

Between Realism and Rortianism

Conant, Rorty and the Disappearance of Options

By Cora Diamond

ANYONE WHO READS JAMES CONANT'S ESSAY "FREEDOM, CRUELTY AND TRUTH: Rorty versus Orwell" and Richard Rorty's reply to it must be impressed by how many deeply interesting philosophical questions are raised and discussed (Conant 2000, Rorty 2000a). My plan is to focus on questions about realism, in particular on the question of how philosophical options can apparently disappear from view—I mean the options that may be thought to lie between metaphysical realism and Rortianism. I shall also try to connect the option-disappearance issue with questions about how one reads Wittgenstein.

I. Conant and Rorty on realism: how Conant sets up the issue and how Rorty responds

FIRST I WILL DESCRIBE THE DISPUTE BETWEEN RORTY AND CONANT ABOUT REALISM. Conant's essay began with a characterization of philosophical realism. He set out eight theses, and his basic idea was that any doctrine that includes a version of one or more of the theses counts for the purposes of his paper as Realist—the more theses that are included, the more realist the doctrine in question is. Conant also set out eight Rortian theses, which are opposed one-to-one to the Realist theses. The way Conant set out the theses was meant to make plain that there is a lot of *room* between the Realist and Rortian members of each pair of theses. Conant argued that the space of options *between* the Realist theses and the Rortian anti-theses is invisible to Rorty. This is at the heart of what I want to discuss, and I'm going to focus just on the first two pairs of theses. Here are the four theses: Realism 1 and 2 and Rortianism 1 and 2.

Realism 1. *The thesis that the Thing-in-Itself is a condition of the possibility of knowledge.* All our experiences of the world are of appearances, views of it from some particular point of view. The only sorts of truths we are able to formulate are truths about the world under some description. But we should not mistake the limitations of our knowledge, imposed on us by our finite cognitive capacities, for limitations that are inherent in the nature of reality as such. The

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idea that our experience is *of* the world (that the appearances are *appearances* and not mere illusions)—i.e., that there is something which our descriptions are *about*—presupposes the further idea that there is a way which is *the way the world is in itself*. For the world to be a possible object of knowledge there must be such a way that it is, apart from any description of it—a way the world is when “viewed from nowhere,” i.e. from no particular point of view (or, alternatively, from a God’s-eye point of view). Moreover, though such knowledge of the world (as it is in itself) is in principle unattainable for us, we are able to *think* what we cannot know: we are able to grasp in thought that there is such a way the world is, apart from the conditions under which we know it. It is only by postulating the existence of such a noumenal reality that we render coherent the supposition that all our apparent knowledge of reality is indeed *knowledge* of a genuinely mind-independent reality.

Realism 2. *The thesis that objectivity is non-perspectival.* Some descriptions of the world are to be preferred to others. Descriptions can be more or less accurate. Descriptions of the world are more accurate—i.e., better *mirror* the actual structure of reality—to the extent that they are *purified* of everything in them that is an artifact of our partial parochial perspectives on reality. Though it is not possible for us to describe reality without using concepts which human beings can understand, it is possible for us to use concepts which are *not peculiarly ours*—concepts which every properly conducted enquiry into the ultimate nature of reality, be it conducted by humans or non-humans, is eventually fated to converge upon. In so far as our aim is to achieve a knowledge of things as they really are, a description of reality formulated solely in terms of concepts of this latter sort represents a *metaphysically privileged mode of description*. Such concepts furnish us with the means to achieve a non-perspectival, transparent mode of access to how things really are in themselves. The resulting descriptions are descriptions of objective reality.

Rortianism 1. *The thesis that solidarity should replace objectivity.* To aspire to *objectivity* is to aspire in making claims to make oneself answerable to the world itself. To aspire to *solidarity* is to aspire in making claims to make oneself answerable to nothing further than the verdicts of the members of one’s community. The idea that a claim can stand in a normative relation to the world—a relation that would make the claim correct or incorrect (true or false) *in light of how things are with the world*—is to be rejected. Since claims cannot be justified in the light of how things are, the only way for a claim to be justified is by its being justified to *some other person(s)*. Justification is a sociological matter, a matter of seeing whether something is acceptable to my peers. Solidarity (agreement with one’s community) should therefore replace objectivity (agreement with how things are) as the end of inquiry. Inquiry should aim not at Truth, but at ever-widening circles of consensus. The traditional distinction between knowledge and opinion should be re-interpreted as the distinction between topics on which it is comparatively easy to achieve agreement and those on which it is comparatively difficult to achieve agreement.

Rortianism 2. *The thesis of linguistic idealism.* Only descriptions of the world can be true or false, and descriptions must be formulated in sentences. Thus where there are no sentences there is no truth. Sentences, however, are elements

of human languages, and human languages are human creations. Truth cannot exist independently of the human activity of employing language to make claims because sentences cannot so exist. Apart from the activity of human beings there is no language, hence no true claims, hence no truth.

It may seem apparent, and certainly Conant wanted it to be apparent, that there is *room* between Realism thesis 1 and Rortianism thesis 1. For it certainly seems that one might believe in the possibility of objective knowledge of the world without believing in some sort of noumenal reality. And it also seems that one could hold that there is a difference between a claim's being justified by how things are and a claim's being justified by how other people take it—it certainly looks as if you could make such a distinction without believing in descriptions of the world that are independent of any particular point of view. The relation between Realism thesis 2 and Rortianism thesis 2 is somewhat more complicated, but one might say here that giving up the Realist's thesis that there is some metaphysically privileged form of description of the world hardly seems to involve committing oneself to Rortianism.

Rorty responds to Conant's claim, that there are options Rorty ignores, by saying he cannot see in what ways Conant disagrees with metaphysical realists like Peter van Inwagen. He then says that he has spent a lot of time replying to various other philosophers who think that there are options that he habitually ignores. He mentions Hilary Putnam, Crispin Wright and Susan Haack (Rorty 2000a, 343–4). Other examples would include Charles Taylor, John McDowell, and Robert Brandom. These are all philosophers who say that Rorty ignores, or simply doesn't see, some or other options significantly distinct from both Rortianism and metaphysical realism. These are all philosophers who believe that there is a space of possible views apparently invisible to Rorty (although they have quite different views individually of what lies within that space). While Rorty says that he has spent a lot of time replying to them, it is not clear what is going on in his replies, or why the options that his critics see are apparently non-existent or invisible when Rorty surveys the scene. I want also to emphasize Rorty's claim that, as far as he can tell, Conant does not disagree with metaphysical realists like van Inwagen. As a characterization of Conant's views, this is breathtaking—but it is typical of Rorty's response to those who claim that there are options he ignores. Rorty's claims that his critics are committed to forms of metaphysical realism despite their own explicit rejection of such views is itself a very striking expression of how options lying between Realism and Rortianism have been made to disappear. (Another very characteristic expression of Rorty's view is his claim that Robert Brandom (on the relation between the facts and the claims we make about things that are available to be talked about) is trying to "find a compromise in an uncompromisable dispute" (Rorty 1998b, 134). Rorty's idea of an uncompromisable dispute is indeed the same idea as that of there being no options in this region of thought other than Rortianism and metaphysical realism.)

