

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

EPISTEMOLOGY UNDER THE PEN OF RORTY: A CRITICAL STUDY OF
RORTY'S PRAGMATISM.

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PRAGMATISM.

BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date:.....


Name: Husein Inusah

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Rorty's pragmatic approach to epistemology. Rorty criticizes foundationalism for relying on the optical metaphor that sees knowledge as grounded in the given of sense impression. He also criticizes the enterprise for relying on absolute truth which is untenable. Sellar's critique of the notion of the given and Quine's attack on analytic synthetic dichotomy are by implication sufficient to show that foundationalism is misguided. According to Rorty, the idea that justification of a belief lies in its direct or indirect relation to what is given in experience is a misconception resulting from confusion, made possible by the optical metaphor, of justification with causation. Justification should be conceived rather as conversation, so that our beliefs are justified by the expression of judgment of a social group. On this construal, Rorty urges that epistemology is dead and no successor subject could take its place. However, in this thesis, using the analytic method, we argue that Rorty does not pronounce epistemology dead as he purports to have done. We also argue that Rorty's death of epistemology thesis is a deviation from mainstream pragmatist view of epistemology. Our argument is that Rorty does not pronounce epistemology dead but in a frantic attempt to provide answer to the epistemological question purports to be pronouncing the enterprise moribund. A further argument is that the original pragmatists do not abandon epistemology entirely as Rorty has vehemently done. This is why we also try to show how Rorty strayed from original pragmatism.

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DEDICATION

To my late mother Aminatu Inusah. I am so proud that God chose you to have me as a child. Your lovely upbringing is my success and celebration.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Richard Rorty is one of the most prominent pragmatists of the 20th century who has made serious effort to reinterpret the pragmatist text for use in contemporary times. A virtue motivating Rorty's reinterpretation of the pragmatist text is his controversial pronouncement of the death of epistemology and philosophy. He pronounces traditional foundationalist epistemology dead because he thinks the enterprise is just not working. Rorty believes it is a waste of effort and energy to pursue absolute and objective truth the way the traditional epistemologists do because there is no truth beyond the human frame of mind. His reinterpretation of the pragmatist text has spurred a heated debate within the pragmatist tradition. Most pragmatist scholars, especially Hilary Putnam and Susan Haack have constantly attacked him on this score. According to Putnam and Haack, Rorty's pronouncement of the death of epistemology is a deviation from the classical pragmatist method of doing epistemology.

The classical pragmatist text is a set of interlocking thesis found in the works of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey. Though the works of these scholars espouse the concept of pragmatism, there are nonetheless important and interesting differences in them. Peirce is the founder of modern day pragmatism. He devoted his version of pragmatism to clarifying and determining

the meaning of concepts. For Peirce, the meaning of a proposition lies in its practical conceivable consequences (Peirce 1934: 5.402). This means that for a proposition to have meaning it must be conceivable and capable of experimental verification. This experimental method will show the conceivable consequences of the proposition in question. Peirce describes his version of pragmatism as characteristics of experimental behavior in the laboratory. He says that whatever assertion we make, it will only be meaningful to him if a prescription of an experiment could be carried out on it; other than that that assertion should not be made at all (Peirce 1934: 5.402). Peirce defines truth as the opinion which is fated to win at the long run (Peirce 1934: 5.407). James, Peirce's successor, saw pragmatism as more than a theory of achieving clarity and verification of meaning. For James pragmatism provides a framework for resolving moral, metaphysical, and religious problems thus saving us from pretended absolutes and fixed principles and also guiding us towards facts, power and action (James 1907: 51). James defines truth as what is expedient or useful in our way of behaving (James 1948: 170). There is a striking difference between Peirce and James' versions of pragmatism. Whilst Peirce is preoccupied with Truth as a totality of all individual truths, James, by contrast, is interested in individual truth. This difference makes Peirce more of a positivist and realist and James a nominalist. Dewey another prominent classical pragmatist calls his version of pragmatism instrumentalism. Dewey harmonized both Peircian realism and Jamesian nominalism into his version of pragmatism. Dewey argues that enquiry should be seen as a matter of problem solving. It should offer us fruitful ways of coping with reality. He defines truth as warranted assertibility, what is reasonable for us to believe (Dewey 1946:168).

However, in his analysis of pragmatism, Rorty holds that Peirce did not contribute much to pragmatism except for giving the tradition a name (Rorty 1996: 220). Besides, Peirce left the rigid canons of traditional epistemology untouched. Rorty prefers Dewey and James because, as he claims, James supports the spectator theory of truth and sees truth, as “what is good in the way of belief” (Rorty 1996: 221) and Dewey sees truth as what we are justified in believing and as a “social phenomenon” (Rorty 1979: 9). Putnam and Haack prefer Peirce. They want to continue to do epistemology just like Peirce. They are committed to the original pragmatist text as propounded by Peirce, however, not holistically (Hacking 1983: 62).

Much of Rorty’s perspective on epistemology is crystallized in his epoch making book; *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) henceforth referred to as PMN. In this book Rorty expresses his anti-foundationalist epistemology. Rorty’s argument is that the history of philosophy and, precisely, epistemology has been clouded by the seductive picture of knowledge as needing to be grounded in a direct acquaintance with the “givenness” of sense impression. The view of knowledge as assemblage of privileged representations, according to Rorty, was the product of intellectual history beginning with Plato’s quest for the form, Descartes’ invention of the mind and quest for clear and distinct ideas; proceeding through Kant’s empirical realism and transcendental idealism, down to modern analytic quest for commensuration and for privileged vocabulary (Rorty 197: 155-164). Thus the central problem of epistemology, according to the foundationalist, boils down to the effort of the mind to “mirror” a mind

independent reality. Rorty announces that if we give up this mirror image of the mind the foundationalist epistemologist argument could easily be defeated (Rorty 1979: 157). A foundationalist believes that in order to avoid the regress inherent in claiming that all beliefs are justified by other beliefs, some beliefs must be self justifying and form the foundations to all knowledge (Crumley II 1999: 94).

Rorty introduces his anti-foundationalist epistemology in part two of his book. In chapter three titled “The Idea of a Theory of Knowledge”, Rorty begins by attributing the problems of traditional epistemology to Locke and Kant. This is because in order to address the epistemological problem, Locke conflated issues of causal conditions with questions of epistemic justification (Rorty 1979:139) and Kant confused predication with synthesis (Rorty 1979: 148). Locke, Rorty argues, thinks that how an object is represented on our mind is the justification we have for knowing such object. But in the case of Kant, Rorty blames him for his idea that a proposition is a synthesis of sensible intuitions and concept. The problem, as Rorty notes, is that Kant confuses knowledge of... (non-propositional knowledge) with knowledge that... (propositional knowledge). Both views, Rorty argues, see knowledge as a relation between ideas and object (correspondence) and not as a relation between ideas (coherence).

Rorty proceeds to draw from Sellar’s attack on the “given” and Quine’s attack on analytic-synthetic dichotomy as offering a kind of epistemic holism; the view that statements are confirmed or disconfirmed not individually on the bases of experience, but only as field (Moser and Vander Nat 1995: 202). Sellars and

Quine's epistemic holism, according to Rorty, has already pronounced the death of epistemology. His was to finish what Quine and Sellars started.

Sellar's objection to the 'given' presumes that there is no pre-linguistic given which our minds must mirror accurately or otherwise, and even if it (pre-linguistic given) exists, it is an insufficient and unnecessary condition for knowledge and justification since we can have the sensation of "redness" (knowing how redness looks like) without knowing what it is or knowing about redness (what redness is, say it is a colour) without first having a pre-linguistic awareness of "redness" from birth (Rorty 1979: 186). The import is to remove from our minds the belief that we cannot have knowledge if we do not have raw feels. The pre-linguistic given or the non-propositional awareness which plays an essential causal role in the traditional foundationalist and empiricist justification of knowledge is thus baseless and unfounded. Thus the whole epistemological enterprise is misguided.

Similarly, Quine's attack on the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements indicates that there is no historical and overarching vocabulary in which all discourses will one day converge (Quine 1995: 255-268; Rorty 1979: 192-209). Quine's critique tells us that there is no vocabulary that is in any sense absolute. All we can do is to see statements from our human contingent point of view. The upshot is that nothing can be known with certainty.

These two critiques combined hit hard, according to Rorty, at the root of the canons of traditional foundationalist epistemology. They offer support to Rorty's pronouncement of epistemology as moribund. Rorty announces that

Quine and Sellars have earlier on announced the death of epistemology before he finally drove the nail into the head. If traditional foundationalist and empiricist epistemology is dead, then also is philosophy because philosophy since Descartes, Locke and Kant till present day discussions on the subject has been preoccupied by the answering of epistemological question (Rorty 1979: 131-139) (Henceforth we shall use philosophy and epistemology interchangeable as Rorty does to ensure conformity with his text). According to Rorty then, we should opt for conversation not as successor subject to epistemology but as an indication that the void left by traditional epistemology still remains vacant (Rorty 1979: 315).

Conversationalism is Rorty's pragmatic alternative framework of engaging in epistemological discourse. The term denotes the use of language by historically conditioned communities of language users to legislate on what counts as knowledge and what does not. Since justification is a human phenomenon, we should see knowledge as a relation between ideas but not as a relation between ideas and object (Rorty 1979: 9). If we treat knowledge and justification as a relation between ideas but not as a relation between subject and object then we can abandon the search for foundations; such as knowledge as correspondence, as representationalism, as essentialism and settle for conversationalism: what a community of enquirers agrees upon within their present cultural space. Conversationalism implies a philosophy (epistemology) without mirrors, and philosophy (epistemology) without mirrors denotes conversationalism.

