

- 211 I think that with respect to most philosophical problems the premise is false, but I shall not argue the point here.
- 212 N, p. 303. Thus in *The Principles of Newspeak* we find:

Take for example the well-known passage from the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government . . ." It would have been quite impossible to render this passage into Newspeak while keeping to the sense of the original. The nearest one could come to doing so would be to swallow the whole passage up into the single word *crimethink*. (N, pp. 313-314)

If Rorty's brave new "post-philosophical culture" were ever to be realized and his proposals for a "replacement vocabulary" adopted, then – as far as I can see – the term 'Realism' would function just the way the term 'crimethink' is supposed to in Newspeak. It would serve as a linguistic device which simultaneously fulfills two purposes: (i) that of ostending a stretch of thought that cannot be rendered into the new vocabulary, and (ii) that of indicating that the stretch of thought in question is precisely of the sort that the new vocabulary has been adopted in order to render inexpressible.

- 213 N, pp. 51, 52, 53-54.
- 214 This paper is indebted to conversations about Rorty over the past decade with Stanley Cavell, John Haugeland and Hilary Putnam and to comments on drafts by David Finkelstein and Lisa Van Alstyne. Its two largest debts are to Cora Diamond and John McDowell: to Diamond's article "Truth: Defenders, Debunkers, Despisers" (in *Commitment in Reflection*, edited by Leona Toker; New York, NY: Garland, 1994), to McDowell's contribution to this volume, and to conversations with each of them about Rorty.

RESPONSE TO JAMES CONANT

James Conant says that "in non-totalitarian societies, the following two tasks generally coincide: the task of seeking to justify a claim to the satisfaction of other people and the task of seeking to establish that a claim is justified in the light of the facts" (p. 306). Rather than distinguishing two tasks, I would say: in non-totalitarian societies, we take the facts to be established when we have conciliated our opinion with those of others whose opinions are relevant (our fellow-citizens, our fellow-jurypersons, our fellow-experts, etc.). Conant goes on to say that these two tasks "diverge radically" in totalitarian societies. I would say: in such societies it becomes very difficult, and often impossible, for anyone to find out what the facts are, because agreement is no longer a good sign of truth.

The difference between Conant and myself is that he thinks that someone like Winston, trapped in such a society, can turn to the light of facts. I think that there is nowhere for Winston to turn. People in such societies are in the same position as people with real or purported psychotic delusions. They may never be able to reconcile their memories with what the people around them are saying. They may never know whether they are crazy or whether the people around them are liars or dupes. There is no procedure called "turning to the facts" which will help them. The lack of such a procedure is my reason for saying that all we can do to increase our chances of finding

truth is to keep the conditions of inquiry free. (This view – that if we take care of freedom, truth will take care of itself – is said by Conant to be "roughly the opposite of Orwell's view." I think that Conant here confuses truth with truthfulness – a point to which I return at the end of my response.)

In the case of Winston and the "patients" whom the KGB used to send to what is called "psychiatric clinics," their memories are right and the people around them are lying. In the case of other people in similar situations – for example, the person who has a clear, distinct, forceful, and vivacious memory of Elvis riding though Yosemite on the back of Godzilla, a memory which coheres beautifully with many of his other relevant beliefs – their memories are wrong. But neither Winston nor the Elvis-sighter is in a position to find out whether their memories are right or wrong. For neither can turn away from the effort to achieve coherence among their beliefs (for example, the belief that all these seemingly intelligent and decent people think they are crazy) and instead start comparing their memories with "the facts."

Conant speaks as if Winston's memories are the best evidence as to the facts. Orwell and we know that they are, but how is Winston supposed to know that? Conant treats these memories as somehow intrinsically veridical. But Winston's memories no more bear an intrinsic mark of veridicality than do the Elvis-sighter's. Winston's tragedy is that he is in a position in which he will probably be led away, either by force or persuasion, from what we know to be true. The Elvis-sighter's good fortune is that he may, with luck, gradually be led away, either by force or persuasion, from what we know to be false. But the difference between tragedy and good fortune is only recognizable from the outside – from where we are.