II. How to approach the question of the disappearing options

I HAVE TRIED TO FIGURE OUT HOW RORTY'S ARGUMENTS WORK IN HIS DISCUSSIONS OF philosophers who allege that there are options that he does not recognize, and I have found myself stymied. So I am going to take a different approach. I want

instead to find a way of describing in Rortian terms the situation of Rorty versus his critics, which will make it appear that there are no options other than Rortianism and metaphysical realism. My idea is to see where we can get, starting from such a description of the situation. So in a sense this is the opposite approach from Conant's. Conant starts with a description of the situation that makes it appear that there is plenty of room between Rortianism and Realism. I start by describing the situation in a way that might seem to leave no room between them. The description I give uses language that Rorty picks up from Stanley Cavell, who had spoken of our being led, in philosophy, to speak "outside language-games." In his essay on Cavell, Rorty uses that phrase to describe philosophical projects in which we try to reach through to reality or goodness as they are, independent of our particular languages, interests, and needs (1982a, 186).¹ This is, for Rorty, connected with what he takes to be a Kantian conception of knowledge of things as they are in themselves, formulated in the things' *own* language, not our language; he contrasts that conception with knowledge as justified true belief, where "justification" is what we take, in our language-game, to be justification (1982b, 182). An understanding of metaphysical realism in terms of the attempt to get outside language-games thus brings to light the contrast with what it is to be "inside" language-games—a contrast, that is, with what is actually involved in engaging in our language-games. Here we get a kind of no-space-between picture of the situation. There is no space between operating within language-games and aspiring to get outside them. Rortianism and metaphysical realism exhaust the space of philosophical possibilities if Rortianism is identified with operating within language-games, and metaphysical realism with the attempt to get beyond them, to get to things as they are in themselves. (While I have developed this description of the situation by using the language Rorty picks up from Cavell, of getting "outside language-games," Rorty gives a very similar description of the situation, without explicit reference to Cavell, in the Introduction to *Consequences of Pragmatism*, 1982b, xix.)

But here one may ask: why should operating within language-games be identified with a Rortian story about what that is? Why shouldn't there be room for options distinct from Rortianism as accounts of what it is to operate within language-games? Well, indeed, that's the question. But what has happened is that the problem of how options disappear is now *relocated*. It becomes: how does Rorty's understanding of *operating within language-games* make options disappear?

There are two ways to approach that question. One could lay out the main features of Rorty on language-games, and then show how, on such an account, options disappear. Or alternatively, one could construct an account of Rorty on language-games that, by making certain features salient (features which might not be salient on every account), explains how Rorty on language-games makes options disappear. That is what I shall be doing in sections 3, 4 and 5. The account that I shall give of Rorty on language-games is meant to bring out some parallels with Wittgenstein's approach in the *Tractatus*. I shall argue that Tractarianism and Rortianism work in similar ways to make philosophical options disappear.

III. Rorty on language-games: starting from Putnam

RORTY TAKES HIS VIEWS TO BE A KIND OF EXTENSION OF WITTGENSTEIN'S, AND HILARY Putnam has brought out how questionable that claim is. Putnam is responding

to the very different spirit of Rorty's writings, compared with Wittgenstein's; his sense that Rorty is writing *against* the spirit of Wittgenstein's thought is important for his understanding of his own differences from Rorty. He singles out, as a telling indication of Rorty's kind of approach, passages where Rorty speaks of learning a language-game as essentially a matter of getting ourselves programmed in a certain way, so that, given some causal inputs, we get thus-and-such output.² (Putnam's way of putting this takes for granted a more static picture of our language-games than Rorty held. The picture Putnam gives us needs to be modified to include the Rortian view that we are continually getting "reprogrammed.") The passages to which Putnam refers are important for my account, but so also is the somewhat later passage where Rorty responds to Brandom, who had said that "in a central range...of perceptual experience, the facts *are* the reasons that entitle perceivers to their empirical beliefs" (Brandom 2000b, 164). Rorty said that he found this "shocking," since (as he puts it) he had assumed that all of us Sellarsians "agreed with Armstrong, Pitcher, Dennett, et al., that perceptual experience was simply a matter of physiological events triggering a disposition to utter various non-inferential reports." Rorty added, "We all agreed, I thought, that Wittgenstein was right to reply to the question 'How do you know that this is red?' with 'I know English.'" It would be ludicrous, he says, to add, "My reason is [the] fact that it is red" (Rorty 2000b, 196).

Rorty's use of the passage from Wittgenstein, in connection with being "shocked" by Brandom's reference to facts as entitling perceivers to their empirical beliefs, is very interesting. It suggests a way of spelling out Rorty's views as a development of what is implicit in his use of the passage, and that is what I shall try to do. That is, there is a way of reading that remark of Wittgenstein's as expressing a kind of causal account of language-games that blocks the idea of an entitlement, from the facts, to empirical beliefs, and which fits with a broader causal account of language-games in which the idea of facts entitling us to have beliefs would have no place.

Wittgenstein's remark—that it would be an answer to the question "How do you know that this is red?" to say "I have learnt English"—is taken by Rorty to mean that learning English is getting yourself programmed in a way that makes you fit in, in your responses, with others who speak English. What counts as following the rules of English in respect of what counts as red isn't anything independent of what we all do, what we all accept in what others do. In respect of what goes into the description that any of us may come up with, say, of a particular tomato, we shouldn't think of this as involving two distinguishable elements: on the one hand, the describing-activity we engage in with words like "red," and on the other hand, the contribution of things themselves, the tomato itself, out there. Certainly the tomato is one of the things that cause things to happen to the people who are out in the garden looking at it. We are causally subject to *lots of things* out there; then we, who have learnt English, may say, "Yes, the tomato is now red." Our causal interactions with things in the garden, and the way we then go on in our use of words like "red," together give what is in fact agreement with each other in saying, "It's red now." There isn't such a thing as that being *appropriately sayable* in the language-game, apart from that being how we all go on, and that being what we accept when others come out with those words. Any

