation of some other philosophers, and philosophy in general. That is not the same as saying that it is unimportant what Wittgenstein said, but where a conflict rises between his thinking and Rorty's understanding of him, for the purposes of this paper, I shall accept Rorty's views as superior to Wittgenstein's. If inconsistency were to be demonstrated, it would have to be an inconsistency between Rorty's interpretation and his thinking in general.

Wittgenstein's role for a Rortyan perspective I.

Rorty sometimes seems to imply something like an "end of philosophy" but his reason is that he understands "philosophy" much more specifically in these contexts. In his seminal book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* Rorty criticises the view that perception, knowledge and language were representational and truth was correspondence (Rorty 1979). When declaring the end of philosophy, he does not attack *non-correspondentist* and *non-representational* theories of truth and knowledge. He argues against a very specific notion of philosophy, though that notion was the obligate in his academic environment: the paradigm of philosophy that has been set up by the Descartes-Kant epistemological tradition and then transformed into a linguistic version by Frege, Russell, Carnap, and the early Wittgenstein. An end of philosophy would mean an end of *this* sort of philosophy: the view according to which language and thinking is representational; or words and thoughts correspond to facts that makes (at least some of) them meaningful and true. According to Rorty, this paradigm of philosophy reached its limits, it ignores the actual problems of the society which gave birth to it, and the reason why it has to be abandoned is focusing on other, more vivid and urgent problems, in order to make philosophy socially more useful. Philosophy in this sense started in the ancient Greece with the distinction between appearance and reality, and reached its limits with the representational theory of knowledge and language (which is closely connected to the

correspondence theory of truth), that attempted to establish a bridge between appearance and reality. However, without the pre-modern belief in the supra-natural, there is no need to suppose anything outside appearances; hence, the bridge that Cartesians, Kantians and Fregeans are building is a useless one.

In this picture of the history of philosophy, Wittgenstein takes a very special place. As mentioned above, his early *Tractatus* was one of the major contributions to a transformation of the Cartesian-Kantian epistemological project into a linguistic approach. The *Tractatus* establishes a one-to-one correspondence between the realm of facts and propositions, claiming that the two are isomorphic. True propositions are correct representations of facts; knowing a fact is therefore holding a true proposition about it. This work is one of the most comprehensive elaborations of the idea that representation establishes a bridge between reality and appearance – and hence is one of the main targets of the Rortyan criticism.

It is also widely held that in his later period, Wittgenstein himself significantly contributed to the destruction of his own views. From 1929, he had started developing a theory of meaning that finally resulted in a view that is mostly interpreted as *abandoning* the requirement of a theory of meaning. Whether the late Wittgenstein held a theory of meaning or a non-theoretical approach to meaning is an issue not discussed here; but it could be hardly denied that Wittgenstein developed an idea of language that gave up representation and correspondence as central notions. What, if any, his constructive view about language and thought was in his later period is a matter of debates (and so is the supposition how many different "later" periods he had), but for Rorty, the destructive movement is the more important, since this is what raises Wittgenstein out of the group of representationalist philosophers and makes him to be one of Rorty's heroes like Dewey, Heidegger, Quine, Davidson, Derrida, and others. However, what makes Wittgenstein special to him cannot simply be a

rejection of antirepresentationalism, precisely because *all* of his heroes do so. In order to understand why Rorty sees Wittgenstein as central, something distinctive must be identified in his thinking that significantly contributes to Rorty's views.

The early Wittgenstein and mysticism

In the camp of Rorty's philosophical ancestors, one reason why Wittgenstein's place is unique is that he related to the representationalism vs. pragmatism issue in his early and late period differently. Rorty makes a parallel between the turning from the early to the late Wittgenstein and an imaginative turning from the late back to the early Heidegger. The parallel is based on a question of mysticism: both the early Wittgenstein and the late Heidegger held a certain form of mysticism, in contrast with the early Heidegger's and late Wittgenstein's pragmatism (Rorty 1991, p. 50-52). According to Rorty, "the older Heidegger retreated from sentences and discourse to single words - words which had to be abandoned as soon as they [...] entered into relations with other words and thus became tools for accomplishing purposes" (Rorty 1991, p. 52). In parallel, in the final, "Schopenhauerian sections" of the *Tractatus* mysticism occurs as well: "[t]he early Wittgenstein had defined the mystical as 'the sense of the world as a limited whole'" (Rorty 1991, p. 50).