Conant believes that one can hold both that "there is no way of determining warrant *sub specie aeternitatis*" and that "there is a way of determining the warrant of *p* apart from *S*'s ability to justify *p* to those around her" (p. 306). If "a way of determining" means "a way for *S* to determine," then I do not believe this. My tediously familiar strategy for defending my disbelief is to infer from an old coherentist chestnut – that you can only get at "the facts" by way of conciliating beliefs, memory-images, desires, and the like – to the view that there is no procedure of "justification in the light of the facts" which can be opposed to conciliation of one's own opinion with those of others.

Conant says that "assuming that Winston's memory does not deceive him . . . then Winston's belief is warranted" (p. 306). If he means, tautologously, that if Winston trusts his memory his belief will be warranted in Winston's own eyes, he is of course quite right. But there remains the question O'Brien raises: why should Winston trust his memory? As O'Brien points out, we do not ordinarily trust memories that fail to cohere with everything everybody else believes. Why should Winston make an exception for himself? Well, perhaps because he finds himself to be living in a totalitarian society? But this just postpones the question. For his evidence that he is living in such a society consists in the memories which O'Brien disputes.

I should have thought that only someone who holds the views which Conant calls "Realist," and disavows, would want to oppose ordinary intersubjective justification to "justification in the light of the facts." So my problem with Conant is to figure out how he differs from van Inwagen – a straightforward, self-confessed Realist. Early in his paper, Conant says that he will not be criticizing me "on the grounds on which his Realist critics do." But I have trouble seeing how the grounds have been changed.

Presumably Conant would see my difficulty here as a result of what he calls my "blindness to intellectual options that occupy the intervening space between the rejection of Realist theses and the affirmation of their Rortian counterparts." I do not

think I am as blind as all that; I have spent a lot of time arguing against various such options (for instance, Putnam's, Wright's, Haack's). It would have helped if Conant had said more about the position he himself occupies in this intervening space, and in particular of how he has managed to avoid the fixations and obsessions to which he believes me to have fallen victim.

Turning now to questions of Orwell-exegesis, I do not see much justification for Conant's¹ claim that my "discussion of Orwell is structured around the assumption that there are two natural ways to read Orwell: either as a Realist or as a Rortian." Reading Orwell as a Rortian would obviously be very unnatural indeed. My reading of him was not intended to claim him as fellow pragmatist, but to explain why one could be a non-Realist and still have one's moral horizon expanded by *1984*, why one could agree with O'Brien's coherentism and still be intrigued, fascinated and appalled by O'Brien's way of coming to terms with the absence of freedom. That is why I spend much of my Orwell chapter arguing that what matters is freedom rather than truth, and that the truth of Winston's beliefs is irrelevant to the relation between himself and O'Brien. The idea was to say how the book looks when seen through non-Realist eyes.

As an analogy: I might have written an account of how even atheists like myself are impressed, improved and morally instructed by *Pilgrim's Progress*, but it would not have occurred to me to argue that Bunyan had latent atheistical tendencies.² I do not see that Conant has much textual basis for the claim that I read Orwell "as centrally concerned with defending theses whose motivation depends on the desire to distance oneself as far as possible from Realism" (p. 283). I certainly cite passages in Orwell's writings which I then read in a non-Realist sense, but I could also cite passages in Bunyan that I would proceed to read in an atheist sense. I would do so without imagining that Bunyan himself would have appreciated my efforts. As I said in my book, my reading of *1984* was "not a matter of wanting to have him [Orwell] on my side in a philosophical argument"³ (*CIS*, p. 173). Had Orwell taken an interest in such arguments, I imagine, he would have sided with the Realists.

