

## Richard Rorty on the Power of Philosophical Reflection and the Pragmatist Conception of Critical Thinking: A Redescription

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### INTRODUCTION

In this essay, I want to provide a reading of Richard Rorty's pragmatism as a continuation, rather than a disruption, of the traditional philosophical project of identifying the moral and intellectual responsibilities of reason and of philosophy itself. My reading will identify a number of philosophical claims and arguments Rorty makes in his articulation of pragmatism as an "alternative account of the nature of moral and intellectual responsibility."<sup>1</sup> This will involve reconstructing Rorty's account of what I will refer to as the "authentic" powers and limits of philosophical reflection. I take as my starting-point the ostensibly critical views which Rorty has expressed regarding the relationship between philosophy and education<sup>2</sup> and I attempt to show along the way how Rorty's account of the self-responsibilities of philosophy comes to structure a particular answer to a problem of special moment to us today in the field of education: the nature and conditions of critical thinking as an educational ideal.

### RORTY'S DOUBTS AND TWO INITIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Rorty writes: "I am dubious about the relevance of philosophy to education... I am not sure that philosophy can do much for...[education]."<sup>3</sup> He is concerned, as a result, that philosophical interests and sophistication will "get in the way of our larger political or educational purposes."<sup>4</sup> And specifically on the matter of what I am referring to as "the power of philosophical reflection" within education, Rorty writes: "The best that us philosophers can do is to develop a suitable rhetoric for the presentation of...new [practical] suggestions — making them a bit more palatable."<sup>5</sup> Rorty's doubts about relevance, his concern with philosophy as a potential threat to progress in educational thought and practice, and his apparent reduction of philosophical analysis and speculation within education to rhetorical status, certainly appear to paint a disenchanting picture. Even though Rorty does not categorically assert the irrelevance of philosophy for education, his statements today plant seeds of doubt within a soil already tilled for just this particular kind of crop. However, it is important to recognize at the outset two central qualifications that serve to mitigate the *prima facie* force of Rorty's statements — one having to do with education, the other with philosophy.

First, the scope of Rorty's skepticism extends well beyond education as customarily defined since Plato by its twin aims of socialization and individuation. The range of doubt here actually extends to the entire realm of the political — admirably defined by Rorty as "the enterprise of developing institutions which will protect the weak against the strong."<sup>6</sup> So whatever it is about the enterprise of education for Rorty that makes philosophy seemingly irrelevant and even impedimentary to it, those features are shared by the entire realm of politics so comprehended. In fact, as will become clear below, the scope of Rorty's concerns

extends to all human practical affairs comprehended under his strongly pragmatist specifications. This range of doubt, I argue, is a direct result of his assessment, on his pragmatist criteria, of the authentic powers, conditions and limits of philosophy as traditionally pursued. So it is not only or even primarily educational practice and policy that is being singled out by Rorty's skepticism. Hence, the relevance and value of philosophy for the analysis, critique and/or provision of any particular educational aim is not being impugned as such. Our examination of the logical origins of Rorty's own pragmatist account of the nature, conditions and limits of critical thought and liberality of mind within his account of the authentic power of philosophical reflection will show these to comprise coherent and central educational aims once properly comprehended within a pragmatist framework.

Secondly, in identifying the power of philosophical reflection as understood by Rorty, it is important to restrain our acquired inclinations and differentiate such power from usual comprehensions of "political" power or influence. Rorty's replies to the educational philosophers Allan Bloom, René Arcilla, and Carol Nicholson, for example, tend to stress the view that decisions on practical courses of action and institutional policy-making typically do not make recourse to philosophical positions and arguments and are actually not needed within such deliberation.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, "power" is defined by its external effects. On my reading of what Rorty's pragmatist position on education and philosophy actually requires, however, the account must (and does) provide an understanding of what we can only refer to as the intrinsic power and limits of philosophical reflection apart from externalist considerations of its pragmatic effects of persuasion and/or adoption by any given community. It is the provision of such an account of philosophical reflection that I believe identifies Rorty's distinctively philosophical project. Rorty's criticisms, I hope to be able to show, target not philosophy as such, not the very possibility for philosophizing itself, but rather specific traditions within Western philosophy whose understandings of the character and applicability of philosophical reflection supposedly transcend the conditions and scope of its legitimate powers. In Rorty's account, I maintain, philosophy remains an important and practically valuable discipline and disposition of thought for the enterprise of education, as well as for the entire realm of human practical affairs. It only has to recognize that authentic philosophical analysis in particular and rational/critical thought in general proceeds by asking questions of the form: "How can we arrange things so that people like Thrasymachus and Hitler will not come to power?"<sup>8</sup>