Rorty canvass that we endeavor to keep the conversation going because there is no final vocabulary; no single certain way to capture the meaning of human life. We should give up the craving for the absolutes, the quest for Cartesian certainty, the conviction that there are privileged representations and the conviction that there is a totality in which all differences will finally be resolved (Rorty 1982: 166; Rorty 1989: 7). This is because there are no constraints on enquiry save conversational ones, and conversation is the only determiner of what passes as legitimate candidate of knowledge.

Rorty's position that conversation is the only determiner of how humans come to know the world; a view which culminated into his pronouncement of the death of epistemology or philosophy, has earned him a barrage of attacks from all corners of the intellectual divide especially from Putnam and Haack. Haack charges Rorty for abandoning epistemology; she wrote "the edifying philosophy into which Rorty wants the epistemologist to put his energies masks a cynicism which would undermine not only epistemology, not only 'systematic' philosophy, but inquiry in general ..." (Haack 1995: 182). On the part of Putnam, Rorty's call for the death of epistemology is misguided. Epistemology should be seen as an on-going discourse. In *Reason, Truth and History*, Putnam rejects the correspondence theory of truth. But he argues that whilst we cannot make sense of non propositional, metaphysically privileged, correspondence relation between linguistic expression and the stuffs of non linguistic world that those expressions represent, we nevertheless need an ideal and standard truth that transcends cultures (Putnam 1981: 49). So Putnam prefers that we engage in some form of

epistemology because epistemological questions are worthwhile asking. Our struggles within those problems, Putnam says, can lead to refinement of the formulations of epistemological answers and cognitive development.

The study involves an in-depth and critical appraisal of conversationalism pointing out its prospects and limitation. It is envisaged that Rorty's intervention further legalizes the traditional debate in epistemology rather than sound the death knell of epistemology. The study also reveals that Rorty by sounding the death knell of epistemology strayed from the classical pragmatist method of doing epistemology.

Statement of the Problem

A hallmark of Rorty's thesis is his commitment to the death of epistemology. In Rorty's view such commitment is inevitable because traditional foundationalist epistemologists in their attempt to answer epistemological questions have insisted on static, absolute and stagnant epistemological criteria that have impeded the growth of epistemology for far too long. If these attempts have not successfully solved our epistemological problems, then the only option left is to stop raising epistemological questions. In other words, Rorty urges that we abandon epistemology and substitute it for conversation. Here, we have a problem. Rorty seems to conflate epistemological answers with questions. But the fact that certain answers to epistemological questions have not been successful does not invalidate the epistemological questions themselves.

Another problem is this. Recall Rorty announces that our claim to knowledge is an expression of the opinion of a community of enquirers according to their own standards of justification (Rorty 1996: 225). This means that a proposition *p* is true if it is agreed upon by a social group and it is false if it is rejected by a social group. It also means that Rorty's conversationalism does not rule out the fact that there are true and false propositions. Therefore Rorty's claim that his conversationalism negates all about epistemology rests on a mistake. This is because epistemology is a discipline preoccupied with the expression of judgment regarding whether a proposition is justifiably true or false.

Rorty's criterion of truth as a conversation gives rise to another problem. Given that we accept the proposition that knowledge is what a social group endorses according to their own justification practices then we are condemned to perpetually accept the opinions of the crowd or wallow in relativism. But the question is; is the majority always right? Is there no truth that transcends one's social and cultural boundary? What happens if there is a conflict between two different social groups concerning the truth of a proposition, which social group forfeits its justification conventions for the other? Such are the problems that beset Rorty's conversationalist criterion for knowledge.

Thesis Statement

The thesis of this study is that Rorty does not abandon epistemology even though he purports to do so. The import is to establish that Rorty has not called for an end to epistemology but in a frantic attempt to provide answers to epistemological question purports to be pronouncing the enterprise moribund. The result is to describe Rorty's epistemology in a new perspective: "Epistemology in Denial."

Purpose and Objective of Study

The purpose of this study is to highlight Rorty's contribution to epistemology while revealing the inconsistencies in Rorty's conversationalist method. The import of identifying such inconsistencies will make evident the claim that whilst Rorty purports to have abandoned epistemology, he was actually contributing to the epistemological discourse.

The specific objectives of the study include;

- (a) a discussion of traditional foundationalist epistemology
- (b) a look at Rorty's pragmatic treatment of epistemology
- (c) an expose of Rorty, Putnam and Haack's debate on pragmatist epistemology
- (d) a critique of Rortian conversationalist method. This will involve:
 - (i) the claim that there are inconsistencies in Rorty's pragmatic treatment of epistemology

(ii) the conclusion that Rorty did not abandon epistemology though he seems to be saying so.

(iii) the claim that Rorty strayed from main stream Pragmatism

Methodology, Sources and Scope of Study

The study will involve content analysis and exegesis of the works of Rorty. In this light primary sources and secondary sources will be used for the research. Primary sources will include Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) his *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989) and his *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982). Other works by the same author that could be consulted include: *Objectivism, Relativism and Truth*, (1991a), *Truth and Progress* (1998), *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, (1991b). Commentaries and critical studies written by other scholars on his philosophy will be consulted in the research.

The scope of the study is restricted within the confines of Rorty's epistemology. We regard all other sectors of Rorty's philosophy as beyond the scope of this research and would only be consulted when they are needed to clarify salient issues. Rorty critique against foundationalism is two fold. First, he criticizes the attempt to justify knowledge claims by tracing them to a set of foundations and second, he criticizes the claim of philosophy to function foundationally in a culture. The first critique will occupy our focus in this study. The second may overlap our discussion. We consider such overlap as unintentional.

Theoretical Framework

Our thesis is twofold. The first is to show how Rorty strayed from mainstream pragmatism and the second is to argue that Rorty does not succeed in overthrowing epistemology. To achieve these targets, our argument is guided by the criteria for determining the principle that best establish which pragmatic discourse is epistemological namely, epistemic justification and ratification criteria of justification. Any theory which does not address the issue of justification, and ratification criteria for justification, is a deviation from the pragmatist way of looking at epistemology. Epistemic justification involves the provision of evidence to support a true belief so that true beliefs that result from hunches, conjectures and guesswork do not qualify as knowledge. This means that justification is evaluative and argumentative and it involves the provision of adequate reasons to support one's knowledge claim. Ratification of justification is the view that the goal of enquiry is truth. In other words, the ratification criterion has it that the reason for providing adequate evidence for our knowledge claims is for the purpose of attainment of truth and not falsehood. Any meaningful analysis of epistemic discourse which does not employ these criteria is a deviation from mainstream pragmatist treatment of epistemology. However, employing these criteria successfully require that one's argument is self explanatory, cogent, simple and coherent. These are the canons of analytic philosophy as established by Haack and Churchland (Haack 1990: 199; Lehrer 1990:13 Churchland 1984: 7) among others.

Organisation

The essay is organized in five chapters. Chapter one, introduces and sets the ground for further discussions on the study. The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part is further divided into eight sub-sections. The preceding section is the background to the study which offers explanation to the basic concepts in the research and the motivation for the research. The second section, the statement of the problem exposes the problem of the study; the purpose, objectives and significance of the study look at, in general terms, why the study is being undertaken, the aims of the study and what it seeks to achieve. The thesis statement spells out what the researcher intends to defend. The methodology and research framework identify the method and the theoretical framework to be employed in the study. Finally the scope of the study draws boundary around the research area.

The second part of the chapter reviews literature related to the study. The review is done around Rorty's end of epistemology rhetoric. Relevant authorities in these areas of scholarly endeavor would have their works reviewed paying special attention to the relation of their work to the study and the void left by their works which this study will fill.

Chapter two discusses foundationalist epistemology. Firstly, we present a brief explanatory notes on epistemology and justification. The motivation is to draw attention to various answers offered to the perennial epistemological question: how do you know? Secondly, we discuss foundationalism, types of foundationalism and their fallouts. The import is to highlight the weaknesses of

foundationalist epistemology so as to expose why Rorty argues that the enterprise should be abandoned.

Chapter three takes a look at Rorty's pragmatic treatment of epistemology, conversationalism. First it explores pragmatism and some early proponents of the tradition. It also looks at some scholars whose ideas have influenced Rorty significantly. Such philosophers will include Friedrich Nietzsche, Dewey, James, Thomas Kuhn, Donald Davidson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger and most importantly, Quine and Sellars. What follows is an in-depth analysis of Rorty's pragmatic treatment of epistemology.

Chapter four does an expose of contemporary pragmatism. It discusses the ideas of contemporary main stream pragmatists such as Putnam and Haack who want to continue to do epistemology and the deviants such as Rorty who repudiates epistemology. The point is to show how Rorty's death of epistemology rhetoric is a deviation from the original pragmatist way of doing epistemology.

Chapter five is the last chapter of the study. It recapitulates Rorty's conversationalism. It then offers a critique and analysis of his version of epistemology. What follows is summary and conclusion of the thesis.

Literature Review

Rorty's end of epistemology campaign and his assertion that our claim to knowledge is the verdict of a historically conditioned community of enquirers has attracted a lot of attention in philosophical discourse. Many philosophers have

interpreted this assertion in diverse ways and this section of the study attempts a review of some of these commentaries.

According to Yates (1989), Rorty's conversationalism reinstates the foundationalist dilemma it purports to overthrow. He remarks, in a quote borrowed from Winfield;

Rorty must assume that his pragmatic description of discourse accurately mirrors the reality of conversation and that ... his position inevitably reinstates the dilemma of foundational arguments it wishes to overcome (Yates 1989: 131).