Conant sees van Inwagen and myself as sharing a set of obsessions (see p. 283), and Putnam, Cavell, Diamond and himself as relatively free from those obsessions. He believes himself to be reading Orwell's book not just through non-Realist eyes, but through eyes unclouded by the "metaphysical," militantly anti-Realist, beliefs which I hold. However, just as Conant predicts, I resist his description of my views as "metaphysical."

I think of all the "Rortian" theses he lists as suggestions about how to redescribe familiar situations in order to achieve various practical goals. I think of both archetypal metaphysicians like Plato, Spinoza and Hegel and archetypal anti-metaphysicians like Dewey, Wittgenstein and Heidegger as having made similar suggestions.⁴ I see the difference between the metaphysicians and the anti-metaphysicians as consisting mainly in the anti-Realism of the latter. In my jargon, "metaphysical" and "Realist" are pretty well co-extensive terms.

Conant obviously attaches a very different meaning to the term "metaphysical" than I do, and I wish that he had explained his use of the term in more detail. Is a view metaphysical insofar as it is contentious, or just insofar as philosophy professors are likely to contend about it? Is all such contention between philosophers pointless? Well, presumably the present contention between Conant and myself is not. To grasp his

sense of "metaphysical" I should have to have a better sense than I do of which philosophical contentions he takes to be the result of obsessions and which not.

Conant says that the obsessed – van Inwagen and I – are not "able to envisage the possibility that what is at stake in Winston's remarks – remarks such as 'The obvious, the silly, and the true have got to be defended' or 'The solid world exists, its laws do not change' – is not the truth or falsity of a metaphysical thesis." (p. 283) This possibility seems to me easily envisageable, and obviously actual. Conant's charge seems to me as odd as would be a suggestion that "obsessed" seventeenth-century Copernicans were unable to recognize what is at stake in the remark "the sun is about to rise above the horizon" is not the truth or falsity of an astrophysical thesis.

Commonsensical remarks or platitudes can be used as objections to proposals for conceptual revision, but they should not be.⁵ Appeals to ordinary language are of no philosophical interest. Revisionist philosophers like myself (and like Austin's chief target, Ayer) do not wish to stop people making commonsensical assertions. We wish rather to change the inferential connections currently holding between those assertions and more controversial assertions. Thus Galileo wanted to stop people inferring from "The sun is rising" to "The sun goes round the earth." I want to stop people inferring from protests such as Winston's to Realist philosophical views. Pragmatists want, for example, to block the inference from "P is true iff p" to "There is a way the world is, independent of such human needs and interests as O'Brien's or Winston's" or to "When we begin to suspect that we live in a totalitarian society, we can turn to the facts for help."

Let me now drop questions about the exegesis of Orwell and turn to Conant's attempt to "demonstrate" to me that my "way of rejecting philosophical problems does not enable us to care about the very sorts of goods that he thinks we should care about instead" (p. 269).

My first reaction to this formulation of Conant's strategy was that predictions of what will happen if certain revisions in belief or vocabulary are made are not suitable candidates for *demonstration*. Such predictions may be confirmed or disconfirmed as the result of experiment or past experience, but how could one give them *a priori* backup? The notion of "demonstration" seems out of place when the question is whether a new tool can replace an old tool without untoward side-effects.

Yet Conant offers *a priori*, "conceptual analysis" arguments to show that we cannot adopt the theses he cites as "Rortian" and still achieve certain practical goals (for instance, the defense of freedom against totalitarianism). He is not arguing, on the basis of past experience, that the risks of making the suggested changes are so great that it would be foolish to perform the relevant social experiment.⁶ Rather, if I understand him, he is claiming that the changes in belief and vocabulary I suggest would lead to the unraveling of the only vocabulary in which we state the goals which it is hoped such changes would facilitate.

His argument thus comes down to claiming that there is a presuppositional relation between certain old, familiar, beliefs and vocabularies and the ability to formulate (or perhaps the will to achieve) certain goals – the political goals which Orwell, Conant and I share. For this argument to succeed, he must show that, as he says, "the ways in which the Party wants its members to think and judge cannot be captured in terms of a coherent set of ground-rules for the application of concepts." He must show that "Party members are supposed simultaneously to abide by our ordinary norms for making claims and not to abide by these norms" (p. 302).