attempt to think of this as a matter of the combination of two distinguishable items: *what the words "red" and "tomato" mean*, given the meaning they have had assigned to them (or the rules that have been fixed for them), and, besides that, *the way the tomato is* (such that we are justified in calling the tomato red by its *having that feature*, the one meant by "red") is undercut by the conception of the use of the word as simply how those who have been programmed a certain way go on with each other when causally acted on in various ways by various things. "I have learnt English" means no more than that I go on without trouble, with other people, in using the word as others do. And the tomato is appropriately called "red"—and the sentence "It's red" is a truth—if we all take assertions of the sentence "It's red" to be justified. It is possible to elaborate this picture to allow for my use of a word to be taken by me to belong proleptically to some use distinguishable from the way my present peers use the word. This is the kind of case Rorty describes in terms of solidarity with some future community. But neither in the original picture nor in the elaborated picture does justification float free of solidarity with a community of language-users. In the use of words, there is only intersubjectively determined appropriateness of the application of those words in contexts which we describe as ones in which the words are applied "to" such-and-such things. There isn't a distinction between being true and being appropriately taken to be true, where that is a matter of the way the game is played, *what we take to be justification for taking-true*.³ It should be obvious that there is no serious place in this conception for answerability to *the way the thing is*; this is even more obvious if taken with Rorty's reminders that there is no single purpose served by the very various games in which we may be taken to be saying something or other about how things are.

On Rorty's account, the feature that the tomato has, of being red, is tied to its being described within a particular language-game. It isn't an "intrinsic" feature of the tomato, if that means a feature it would have independently of this or that language-game of description of things. As Rorty puts this point in discussing Charles Taylor, before you describe the thing as a dinosaur, or as a tomato or whatever, "there is no sense to the claim that it is 'out there' having properties." (This idea is carefully distinguished by Rorty from any claim that there is some kind of causal dependence, in general, between being spoken of in some language-game of description and having this or that feature. A thing isn't *made to have thus-and-such a feature* by people talking in the ways we do.) Over the years, Rorty articulated in different ways the connection between a thing's having thus-and-such a feature and its being described in some particular way in our language-games, but the basic idea itself remained constant. In 1987, Rorty defended the claim that Newton's laws became true through Newton's work, and that before Newton's discovery they were neither true nor false. If the Latin sentence that Newton used to state the principle of inertia had been uttered by someone in the tenth century, it would not then have been a truth-value candidate; its being a candidate for being true or false depended on the development of a set of coherent and useful practices in which there could be embedded uses of that sentence to make assertions.⁴ Here the crucial thing for the truth of a sentence is its position in such a set of practices. In 2000, in his response to Brandom in *Rorty and his Critics*, Rorty says that his defense of that view "went over like a

lead balloon" (2000b, 185). Although he was reluctantly giving up defending the view, the central reason for not defending it was that it admittedly sounds paradoxical. The paradoxical-sounding point about when sentences "become" true can, though, be given up (he thought) without giving up the basic idea about the relation between truths and language-games. We could keep the basic idea, and just not use "became true" in the way that a pragmatist might lean towards. Or else we could indeed instead treat paradoxicality "as a small price to pay for progress." Rorty's papers in the 1990s go both ways, but there is no substantial difference in approach. (See also Conant's statement of linguistic idealism, as thesis 2 of Rortianism. I return to Rorty on the dinosaurs in Part 6.)

What I have just laid out may be taken to be a *model of the use of words*, what Wittgenstein speaks of as a *Vorbild*. He says, in § 131 of *Philosophical Investigations*, that such a model should be regarded as an object of comparison, not as a preconceived idea to which reality must correspond. And he refers there parenthetically to the dogmatism into which we easily fall in doing philosophy. This section of the *Investigations* is one of those that Rorty doesn't want to have anything to do with. But I want here to develop a way of looking at what is going on in Rorty's writings, making use of the ideas in *PI* § 131 and the surrounding sections. I want to take § 131 as offering us the basis of a criticism of Rorty's approach.

The sections of the *Investigations* around § 131 reflect Wittgenstein's understanding of his own earlier philosophical dogmatism. When he was working on the *Tractatus*, he had in mind some simple and straightforward illustrations of the use of language, which had analogies to the use of a picture or diagram, and he saw this conception, this understanding, *into* propositional language. He had a particular model, saw it *into* all language and all thought, and took himself to be "perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality" (§ 104). I want to suggest that Wittgenstein's approach in the *Tractatus*, which he criticizes in these sections of the *Investigations* and which he explicitly rejects when he says that the model is no more than an object of comparison—this approach is indeed Rorty's approach in discussing realism. While Rorty rejects the idea that we should say anything in general about language and reality, he does provide a general account, for philosophy-of-language purposes, of language-games of describing things (see Rorty 2000c, 88). My suggestion here is that the kind of account he gives involves a *seeing* of a particular model *into* language-use generally. Rorty doesn't like the sections of the *Investigations* where Wittgenstein discusses method, but these sections are useful, I think, in making available a way of conceptualizing Rorty's method of approach. What Rorty is doing can best be understood (I'm suggesting) by recognizing the resemblance between his approach and that of Wittgenstein's early philosophy. This will help us to see more clearly what is going on when Rorty claims not to see the options that critics like Conant, Taylor, McDowell, and others believe to lie between Realism and Rortianism.

IV. Rorty, Realism and the model of language-games

RORTY DISMISSED THE SECTIONS ON METHOD IN *PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS* WITH a remarkable comment about how "pragmatic readers" of Wittgenstein see those remarks, namely as an unfortunate leftover from Wittgenstein's earlier "positivistic" period (Rorty 2007a, 164). This "positivistic" portrayal of the

whole set of remarks goes with Rorty's lack of interest in the transformation of Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy during the 1930s. Rorty takes a particular resemblance between the *Tractatus* and §§ 89–133 of *Philosophical Investigations*, namely the role in philosophy of recognition of nonsensicality—and takes that resemblance to indicate Wittgenstein's failure to have gone on beyond the *Tractatus*—whereas the significance of the references to nonsensicality in *Philosophical Investigations* can't come into view except in connection with Wittgenstein's re-conception of philosophical method and, in particular, of the role of *generality* in philosophy.