Rorty is resistant to philosophical arguments that claim problems or views of philosophy to be 'nonsense'. His reason is that "[a]s a result of the popularity of the linguistic turn, 'nonsense' became term of philosophical art - just as 'representation' had become one in the wake of Kant. Philosophers began to think of themselves as specialists in detecting nonsense" (Rorty 2007, p. 171) and he prefers thinking of philosophers as no kind of detectives and philosophy as having no special fields to detect.

Wittgenstein's early transcendentalism, just as Kant's own one, is a strategy of 'stepping back' to a neutral terrain from the battlefield where one of the untenable positions has to be taken necessarily. However, this 'stepping back' strategy must be abandoned if language is treated with the later Wittgenstein as social practice that is an open, unlimited sphere from which no back-step can and should be done.

The early Wittgenstein saw "social practice as *merely* social practice" which urged him "thereby rising above it" (Rorty 1991, p. 61) in order to be capable of "fixing the limits of language" (Rorty 1982, p. 23). Social practice became a central notion of the later Wittgenstein as well as Rorty; they found it unnecessary to seek for something beyond or above it.

The later Wittgenstein and representation

What makes Wittgenstein more special than Heidegger is that regarding the parallels between the early Wittgenstein and the late Heidegger, representationalism plays no role. Though both the early Heidegger and the late Wittgenstein were antirepresentationalists, the late Heidegger is hardly understood as a representationalist. Wittgenstein was a thorough opponent of representationalism precisely because he was, in some readings at least, an earlier defender of it. But it is no less important *how* he rejects representationalism.

Rorty claims that there are "philosophers who, as [Rorty] do[es], find support in [Wittgenstein's] writings for pragmatist views of truth and knowledge" (Rorty 2007, p. 161). This support undoubtedly comes from Wittgenstein's Anti-Cartesian philosophical attitude. According to Rorty, the importance of Wittgenstein's later thinking lies in that

> "[The *Philosophical Investigations*] is the first great work of polemic against the Cartesian tradition which does *not* take the form of saying 'philosophers from Descartes onward have thought that the relation between man and the world is so-and-so, but I now show you that it is such-and-such'" (Rorty 1982, pp. 33-34).

For the later Wittgenstein, the central issue of philosophy was no more establishing the relation between humans and the rest of the world – a task that has traditionally been thought to be done by theories of representation. Wittgenstein rejected *the question* what this relation lies in, dissolving rather than solving the problem.

Rorty emphasises the later Wittgenstein's views regarding ostensive definition, private language, and rule following as central in his thinking (Rorty 2007, p. 165). He thinks that Wittgenstein anticipates Quine's and Davidson's arguments against the language-fact distinction as well as Sellars's and Brandom's arguments against the idea of knowledge by acquaintance.

Nevertheless, representationalism is perhaps *the* central issue in Rorty's relation to the later Wittgenstein. In Rorty's view,

> "To drop the idea of languages as representations, and to be thoroughly Wittgensteinian in our approach to language, would be to de-divinize the world. Only if we do that can we fully accept the argument I offered earlier – the argument that since truth is a property of sentences, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truths" (Rorty 1989, p. 21).

Here Rorty claims that a central thesis of him, namely that truths (in plural and with a decapitalised "t") are human constructs, *presupposes* a Wittgensteinian attitude toward language. Without accepting (the later) Wittgenstein's views about language, one cannot follow Rorty in accepting antirealism (or, one might say, constructivism) regarding truth. The reason is, Rorty explains, that the claim that truths are human constructs hangs upon the claim that vocabularies are human constructs, and sentences (i.e., the bearers of truth) are vocabulary-dependent. Hence, it seems that it is not sufficient to reject representationalism; in order to follow Rorty in his most radical and controversial claim, one has to reject it in a specific way, at least one

component of which is "thorough Wittgensteinianism" in the approach to language.

Wittgenstein's attack on representationalism can be summarised in two central claims as follows:

(1) Meaning atomism is untenable.

(2) Individual language use is impossible.

From this, it follows (though quite indirectly) that

(3) Representationalism is false.

This syllogism has to be explained in some details.

Meaning contextualism and language use as social activity

For (1), Wittgenstein argues that ostensive definitions are necessarily ambiguous. If someone did not know what the word "red" means, it would help her nothing if a red card were provided since without a previous understanding of what red is, she would not know whether a red card represents redness, cards, squares, paper, the number one, or nothing at all. Similarly, if she had a mental picture of red in her mind, she would still need to understand what its redness lies in, in order to be able to apply it to red objects. Mental images support knowledge and meaning no more than physical pictures, and without a fixed system of reference, pictures or images do not represent anything. However, it is precisely the system of reference that should be established by representation.