His argument is that every discourse whether foundational or conversational has a subject matter and a scope of reference and for that matter occupies a privilege status with respect to the rest of culture. But Rorty claims that no discourse has a privilege access to the rest of the world. This granted, Rorty's conversationalism has no privilege status with respect to the rest of the culture and has no privilege way of representing it. Certainly, Yates (1989) observes that Rorty will object to this because it will amount to using language to convey information about nothing. It will mean that Rorty's conversationalism is something about nothing because going by his (Rorty) own criteria his work will not occupy any foundational or privileged status to the rest of culture. Yates (1989) concludes that this position is very dangerous and has paradoxical implication on Rorty's conversationalism since rejecting the above thesis will therefore mean that he (Rorty) is endorsing traditional foundationalism

Yates' argument that Rorty does not succeed in overthrowing foundationalist epistemology he (Rorty) purports to abandon is true. But the problem with Yates (1989) is that he does not tell explicitly which type of foundationalism Rorty tries to overthrow. But a careful reading of (Yates 1989) work will reveal that he refers to conventionalism.

What Yates (1989) refers to, as a discourse that occupies a privilege status with respect to culture and has a way of representing it, is a norm or convention. Conventionalism is the view that conventions or norms serve as the foundation for knowledge. Rorty does not reject conversationalism. He rejects experiential foundationalism, the view that some beliefs possess privileged epistemic status and confer justification on other beliefs that are not basic. But Yates (1989) confuses experiential foundationalism with conventionalism. He misconstrues Rorty's attack on experiential foundationalism as an attack on conventionalism. Our position is that Rorty's assault is waged rather against experiential foundationalism. The similarity of Yates' thesis and the thesis of this study is that Rorty does not succeed in demolishing foundationalism. The difference is that while we hold that Rorty attacks experiential foundationalism, Yates (1989) tacitly maintains that Rorty attacks conventionalism. We therefore argue that even though Yates' objective is correct, he hit the wrong target because experiential foundationalism is not the same as conventionalism, even though both doctrines may be seen as forms of foundationalism. This notwithstanding Yates' thesis will provide us with an insight into the contradictions in Rorty's thesis.

Guignon (1986: 416) argues that the Rorty's end of philosophy rhetoric "means that the air of seriousness and earnestness that surrounded philosophy since Plato ... be dispelled". For him Rorty does not abandon epistemology, rather he says that philosophy or epistemology should, in this direction, be done playfully and should be interpreted to serve our current ends.

We agree with Guignon (1986) that Rorty does not call epistemology moribund in the actual sense of the word. However, the problem with Guignon's position is that he does not use arguments or inconsistencies in the internal dialectics of Rorty's work to arrive at this conclusion. Besides, it is difficult to ascertain the truth of Guignon's report on Rorty's supposed assertion that we should do philosophy playfully. This is because Guignon does not offer any evidence to buttress his claim. Unlike Guignon, we announce that Rorty's conversationalism is an epistemological discourse because providing a certain answer to epistemological questions does not change the question itself. Alternatively, we take our argument from Rorty's claim that for S to know P depends upon the verdict of a social group of which P is a member. From this we deduce that Rorty's conversationalism is one more way of doing epistemology.

In a concluding postscript to a chapter devoted to discussion on 'Epistemology and Postmodernism', Ozumba (2001: 160) points out that epistemology has never been a discipline after truth in its absolute sense. His argument is that Rorty's pronouncement of the death of epistemology "stems from [his] wrong association of epistemology with the rigid canons of traditional epistemologists like Plato and Descartes' (Ozumba, 2001: 162). Ozumba's word

of advice is therefore directed to Rorty whom he argues should have corrected Plato and Descartes instead of pronouncing the epistemological enterprise moribund. It is true that Rorty faults in pronouncing epistemology dead. The problem, however, is that Ozumba (2001) takes Rorty's end of epistemology rhetoric as literary so. Besides, it is wrong to assert that Rorty was wrong in associating epistemology with Plato and Descartes. Plato's quest for the immutable forms and Descartes' search for certain and indubitable truth are obvious examples of their association of epistemology to rationality. Even some contemporary philosophers such as Russell still associate epistemology with rationality. If Ozumba's view were plausible, his caution should have been directed to these contemporary scholars as well. Unlike Ozumba (2001), we hold the position that Rorty was right in associating epistemology to the rigid canons of rationality. However, we grant that though Rorty purports to abandon epistemology, he continues to do epistemology; the internal dialectics of his argument unveils this.

Verges (1987: 322), an adherent of Rortian philosophy defends the view that Rorty did not call for the end of philosophy. He explains that since philosophy does not name a natural kind, it makes no sense to pronounce it moribund. Verges is right in his assertion. But the problem with Verges' thesis is that his solution suffices only to provide a narrower view of the problem. Of course, Rorty was aware of the implication of such rhetoric because as Verges notes "Scores of arguments in Rorty's writing point to this undeniable fact" (Verges 1987: 322). This granted, why does Rorty proceed to offer such

impressive argument to support his view? The alternative answer, we hold, is that Rorty was pronouncing epistemology moribund without notice. But this could only be made manifest when one observes critically the internal dialectics within his work.

Triplett (1987: 116) announces that Rorty does not succeed in demolishing traditional epistemology and moderate analytical theories of empirical justification. His argument is that Rorty denies the existence of raw feels and yet subsequent arguments in Rorty's writing seem to assume that there is some sort of rudimentary non-conceptual awareness. Triplett claims that traditional and empirical epistemology relies on non propositional beliefs as a source of justification of knowledge. These non propositional beliefs are sometimes self justifying and they confer justification upon other beliefs. An attack on non propositional awareness, therefore, Triplett argues, is an attack on epistemology. In fact, it is not clear from Triplett's thesis how exactly non-conceptual awareness acquires a slot in Rorty's conversationalism. This is because Rorty has been consistent in his rejection of perceptual and appearance beliefs to the last breathe. However, we agree with Triplett that Rorty does not succeed in overthrowing traditional and empiricist epistemology but our argument does not rely on traces of non propositional beliefs in Rorty's conversationalism. Our argument draws support from the inconsistencies in Rorty's work.

Sosa (1983) blames Rorty for subscribing to foundationalism. His argument is that Rorty's anti-foundationalist case suffers the same fate as foundationalist epistemology. He notes that;

if traditional foundationalism is charged of confusing causation (Nature Mirroring) with justification, conventionalist foundationalism would seem equally well refuted by a charge of confusing conventions (direct social approval) with justification (Sosa 1987:57).

He calls Rorty's epistemology conventional foundationalism because in Rorty's pragmatic treatment of epistemology what makes argument permissible is its relation to the norms legislated by society. But these society legislations are conventions and invariably serve as the foundation for conferring justification on other proposition in a chain of beliefs. Hence, Sosa (1983) concludes that Rorty accepts foundationalism at one point and criticizes it at another. The thesis of this work agrees with Sosa (1983) that Rorty's epistemology reinstates the core criterion of empiricist epistemology which he purports to overthrow. But the problem with Sosa's position is that his argument does not tell on Rorty's anti-foundationalist position holistically. It assumes that since Rorty supports at least some form of foundationalism, he is giving credence to foundationalist epistemology in general. This position leaves the substantial difficulty and the contradiction in Rorty's pragmatic treatment of epistemology seriously untouched. Our position is that Rorty's argument when taken holistically grants impetus to the credibility of traditional foundationalist epistemology. We try to show that the inconsistencies in the internal dialectics of Rorty's pragmatism leave the canons of traditional foundationalist method of justification intact.

Hacking (1994: 63) attacks Rorty for abandoning truth as correspondence. He notes that Rorty's attack on representationalism, which culminated into his (Rorty) idea that there is no external truth or even canons of rationality, is misguided. For Hacking (1984) Rorty's version of pragmatism which regards human experience as a matter of conversation is a deviation from the pragmatist norm. He notes further that even Dewey, whom Rorty admires so much, will despise such a spectator theory of knowledge if he were alive. This is because Dewey does not abandon epistemology as rational and normative discipline. Dewey defines truth as warranted assertibility; truth is what is reasonable for us to believe. His definition of truth does not eliminate the role of reason in our day to day claim to knowledge. Hacking (1994) therefore argues that Rorty's attack on rationality will not only be injurious to epistemology but also to science as well. However, Hacking's work has a problem. It seems to take Rorty's end of epistemology rhetoric on a face value. What the thesis of this work intends to defend is that even though Rorty purports to have abandoned epistemology, he is actually engaging in epistemological discourse and this will be made possible if we take a careful look at the internal dialectics of his conversationalist method.

Rockwell (2003) argues that Rorty, by pronouncing epistemology dead, strayed from the pragmatist tradition. The problem with Rorty is that, as Rockwell (2003:4-5) argues, he confuses the unsatisfactoriness of epistemological answers with questions. Rockwell's thesis is similar to our position because we also hold the view that Rorty confuses question with answers. But Rockwell's thesis is different from the thesis of this work because his conception of the problem is

inadequate. Rockwell (2003:4) merely considers the Rortian confusion of epistemological answers with questions. He does not explain which epistemic answers Rorty confuses with question. For reasons best known to Rockwell, he does not penetrate deeper into epistemological discourse so as to offer us an in-depth idea about his claims. The position of this study concerning Rorty's reinstatement of epistemology is far broader. The essay reveals that apart from Rorty confusing epistemological questions with answers, his standard for measuring what counts as knowledge gives credence to the legitimacy of traditional foundationalist epistemology. The essay also illustrates broadly various answers to the epistemological question to make clear the confusion in Rorty's epistemology.