One of the things that Wittgenstein brings to our attention is that one may be putting forward a general theory of some subject matter without being aware that one is reading a general range of cases through a particular model (as one may see something *through* spectacles). The philosopher has an insight, or an apparent insight, into how this range of cases *all* work. This insight may be tied to some convincing and apparently transparent sorts of case. Such cases may seem to reveal what is present in *all* cases. Then there is apparently no need to consider in any detail any other sorts of case, since whatever apparent variety they might exhibit is irrelevant: *underneath*, they are the same. Whatever exactly one might want to say about *Philosophical Investigations* §§ 89–133, those sections can be taken as a *warning* against a kind of philosophizing that one may engage in without recognizing that one is doing so. The reading of a model *into* a general range of cases is (I'm suggesting) unlike the giving of arguments, where you know that that is what you are doing.

Rorty's causal model of language-games has two distinct sorts of function in his writings. It has one function when he is considering the relation between Rortianism and Realism, and an entirely different function when he writes about the supposed options between Rortianism and Realism. In the first sort of context, he takes Rortianism to be a range of cultural practices and ways of speaking. What he is doing, by his own account, is recommending these practices and ways of speaking as more helpful than the remnants of metaphysical realism that survive in our culture, including our philosophical culture. The causal model of language-games is, in this context, a part of what he is recommending.

The situation is different when what is in question is whether there is, as Conant argues, *space* between Rortianism and Realism. Rorty is certainly aware that ordinary talk of truth and justification may appear not to fit easily into his general account. Rorty's response to the existence of these cases is complex. There is an element of recommendation in it: he describes ways in which the cases *can* be fitted into the causal model and *recommends* that they be so treated.⁵ One approach frequently used by Rorty is an appeal to Berkeley's recommendation that we "ought to think with the learned, and speak with the vulgar." The idea is that ordinary locutions—the sorts of things said "in the marketplace" or by "the laity"—are irrelevant to the kinds of discussion of truth that go on in the seminar room.⁶ Rorty has also provided more detail about miscellaneous ways of talking about truth and justification that can be fitted into the framework of the causal model. Thus, for example, there is "cautionary" talk of what might not be true, even though it is taken by all of us to be fully justified; there is the use of "true" to endorse a claim; and there are various disquotational uses of "true."⁷ The overall

conception here is that much ordinary talk of truth and justification, within various language-games, can be understood to fit into the Rortian conception of language-games. Further, the sorts of cases that do not fit in, in which there is irreducible commitment to a conception of what we say and think being answerable to a reality independent of our ways of thinking and talking about it, are cases of a commitment to Realism. Here it is beginning to look as if there is no room for any option besides Realism and Rortianism, since any rejection of Rortianism would express the yearning to get beyond language-games, contaminated as our language-games are by particular parochial interests and particular human forms of responsiveness.

I think it is possible to push further our understanding of how the causal model of language-games makes alternatives to Rortianism and Realism disappear, by considering the analogy with Wittgenstein's methods in the *Tractatus*. This is the topic of the next section.

V. *The Tractatus and the disappearance of options*

WITTGENSTEIN TOOK THE EXPRESSION "SATZ"—WHICH DOES NOT (PRIOR TO BEING philosophized about) have a logically regulated use, but might be applied to all sorts of things that (for example) merely looked sentence-like—and provided, in general terms, a description of a use of words—a description which is articulated in large part through the idea of *picturing* and through the model, the *Vorbild*, of the *picture-proposition*. Propositionhood isn't, in our ordinary thought and talk, anything with logically fixed contours. What Wittgenstein has laid out is, in intention, a use of words that does have logically fixed contours. You can get that use into focus, and see it as present (however unobviously so) in your thinking and speaking; you see this model as giving you the underlying logical common feature of—of what? Of what it is a common feature of; and what *that* is cannot be independently specified.⁸ The activity of philosophy as engaged in by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* is, in a sense, therapeutic. Here I can explain only some of what I take that to come to, within the context of the *Tractatus*. The specification of the model is meant to displace our usual philosophical activity. It is meant to reshape desire, to reshape what we take ourselves to want in philosophical thinking. It is meant to give us what we want, but not what we might beforehand have taken to be what we wanted. Part of how the model is meant to do this is that it is meant to give us *realism*—but realism that is distinct from what we may have, beforehand, taken to be realism. It is meant to give us realism in this sense: that it leaves room for everything that we have been able to say in ordinary physical-object language—but everything we say in that language can be said also in experiential language, in "my" language. The *Tractatus* is meant to help us not so much to give up the philosophical yearnings that get expressed in Realist philosophical thinking and writing but to re-conceive those yearnings in such a way that Realist philosophizing loses its hold on us.

If we look carefully at this kind of therapeutic activity, we can see how it leads to the disappearance of options. It is sometimes objected to the *Tractatus* that Wittgenstein's account led to the ruling out from significant language of many kinds of significant propositions, but Wittgenstein's own later criticism was quite different. He said that he had taken a multitude of very different sorts

of cases and read them all as having in essence the same fundamental character. Whatever variety there might be in all manner of different cases could *a priori* be taken to be superficial and therefore not philosophically relevant; the variety can be ignored. Wittgenstein had not held that sentences that were not picture-propositions nor truth-table tautologies nor contradictions were nonsensical; that's not how options disappear from view in the *Tractatus*.

Here's how they disappear. The translatability point—the point that whatever can be said in any language, including the ordinary language in which one speaks about various sorts of physical objects, can be said in my experiential language—has, as an implication, that one system of talk of celestial bodies (say) may be more useful than a different system, but the two systems of talk don't give us incompatible truth-claims about objects “out there” referred to in both systems. Such systems of description may be more or less useful; they are tied in, in different ways, to evidence describable in experiential language. (I believe that Wittgenstein's story about the relation between different systems of description developed but did not undergo genuinely significant change between the *Tractatus* and the period of Wittgenstein's conversations with Lee in the early 1930s, and I will describe the view as the *Tractatus* view, my object here not being *Tractatus* exegesis but explanation of a kind of therapeutic structure.)