At pp. 309–10 Conant says that when Orwell asserts what he takes O'Brien to deny – the “very existence of external reality” – he is not presupposing “any commitment to Realist theses,” but only “norms internal to our practices of making claims.” So one expects him to tell us what these norms are, and how the Party stabs itself in the back by trying to evade them.

But the *only* relevant norm Conant cites is the one that says it's always OK, for any proposition *p*, to assert both “Everybody always has and always will believe that *p*” and “*P* is false.” Presumably he thinks that the Party asks us both to abide by this norm and not to abide by it. But I do not see why the Party has to do this.

I not only agree that this is one of our norms, I agree with Conant that no society is imaginable in which this norm does not hold. If “denying the very existence of external reality” means suggesting that we drop this norm, then I make no such denial. Nor need the Party do so to bring about the universal consensus it requires. I cannot imagine a society in which this norm would not hold, either when “*p*” is replaced by “two and two is four,” or by “the Holocaust was a moral abomination” or by “Party invented the airplane.” I can, however, imagine societies in which it would seem as absurd to doubt one or another of the latter two claims as to doubt the former.

Conant sometimes says that the Party wants people to violate this norm and sometimes (as at p. 307) that I want to “outdo the Party” by arranging for it to be impossible to “distinguish at least in principle” between the questions “Who invented the airplane?” and “Who does everybody say invented the airplane?” But nobody could make such an arrangement, and the Party can settle for something much easier: namely the absence of doubts about who invented the airplane. In-principle-distinguishability guarantees at most what Peirce called “make-believe doubt.” To get real doubt one needs something more than the norm which Conant rightly says every use of language presupposes. All the Party wants or needs to do is to make all doubt of the relevant sort seem absurd, crazy, comparable to the doubts of the Elvis-sighter about Elvis' death.

Conant goes on to say that I am wrong to assert that there is no answer to be given to people like O'Brien who are carrying out this aim. He proposes an answer which I explicitly reject, viz, “Though you embody the practices of a totalitarian society which will endure forever, there is something beyond those practices which condemns you.” My problem with this answer is that saying “reality condemns you” seems too much like saying “God condemns you” – it is equally unverifiable, and equally ineffective, given the totalitarian set-up. One can picture the last Christian in an atheist society saying “God condemns your practices,” but would that be an *answer* to her atheist audience?

To Christians like Bunyan or C. S. Lewis, non-Christians appear (and here I paraphrase Conant's description of totalitarianism at p. 307) to spend an enormous amount of energy hiding God's existence, and His condemnation, from themselves. O'Brien and his colleagues have created a situation in which the assertion “there is an external reality which you have hidden from yourself which condemns you” has no familiar inferential relations to any statements believed by anybody other than Winston, just as the assertion “God condemns you” has no familiar inferential relations to any statements believed by anybody in the audience addressed by the last Christian.

For Conant to accomplish the sort of “demonstration” he wants he would have to show the relevance of the in-principle-distinguishability of the agreed-upon from the true to some imagined argument between Winston and O'Brien. He would have to find some disanalogy between the Christian's invocation of God and his suggested answer

to O'Brien – a disanalogy which rests upon the difference between practices as optional as Christianity's and non-optional practices, practices underwritten by some sort of transcendental guarantee. I do not see what such a disanalogy would be, because – back to the old coherentist chestnut – I cannot see how you break out of the social practices around you into a realm that transcends those practices.

Conant agrees with me that we should not make a tacit appeal “to the idea that there is something deep inside each of us, some indestructible common human nature, some built-in guarantee of human solidarity that will last forever” (p. 313) But without something like that, how can he “demonstrate” that my “way of rejecting philosophical problems does not enable us to care about the very sorts of goods he thinks we should care about instead”? How can he “demonstrate” that to accept my claim – the claim that if we promote freedom, then truth will take care of itself – will prevent us from formulating or defending the political goals we both share?