Hence, one should not define meanings in terms of one-to-one correspondence. A possible way can be defining meaning contextually. It involves that atomic building blocks of Fregeans and Tractarians are meaningless without a holistic, or at least contextual, background. If it is the context that fixes meaning and the system of reference required, meaning and reference is relative to the context. At least one powerful denial of meaning atomism is explaining the meaning of a word in terms of its relation to other words. It is what Wittgensteinians mean by the meaning-use identity: word meaning is

determined by, and can be explained in terms of, its usage in different contexts. In other words,

(1') Meaning is contextual.

For (2), Wittgenstein argues that from the perspective of an individual, no criteria of correct rule following can be fixed – i.e., an individual can never be sure whether she follows a rule correctly (or she follows another rule correctly, or eventually she does not even follow any rule). The reason is that all she has got is patterns that are understood in terms of rules only under certain descriptions. Hence, her recognition of a rule depends on her own description, being description-relative, and in an individual framework, she has no ground for comparing her descriptions to anything but the pattern *under her description.*

Thinking (and language use) are explained as rule following activity since Kant's account of conceptuality and schematism. As any other rule-following activity, thinking and language use can also be understood only relative to a description. In order to avoid an all-out textbook relativism and/or a Kripkean meaning scepticism, the only possible way is explaining rule-following activities in a social framework, in which the "objective" (i.e., intersubjective) criteria of correctness are publicly accessible and being subject to comparison. From this, it also follows that a "private language" (supposed to be an individual, subjective mental rule-following activity that is privately accessible only to one's own mind) is nonsense: without public criteria, rule-following is impossible. Private language can be imagined as parasitic on public language at most, hence being both temporarily and logically secondary to social language use and thinking. Hence, from (2), it follows that

(2') Language use and knowledge acquisition are social phenomena.

From ((1') & (2')), it is easier to see how (3) follows. Representation is thought to be a one-to-one correspondence between entities of reality and objects appear to the mind. But if (1'), i.e., meaning (and hence knowledge) is contextual, no method of isolating singular objects can be provided. Without the bridgehead on the side of appearances, no bridge of representation can connect appearances to reality. Representation is therefore worthless if possible. But it would still be an extremely dangerous position, from which scepticism, subjectivism or relativism could equally follow. Moreover, as a consequence, even more emphasis would be given to the mystical Kantian-*Tractarian* question of "the limits of language".

But if (2'), i.e., contexts as socially constructed systems of reference *do* fix meaning without fixing any limits of language, there is something that makes a connection between reality and humans not only impossible but unnecessary as well. Knowledge and meaning via language use and social activities are embedded into reality. No correspondence is required, precisely for the reason that because of the overlap, no isomorphy supposed by the *Tractatus* is possible. Setting up the "limits of language" is also not an issue: language is continuous via social practice with the rest of reality, and hence no clear borders of it can or should be established. If (1') then representation theories (at least in their present form) are impossible, but if (2') then they are also theoretically unnecessary since there is a more useful framework that can still explain the same explanandum.

Wittgenstein's role for a Rortyan perspective II.

After all, I can come back to the question why Wittgenstein is so special to Rorty. Contexts used to be called as language games by Wittgensteinians, and sometimes vocabularies by Rortyans. In the light of this, it can be seen why Rorty claimed that in order to accept his claim that truth is a human construct, one has to follow Wittgenstein in philosophy of language. For

Wittgenstein, language use is a context-relative activity of humans, where the context is fixed by social activity. If semantic notions like meaning, reference, and truth are constituted contextually, and contexts are constituted by social rule-following activities, Rorty's argument is conclusive that humans construct truth. Otherwise the notion of truth would be open to be understood in terms of correspondence and representation (which, if Wittgenstein is right, would make truth relative to an individualistic and atomistic framework). Such a notion of truth could not be seen as a human construct without falling into relativism, subjectivism, scepticism, and other capital crimes of which Rorty is nonetheless often accused. But if a Wittgensteinian account of language is accepted, according to which language use is social and contextual, truth cannot be expressed in terms of individualism and atomism, without which correspondence and representation are groundless and hence are relativism, subjectivism, and scepticism. That is why Wittgenstein is a central figure to Rorty. Even though he would have sufficient munitions against representationalism on the grounds of Deweyanism or Heideggerianism, he also needs some grounds for his stronger claim that truth is a human construct. For supporting this, Wittgenstein's philosophy of language seems to him the most powerful weapon.