Ozumba (2002) reiterates his earlier claim that Rorty pronounces epistemology moribund when he (Rorty) claims that we should replace epistemology with conversation. Ozumba (2002:222) considers Rorty as the opponent of foundationalist epistemology and the advertiser of the death of epistemology. Ozumba (2002) defends Quine against Rorty and asserts that Rorty's appropriation of Quine's attack on the dichotomy of synthetic and analytic truth, which led Rorty to assume that Quine was calling for the demise of traditional foundationalist epistemology, is a mistake. For Ozumba (2002) Quine does not call for the end of epistemology but Rorty does. Ozumba (2002) explains that Quine's ontological relativism allows for background knowledge in the translation of one language to another. He regards this background knowledge as the foundation of non inferential beliefs. The implication of his claim is that

Quine is not an anti-foundationalist as Rorty would want us to believe. But such an assertion is erroneous. Ozumba (2002) commits the same mistake as Yates (1989) above. Both conflate conventionalism with experiential foundationalism. This accounts for the reasons why Ozumba (2002) argues that Quine is a foundationalist and Rorty is not. But Rorty is also a foundationalist just like Quine because both are conventionalists. We can therefore conclude that if Quine does not abandon foundationalism then so also is Rorty. But the form of foundationalism advocated by (Ozumba 2002) is not basically the focus of this study. Besides, we disagree with (Ozumba 2002) that Rorty calls for the end of epistemology and Quine does not. To subscribe to Ozumba's view will mean that Rorty pronounces epistemology moribund in the real sense of the word. Our focus in this study opposes Ozumba's claim that Rorty calls for the end of epistemology. We argue that Rorty does not abandon epistemology and that his pronouncement of the death of epistemology stems from the contradiction in his work.

According to Pihlstrom (2001:1) Rorty's abandonment of the traditional picture of epistemology and philosophy as a systematic and rigorous discipline is misguided. He notes that Rorty's strategy is alien to the pragmatic treatment of epistemology of Piercean and Deweyan models. He defended James and Dewey as championing in some degree the course of traditional epistemology which Rorty rejects in totality. He notes further that Dewey in particular, whom Rorty admires greatly, will not be obsessed with Rorty's post-philosophic utopia; i.e. Rorty's pronouncement of the demise of epistemology. It is true that Rorty abandons epistemology as a rigorous and systematic discipline. But Pihlstrom's

position only offers cursory explanation to Rorty's end of epistemology rhetoric because he fails to discuss the matter further. We argue that Pihlstrom (2001) takes Rorty's end of philosophy rhetoric on face value. The thesis of this work identifies some inconsistencies in Rorty's treatment of epistemology and concludes that Rorty was doing epistemology though he claims to be pronouncing the enterprise dead.

Elgin (1984:6) observes that Rorty's neo-pragmatic method of doing epistemology and philosophy is alien to the pragmatist spirit. Her argument is that if our claim to knowledge will just be reduced to what a community of enquirers takes it to be then Rorty agrees that what satisfies the community is *ipso facto* satisfactory. But Elgin (1984) believes that such a move is a deviation from the traditional pragmatist notion of epistemology or philosophy. Even though Elgin (1984) complains about Rorty's rejection of the original pragmatist view of epistemology she does not consider whether Rorty's conversationalist method justifies the legitimacy of traditional epistemology or not. She leaves such concerns unattended to. The focus of this study is that Rorty's conversationalist method does not call epistemology moribund if we review the internal dialectics motivating Rorty's argument critically.

The foregoing has shown that a number of scholars have commented on Rorty's use of the end of philosophy rhetoric. However, they have failed to indicate whether Rorty was indeed pronouncing the enterprise moribund or not. Though critical of Rorty's pronouncement of the death of epistemology, these scholars, in one or the other way, have failed to consider the internal dialectics of

Rorty's thesis which culminated in his end of epistemology rhetoric. We argue that a critical re-reading of Rorty will reveal that he was pronouncing epistemology dead whilst he continues to do epistemology. The essay therefore takes Rorty's thesis as contribution to the epistemological discourse rather than as contribution to its demise.

CHAPTER TWO

TRADITIONAL FOUNDATIONALIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Introduction

One of the concerns raised in the previous chapter is that Rorty conflates answers with question. In this chapter we introduce some existing answers to the perennial epistemological question: How do you know? The motivation is to offer basis for the arguments that we shall raise in subsequent sections of this essay. Meanwhile, the bulk of the chapter discusses epistemic foundationalism and some weaknesses associated with it to reveal why Rorty argues that the enterprise should be pronounced dead.

Epistemology and Justification

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that concerns itself with the nature, scope and extent of knowledge. Knowledge is traditionally defined as justified true belief (JTB). The traditional definition of knowledge was first introduced by Plato in *Thaetetus* and is reiterated in modern times by C. I. Lewis (Lewis, 1970:70). A contemporary advocate of the definition is A. J. Ayer (1956) Chisholm (1980).

In the 1960s, the traditional definition of knowledge as JTB came under attack from Edmund Gettier. Gettier argues that the traditional definition of

knowledge as JTB is a necessary but insufficient condition for knowledge. This is because our justification for a true proposition could turn out to be false whilst our knowledge about the proposition is true. Hence justified false belief JFB could as well lead one to knowledge (Gettier 1995:272). In spite of the devastating effect of Gettier's counter-example on the traditional definition of knowledge, many epistemologists nonetheless regard JTB as an adequate definition of knowledge and the author of this essay is no exception. Besides, it is beyond the scope of this study to attempt to flesh out the devastating nature of Gettier's counter- example on the credibility of JTB.

To admit that knowledge is justified true belief is to admit that one must have ample and sound reason for holding the belief in question. Hence justification is an essential condition for knowledge. Justification entails that our evidence and reasons for accepting a proposition as true should be certain, unshakable and in some degree infallible. But skeptics have questioned the credibility of this assertion. The skeptics argue that it is erroneous to believe that we are able to discern the items of the external world on the basis of evidence through the means of inferential justification.

The skeptic uses the regress argument to his advantage. If our belief about the external world is inferentially deduced or induced from some other belief then how is the latter belief itself justified? This means that our justified beliefs will themselves need to be justified; so justification will run *ad infinitum*. In that case, the skeptic contends that we cannot presume to have justification for our

knowledge (Moser 1996:3). Many epistemologists have offered various answers to the regress problem and we shall discuss these responses in brief.

The first response to the regress problem is termed (i) epistemic infinitism. According to this response, regress of inferential justification is infinite and no end is ever reached in justification (Moser and vander Nat, 1995:15). A notable advocate of this school of thought is Charles Peirce. The second response is termed (ii) epistemic coherentism. Coherentism is the view that justification must be systematic in virtue of harmonious relation among beliefs. Thus, for the coherentist, justification for any belief ends in a system of beliefs with which the justified belief coheres (Pollock and Cruz, 1999:66). Proponents of coherentism include; Keith Lehrer (1990), Laurence Bonjour (1985) and Wilfred Sellars (1975, 1988) among a host of others. The third reply is termed (iii) contextualism. This is the view that ‘contextually basic’ beliefs whilst themselves lacking justificatory support can support other beliefs (Moser 1996:10). Contextualism has few followers. Its notable proponent is Ludwig Wittgenstein (1969). The fourth non-skeptic reply to the regress argument is (iv) epistemic foundationalism. This is the view that there exist some basic beliefs which confer justification upon other beliefs in an inferential chain of justification (Pollock and Cruz, 1999: 29). Foundational theorists include; Roderick Chisholm, (1979) and William Alston (1989). The fifth reply to the regress argument is more recent and it is termed (v) foundherentism. It is a hybrid theory in that it merges theories (ii) and (iv). The theory agrees with coherentism that there should not be basic belief but agrees with foundationalism that experience can be relevant to justification of

empirical belief. In this theory justification is not exclusively one directional but also involves a relation of pervasive mutual support among propositions (Cargie 1996: 621). Susan Haack is the founder of foundherentism.

The above mentioned theories: Infinitism, coherentism, contextualism, foundationalism and foundherentism constitute the answers to the basic epistemological question: How do you know? We expose these answers at the opening pages of this chapter to direct our focus to one of the problems identified in this essay; the fact that Rorty conflates answers with questions. However, our pressing objective in this section is to offer an expose of foundationalism (item iv) in order to disclose some of its fall-outs that attracted the criticisms of Rorty.

Foundationalist Epistemology

Foundationalism is the epistemological stand point that there exist some beliefs considered as basic and self-justifying and these beliefs provide justificatory support to other beliefs that are non-basic. The *raison d'être* for foundationalism is to avoid the regress problem terminating in beliefs that are basic and self-justifying so that our knowledge is given a secure foundation (Bonjour 1996:103).

Thus, in describing human knowledge, the foundationalist employs an architectural metaphor: the set of known beliefs is like an edifice resting upon foundation which provides it with structural stability (Landesman 1970: 6). This foundationalist strategy was first used by Aristotle in his *Posterior Analytics* (Aristotle 1999, BK 1, Chp. 3) and reiterated by Thomas Reid (Reid 1970) in

modern times. Contemporary version could be seen in Chisholm (1996). A consensus among foundationalist is the view that some beliefs are self justifying, basic and possess privileged epistemic credibility in the entire doxastic corpus. However, they disagree on what kind of beliefs qualify as basic and what makes them eligible for such epistemic privileged role. Secondly foundationalists have not agreed on the kind of connection that holds between basic and non basic beliefs. These disagreements have given rise to types of foundationalisms namely; strong, neo-classical and moderate foundationalism.