For Rorty, authentic philosophical questions and reflection avoid commitments to metaphysically realist claims and arguments. For embedded within such a realism is an insufficiently self-critical understanding of the constitutive roles within knowledge and rationality of language, history, and our necessarily "ethnocentric" commitments to liberal democracy as a form of life. It is an understanding which engenders an assumed — and, for Rorty, a presumed and presumptuous — metaphysical view of, amongst other things, the nature, conditions, and limits of philosophical reflection as a human power. Rorty's critical position on the place of philosophy in education, and in the realm of the practical in general, is based primarily on the claim that metaphysically realist traditions within philosophy have

purported to provide answers to questions which transcend the legitimate jurisdiction, the proper limits, of its own actual and authentic powers of reflection. For Rorty, we thus have a case of a kind of transgression by philosophy against its own nature. At different points and for different purposes, Rorty refers to the culpable traditions by such names as: “metaphysics,” “transcendentalist philosophy,” “Platonic philosophy,” “systematic philosophy,” “realism,” “the epistemo-metaphysical tradition,” “the metaphysics of presence,” “the Plato-Kant line,” and “epistemologically centered philosophy.” Rorty writes “‘Reason,’ as the term is used in the Platonic and Kantian traditions, is interlocked with the notions of truth as correspondence, of knowledge as discovery of essence, of morality as obedience to principle, all the notions which the pragmatist tries to deconstruct.”<sup>9</sup> Rorty’s pragmatism recommends we honestly admit the impossibility and hubris of any quest for the foundations of our practices of justifying truth, rationality, goodness, and/or knowledge where this takes the specific form of “an appeal to Reason, conceived as a transcultural human ability to correspond to reality, a faculty whose possession and use is demonstrated by obedience to explicit criteria.”<sup>10</sup>

We can at this point identify an important criterion entailed by this critique of philosophy and binding upon philosophical analysis/critique in particular and critical thinking in general. All forms of reflection are required to proceed in accordance with an authentic recognition of the resources and powers that are genuinely available to themselves. In providing the justification required by the knowledge-claims one is making, one should avoid illegitimately transcending (transgressing) such powers and resources. To act otherwise is to be insufficiently and thus inappropriately self-critical; it is to misunderstand the character of the powers of philosophical reflection or “Reason” itself and to transgress the proper limits of its possibility and legitimate jurisdiction. Within our discussion of Rorty’s conception of “language-games” or “whole vocabularies” in the next section, I hope to show in a more comprehensive manner something of the grounds and context for Rorty’s position. At this point we should note, however, that most contemporary philosophy of education does not operate with the kind of metaphysical understanding targeted by Rorty and thus cannot be taken to fall into the orbit of Rorty’s critiques of foundationalist philosophy. As recommended and displayed within the work of Paul Hirst, for example, the Greek metaphysical supports for conceptions of critical thinking, “liberality of mind,” and the justification of liberal education give way to a reconstructive analysis of the possible forms of experience with their attendant forms of understanding and competencies deemed to be integral within a comprehensive conception of the nature of liberal education.<sup>11</sup>

Let me now try to spell out further the directions of Rorty’s identification of philosophy as a form of reflective power and attempt to identify in the process another entailed feature of critical thinking by turning to the apparent reduction of philosophy to rhetorical status.

#### RORTY’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE “RHETORIC” OF PHILOSOPHY

This first mark of critical thinking on Rorty’s critique is, admittedly, primarily negative: it does not so much prescribe a particular path for thinking as proscribe

specific attempts by thought and reason to attempt answers and questions beyond its demonstrated capacities. “Know thyself” seems to be the appropriate exhortation here for the Socratic eros of the genuine critical thinker. But there is clearly a counterpart to this exhortation that we can take as a second mark of critical thinking. It takes the form of the philosophical imperative: “*Sapere aude.*” What is it, then, that philosophy in particular and critical thinking in general positively dare to know and do when proceeding in accordance with an authentic self-image which properly repudiates the *hybris* of foundationalism and its metaphysical pretensions? Such daring takes the form of a particular kind of rhetoric. Recall the claim that the power of philosophical reflection, authentically comprehended, takes precisely the form of a rhetoric: “The best that us philosophers can do is to develop a suitable rhetoric for the presentation of...new [practical] suggestions — making them a bit more palatable.”