The existence of thus-and-such planet may be pictured by us as a matter of what is “out there,” but this may stop us recognizing the complex kind of *use* that talk of planets has. Consider as an example—suggested by Charles Taylor's discussion (1990) of Rorty and realism—the idea of the solar system waiting for Kepler to get things right about it, things that Albertus Magnus had not got. On the *Tractatus* view (a version of which is more fully developed in Wittgenstein's thought after he returned to philosophy in 1929), Keplerian talk of the solar system gets tied into experiential language in thus-and-such ways, and Albertus's talk about celestial bodies gets a different set of connections with experiential language. There are all sorts of reasons that we may have for preferring Keplerian or post-Keplerian talk. But the point about the essential linking of Kepler-talk and of Albertus-talk with experiential language is that it brings out that the two systems involve no contradictory claims about some *things* out there, things that are out there independently of our thought, but that can be got at, referred to by us in our thought—although the two systems do lead us to *frame different expectations*. (Compare Wittgenstein 1980, 80–81, on the expectations that you have concerning what you will see when ships disappear over the horizon, if you accept the “hypothesis” of a spherical earth.) Within Kepler-talk there is reference to celestial bodies, i.e., there is *what appears as such reference, and what has various ties to experiential language*; similarly, within Albertus-talk there is also what appears as reference to celestial bodies, but what there isn't space for (in Wittgenstein's account of the relation between Kepler-talk and Albertus-talk) is a narrative in which we make fewer correct claims about *those bodies* in Albertus's astronomy and get more about *them* right later. From the point of view of the *Tractatus*, history-talk about getting more things right about *them* is either a possibly misleading bit of “vulgar talk” or the expression of a confused philosophical Realism. The idea of Kepler-talk as getting more things right about such-and-such celestial bodies, where that is not taken to be a possibly misleading bit of “vulgar talk,”

has disappeared. In summary: the two options that are left are (1) an account in which different planetary theories are understood as systems of description with different tie-ins to experiential language and differences in usefulness and (2) a Realist yearning for *real* reference to things out there—things which stand in causal relations to our experience but which are representationally independent.⁹

Independently of Rorty's causal model of language-games, we may have a loose understanding of there being numerous language-games in which we engage, in which we make various sorts of claims. And we may then take it to be a question about any of these language-games, whether in it we are describing things that are *genuinely out there*,—while in other language-games, perhaps, we do not genuinely do so, though we might be under the impression that we are referring to and describing what is really there. Thus, for example, we may be puzzled philosophically by the question whether there are moral states of affairs, or whether there are genuine moral properties that things have. Rorty's causal model provides a general understanding of language-games that is meant to take in very varied cases, and is meant to get us to give up the whole idea of a problem whether there are some things that we say that *get at* something or some feature of things that is really out there, and other things we say that do not. Rorty's model emphasizes the causal links between us and the rest of the universe. Our beliefs and the things we say are part of this life-of-causal-ties-with-things; we could hardly be *more* in touch with reality. Rorty's account thus gives us, or is meant to give us, all the *real* that we really need (see especially Rorty 1991, 159; cf. also 1991, 101); it is meant to reshape the desire for the Real-as-it-is-in-itself, beyond language-games; it is meant to undercut that desire in its old bad form, and it leaves us able to see that the desire that beliefs *not float free of the world* is a desire that cannot help but be satisfied.

I said that the causal model of language-games is part of a set of practices and ways of speaking that Rorty recommends. Here I want to add that he does not just "recommend" it; his philosophical approach has in fact got a therapeutic structure not unlike that of the *Tractatus*. The therapeutic structure of the *Tractatus*, as it approaches questions about realism, presents us with, on the one hand, a mode of treatment of physical-object language (as having a logical linkage to experiential language) and, on the other hand, the recognition of a kind of philosophical picture of what we mean when we say that the earth has existed for more than 4 billion years: a picture of the earth *out there*, independent of us, of our existence, our language and our practices of taking things as evidence. Such a picture may be a mere accompaniment of our uses of language; but it may also seem to us to give what has to be the case, if our uses of language are genuinely justified. This is the kind of theorized realism that the *Tractatus* is meant to lead us to see to be empty. Call this *Tractatus*-unkosher realism, *Tractatus*-trayf realism. Within the *Tractatus*, it contrasts with the realism that is on offer, the realism that is a matter of the linkage of physical-object talk with experiential language. There is a corresponding structure in Rorty's thinking, in the contrast between Rortianism (which supposedly fulfills any reasonable desire that beliefs not float free of the world) and what could be described as Rorty-unkosher realism, Rorty-trayf realism. Seeing how this structure works is seeing how options other than Rortianism and metaphysical realism disappear.

Take the idea we may have of truth-conditions in virtue of which what we say of things will be either true or false, independently of whether we and our peers in practice take thus-and-such application of the language to be justified. The things themselves have whatever features they have, independently of how the game and its practice are shaped by particular needs of ours. We thus have a picture of truth-conditions going where they go, determining truth or falsity through the ways things are; and in accordance with this picture we see truth as quite possibly diverging from what is taken to be justified in a practice which may respond in all sorts of ways to needs and interests. Some such picture as this can help us to understand the contrast, as Rorty sees it, between his own views and Realism. The picture itself may be a mere harmless accompaniment of vulgar talk about truth, as the picture of the sun moving upwards while the earth remains in place may be a harmless accompaniment of talk about "sunrise," and as the picture of the 4-billion-year-old earth "out there" may be a harmless accompaniment of *Tractatus-kosher* talk of the age of the earth. But what then is it, in the Rortian case, for such a picture not to be a mere harmless accompaniment of vulgar talk?

Rorty answers that question in various ways, and it is not always easy to see what they come to. I think the clearest answer he gives is in his discussion of the idea that, in a sense, dinosaurs are "social constructions" (Rorty 1998a, 82–3, 86–8).¹⁰ These discussions help us to see what it is to have a Rorty-*trayf* conception of such truths about dinosaurs as that dinosaurs are oviparous. Being oviparous is a feature of dinosaurs and the kosher Rortian view is that it is a feature of things-under-a-description—in this case, under description in the language-game of dinosaur-talk, where the game here includes the to-and-fro with our peers, the to-and-fro of what we say and get our peers to accept as justified. *There* (including in the "there" what we get our peers to take as justified) we see what counts as *dinosaurs* having *this feature*. But we can alternatively picture the situation of ascription of oviparousness to dinosaurs as one in which we have the language-game, shaped as we may take it to be by needs and interests, and think then of its application to *dinosaurs*: there they *were* and whatever features they had, including being or not being oviparous, they had independently of our thinking about them. Such a picture, taken up in philosophizing, is at the heart of a Rorty-*trayf* conception of truths about dinosaurs. We should note that it is perfectly Rorty-kosher to allow for the fact that the oviparousness of dinosaurs is not causally dependent on our having the dinosaur-talk language-game, or on our existing at all, but Rorty thinks that we may confuse the fact that dinosaur-oviparousness is not *causally* dependent on our language-game with the idea that dinosaur-oviparousness is *representationally* independent. What is crucial to Rorty-*trayf*-hood is the detaching, or attempted detaching, of *the feature of dinosaur-oviparousness* from the to-and-fro of dinosaur-talk, and the opening up of a gap, or seeming gap, between what our peers take to be justified and what genuinely gets dinosaur-reality right. *Here the dinosaurs themselves set, or seem to set, a standard*. This is why Rorty believes that, although critics like Conant don't think that they believe in things-in-themselves, such a conception underlies the idea of a gap between what we can justify to our peers in our dinosaur-talk and what the truths are about dinosaurs.