Strong Foundationalism

Strong or radical foundationalism is the Cartesian type of foundationalism. It holds that basic beliefs are infallibly justified and cannot be false. Just having the belief is enough to guarantee the certainty of one's belief. The motivation for this view is the argument that one's knowledge about one's inner state is immediate and prior to one's knowledge about the external world and cannot be false. Besides, the subject is the only one privy to the content of her own mind and no one can contest the validity of her belief. Such beliefs about the inner state are simply true because the subject cannot doubt the content of her own mind.

In principle, we may trace such epistemic project to Rene Descartes. The intuition motivating Descartes' attempt to base all knowledge on pure and distinct ideas is to provide a secure platform that will serve as edifice upon which non basic beliefs could be grounded. Descartes believes that it is only when he is able to achieve this feat that he will have epistemic guarantee of the infallibility of his

initial source of belief. This initial infallible, non basic belief should be self justifying and should be able to offer justificatory support to other beliefs (Descartes, 1977: 437-441). This form of foundationalism states that those basic propositions are subjective prepositions concerning sensory experience that are given to a person in perception. Standard examples include propositions expressed by “I seem to feel heat” and “I appear to see something red”. Such propositions according to the Cartesian foundationalism are said to be infallible, indubitable, certain or incorrigible for a person. They provide the necessary foundation for every empirical proposition that we know (Triplett 1990:93)

It is important to observe that the Cartesian foundationalists do not claim that only basic beliefs should be infallible. They also expect that non basic beliefs be infallibly justified as well. This is why they employ the deductive method as the inferential connection that should obtain between basic and non basic beliefs (Crumley II: 1999).

The Cartesian foundationalist thesis faces a number of problems. The Cartesian foundationalist holds that our basic beliefs must be certain, indubitable and infallible. It follows from this that non basic beliefs should also be certain and infallible, deriving their infallible support from the basic belief that confers justification upon them. This position invites some challenges. One: most of our perceptual beliefs are not certain and any attempt to justify the certainty of all perceptual beliefs will amount to epistemic deception. This is because the senses are unreliable. Two: the beliefs that are best candidates for certainty, for instance the belief that “I am thinking”, is not informative enough to guarantee the

certainty of our specific non basic belief about the external world (Moser 1996:7). Three: strong foundationalists have not agreed on the type of belief that could be known infallibly. Some strong foundationalists take proposition concerning mathematics and geometry as infallible. Others admit that beliefs about sensation and sensory appearances are infallible and finally, a section agrees that theological claims as “God exists” are basic and infallible (Landesman 1970:7). 0

Neo-Classical Foundationalism

Neo classical foundationalism is the view that certain beliefs are incorrigibly justified. The term was first introduced by Timothy J. McGrew (McGrew 1995: 57). Neo classical foundationalists, like strong foundationalists, allow that basic beliefs are infallibly justified. The argument is that if S believes that P, then P, because P cannot be false on the assumption that S is directly acquainted with her own sense experience. A prominent proponent of this view is Bertrand Russell (Russell 1959). The essential difference between the strong and neo foundationalisms concerns the justificatory link that obtains between basic and non basic beliefs. Whereas strong foundationalism requires a deductive connection between basic and non basic beliefs, neo classical foundationalism requires that inductive or probabilistic connection obtain between basic and non basic beliefs.

Modest Foundationalism

Modest foundationalism is the view that foundational beliefs need not yield certainty and need not deductively support justified non-basic beliefs (Moser 1996:7). The motivation for modest foundationalism stems from strong foundationalist difficulty of proceeding from infallible basic beliefs in the inner space to other sets of beliefs about the external world in the outer space; and the fact that non-inferentially given beliefs in the inner space may not necessarily be infallibly justified (Crumley II 1999:101). As noted earlier on, it is difficult how our ever-changing perceptual belief could supply the needed justification for our day-to-day claim to knowledge, taking cognizance of the fact that our perceptual beliefs might not be certain. The modest foundationalist thought drives home the point that it is cumbersome to suggest the extent to which our basic beliefs account for our knowledge of the external world, if we are required to do so by infallible means (Crumley II 1999: 101). It is this difficulty that adherents of modest foundationalism hope to address. Hence, the crux of the modest foundationalist thesis is to offer a report that will address the following salient issues; the infallibility of basic beliefs, what type of beliefs count as basic and the inferential connection between basic and non basic beliefs (Pollock and Cruz 1999:35).

The adherents of modest foundationalism maintain their commitment to the view that fallibly justified beliefs may not provide epistemic credibility. The justification of such beliefs can be defeated, since most of the time, we come to realize that some beliefs we recognize as true would have to be rejected because

of new evidence. This is referred to as defeasible reason (Moser 1996:2). Suppose that what I see as I compose this essay is a rectangular brown patch before me. According to the claim of modest foundationalists, such evidence that lends support to the basic belief; “I am having a sense impression of a rectangular brown patch” (table) can undermine the justification to the basic belief. For example, moving to the extreme corner of the room, I could see the table from a different view and perhaps decide that the shape of the table is triangular and the colour black not brown. Besides, memory beliefs arising from our experience, though basic, could be undermined by the discovery of further evidence. Suppose that Mr. Wiredu has booked appointment to meet his third year epistemology class this evening at exactly 5:00pm and considered such beliefs based on memory belief from the stipulation of the University’s time table, of which he is quite familiar. Suppose, however, that after checking the time table during the mid-day, he observes that the period has been shifted to 3.00pm by the students in the previous lesson. This means that he must reassess his basic belief.

From the foregoing, it can be said that modest foundationalism has at least solved the problem of whether basic propositions stand in need of being infallibly justified or not. It has also established inductive or probabilistic connections between basic and non basic beliefs. However, modest foundationalists are divided on which beliefs qualify as basic. To this end, proponents of modest foundationalism have offered three approaches to the problem which of course is beyond the scope of this study. But we shall explain them briefly. First, there is a group of scholars who holds the view that basic belief can justify itself apart from

evidential support from something else (Self Justification) (Moser and Vander Nat (1995:16). These scholars include Chisholm (1982) and Ducasse (1968). Another group of philosophers called proponents of non belief experience holds the view that basic perceptual beliefs can be justified by non belief sensory experiences (Justification from non doxastic origin). A notable advocate of this view is Lewis (1970). The last group of scholars known as reliabilists holds the view that reliable belief forming process could confer epistemic justification on non inferential beliefs (Crumley II 1999:6). Proponents of reliabilism include Goldman (1988) and Armstrong (1973). It is nonetheless contended among scholars whether reliabilism is a foundationalist theory (Crumley II 1999, p. 102).

Although the modest foundationalist perspective provides a solution to how justification transmits from foundational beliefs to inferentially justified belief, it is not certain the exact nature of the connections that obtain between them. Also we are confronted with the problem of whether there exist certain kinds of beliefs that are basic and self justifying. These and other considerations expose the weaknesses in foundationalist and empiricist epistemology.

Weaknesses of Foundationalism

There are significant objections raised against epistemic foundationalism. But the ones presented below have been carefully selected to reflect Rorty's criticisms against the doctrine. The motive is to ensure that the objections we present here will make it easier to determine the import of Rorty's attack on foundationalism and why he argues that the enterprise should be abandoned.

A virtue of foundationalist argument is that there are some basic beliefs that occupy a privileged status in the entire doxastic corpus. These basic beliefs are self-justifying and non-inferential and they confer justification on non-basic beliefs. This position has attracted a lot of criticisms against foundationalism. Sellars (1975) and Bonjour (1996) contend that one cannot be non-inferentially justified in holding any belief since one can be justified in holding a belief only when she has enough reasons to think the belief as true. This is because if basic beliefs are justified then there are some features of such beliefs by virtue of which they are justified. Once we have been able to identify these features we can then ask why they make the truth of the basic beliefs more likely. In the case of strong foundationalism, we identify how the features of the basic belief guarantee the certainty of the putative belief. This argument is termed the level ascent argument and it formally runs like this:

(I) Foundational belief *f* has certain feature *F*

(II) Beliefs having feature *F* are likely to be true (in the case of strong foundationalists, such beliefs are infallibly true)

(III) Therefore, belief *f* is likely to be true or (true, *pace* strong foundationalist) (Moser 1996:8).

Premise (I) explains that all basic beliefs should possess certain features that justify them. The beliefs should at least involve some property that will enable one to identify them as basic and non-inferential, else it will raise questions about the credibility of basic beliefs. Premise (II) makes a claim about the connection that holds between belief *f* and the property *F* determining the truth or

likelihood of the truth of belief *f*. The upshot is that if justification of basic beliefs depends on such argument then we cannot be said to have basic beliefs. The consideration that our basic beliefs must be justified defeats the very notion of self and non-inferential justification.

Some scholars have argued that the level ascent argument is strong and too demanding for foundationalism (Alston 1989; Audi 1993). They contend that it is difficult for one to provide metareasons for the justification of features of basic beliefs. Given such requirement, they argue that basic belief *f* will be justified if only it has a feature *F*. Again given this requirement, basic beliefs having feature *F* will have to be justified by giving evidence *r* to show that *f* has *F* (Moser, 1996:8). This way an agent must have beliefs about the epistemic status of the justifying reasons and this will prove difficult. This is a weaker response though. Foundationalists have offered a more compelling response to the level ascent argument.