In his essay “Hermeneutics, General Studies, and Teaching,” Rorty presents his view of the nature of critical thinking in the following terms:

Liberality of mind and critical thought are not, on this view, matters of abstractness but of a sense of relativity, of alternative perspectives. Critical thinking is playing off alternatives against one another, rather than playing them off against criteria of rationality, much less against eternal verities.<sup>12</sup>

Central at this point for our purposes is the term “alternatives” or “alternative perspectives.” We can identify two senses of the term operative at two different levels within Rorty’s account. The first sense is of particular moment for Rorty’s attempt to identify the authentic limits of the possibilities (powers) for genuine justification within philosophical reflection and critical thought. The second is central to Rorty’s attempt to identify the genuine positive possibilities (powers) for philosophical reflection and critical thought.

In the first sense, the term refers to an entire language-game or whole vocabulary which is taken to be incommensurable with other language-games. Examples which Rorty offers without providing any explicit criteria of individuation for “whole languages/vocabularies” include: Romantic poetry, German Idealism, French revolutionary thought, Galilean mechanics, and Kantian conceptions of selfhood. Important here is the fact that Rorty understands his own “rhetorized” version of philosophy and criticalness, developed along pragmatist lines, to itself comprise an instance of such a language-game. Here, to say that pragmatism is “incommensurable” with the foundationalist language-game means that it would be self-contradictory for Rorty’s critique of traditional metaphysically grounded understandings of the power of philosophical reflection to itself attempt to provide “alternative” answers to those same questions raised by the traditions he targets. One would, through such an attempt, end up transgressing the proper limits of the power of philosophical reflection oneself. Rather, Rorty’s own identification of an authentic understanding of the powers and limits of philosophical reflection must claim, and does claim, that the metaphysically grounded understanding of philosophical reflection should be abandoned. As Rorty writes, it should be “put aside” — for it is naught but “an escape from freedom into the atemporal,” and “an attempt to attain an end beyond [human] life.”<sup>13</sup> Since we are dealing here with two incommensurably

different language-games, Rorty's position must be one which renders illegitimate any "alternative 'theories of knowledge,' or 'philosophies of mind,'" any "new, non-Platonic set of answers to Platonic questions," and it is a position which must maintain that we "not think that we should ask those questions anymore," that we should simply "change the subject," "'set aside' rather than 'argue against'" the transgressors.<sup>14</sup> Such insouciance itself also requires that we "not invoke a theory about the nature of reality or knowledge or man which says that 'there is no such thing' as Truth or Goodness."<sup>15</sup> (Rorty at times does not abide by this requirement.)

For Rorty, then, when the "alternatives" at hand comprise entire language-games or whole vocabularies there are no external and independent "true" conceptions and no attendant criteria of any kind for their justification or comparative appraisal: "the notions of criteria and choice...are no longer in point when it comes to changes from one language-game to another."<sup>16</sup> This because each language-game individuates and populates the world in a completely different and irreducible way: "[a] shift from one vocabulary to another involves changes in truth-value candidates rather than simply changes in assignment of truth-value to already-existent candidates."<sup>17</sup> The paradigm-revolutions which bring about entirely new languages within such realms of human endeavor as science, philosophy, and literature, comprise "new maps of the terrain (namely, of the whole panorama of human activities) which simply do not include those features which previously seemed to dominate."<sup>18</sup> Changes in language-games are thus improperly identified as comprising some kind of decision, or act of will, or as being consequent upon argument and the giving of reasons: "Europe did not *decide* to accept the idiom of Romantic poetry, or of socialist politics, or of Galilean mechanics. That sort of shift was no more an act of will than it was the result of argument."<sup>19</sup> In other words, an authentically self-critical form of philosophical reflection requires us "to give up on the idea that there can be reasons for using languages as well as reasons within language for believing statements."<sup>20</sup> It is a mark of the nature of a language-game that attempts at their justification and/or comparative appraisal reach the limit of their genuine possibilities, and it is a mark of an authentically self-critical understanding of the legitimate bounds of philosophical reflection that this jurisdictional limit to its powers be recognized. When the object of our "play" of alternatives is one (or more) entire language-game(s), justification, Rorty maintains, must give way to explanation within any account of change from the one to the other. All we can possibly and legitimately do here is identify ("bleakly") the causes of such change. For Rorty, the prime cause here is "re-description" — a particular kind of "rhetoric." Shifts from one vocabulary to another are caused by the progressive development of a mass of re-descriptions of old things in novel ways, and new things (new "truth-candidates") in even newer ways. Identified causes here simply take the form of the development of new patterns of linguistic behaviour.<sup>21</sup> The major instrument of cultural change here is not justification for this requires criteria. But in this sense of "alternatives" there are none. The force or power here is, instead, one that takes a distinctively rhetorical form: "a talent for speaking differently" or "strong poetry."<sup>22</sup> It is here, I argue, a mark of the authenticity of philosophical reflection in particular and of critical thought in general that it recognize the impossibility of justification