In Part 2, I said there was a question how the Rortian story makes options disappear concerning what we might take to be possible *within* language-games. This is the issue right now. Rorty's model of "operating within language-games" does not allow for what one might call *partitioning* of a language-game—so there is the activity we engage in, shaped by our interests and needs, and reflecting in various ways our perspectives, *and* there is supposedly also, within our playing of the language-game, the possibility of being *responsible* to the way things are, in our assertions about those things. The Rortian model of what it is to operate within language-games allows for the possibility of vulgar talk that suggests that picture, but that's all. It does not allow that picture to be taken seriously in philosophy. To take the picture seriously is to work with an idea of the things we are talking about, with whatever features they may have, as distinct from what, given the way we and our peers engage in the language-game, we take to be justified in our ascriptions of this or that feature to the things. So although philosophers who see options invisible to Rorty may take themselves to have a thoroughly language-game conception of what it is to be talking about dinosaurs, Rorty sees their views as involving a surface commitment to language-game talk that is actually underpinned by a version of the scheme-content distinction, in which the language-game in which we are engaged works as a kind of scheme and the dinosaurs off there in the past are the content. They were whatever they were, with whatever features they had, independently of our language-games; they are taken to be (in Rorty's terms) *representationally independent*. (The issues here are closely connected with the points in Conant's statement of Rortianism thesis 2, and the question of the dependence of *truths* about things on human activity. Another importantly connected issue is Rorty's disagreement with Wittgenstein on grammar—a disagreement that is obscured by Rorty's reading of Wittgenstein as having given up any distinction between grammar and empirical description. See Rorty 1991, 40, where Rorty ascribes to Wittgenstein a Quinean view of such distinctions. Wittgenstein's complex views about grammar in relation to empirical description, and about things we "hold fast" in our language-games, involve a deep disagreement with Rorty about the multiplicity of different sorts of language-games of description of things and the multiplicity of ways in which what is said may be taken to be responsible to how things are).

There are similarities between the structure of option-disappearance that we see in Rortianism and in the *Tractatus* and elements in Berkeley's thought, even as early as the *Commentaries*. Berkeley is for Reality, so he says, and gives you (he says) all the reality you could have any use for. The material things themselves, out there independent of us and our perceptions, are part of a philosophical picture that is in essence *empty*. So far as *substance* plays any role in our lives (in contrast to the philosophical conception of substance), it's available on Berkeley's view, and the vulgar can go on talking of (for example) first hearing and then seeing a dog (instead of talking with greater Berkeleian accuracy of first forming expectations about what one might soon see when one hears a bark, and then having those expectations realized). A central feature of the realism that Berkeley rejects is the idea that things "out there" independent of being perceived are *causes* and cause our perceptions of them; though what we might vulgarly take to be causal relations *within* the world as we perceive it are allowed for, as parts of God's language to

us. The natural world as we perceive it is a sort of language, and to understand it is to be responsive to its practical usefulness. The natural sciences are not to be thought of as after a reality *beyond* the perceptible natural world, a reality of things acting on us and causing our perceptions. The Berkeley-kosher reality of natural things might be said to be “representationally dependent,” belonging as these things do to the perceived-world-as-language. That is, I am suggesting that a contrast between what might be called “representational dependence” and “representational independence” is significant for Berkeley in something like the way it is for early Wittgenstein and Rorty, though what the contrasting terms come to is different in the three cases. And that contrast is important in the way, in all three cases, all philosophical options are made to disappear—other than metaphysical realism and, in each case, one particular alternative to it: in each case, a form of idealism. The disappearance of options can be seen in, for example, Berkeley’s treatment of two people seeing the same thing, say a dog: this might, on the one hand, be understood to mean that the two people had sensible ideas which did not differ significantly, or alternatively it might be taken to invoke an abstract philosophical notion of identity. Berkeley can offer a more complex Berkeley-kosher account, but what is not on offer is anything between the phenomenal treatment of identity and some or other abstractly philosophical idea of identity. There is no room for *same dog* that doesn’t come down to either Berkeley-kosher or abstract philosophical *trayf*.

Brief excursus on Rorty and philosophical method. In section 5, I have ascribed to Rorty the view that philosophers like Conant, who see options that Rorty believes not to exist, are dependent on Realist theses that they themselves explicitly reject. This description of Rorty’s view of his opponents is based in part on his response to Charles Taylor (1998f). He says, speaking not just of Taylor, that “although the idea of the thing-in-itself is in disrepute, it seems to me to survive, in disguise, in the purportedly noncontroversial idea that things have intrinsic, non-description-relative features” (1998f, 87). This passage is hardly Rorty at his lucid best. There are questions about what exactly is meant by *relativity of a feature to a description* (questions which arise equally about the notion I have used in expounding Rorty’s views, of representational dependence/independence). But here I want just to note a different issue, that of Rorty’s appeal to the idea of disguised commitment to theses that are inconsistent with those to which one is explicitly committed. This idea is in play in Rorty’s response to Conant—in his description of Conant as taking a view indistinguishable (as far as Rorty can see) from that of van Inwagen. Since Conant plainly and explicitly disavows the philosophical views of van Inwagen, Rorty here (as in his response to Taylor) works with a conception of *disguised commitments* to metaphysical realism. He is not, though, working with a notion of *clarification* as an aim of philosophy. The idea is rather that it may be hard to stop thinking of things in obsolete terms and thus to achieve what we could achieve by giving up those terms. So although Rorty does think there is a kind of incoherence in the views of people like Conant and Taylor, this isn’t the point of his criticisms: the point is simply to note the role that the obsolete conception is playing (supposedly) in their thought, and then to see the advantages of giving it up. There are passages in Rorty where he argues that “confused,” “incoherent,” and the like, as terms of criticism in philosophy,

are merely rhetorical alternatives to “useless” or “passé.” But his criticism of Taylor does involve bringing out (if Rorty is correct about Taylor’s arguments) a kind of confusion of the sort philosophers do accuse each other of: appealing in a disguised way to a view supposedly abjured.