They have responded to the level ascent argument by differentiating between showing that a belief is justified and being justified in believing (Crumley II 1999:111). Foundationalists contend that showing that a belief is justified is not a necessary condition for it being justified. For instance, suppose that Mr. Wiredu a lecturer in University A was expected to present a seminar paper in University B where he is not well known. To authenticate his identity as a lecturer, he must show an ID card that he is indeed a lecturer from university A. But unfortunately, Mr. Wiredu forgets his ID card at home. The foundationalists argue that Mr. Wiredu's inability to provide the ID card does not discredit the fact

that he is a lecturer in university A. The fact that he is a lecturer in university A is independent of his ability to provide evidence that he is. Foundationalists therefore contend that whether a belief is justified is independent of whether one can show that it is justified. This sounds convincing enough but it creates another difficulty for the foundationalists.

To assert that a belief can be true independent of the person's ability to provide evidence about the truth of the belief, as the foundationalists argue, is the same as arguing that certain propositions are true independent of one's ability to know them as such. This explanation permits that there are some truth out there independent of a subject's ability to perceive them and so to grasp the truth we must step outside the human frame of mind. This is the central focus of analytic epistemology; the notion that there are certain privileged propositions that are true independent of experience. These propositions, according to the analytic philosopher, are objective, absolute and enduring and they exist outside culture, language and history. Standard objections have been raised by Quine (1995) against this claim. His argument is that the distinction between analytic propositions, proposition believed to be true independent of experience and synthetic proposition, propositions that report observed fact is misguided and needs to be rejected. He argues that there is nothing like analytic truth outside the human contingent point of view and there is no privileged class of incorrigible beliefs immune from error and criticism.

A more devastating attack raised against foundationalism is the view that there is something that is directly given in perception. This view has been called

by Sellars the myth of the given. The given is a privileged representation and a self presenting state of affairs in perception which provide empirical knowledge with foundations (Sellars 1988:177). It belongs to a framework which is innate or external and which helps the agent to construct a representation of the stuff in her environment. The given as described by Chisholm (1996) was first introduced by C. I. Lewis in his *Mind and the World Order*. He defines the given as apprehension of sensations, sense impressions, appearances, sense data, *qualia* and so on that provide justification for our beliefs (Chisholm 1996:2). All foundationalist theories of doxastic and non doxastic strands hold these assertion as basic thereby making the given a necessary and sufficient component in grounding our knowledge claims.

But Sellars argues that such an epistemic strategy is misconceived. The given is not relevant to the justification of knowledge claims. The given, according to Sellars, is a non propositional awareness and lacks the credibility of being considered as proposition. According to Sellars, epistemology is preoccupied with propositional beliefs which allow an agent to justify other beliefs. This essentially is what epistemologists refer to as justified true belief (Sellars 1963:160). Similarly, Karl Popper in his famous falsifiability thesis cast doubt on the assertion that sense experience is related to knowledge (Popper 1972: 180). He argues, like Sellars, that sensations do not provide a basis from which theories can be confirmed or verified. Theories are guesses or conjectures intended to explain observable fact. They are tested not by being inferred from some non existent foundation but by setting up experimental situations in which

an attempt is made to refute or falsify them. The most experience can do is to show that a theory is wrong but not provide reasons for thinking it is right.

The above consideration has resulted in another attack against foundationalism. In foundationalism, the epistemic agent is viewed as capable of representing the world through his or her beliefs and her mental states (Pollock and Cruz, 1999:11; Papineau 1982:130-131). This has made foundational epistemologists to focus their attention on the formation of beliefs and other mental states instead of engaging in matters of epistemic justification. The result is that the foundationalists blend psychology of perception with epistemology. This creates problem for epistemology because the psychological process of forming beliefs does not involve epistemic justification but explains the causal connection obtaining between the agent and the object of belief. The epistemological method, enter into the “logical space of reason” (Sellars 1969:169). So epistemic justification becomes a norm which governs what we should believe and what we should not believe. If we look at it this way then epistemic justification will be seen as a norm rather than a study about how we form beliefs.

Conclusion

Thus far, we have discussed epistemic foundationalism, types of foundationalism and raised some objections against the theory. In essence, the core flaws in foundationalism considered under this study include the level ascent argument which challenges the foundationalist claim that basic beliefs are self

justifying. According to the level ascent argument one cannot be non-inferentially justified in holding any belief since one can be justified in holding a belief only when one has enough reasons to think the belief is true. Such considerations will have it that basic beliefs be justified by some other features. This defeats the foundationalist assumption that basic beliefs are non-inferentially and self-justifying. Similarly, Quine (1995) has attacked foundationalist epistemology on the grounds that there are propositions which are immune from revision. Sellars (1988) charged that the 'given' element in sense experience, which the traditional foundationalist rely on, is a myth and therefore cannot be the foundation of our knowledge claims. Finally, Sellars (1969) points out that justification is a logical concept and should not be devoted to the study of belief formation as the traditional foundationalist will wants us to do. Foundationalism should instead consider epistemic justification as a norm rather than a study of how we form beliefs.

CHAPTER THREE

RORTY'S PRAGMATIC EPISTEMOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on Rorty's neo-pragmatic epistemology. We begin by offering some explicatory notes on pragmatism.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is philosophical theory that explains both meaning and truth in terms of application of ideas, or beliefs or performance of action that have observable practical outcome. Prominent pragmatists include Peirce, James, Dewey and many others (Blackburn 2005:287).

Pragmatism is derived from the Greek word *pragma* meaning action (James 1907: vii). It insists on usefulness or practicality as the criterion of truth. Pragmatism objects to the view that concept, judgment and reasoning processes are representative of reality and the process of reality. It considers them to be merely symbols, hypothesis and schema devised by man to render possible the experience of reality (Thayer 1964:438). So pragmatism set up as the standard of truth some non-rational test such as action, satisfaction of needs, realization in conduct, the possibility of being lived and considers reality by these norms to the exclusion of others.

Pragmatism has been advanced as a method for determining genuine from mere verbal disputes, as a theory of meaning and as a theory of truth and reality. But our focus here is to look at it as a source and means of justification for our beliefs about the world. Such a strategy, we believe, will place the thesis within the scope of study, within the confines of epistemology and pragmatism, since our aspiration here is to look at Rortian pragmatic epistemology.

Pragmatism is a practical, in-use account of the origin and justification of our beliefs (Geisler and Feinberg 1980:116). Pragmatism as a theory of knowledge differs from rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism is the position in epistemology according to which reason is the main vehicle to knowledge, whereas empiricism holds that knowledge comes to us through sense perception. These two epistemological positions are sharply opposed to each other. In between them lies pragmatist epistemology (Butler 1957:446).

Pragmatism is not a rationalist concept because it makes no attempt to abstract knowledge from its context. Moreover, it doesn't begin with universal truths or principles and then deduce specific items of knowledge from them. Yet there are some rational elements in pragmatism. Sheer facts do not constitute knowledge for the pragmatist. Pragmatism, like rationalism, relies on the pattern of successful organization of facts and not any unorganized brute facts (Butler 1957:447). The pragmatic patterns of organizing fact, which constitute knowledge, are hypotheses which work successfully.

On the other hand, pragmatism is not an empirical concept. This can be made clear in two ways. First, pragmatism does not require necessarily that sense

perception should form the basis of our knowledge claims and second, pragmatism does not regard any compilation of facts as constituting knowledge even if those facts are yielded through sensations or by such refined sensations as scientific observations (Butler 1957:447). This is because, for the pragmatist, a catalogue of data has no value if it is not put into practical use to yield a desirable end? Yet, like empiricism, it accepts probability as an adequate requirement for knowledge. Besides, it does not cut off experience from knowledge. It allows man to seek for justification for his beliefs in experience (Geisler and Feinberg 1980:116).

The pragmatists hold that the world is constantly changing and there are no final solutions to the problem human beings face. So we should always try to refine existing knowledge to the betterment of the human race. It is to these reasons that pragmatists consider hypotheses, beliefs or ideas that work as successful and true and those that do not have practical value as false. The views of three of the most prominent classical pragmatists, C. S. Peirce, W. James and J. Dewey will be discussed briefly.

Peirce is the founder of modern day pragmatism. He devoted his version of pragmatism to clarifying and determining the meaning of signs. For Peirce, the broadest category of instrument of communication is that of signs. Words, concepts and certain standardized forms of overt behavior are all signs. Peirce argues that pragmatic determination of meaning does not apply to words or usage in general but more directly to concepts or intellectual purports of words (Peirce 1934:5.403).

Meaning of propositions or intellectual conception, Peirce says, should lie in its practical consequences (Peirce 1934:5.403). What does Peirce mean by the claim that statement or propositions should have conceivable possible effect or consequence? The idea is that an experiment or an operation when performed should lead to certain confirmable results. From this it follows that for a proposition to have meaning it must be conceivable and capable of experimental verification. In other words, the highest level of clarity is reached when we relate ideas to action. This idea of clarification is summed up in the following maxim:

Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object (Peirce 1934:5. 402).