at the level of the language-game itself and restrict itself to explanation via the rhetorical qualities of the proffered alternatives. New languages can be said to “take” or “catch on” with a new generation which finds it of practical value in its presently faced problems and/or of expressive and aesthetic value in its quests for edification.

But importantly, none of this yields for Rorty’s pragmatism the impossibility of justification as a genuine power of philosophical reflection in particular or of critical thinking in general. For Rorty’s alternative pragmatist view of authentic philosophical reflection must offer an account not only of the limits of justification but also of its genuine possibilities if it is to make good on its claim as to what is to count as authentically self-critical philosophy and what is to count as the “moral and intellectual responsibilities” to which we are accountable. That Rorty can be read to offer such an account is not at all unexpected. For Rorty’s concern with the power and limits of justification is not only directed by the self-imposed criterion of philosophical authenticity. It is also at the very root of his critiques of the metaphysical/foundationalist philosophical traditions he targets. One of his major complaints with the quest for the “foundations” of our knowledge of Truth and Goodness is precisely that it comprised a quest for “truths which are certain because of their *causes* rather than because of the arguments given for them...[emph. mine]”<sup>23</sup> Rorty’s project of overcoming the metaphysical traditions necessitates asking how justification is possible — and this once the historically pervasive Platonic analogy between knowing and perceiving that structures such a quest is given up as chimerical: “The essential feature of the analogy is that knowing a proposition to be true is to be identified with being caused to do something by an object.”<sup>24</sup>

It is, as I have said, through the second sense of “alternative perspectives” that Rorty’s account turns from a reconstruction of the limits of philosophical reflection to an identification of the genuine positive possibilities of its authentic powers for justification. In this second sense, the power of critical thinking in general and philosophical reflection in particular retains the form of “rhetoric” but now in a form geared specifically to what Rorty takes to comprise an authentically conceived and genuinely (self-)critical form of justification. It is this second sense of “alternative perspectives” that Rorty employs within his statement above on the character of critical thinking. Consider again his statement on the nature of critical thinking:

Liberality of mind and critical thought are not, on this view, matters of abstractness but of a sense of relativity, of alternative perspectives. Critical thinking is playing off alternatives against one another, rather than playing them off against criteria of rationality, much less against eternal verities.

This power is displayed for Rorty within our everyday mundane activities of practical deliberation upon the efficacy and efficiency of alternative courses of instrumental action. Rorty’s philosophical understanding of the authentic power of philosophical reflection is presupposed within his account of the nature of critical thinking in the following way.

Rorty maintains that what we should want when we offer justifications for a course of action (or the truth of a belief) is unforced agreement which, after all, is implied by “justification” rather than, say, brainwashing. (I owe this thought to

Michael Jackson). What we want only in bad faith, and consequently cannot genuinely attain, is the kind of causal necessity presumptuously proffered along lines of a "Platonic appeal to immutable standards" — an appeal to standards or criteria or "first principles" traditionally claimed to originate within the immanently constituted essence of "nature" or "self" or "reason" itself.<sup>25</sup> Given this desire and value, it would seem to follow from the point of view of ourselves as agents engaged in deliberation upon courses of means/ends actions that we must also desire and value the conditions necessary for attaining such a possibility. On Rorty's account, one of the principal conditions of justification is "free and open encounter with people holding other beliefs."<sup>26</sup> What characterizes such an encounter is the possibility for a certain kind of "rhetoric" of justification for practical deliberation. This rhetoric takes the form of "playing alternatives against each other" in the sense that deliberation upon alternative choices genuinely proceeds, and can only genuinely proceed, by way of providing examples, making comparisons, reflecting upon potential consequences of courses of action in light of desired ends, and thinking up imaginative projections of as-yet unrealized and unthought-of states-of-affairs and problem-solving strategies. On Rorty's pragmatism, "the pattern of all inquiry...is deliberation concerning the relative attractions of various concrete alternatives."<sup>27</sup> The only legitimate form of justification possible within practical deliberation is one of contrasting present beliefs with proposed alternative beliefs, comparing the desirability of one projected set of consequences of action over another set. Importantly, it comprises a form of reflection and rhetoric which must restrict the procedures of deliberation to the choice between actual and/or possible alternatives. This is all that possibilities for justification legitimately entail once we "set aside" traditional criteria of "getting it right" via a correspondence to a "nature" or "reason" causally making a decision right, a belief true.<sup>28</sup>