VI. *Representational independence and the disappearing options*

THOSE OF RORTY’S CRITICS WHO HAVE CLAIMED, LIKE CONANT, THAT THERE ARE OPTIONS between Realism and Rortianism, options that Rorty ignores, have in mind (in somewhat different ways) our situation within the language-games of investigating and describing how things are. Rorty has no interest in denying that our language-games may have what he would take to be elements of metaphysical Realism or elements that philosophers may take in a Realist way, but what I am concerned with here is Rorty’s seeing as Realism what his critics understand in a quite different way. According to Rorty, what makes for the truth or falsity of the things we say is the ways “our current descriptions of things are used and the causal interactions we have with those things” (Rorty 1998, 86–7). If we are considering whether dinosaurs are oviparous, what is relevant to the truth of “Dinosaurs are oviparous” is the ways the language-games with our words are played and the causes to which we are subject; we cannot *pull out* from all that goes into shaping our practices, and all that is involved in the causal interactions we have with stuff, *certain* pieces of the world (the dinosaurs), and say that it is *the features of these things* that are what is responsible for the truth of “Dinosaurs are oviparous.” So although we can (speaking with the vulgar) say that it is because of *how dinosaurs in fact were* that it’s true to say that dinosaurs were oviparous, these words may suggest a philosophical picture that Rorty rejects. Rorty’s critics may hold that, once we have learned how to engage in the language-game of paleontology, say, what we then may claim about the oviparousness of dinosaurs is responsible to *how dinosaurs were*; but from Rorty’s point of view, that sort of philosophical attempt to conceive of participants in the language-game as responsible to *things* and their *features* appeals implicitly to the notion of things-in-themselves. Rorty, that is, reads his critics as implicitly rejecting the dependence of truth and falsity on our practices of taking-as-justified, practices that are shaped by needs and interests; the critics are, in his eyes, appealing to an idea of things like dinosaurs as *representationally independent* of us, an idea of there being a way dinosaurs and other things are, apart from what emerges in the give-and-take of language-games, distinct from what in the game we can persuade our peers to take to be justified. If the grammar of our language-game of description of dinosaurs apparently allows that the features of dinosaurs are independent of how we describe them, then (from Rorty’s point of view), this would merely indicate that we might do better to re-shape the language-game to one whose explicit character was closer to Rortian pragmatism.

Throughout my discussion of Rorty, I have made use of his notion of representational independence, which I think is problematic, and I want here simply to indicate why. The expression “representational independence” is used by Rorty (1998f) in criticizing Charles Taylor, but he also uses there and elsewhere the equivalent notion of “intrinsic” features, i.e., features of a thing that are supposedly independent of, or not relative to, how the thing

is described. Both the expressions—“intrinsic feature” and “representational independence”—involve a contrast with an idea of non-causal dependence of things and their features on how things are described, and it is this notion of a kind of non-causal dependence, which is at the heart of Rorty’s views, that is problematic (as Hilary Putnam argued: Putnam 1994, 301). Rorty’s explanations are not helpful: he says that *once you describe something as a dinosaur*, for example, its skin color is causally independent of the description. What is not clear is what exactly is supposed to be dependent upon your having described it as a dinosaur, and what *sort* of dependence is in view. If its skin color is causally independent of the description *once you have described it*, what is supposedly the case with its skin color beforehand? It looks (some of the time) as if what Rorty means is that, beforehand, there isn’t any way to claim that it has or hasn’t any skin color (see 1998f, 87.) In one sense, it’s a truism that, unless you are speaking of something identified in some way or other, there isn’t anything at all that would count as *saying of it* that it has such-and-such skin color. But Rorty apparently means to take a view on whether there is or isn’t some kind of non-causal dependency of *the skin color* on the-thing’s-being-described-as-a-dinosaur; that is, he does not mean just that there is no *saying anything about the thing’s skin color* unless you are speaking about the thing *in some way or other* (which it is hard to imagine anyone denying) or unless you are speaking about it *as the sort of thing about which one can say it has such-and-such color skin* (for example, speaking of it as whatever left such-and-such footprint), which also does not appear to be saying anything that anyone would deny. Rorty does appear to be making a stronger point than those truisms. He repeatedly speaks about *features* supposedly being relative or not relative to descriptions; he isn’t talking about *ascriptions* of features to a thing being relative to some way or other of talking about the thing. And his assertions about features being relative to descriptions is meant to connect with remarks about the implicit appeal by his critics to the idea of things-in-themselves: that is, features that are supposedly not “relative to a description” would be features of the thing as it is in itself. This is only to say that Rorty’s appeals to the notion of things-in-themselves, in discussing the views of his critics, involve the same problematic notion of non-causal dependence (of features on our practices of taking-as-justified). The same issue also underlies his description of Brandom as having tried to find a compromise in an uncompromisable dispute because of Brandom’s statement that “objects and the world of facts that comprises them are what they are, regardless of what anyone takes them to be,” which from Rorty’s point of view, compromises on exactly the issue of the non-causal dependence of things, and of how these things are, on our language-games (1998b, 131–4).

There is an element in Rorty’s discussion of representational independence that should be specifically mentioned in connection with the theme of idealism. In the passage cited in the last paragraph (1998f, 87), Rorty says that, until you have described the dinosaur as a dinosaur (or have described it in some other way), “there is no sense to the claim that it is ‘out there’ having properties.”¹¹ This passage should be connected with the structure of the claim of Brandom’s that Rorty rejects: that objects and the world of facts (including dinosaurs) are what they are, regardless of what anyone takes them to be. The structure of Brandom’s claim is implicitly counterfactual: even if we had never found out anything about

dinosaurs, there would have been dinosaurs, and they would have been oviparous. But one might then ask: if it would make no sense (according to Rorty) to say that the dinosaurs were there having properties, if no one had ever described dinosaurs, why does Brandom's counterfactual even appear to make any sense? There is an interesting answer open to Rorty: namely that the counterfactual itself involves describing the things in question as dinosaurs. We are not making any claims about how undescribed things would be; we take them to be *described as dinosaurs* in the counterfactual itself. That line of argument is a version of Berkeley's Master Argument. To think the counterfactual about the dinosaurs is to think the things in question, the dinosaurs, under some description.