Peirce defines truth as the “opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed upon by all who investigate” (Peirce 1934:5.407). According to Peirce the object represented by this opinion is the real and the truth. Peirce’s argues that a belief is a habit of action, which when the unexpected events occur, leads to doubt. Thus we conduct enquiry in order to establish a new belief and the enquiry ends as soon as we arrive at the truth (Peirce 1934: 5.394). He says that a person in a state of real doubt, not Cartesian doubt, struggles to attain a set of fixed beliefs. Peirce argues that some methods of acquiring beliefs such as the methods of tenacity: opinions that people adopt for a certain benefit by which they set rationality aside and turn away from any influence that could disturb this opinion

(Peirce 1934:5.375). The method of authority: method used by institutions to indoctrinate people to form an opinion in order to keep them ignorant of other opinions (Peirce 1934). And the method of a priori: opinions that are arrived at through reflection and conversation (Peirce 1934:5.378) are unsatisfactory because they are inherently unstable. The nub of Peirce's argument is that a person employing the use of the above methods will only acquire an opinion. But opinions are divergent and the differences in rival opinions may raise doubt. He thus recommended the scientific method as the only stable method of enquiry. For Peirce it is only the scientific method that will enable us acquire beliefs that are unshaken. Peirce renews his commitment to the scientific method because he believes that it is only the scientific method among other acquisition of beliefs that has the virtue of securing unshakable beliefs. This sound convincing because, according to Peirce, the scientific method is constrained by reality which is independent of our beliefs about it. According to Peirce, beliefs acquired by virtue of the scientific method are caused by real things so it can lead eventually to a stable consensus. It is on this account that Peirce acknowledge that truth is an opinion which is fated to be agreed upon by a community if it examines the issues long enough. This community Peirce recommends is a scientific community. This is because the scientists believe that the real answer to a question is that on which all enquirers will agree in the long run. And since true propositions depict realities, this means that the belief held by a community at the long run is true. The simple explanation is that though specific application of the method of science may be mistaken, repeated applications will remove all loose and

alternative hypotheses until eventually one true account remains. But since this cannot be said of the other methods, the scientific method triumph.

The conclusion drawn from Peirce's treatment of the scientific method of enquiry is that since enquiry is prompted by doubt and ended only in the acquisition of fixed beliefs or stable beliefs and since truth is a stable consensus which the scientific method will eventually achieve, it follows then that, in Peircean terms, the true is whatever is satisfactory to believe, satisfactory because it is stable (Peirce 1934: 5.243). Our interest here lies in Peirce's commitment to representationalism and correspondence, the core recipe of foundationalist epistemology. The fact that our beliefs represent something independent of what we humans think. Secondly, we see that Peirce alludes to a kind of objectivism. The idea that enquiry will end when all have agreed on one Truth. Finally, we recognize Peirce admiration for the scientific method.

William James is regarded as the key popularizer of classical pragmatism. He was indeed the scholar who made the philosophical world aware of pragmatism and the one who gave pragmatism its mother tongue (Thayer 1964:449). James was a member of the metaphysical club that gave birth to pragmatism. He acknowledged Charles Sander Peirce as the first proponent of pragmatism and dedicated his popular "Will to Believe" to Peirce.

This is the principle of Peirce, the principle of pragmatism. It lay entirely unnoticed by anyone for twenty years, until I, in an address before Professor Howison's philosophical union at the University of

California, brought it forward again and made a special application of it to religion (James 1907:47).

James' pragmatism was quite different from Peircian pragmatism. For James pragmatism was more than a theory for achieving the clarity and verification of meaning. Pragmatism provides a framework for resolving moral, religious and metaphysical problems and disentangling us "from abstraction and insufficiency, from fixed principles, closed systems and pretended absolutes and origins" and guiding us to "correctness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power (James 1907 p: 51). James shifted from Peirce's concern about empirical significance of language. Instead, he was more concerned with the practical effects of our will, thoughts and actions (Thayer 1946: 447).

On truth James says: "the true is only the expedient in the way of our behaving, expedient in almost any fashion, and expedient in the long run and on the whole course" (James 1948:170). James' pragmatic method contains expressions such as "practical consequences", "practical difference", "usefulness" and "workableness", (James 1912).

James, unlike Peirce who was more of a positivist, was a moral philosopher. He was concerned with working out effective and reasonable philosophy of human thought and behavior. Most of his philosophical works are dominated by moral interest. James preferred that "the whole function of philosophy [should be] to find out what definite difference will make to you and me, at definite instance of our life, if this world -formula or that world-formula be the true one" (James 1907:50).

Again Peirce is preoccupied with truth with capital (T). For Peirce truth is the totality of all individual truth. James, by contrast, is primarily preoccupied and interested in individual truth. James finds truth with capital (T) rather too abstract and uninteresting. James believes that truth is relative. For James new truth come into existence as human knowledge grows. Haack puts it thus, “James switch off Peirce’s emphasis on the totality of truths in the long run to an emphasis on the individual truth in the short run” (Haack 1976: 235). This accounts for the reason why we indicated in the previous chapter that Peirce is realist and James a nominalist. James did not share Peirce’s ecstasy for abstraction. Perhaps James’ relativism is what inspired Rorty’s strong preference to him (James) more than he (Rorty) prefers Peirce.

James equated truth with the good to reflect his moral inclination. “The true is whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief” (James 1907:76). James’ moral inclination makes him more of a humanist. As we have seen, his pragmatism is quite different from the theory of meaning fathered by Peirce. James pragmatism broke grounds for another prominent pragmatist called John Dewey.

Dewey, another prominent classical pragmatist, calls his version of pragmatism instrumentalism. Dewey notes: “Peirce wrote as a logician and James as a humanist” (Dewey 1925:361). Dewey was prepared to harmonize both Peircian logic and Jamesian humanism into his version of pragmatism. His pragmatism therefore became a combination of a theory of logic and a principle for ethical analysis (Thayer 1964:445).

Dewey's pragmatic writings can be categorized into two broad perspectives. His technical and logical writings fall under the heading instrumentalism and the other writings fall under the heading social criticisms and evaluation. Dewey defines instrumentalism as:

...an attempt to constitute a precise logical theory of concepts, of judgment and of inferences in their various forms, by considering primarily how thought functions in the experimental determinations of future consequences...it attempts to establish universally recognized distinctions and rules of logic by deriving them from the reconstructive or meditative function ascribed to reasons. It aims to constitute a theory of general forms of conception and reasoning, and not related to its own content, or to its particular implications (Dewey 1925: 367).

This aspect of Dewey's thought which himself describes as "a theory of the general forms of conception and reasoning" (Dewey 1925:367) does not exclude moral judgment or set it apart from judgment of facts.

The other aspect of Dewey's thought is concerned with questions of value in human conduct and experience. He developed his pragmatic principles of consequence as a method of social criticism and evaluation. Dewey argues that the task of philosophy should be the critical evaluation of experience as part of the

“continuous reconstruction of experience and articulation and revelation of meanings of the current course of events” (Dewey 1920:213).

Dewey urges that inquiry should be seen as a matter of problem solving. It should offer us fruitful ways of coping with reality. Inquiry should remove doubt and establish habits we can use to our advantage (Dewey 1933:100-101).

Dewey criticizes the traditional theories of knowledge for making the knower an entity separated from the known. He argues that human beings are part of nature and the world they come to know. So it makes no sense to separate the subject from the object. Besides, he sets aside the representational theory of knowledge and claims that we only have direct access to the world of our inner minds but not to an external reality (Dewey 1933:133).

Dewey follows Peirce in arguing that truth is the end of enquiry, though he adds more to the theory of enquiry. In *Logic, the Theory of Enquiry*, Dewey quotes Peirce’s definition of truth as the “best definition of truth” (Dewey 1938: 345). However, Dewey defines truth as “warranted Assertibility”. This means that statements about physical objects are true if they are permissible under the accepted rules in the canons of inductions and the rules of deductive logic. He merges his definition of truth, that is, the warrant requirement with Justified True Belief criterion.

Rorty's Pragmatic Epistemology

Biography and Influences

Richard Rorty was born on October 4, 1931 in New York City to James and Winifred Rorty. Rorty enrolled at the University of Chicago shortly before turning 15, where he received a bachelor's and a master's degree in philosophy in 1949 and 1952 respectively. He got his PhD in philosophy in Yale University. During 1956-1957, Rorty was an instructor of Philosophy at Wellesley College. After a year as an assistant professor at Wellesley, he joined the philosophy faculty of Princeton University, where he was to remain for twenty one years. Since 1982, he had been the Kenan Professor of Humanities at the University of Virginia. He is a former president of the American Philosophical Association and has been a fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies, as well as Guggenheim fellow and a MacArthur Prize fellow in 1981-1986 (Smith III, 1989:349).

Rorty was influenced by a number of philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, Donald Davidson, Thomas Kuhn, James, Dewey, Quine and Sellars. Since the philosophers who constitute the last four have been discussed already in the previous sections of the thesis, we suppose that such brief sketches would make it easier to discern the impact of their philosophy on Rorty's anti-foundational neo-pragmatic treatment of epistemology. Having said that, we briefly discuss the first five scholars and how their ideas have influenced Rorty.

Wittgenstein in *Tractatus: Logico Philosophicus* expounded the picture theory of language. He then held a representational view of reality and described language as performing a pictorial function. He argued that a language that was worth recognition should be able to represent reality accurately or inaccurately. He regarded those expressions that did not represent reality accurately or inaccurately as nonsensical (Wittgenstein 1961).

However, in the later work, the *Philosophical Investigation*, Wittgenstein's theory of language changed. Here Wittgenstein talks about language as playing diverse roles. He acknowledges that most of what he expressed in the earlier work was inadequate. He refutes the representationalist construal of language. Rather he argues that there is no fixed picture of language, all that there is are series of language games that enable us communicate in different languages since each language has different kind of rules (Wittgenstein 1968:158). According to Wittgenstein, the language game he advocates is meant to regard the speaking of language as a form of behavior or a form of life (Wittgenstein 1968:103). If we understand this, he says, we will understand that it is behavior that determines meaning not language.