The rationality of authentic justification requires us here to pursue the generation and deliberation upon actual and/or concrete alternatives: "human communities can only justify their existence by comparisons with other actual and possible human communities."<sup>29</sup> Within this "play of alternatives," a philosophically self-critical form of reflection recognizes a reliance upon such other forms of knowledge as sociology, history, anthropology, and literature. For it is within such disciplines or genres that we find concrete articulations of actual and possible forms of community comprehended as alternatives to our own and available as resources for our deliberations.

Limitations of space prevent me from considering whether Rorty is actually right or wrong in his defense of what turns out to be his pragmatist version of "ethnocentrism." It is sufficient for us here to have identified the general lines of Rorty's portrayal of the rhetoric of justification involved in "playing alternatives against each other." In that the rhetoric of such justification remains within the immanent confines of a language, history and allegiance to liberal democracy, and does not transgress its limits within flights to the Platonically transcendent, it can be said to constitute the authentic expression of the power of reflection, be it specifically philosophical or as generally applicable to critical thinking within mundane courses of practical deliberation. In that such reflection maintains itself within the

bounds of its legitimate jurisdiction, we also are offered “an alternative account of the nature of moral and intellectual responsibility.”<sup>30</sup> This form of reflection is self-critically authentic in that it abjures what we have seen above to comprise the metaphysically inspired view that such responsibility is to “something out there,” and restricts its deliberations and allegiances to the immanent human realm of community, language and historical tradition.

On Rorty’s account as here reconstructed, the kind of rhetoric to which philosophy must confine itself within practices of justification is also the rhetoric of justification which any form of critical thinking must abide by within practical deliberation. In both cases, all that a self-critically authentic form of reflection allows itself is the “play” of alternatives in accordance with a sense of “alternatives” legitimately allowing for the possibility for justification. The former account is here one which structures, and is presupposed within, the latter in that an authentic understanding of the immanent limits, conditions, and powers (possibilities) of our philosophical quests for meaning, truth, sensibility, rationality, and objectivity entails a conception of critical thinking normatively bound by the immanent limits of this same understanding and authenticity. Clearly, should Rorty be mistaken in his appraisal of our philosophical possibilities for Truth and Goodness, then his consequently derived conception of critical thinking cannot remain unaffected. In such a case, critical thinking would be mistakenly constricted to a “play of alternatives” within practical deliberation where the rhetoric involved could only take the form of comparing beliefs, providing examples, reasoning instrumentally. If Rorty’s position on the attainability of Truth and Goodness is mistaken — in virtue, perhaps, of a misreading of the “incommensurability” between foundationalist philosophy and his own pragmatism which occludes an actual continuity between the two — then his account of what is involved in our practical choices between alternatives may require a rethinking of the wholly immanent and homogenous status of the beliefs, desires, ideals of happiness, and interests comprehended as elements of practical deliberation. On such a possibility, there would exist an identifiable continuum between the polar opposites of a “rationalist theory of rationality” and “criterionless muddling.” All this, of course, raises matters regarding the truth of Rorty’s account. But there is no doubting, in my mind, the logical consistency of the account. Here I can only say that I believe such a “continuity” is evident in Rorty’s pragmatist efforts to identify the limits and genuine possibilities for philosophical reflection in particular and critical thought in general.