VII. Rorty and recommendation

IN PART 4, I SAID THAT RORTY'S CAUSAL UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE-GAMES HAS two functions in his writings. It is one element in a range of practices and ways of speaking that he is recommending. I argued that it has a further and distinct sort of role in his thought. It underlies the idea that his critics (those critics who have argued that there are options which he overlooks) explicitly or implicitly disconnect describing things and forming beliefs from the ways in which our needs and interests shape the applications we make of the expressions in our language-games. Rorty repeatedly presents the situation as one in which there are just two possibilities; Realism and his sort of pragmatism. I have quoted his striking response to Brandom that Brandom's willingness to talk about our coming to make more and more true claims about the things that are really out there to be talked and thought about indicates that Brandom is trying to find a compromise position in an uncompromisable dispute. The alternative to Rortianism, that with which compromise is not possible, is the idea of things out there with whatever features they have. But then the question is whether *this* conception of the alternatives is itself something that Rorty is *recommending*. I don't think it is; I don't think it is ever presented by Rorty as a recommendation. What he recommends is Rortianism, in a context in which the alternative is metaphysical realism. But *that* we should accept a mode of thinking and speaking which imposes that pair of alternatives as all the options there are—*that* isn't itself something *recommended*, although it is a consequence of Rorty's causal conception of language-games, which is itself recommended. That is, as far as I can see, Rorty thinks that his overall approach is in one sense optional (i.e., that it is one of two contrasting philosophical approaches which one might choose to take), and that it is worth going in for because it is good for democracy and other generally good things, in contrast with realism and the traditional body of questions associated with the idea that there is some way the world is. But Rorty doesn't ever take the idea of there *being just two alternatives* as being in a similar sense *recommended*—either because that idea is good for democracy or for any other reason. Rather, *there are just two options*, and all attempts to argue for supposed other options, or to argue (as Conant does) for a distinction between truth and what is taken to be justified, are at odds with (what Rorty takes to be) basic to pragmatism (1998b, 131); they involve (or so he thinks) appeals to metaphysical conceptions of things as they are in themselves.

My argument has been that there is a set of practices and ways of speaking that Rorty recommends, including the causal model of language-games, and that this model itself is tied to his understanding of the philosophical situation and what is possible within it. One of the most striking features of Rorty's philosophy is precisely his insistence that there are on the one hand pragmatists who think we can and should "reduce objectivity to solidarity," and on the other hand there are realists who "must argue that there are procedures of justification of belief which are natural and not merely local" and who "must construct an epistemology which has room for a kind of justification which is not merely social but natural," an epistemology underpinned by a link between our nature and the rest of nature (1991, 22). Conant, and other critics of Rorty who reject the latter conception of what it is for our thought to get things right, who want to insist on the multiplicity of language-games in which there may be norms for investigating and describing how things are, don't want to reduce objectivity to anything, or even to think that objectivity is one thing—there is no place for that kind of complex account of the situation, if every non-reductive understanding of objectivity is read (from Rorty's point of view) as an appeal to things in themselves. I've tried to show what seems to force that reading and also how Rorty's overall philosophical approach has more of a resemblance to the *Tractatus* than he himself recognized. There is in philosophy no single notion of idealism; there are, rather, philosophical approaches which in different ways *give* what we may take to be different philosophical idealisms. The Rortian use of the notion of representational dependence/independence gives a philosophical idealism, and shapes the dispute in which Rorty takes himself to be participating. I believe that it would also be possible to work through what Rorty says about the scheme-content distinction and to see there too a form of philosophical idealism—but I have not tried to do this.

Martin Gustafsson (2011) has drawn attention to the apparently question-begging character of Rorty's approach and to its role in Rorty's understanding of the dialectical situation. That his approach is in a sense question-begging doesn't itself constitute an objection to it. But there is, it seems to me, something deeply problematic that comes out in the double role of Rorty's model of language-games: its role as an element in the package of ideas and ways of speaking that Rorty recommends, and its role as fixing a conception of the philosophical situation, in which there is no room for any alternative to Rortian pragmatism other than Realism. Here perhaps most of all we can see the force of Conant's claim that Rorty is in the grip of the same obsessions about thought and reality as is van Inwagen.¹²

Notes

¹ Cavell's use of the phrase probably draws on § 47 of *Philosophical Investigations*, where Wittgenstein discusses the case of asking "Is this object composite?" *outside* a particular language-game.

² See especially Putnam 1995, 32–8 and 53–5, and Putnam 2000, 83. The passages cited by Putnam are Rorty 1989, 6, Rorty 1979, 342 and Rorty 1995, 295. See also Rorty, 1998c, 14, and Rorty 1998d, 389. This last is a passage that McDowell describes as out of line with Rorty's "better wisdom" (McDowell, 1998, 425). McDowell and Putnam plainly differ in what they take to be characteristic of Rorty's thinking and what they take to be out of place within it.

³ See Rorty's quotation from Brandom, "being true is to be understood as being *properly*

taken-true (believed),” in his Tanner lecture, “Feminism and Pragmatism” (Rorty 1998e, 213); the quotation is from Brandom 1988, 80.

⁴I discuss Rorty’s views about this case in Diamond 1999, and I have included here two sentences from that essay.

⁵See, e.g., Rorty’s debate with Pascal Engel. Engel had said that describing a statement as “justified but not true” can’t convincingly be taken, in Rortian style, to mean that it is justified to this audience, but not to that other audience. Rather, there is an intended contrast between what may be taken to justify a statement and the way things are “in reality” (Engel 2007, 17). Rorty suggests that the intended contrast lies between the present situation, in which the belief appears justified, and a hypothetical future situation, in which it won’t. He adds that he isn’t presenting an analysis of what such talk means, but an advantageous way of thinking about the notions of truth and justification (Rorty 2007b, 41).

⁶See Gustafsson 2011 on Rorty’s early writings and the importance of Sellars for Rorty’s ideas about philosophical methodology. See especially Gustafsson on Sellars’s idea that a philosophical critique of the common sense conception of physical objects does not involve a “practical rejection” of everyday linguistic practices, like the ascription of colors to objects. For a clear expression by Rorty of this Sellarsian view of philosophy, see Rorty 2000c, 88–9; cf. also Rorty’s use of the distinction between ordinary talk and philosophical theory in his reply to Akeel Bilgrami, Rorty 2000d, 263–6.

⁷The causal model has been jiggled a bit by Rorty in ways which make it both more accommodating to some ordinary locutions about truth and more responsive to Davidson’s conception of agency, but this does not affect the issues with which I am concerned.

⁸I argue for this reading of Wittgenstein on propositions and on philosophical method in Diamond (2013) and Diamond (forthcoming).

⁹I discuss the implications of the *Tractatus* for sentences like “The earth has existed for more than four billion years” in Diamond 2011, pp. 271–2.

¹⁰See also the discussion of social constructions in Rorty 1999, 48–9 and 85–6. My exposition of Rorty’s arguments also draws on his 2000d.

¹¹This is one of the few places where Rorty makes explicit use of an argument that something or other makes no sense, an argument of a sort to which he is generally opposed.

¹²This paper was written for the conference in Bonn in 2012, “Skepticism and Intentionality: Perspectives on Topics of James Conant.” I am very grateful to Martin Gustafsson for presenting my paper at the conference, which I could not attend. I greatly appreciate his helpful comments and suggestions and those of James Conant.

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