I entirely agree with Conant that vocabulary replacement of the sort I propose “cuts both ways” and can “deprive us of the ability to talk about some things we might still want to talk about” (p. 314). But the second of the demonstrations he proposes in the initial section of his paper would require him to spell out in detail just why, if our descendants adopt the views he labels “Rortian,” they will be unable to talk about the desirability of freedom and human solidarity, the undesirability of lying, the need for reciprocal trust, and the like.

I do not see that Conant has met this obligation. His criticisms require him to switch back and forth between the transcendental and uncontroversial necessity of the in-principle-distinguishability of the agreed and the true, on the one hand, and crypto-Realist restatements of this necessity on the other.

Much of Conant's criticism of me, as well as many other philosophers' criticisms of pragmatism, run together truthfulness and truth. Pragmatists are often said not to recognize the political and moral importance of truth-telling.

I do not think this charge is even remotely plausible. Truthfulness, in the relevant sense, is saying publicly what you believe, even when it is disadvantageous to do so. This is a moral virtue whose exercise is punished by totalitarian societies. This virtue has nothing to do with any controversy between Realists and non-Realists, both of whom pay it equal honor. My claim that if we take care of freedom truth will take care of itself implies that if people can say what they believe without fear, then, just as Conant says, the task of justifying themselves to others and the task of getting things right will coincide. My argument is that since we can test whether we have performed the first task, and have no further test to apply to determine whether we have performed the second, Truth as end-in-itself drops out.

Conant cites approvingly an article by Cora Diamond called “Truth: Defenders, Debunkers, Despisers” which defends the idea that truth *is* an end-in-itself. But that article constantly runs that idea together with the claim that a world in which human beings can trust each other is as precious as anything can be. Who doubts the latter claim? Certainly not Jane Heal or myself, who are the targets of Diamond's article. Both of us would heartily agree with Diamond that

We need that world of truth within which a lie is merely a lie, within which there are records, within which the reality of each of us is entrusted to the rest, within which the destruction of human lives is not erasable.⁷

We can also agree with Diamond that writers such as Primo Levi, Zbigniew Herbert, and Orwell

together with the anonymous author of the Polish slogan 'We fight for Truth and Freedom' are not writing about truth conceived simply as something sentences or beliefs or propositions exemplify, they are calling on words to help them understand and respond to evil, to help them articulate the kind of evil they take their world, our world, to be threatened by. They call on the word "truth" in that context . . .

So they do, but we philosophers still retain the right to say that this is not the right word to call on, and that they should talk instead (as, indeed, they often do) of truthfulness. (Would the banners of the Polish dissidents have been less inspiring had they read "Honesty and Freedom?") Some of the same people who describe Truth as an end-in-itself identify God and Truth. Philosophers retain the right to say that both words ought to be replaced with others ("Democracy" and "Humanity," for example).

It is no objection to Heal or to me to point out that lots of people use the word "truth" as the name of an end-in-itself, any more than it is a rebuke to the atheist to point out that the word "God" is so used. Atheists are not against loving certain things (for instance, Human Solidarity, Freedom, Democracy) with all one's heart and soul and mind, but they do not want an Omnipotent Creator and Law-Giver to be so loved. Pragmatists do not want Correspondence to the Intrinsic Nature of Reality to be so loved.

Atheists can grant that lots of people use the word "God" for admirable purposes without having any theological views, and pragmatists can grant that lots of people use the word "Truth" for such purposes without having any philosophical views. But neither admission gives them reason to stop their campaigns to change our linguistic habits. Conant seems to want a world in which no philosopher ever recommends any change in our linguistic habits. Philosophers should, he seems to think, "devote themselves to the task of *reclaiming our present vocabulary*". (See p. 313). This is not a project in which I can take any interest. I do not see what Conant thinks is wrong with sifting through our present vocabulary and suggesting that we revise the inferential relationships between our uses of the words it contains – thereby, perhaps, increasing the chance of reaching such goals as Freedom and Human Solidarity.