#### CONCLUSION: THE CONTINUING PLACE OF PHILOSOPHY

On the understanding of the power of philosophical reflection in particular and critical thinking in general that I am attributing to Rorty’s pragmatism, his account displays that “continuity” of philosophical effort which Charles Taylor sees to run from Kant, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, to Merleau-Ponty.<sup>31</sup> It is a concern with what Taylor calls “agent’s knowledge” and the reconstruction of the background conditions defining the possibility and limits of the specific nature of its intentionality.<sup>32</sup> But pace Taylor’s verdict on the continuity of Rorty’s pragmatism with this reconstructive kind of philosophy, I believe we can validly read Rorty’s quest for an authentically self-critical understanding of the powers and limits of philosophical

reflection, and of critical thinking within practical deliberation, to comprehend the conditions of “agent’s knowledge” as conditions necessary for the possibility of human freedom.

My intent here being primarily an effort of reconstruction, I have not focused on the matter of the truth of Rorty’s account comprehended as such. That effort, I think, minimally involves the crucial matter of whether Rorty’s pragmatist identification of the authenticity of thought in truth does not grant us permission “to seek for the natural human good and admire it when found” as Allan Bloom puts it with reference to Rawls.<sup>33</sup> And second, whether the account of criteria for the resolution of conflicts between traditions of inquiry provided by Alasdair MacIntyre’s recent work is both applicable to and able to challenge successfully Rorty’s claims regarding the impossibility of a rational justification of choice between rival whole languages or vocabularies.<sup>34</sup>

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1. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

2. Rorty’s writings on education include: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, chap. 8 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979); “That Old-time Philosophy,” *The New Republic*, 4 April 1988, 28-33; “The Dangers of Over-philosophication — Reply to Arcilla and Nicholson,” *Educational Theory* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 41-44; “Hermeneutics, General Studies, and Teaching,” *Synergos* 2 (Fall 1982): 1-15 (George Mason University: The State University of Northern Virginia); and “Education without Dogma: Truth, Freedom, and our Universities” in *Philosophy of Education: Introductory Readings*, 2d. ed., ed. William Hare and John P. Portelli (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1996), 207-18. Studies of Rorty’s work on education include: René V. Arcilla, *For the Love of Perfection: Richard Rorty and Liberal Education* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Alven Neiman, “Pragmatism and the Ironic Teacher of Virtue,” in *The Educational Conversation*, ed. James W. Garrison and Anthony G. Reid, Jr. (Albany: State University New York Press, 1995), 61-83; Alven Neiman, “Ironic Schooling: Socrates, Pragmatism, and the Higher Learning,” *Educational Theory* 41, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 371-84; René V. Arcilla, “Edification, Conversation, and Narrative: Rortyan Motifs for Philosophy of Education,” *Educational Theory* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 35-39; Frederick Suppe, “Hermeneutics, Eros and Education: Reply to Rorty,” *Synergos* 2 (Fall 1982): 22-25; Karl Hostetler, “Rorty and Collaborative Inquiry in Education: Consensus, Conflict, and Conversation,” *Educational Theory* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 285-98; Jane Roland Martin, “Curriculum and the Mirror of Knowledge,” in *Beyond Liberal Education: Essays in Honor of Paul H. Hirst*, ed. Robin Barrow and Patricia White (New York: Routledge, 1993), 107-28; and William Hare, “Content and Criticism: The Aims of Schooling,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 29, no. 1 (1995): 47-60.

3. Rorty, “Dangers of Over-philosophication,” 41.

4. *Ibid.*, 44.

5. *Ibid.*, 41.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Rorty, “Old-time Philosophy” and Rorty, “Dangers of Over-philosophication.”

8 “Old-time Philosophy,” 33. Rorty, on my reading would have few qualms about such questions, typically addressed by educational philosophers, as: What did Socrates mean by “eros” and what did Aristotle have to say about phronesis? 2. Why did Kant believe that certain principles identify the possibility for genuinely moral action in differentiation from action motivated by desire, inclination or prudence? 3. Is there anything about the ethical tradition of Utilitarianism which could aid in identifying stages of moral development and developing interesting and valuable programs of moral education? 4. What should the meaning and role of such concepts as “rationality,” “knowledge,” and “objectivity” be