From the above-mentioned, it seems to follow that Wittgenstein did not only argue against representationalism but also provided a constructive theory that founded an arguable response to possible Cartesian criticisms. Rorty claims,

> "As Wittgenstein grew older... he gradually dropped the notion of the 'limits of language'. So he turned the *Tractatus* distinction between saying and showing into the distinction between assertions and the social practices which gave meaning to assertions" (Rorty 1991, p. 64).

A distinction between saying and showing can be seen as a residuum of the distinction between the conceptual and the perceptual, and hence is still affected with dualistic approaches that require a connection between the internal and the external (typically in terms of representation). The latter distinction between assertions and the social practices is less sharp (especially on the ground that language use, and hence asserting, *is* a sort of social practice). It provides a unique, monist framework that is immune to a criticism of how connection can be established between the two sides of the distinction precisely because there are no two sides.

Rorty should celebrate such an account of Wittgenstein's thinking if his only purpose would be rejecting representationalism and claiming that any truth is a human construct. But from the latter claim he concludes that any philosophical doctrine taken seriously would miss its target. If truths are human constructs, so are philosophical theories. Hence, he claims, no constructive philosophical theory should be developed. About constructive opponents of the Cartesian tradition he claims that

> "Typically, attempts to overthrow the traditional problems of modern philosophy have come in the form of proposals about how we ought to think so as to avoid those problems. When Wittgenstein is at his best, he resolutely avoids such constructive criticism and sticks to pure satire. [...] He does not say: the tradition has pictured the world with gaps in it, but here is how the world looks with the gaps closed. Instead he just makes fun of the whole idea that there is something here to be explained" (Rorty 1982, p. 34).

Wittgenstein's constructive doctrine about language is self-destructing since it undermines the possibility of any constructive doctrine about language. It is therefore highly supportive for Rorty who has to say something constructively about his own theory of truth and language, but only via throwing away his ladder, i.e., without committing himself to any particular theory of truth and language.

Why not to redescribe the *Tractatus* ironically

An understanding of the later Wittgenstein as an anti-theoretical thinker is mostly popular among those who Rorty calls as the "therapist" Wittgensteinians. But those

therapists like Conant (1989) and Diamond (1991) also claim that "on the whole, the metaphilosophical slogans of the *Tractatus* all applied as aptly to the *Philosophical Investigations* as they did to the early work" (Conant 1989, p. 247). They, as opposed to the commonly held interpretation accepted by Rorty as well, also hold that the early Wittgenstein did not constantly fight against the limits of language and thought, but on the contrary: the *Tractatus,* just as well as the *Investigations,* attempts to show why such a fight is worthless (Diamond 1991, pp. 184-5). From these and similar remarks, Rorty and others (like Williams 2004) conclude that Conant and Diamond take the connection between the early and later works of Wittgenstein to be *too strong,* almost claiming that there is only one Wittgenstein. In order to dispel this misunderstanding of them, Conant and Diamond argue that

> "If one assumes that the *only* way to account for the profound changes in Wittgenstein's thought is in terms of his having put forward a metaphysical theory or a theory of meaning or both in his earlier thought, and his having given up the theory or theories later, then one will take resolute readings [i.e., the authors' own view that Rorty calls as "therapist" reading - I.D.] to be committed to 'strong continuity'; but the idea that that is the only way to understand the profound changes in Wittgenstein's thought should in any case be rejected" (Conant-Diamond 2004, p. 81).

Whether it is the only way or not, it is undoubtedly the way how Rorty understands the connection between the early and late works of Wittgenstein. He claims that for pragmatist Wittgensteinians like himself, Wittgenstein's "importance consists in having replaced a bad theory about the relation between language and non-language, such as that offered in the *Tractatus,* with a better theory, the one offered in the *Philosophical Investigations*" (Rorty 2007, p. 161). (The expression "better theory" should probably not be understood here literally since it would contradict the above-cited "fun of the whole idea that there is something here to be explained" (Rorty 1982, p. 34)).