Somebody sometimes needs to suggest such revisions, or intellectual progress would come to a halt. The metaphilosophical difference between Conant and myself can be summed up by saying that he sympathizes with Putnam's and McDowell's attempts to prevent us philosophers from, as Putnam nicely puts it, "leaping from frying pan to fire, from fire to a different frying pan, from different frying pan to a different fire, and so on apparently without end." I do not share this wholesale quietistic impulse. I am anxious to give the peace of the grave to lots of worn-out old philosophical problems (for instance, those taken up by G. E. Moore), but I have no doubt that every attempt to get rid of old problems by revisionary attempts to break old inferential connections will itself generate unexpected new inferential connections, new paradoxes, and (eventually) new "problems of philosophy" for the textbooks to mummify.

Where Putnam and Conant see leaps from fires to frying-pans, I see the dialectical progress of the World-Spirit, correctly described by Hegel as the discovery of incoherence in any given way of making things hang together, followed by the formulation of an alternative way, the incoherence of which will be revealed a little later. I do not believe that there is, in addition to the so-called fixations and obsessions

of us philosophical revisionists, a peaceful, non-obsessed, vision of how things deeply, truly, unproblematically are. If there were – if there were something like what Cavell calls "the Ordinary" – I doubt that I should have any interest in dwelling within it. I see the desire for ever-new, revisionary, extraordinary, paradoxical languages and problems as the manic eros which gave us the Platonic dialogues, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs," and *The Postcard*.

If you want genuinely and permanently unproblematic peace, you should stay out of philosophy. You might try, for example, becoming a gardener in a monastery, or a hermit on a desolate shore. Wittgenstein's importance lies not in his intermittent escapism, but in the intensity of his revisionary obsessions – in the fires he stoked, and the energy with which he hammered out a frying-pan of a kind never seen before.

Notes

- 1 There are a couple of other places at which Conant attributes strange views to me without adequate evidence. He says, for example, that I advocate political quietism as well as philosophical quietism, and therefore interpret Orwell as agreeing with me that "the future outcome of history is essentially *out of our hands*" (p. 287). He also says that I regard "the concerns of literature as incommensurable with those of politics." The only evidence Conant offers for the latter claim is a passage in which I say that the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity are incommensurable. But why should he attribute to me the belief that novels and poems never speak to the latter demands? At p. 145 of *CIS* I say that "The pursuit of private perfection is a perfectly reasonable aim for some writers – writers like Plato, Heidegger, Proust, and Nabokov, who have certain talents. Serving human liberty is a perfectly reasonable aim for other writers – people like Dickens, Mill, Dewey, Orwell, Habermas, and Rawls, who share others."
- 2 If my Orwell chapter contributes anything to our appreciation of *1984*, it is by suggesting that we read the book as illustrating, among other things, how "intellectual gifts are as malleable as the sexual instinct" (*CIS*, p. 187), and how, when the hope of freedom is gone, torture can replace intersubjective agreement as a goal. Though, in a trivial sense, non-Realist, this reading has nothing to do with anti-Realism. It amounts to an attempt to change the subject, to suggest that the reader attend to O'Brien's pleasure rather than to Winston's pain.
- 3 On the other hand, Conant is right that there are passages in my Orwell chapter in which I do seem to be claiming that Orwell had Rortian tendencies. The most regrettable of these is one that he quotes: "In his better moments, Orwell himself dropped the rhetoric of transparency to plain fact and recognized that he was doing the same *kind* of thing that his opponents, the apologists for Stalin, were doing." (*CIS*, p. 174) "In his better moments" suggests that the rhetoric of transparency was a mere lapse on Orwell's part, and "recognized" suggests a conscious realization on Orwell's part. Both suggestions are wrong. I should have argued that *Animal Farm* was a good example of what Orwell called "using words in a tricky, roundabout way" without suggesting that Orwell ever came close to abandoning the Realist "rhetoric of transparency."
- 4 I realize that Conant does not wish Wittgenstein to be read as having anti-Realist views, or as attached to any philosophical theses. I cannot help reading him as being attached to many such theses. One difference between us may be that I should like to give philosophy peace by setting aside a lot of familiar old philosophical topics in the quiet confidence that lots of new