within a serious Critical Thinking Program? 5. Is there a difference between an ability and a disposition such that teaching for the one would be different from teaching for the other? 6. Does Rawls's account of "reflective equilibrium" have any bearing on our deliberations on the justice of educational resource-allocation or equality of educational opportunity? 7. Is there a coherently distinctive "feminine voice" within science and/or ethics which education and developmental theory cannot legitimately ignore? 8. Is our understanding of socio-historical phenomena different in kind from the explanations we give of the physical/material world? 9. What are the rights, duties, and responsibilities of a citizen of a liberal democracy? 10. Are the capacities and competencies we display in the search for truth the same as those required within practical deliberation? How do we teach for them? 11. Why did Hegel think that his *Phenomenology of Mind* would be of value as a senior high-school text? 12. If one of the aims of education is the development of personal autonomy, then how are we to conceive of "selfhood" such that we could teach for it? 13. Does the concept of pedagogical knowledge have any meaning, and if so, what are its forms, limits, and conditions of acquisition? 14. What are the differences between liberal education and vocational education and what roles should they respectively play within our school and university systems? 15. Are the truth-conditions for moral judgments different from truth-conditions for empirical claims such that to teach for the one is different from the teaching for the other? 16. Is there a difference between explaining how one came to hold a belief or the causes of the belief and providing justification for that belief? Is the distinction relevant for our conceptions of intellectual independence? 17. Is moral education only possible through religious education? 18. What does it mean to be "culturally literate"? 19. What skills, knowledge, values, and dispositions does this Philosophy for Children Program offer students? 20. What are the aims of Socratic teaching and learning? 21. On what criteria can we legitimately differentiate between indoctrination and teaching?

9. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 172: "[T]he traditional Platonic or Kantian philosopher...wants to show that sinning against Socrates is sinning against our nature, not just sinning against our community."

10. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 28.

11. Paul Hirst, "Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge" in *Education and Reason*, part 3, *Education and the Development of Reason*, ed. R.F. Dearden, P.H. Hirst, and R.S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

12. Rorty, "Hermeneutics, General Studies, and Teaching," 11.

13. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, 87.

14. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 6.

15. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, xiv. See also Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 32 and Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 8.

16. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 6.

17. *Ibid.*, 47.

18. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 6.

19. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 6.

20. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 48.

21. *Ibid.*, 9.

22. *Ibid.*, 7.

23. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 157.

24. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 8-9.

25. Rorty, "Old-time Philosophy," 30. It is important to note that Rorty has no difficulties with the view that there exists a world in time and space which does not include human mental states and which can genuinely be understood as that which "contains the causes of our being justified in holding a belief," Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 5. Such a common-sense realism, with its benign notion of "truth-qua-correspondence," is, for Rorty, different from the metaphysical realism embedded in the idea that "the world splits itself up, on its own initiative, into sentence-shaped chunks called 'facts.'"

26. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 41.

27. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, 164.

28. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 41.
29. *Ibid.*, 42.
30. *Ibid.*, 41.
31. Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology" in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 474.
32. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 29.
33. Quotation from Allan Bloom quoted by Rorty, "Old-time Philosophy," 29. A potential criticism of Rorty along the same Platonic lines may be adapted from Ilham Dilman's criticism of moral conventionalism: "The man who has moral understanding knows that the values he believes in are not mere arbitrary conventions but are founded on a reality that is independent of human agreement, independent of human purposes and desires; namely on certain facts about the universe which may be hard to formulate or describe." *Morality and the Inner Life: A Study in Plato's Gorgias* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1979), 111. Interestingly, Thomas McCarthy argues that Rorty's "conventionalism" may not be all that conventional in the first place given what Rorty wants to do away with. See Thomas McCarthy, "Private Irony and Public Decency: Richard Rorty's New Pragmatism," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (Winter 1990): 355-70. Rorty's reply to McCarthy, "An Exchange on Truth, Freedom, and Politics," appears in *Critical Inquiry* 16 (Spring 1990): 633-43. For a more general critique of Rorty's conventionalism from the perspective of evolutionary epistemology, see Peter Munz, "Philosophy and the Mirror of Rorty," in *Evolutionary Epistemology, Rationality, and the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Gerard Radnitzky and W. W. Bartley, III (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1987) 345-98.
34. In "The Relationship of Philosophy to History: Postscript to the Second Edition of *After Virtue*," MacIntyre formulates such criteria in the following way: "If some particular moral scheme has successfully transcended the limitations of its predecessors and in so doing provided the best means available for understanding those predecessors to date *and* has then confronted successive challenges from a number of rival points of view, but in each case has been able to modify itself in the ways required to incorporate the strengths of those points of view while avoiding their weaknesses and limitations and has provided the best explanation so far of those weaknesses and limitations, then we have the best possible reason to have confidence that future challenges will also be met successfully, that the principles that define the core of a moral scheme are enduring principles," Taylor, *After Philosophy*, 419.