For Rorty, the difference between the early and the later Wittgenstein is straightforwardly metaphilosophical: they differ in their relation to the general task of philosophy as a discipline. In accordance with his unique understanding the difference between the transcendental unity of the *Tractatus* and the pluralism of language games, Rorty argues that

> "The *Tractatus* had said: there can be no genuine discursive discipline which deals with those matters called 'the problems of philosophy' for *here* are the limits of language, and thus of discursive inquiry. The *Philosophical Investigations* said: there can be as much of a discipline as you care to develop, but do you really wish to do so?" (Rorty 1982, p. 20).

While the *Tractatus* in the Rortyan interpretation attempts (and fails) going beyond the "limits of language", the *Investigations* (successfully) attempts going beyond the going-beyond attitude. In the first case, this makes philosophy unified but (in some interpretations) nonsense, whereas plural and hence senseless or at least vague in the latter. From a Rortyan perspective, Conant and Diamond transform the later Wittgenstein's pluralist metaphilosophy into a unificationist metaphilosophy of a unified Wittgenstein.

Above I have argued that for Rorty, the explicit contrast between the early and the late Wittgenstein is a difference between mysticism and pragmatism, though I have assumed that regarding Rorty's purposes, a similarly significant contrast could be drawn between early representationalism and late antirepresentationalism. I have also assumed, in accordance with Rorty's interpretation, that the later Wittgenstein argued against representationalism via arguing against his own earlier views.

But if the contrast between the early and the late Wittgenstein is blurred, as therapist Wittgensteinians claim, it can have three alternative consequences. Firstly, an opposition between a representationalist and an antirepresentationalist should be seen as less sharp. This is clearly unacceptable for Rorty who sees the

representationalist-antirepresentationalist debate as central in the opposition between the Plato-Kant philosophical tradition and pragmatism. Secondly, Wittgenstein could not be understood as a represent-tationalist who later became an antirepresentationalist. But the *Tractatus* accepts a fact-proposition correspondence and hence it cannot be claimed to be an antirepresentationalist work (and therefore, if no turning point is supposed, the later Wittgenstein cannot be claimed to be an antirepresentationalist either). This would make the later Wittgenstein an uninteresting figure for Rorty – a too high price for showing limited sympathies toward the early Wittgenstein. Thirdly, one could also say that Wittgenstein's philosophy is discontinuous regarding the representationalist - antirepresentationalist debate, but his metaphilosophy is continuous regarding the mystical-pragmatist opposition. This would be a well-balanced harmonisation of the therapist view with the pragmatist one. But Rorty rejects this as well.

His reason to do so is nevertheless not that he has any philological arguments in order to support his understanding. On the contrary: Rorty says he *accepts* the therapist reading as valid, admitting that a possible reading of the book is that "Wittgenstein designed the *Tractatus* to be a self-consuming artifact" (Rorty 2007, p. 168). It would be a particularly Rortyan interpretation to say that the Tractatus is a masterpiece of deconstruction, intending to include its own ironic redescription in its final paragraphs with the claim that all that Wittgenstein said throughout the book do not touch upon its subject, precisely because of the untouchability of that subject.

It would also be a support for the sort of "thorough Wittgensteinianism" urged by Rorty when claiming the above-cited statement that "[w]hen Wittgenstein is at his best, he resolutely avoids [...] constructive criticism and sticks to pure satire" and that Wittgenstein "just makes fun of the whole idea that there is something here to be explained" (Rorty 1982, p. 34).

But Rorty has "no interest in undertaking the project Conant describes" (Rorty 2007, p. 169). He admits that he grounds his interpretation in a selective reading: "pragmatic Wittgensteinians agree with the therapists that there are *some* important links between early and late Wittgenstein", but "it would have better for Wittgenstein to have criticized the kind of philosophy he disliked on grounds of uselessness rather than as 'nonsense'" (Rorty 2007, p. 166). Even if one reads the *Tractatus* from its end backwards, the above-mentioned "Schopenhauerian" spirit places the early Wittgenstein on the side of mysticism in the mysticist - pragmatist opposition (Rorty 1991, p. 50) that proved to be unforgivable.

While arguing against Conant's reading of the *Tractatus,* Rorty dogmatically takes stance against the wild orchids in favour of Trotsky.

> "Admirers of Dewey like myself think that the point of reading philosophy books is not self-transformation but rather cultural change. It is not to find a way of altering one's inner state, but rather to find better ways of helping us overcome the past in order to create a better human future" (Rorty 2007, p. 169).

Pragmatist Wittgensteinians are pragmatists rather than Wittgensteinians or even Rortyans – where those views differ from each other, they, including Rorty himself, choose pragmatism.

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