philosophical topics will present themselves. Conant may hope (and presumably reads Wittgenstein as hoping) to give philosophy a deeper and more lasting sort of peace.

- 5 Conant lists eight things that "Orwell has it at heart to say" (p. 279) and goes on to say that I "manage to read Orwell without ever realizing that such remarks occur throughout his corpus" – or, in the rare instances in which I do realize this, I "view them as unfortunate and dangerously misleading rhetorical flourishes" (p. 280). I think they are unfortunate and dangerously misleading only when taken out of context and used as premises in philosophical arguments, as they are by van Inwagen – and, it seems to me, by Conant as well.
- 6 Many people have argued in this way. Such people typically say that "the only trouble with pragmatism is that it won't work." My response is that we shan't find out till we try.
- 7 Diamond, when citing some lies told by a President of Uruguay, says that this President "took a Rortyan view" (Cora Diamond, "Truth: Defenders, Debunkers, Despisers", in Toker, Leoua (ed.) *Commitment in Reflection* (Garland Press, Hamden; 1993) p. 210). I cannot follow Diamond's inference from my views to tolerance for lies. This passage (from Putnam's Dewey Lectures) is quoted approvingly in Conant's introduction to Putnam's *Words and Life* (p. xiii).

Post-ontological Philosophy of Mind: Rorty versus Davidson

BJØRN RAMBERG

1. Davidson in Rorty's dialectic

For thirty years or more, Rorty has worked to break the grip on analytic philosophy of two problem-defining assumptions. The first is the Kantian idea that knowledge, or thinking generally, must be understood in terms of some relation between what the world offers up to the thinker, on one side, and on the other the active subjective capacities by which the thinker structures for cognitive use what the world thus provides. The second is the Platonic conviction that there must be some particular form of description of things, which, by virtue of its ability to accurately map, reflect, or otherwise latch on to just those kinds through which the world presents itself to would-be knowers, is the form in which any literally true – or cognitively significant, or ontologically ingenuous – statement must be couched. Together, these comprise what Rorty calls representationalism. As Rorty exhibits it in his large-scale frontal assault on representationalist epistemology and metaphysics, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), the key pivots in the dialectical self-immolation of the representationalist paradigm in analytic philosophy are, naturally enough, Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" and Sellars' "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." But in this book, and indeed in a paper published already in 1972, Rorty also makes use of Davidson's work in his effort to circumvent the intuitions that entrench the representationalist framework.¹ And where Sellars and Quine in Rorty's hands are subject to dialectical critiques, each providing the anti-representationalist corrective to the other's still-unliberated thought, Davidson appears finally to set analytic philosophy free. Once we give up the attempt to demonstrate to ourselves why (some eminent subset of) our strategies for framing descriptions of the world really are the ones we ought, because of how the world actually is, to be using, then, says Rorty in *The Mirror of Nature*, "philosophy of language is simply 'pure' Davidsonian semantics, a semantics which does not depend upon mirror-imagery, but which, on the contrary, makes it as difficult as possible to raise philosophically interesting questions about meaning and reference." (1979, p. 299) For Rorty, the Davidsonian account of meaning and thinking is the thing of beauty it is exactly because it makes it seem pointless to raise the sorts of questions about our thinking and its relation to the world that philosophers of the representationalist variety wish to pursue.

Through the 1980s Davidson remains a focal point of Rorty's attention. Of four