The Wittgensteinian notion that language game is a form of linguistic behaviorism influenced Rorty's pragmatic epistemology greatly. Rorty acknowledges Wittgenstein in several pages of his works (Rorty 1979:5, 6 etc; Rorty 1991a: 1, 4, 7, etc). Rorty sees Wittgenstein's language game as offering an anti-representationalist view of reality since Wittgenstein rejected the idea that language does picture reality. This Wittgensteinian idea fits well into Rorty's

anti-representationalist view that there is no external world out there to which our beliefs must correspond. All that there is, according to Rorty, is way of forming habits of coping with reality (Rorty 1991a:1).

Similarly, Rorty argues that Wittgenstein's language game implies a kind of behaviorism. The idea is that if our behavior determines the meaning of our language, then it is our behavior that offers meaning not language. Rorty appropriates this idea into what he calls epistemological behaviorism; "incorrigible reports being a matter of social practices and justification adopted by one's peers" (Rorty 1979:99).

Another philosopher that influences Rorty significantly is Heidegger. Rorty devoted almost an entire book to discussing Heidegger (*Essays on Heidegger and Others* 1991b). We see Heidegger's influence on Rorty in two broad areas; Heidegger's conception of language and truth and his end of philosophy rhetoric. According to Heidegger, "words and language are not wrappers in which things are packed for the intercourse of talking and writing. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are" (Heidegger 1961:11). It is through language that things come alive. This is because our whole being and the world in which we live are given meaning by public language (Heidegger 1971:73).

Rorty agrees with Heidegger that "there is no way to think about either the world or our purpose except by using language" (Rorty 1982: xix). It is through language that we converse, describe and recreate our world. For Rorty, even

though our words do not capture an objective reality, “the human self is created by the use of a vocabulary” (Rorty 1989:7).

Another area in which Heidegger’s influence is felt on Rorty is his (Heidegger) claim to the end of philosophy. Heidegger argues in *On Time and Being* that philosophy is dead. He explains that the development of philosophy into the sciences marks the legitimate completion of philosophy (Heidegger 1972:58). Here, like Wittgenstein, Heidegger abandoned the project he set up to defend in *Being and Time* where he ventured into developing a fundamental ontology to ground the sciences. Heidegger might have realized that such an effort to offer philosophy as a foundational discipline to the science would not succeed.

Rorty is influenced by the later Heideggerian attitude towards the death of philosophy. Appropriating Heidegger’s notion of the end of philosophy, Rorty argues that philosophy as the quest for certainty, for ultimate criteria of knowledge, for final answers to truth have all come to an end and no successor subject can take its place (Rorty 1979:315). Rorty counsels that philosophers should abdicate their throne as cultural overseers and as scholars who can discover the immutable structures of enquiry. Rather, he suggests that they should be participants in the conversation of humankind with neither a fixed question to ask nor a pre-given methodology for answering (Rorty 1979:367).

Nietzsche is one of the philosophers whose influence on Rorty is palpable. Nietzsche’s attack on metaphysics and his rejection of the possibility of all fixed categories was something that impressed Rorty. Nietzsche rejects the conception

of objective or absolute truth and attacked Plato for holding such a view. He calls Plato “the great viaduct of corruption (Nietzsche 1986, Sec: 202) because he saw Plato’s view about reality as very rigid and static.

For Nietzsche, all judgments had to be made from different perspectives about a world that is constantly changing. He argues that it is the human person who philosophizes and find in things what we bring to them. Everything is linked to everything. Nothing is determinate. He defines truth as “the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live” (Nietzsche 1986, Sec: 480).

Nietzsche by this rejected all metaphysical inclinations: there is neither spirit nor reason, nor thinking, nor consciousness, nor soul, nor will, nor truth, nor subject and object. He saw all metaphysical ideas as fictions of no value. Nietzsche reiterates that our whole language is made of the distinction between subject and object, appearance and reality, opinion and truth and so on. Removing this distinction, Nietzsche believes, renders redundant the external world of experience and also removes the idea of particular subject or self, who is perceiving, understanding and thinking about and acting in the world (Nietzsche 1986, Sec 480).

Rorty adopted Nietzsche’s attitude towards truth and the appearance and reality distinction. According to Rorty there is nothing like truth as correspondence except truth as a way of coping with reality. There is no external world, no metaphysics and no absolutism. All that there are are different strands of truth as understood by people of different cultural orientations (Rorty 1998: 2).

Kuhn is another philosopher who has influenced Rorty remarkably. In the *Structure of Scientific Revolution*, Kuhn casts doubt on the plausibility of realism and rationalism (Kuhn 1970). Kuhn argues that two paradigms may proffer the same words and concepts, but in actual fact, these elements are logically different. He calls this idea the incommensurability thesis. Stated succinctly, the incommensurability thesis says that proponents of rival theories are not speaking the same language because their terms of reference are not comparable. The upshot is that a new paradigm due to incommensurability cannot be built on the one that it overthrows. It is made to only supplant it (Kuhn 1970:112). This incommensurability thesis has a serious impact on realism and rationalism. This is because the realists and rationalists cannot accept the world in which truth is dispersed. For example, there have been various theories about electrons propounded by renowned scientists: R. A. Millikan, H A. Lorentz and Niels Bohr. The realists for example believe that these theories about electrons are just about electrons no matter what we think. The motivation driving such a thought is that the realists and rationalists are looking for a common ground in which all enquiries would finally converge. But the adherents of incommensurability thesis of the Kuhnian orientation would argue that such theories of electrons meant something different. They represented a pluralistic picture of electrons.

Appropriating the ideas of Kuhn, Rorty in his anti-foundational, neo pragmatic epistemology, debunks realism and representationalism. He argues that the whole business of enquiry is “finding new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of talking” (Rorty 1979: 360). He argues that enquiry is not about

discovering necessary truth, or grasping unchanging essence or searching for an objective common ground for all situations, but a way of reconstructing our own views and discovering the pluralistic nature of enquiry for the positive improvement of human life (Rorty 1979:360).

Besides, enquiry should be conversational and conversation should be guided by justification practices of each language community. Such consideration, like the Kuhnian incommensurability thesis, will ensure that different theories are propounded by different community of enquirers to serve human purposes (Rorty 1998:2).

Donald Davidson is another philosopher who has had profound influence on Rorty. Davidson's idea on truth has had a great impact on Rorty's idea about truth as conversation. Davidson argues that there is nothing like truth. He suggests that since there is nothing like truth, nobody should try to specify the nature of truth. For Davidson, truth is relative to cultures and so it would be unprofitable to see the possibility of absolute truth that applies to different languages across cultures (Davidson 1986:186).

Taking a cue from Davidsonian conception of truth, Rorty argues that there is nothing like Truth with capital T. This is because truth is relative to cultures and so it will be unprofitable to see the idea of absolute Truth that transcends all cultures. Rorty announces that Truth is not the goal of enquiry because we cannot tell how distant or closer we are away from Truth (Rorty 1998:119-142).

Rorty's Critique of Epistemic Foundationalism

Rorty started as an advocate of linguistic philosophy with the initial hope that the tools of language and logic could provide answers to most of our philosophical questions. His anthology, *The Linguistic Turn* of 1976 played a decisive role in defining a linguistic philosophy for an entire generation. However, as events turned out, Rorty later became one of the incisive critics of the analytic movement until his death on June 8 2007.

In his landmark work PMN, Rorty mounted a strong critique against foundationalism and the correspondence theory of truth. Rorty's critique against foundationalism was two fold. More specifically, he criticizes the attempt to justify knowledge claims by tracing them to a set of foundations, and more broadly, he criticizes the claim of philosophy to function foundationally within cultures. The former critique is our primary focus in this study. However, the second critique may overlap our discussion. We consider such overlap unintentional.

According to Rorty, epistemology as a discipline that requires certainty evolved as a reaction to Descartes' invention of the mind. Descartes after doubting everything else concluded that what he couldn't doubt was his own mind. By this he created an inner space suggesting that the mind is active and infallible. If we are certain about the content of our minds how do we account for the stuff of the external world? So Descartes' invention of the mind, according to Rorty, later culminated in Lockean representationalism (Rorty 1979:136). The Lockean project considered the mind as passive in opposition to Descartes' active

mind. According to Locke, the mind is a passive agent which is imprinted with ideas emanating from the external world. So Locke placed Cartesian inner space inside the outer space.

But what Locke actually succeeded in doing, according to Rorty, was to confuse the mechanistic account of the operation of the mind and the grounding of our knowledge claims so that the causal account of how one comes to have a belief becomes an indication of the justification one has for the belief (Rorty 1979:141). Put simply, Locke substituted psychological formation of beliefs with epistemic justification, thus, in effect, replacing epistemology with psychology.

To make matters worse, Kant confuses predication with synthesis in his attempt to synthesize Descartes' inner space and Locke's outer space. He did not abandon the mirror image of the mind (knowledge as representation) created by Locke. Thus Kant still talked about "inner representation rather than propositions" (Rorty 1979:149). Kant identified two distinct entities: the intuition, the immediate data that is given to the mind, and the concept, the construction of the mind which represents the activities of our thoughts. Given this, the mind is able to constitute the external world of experience. So the Kantian problem is that instead of admitting that knowledge is a relation between beliefs or propositions he rather considers propositions in terms of how the mind is able to constitute an external object (Rorty 1979:149).

Rorty argues that the current mirror image in foundationalist epistemology, the idea that the mind mirrors reality accurately or inaccurately is a product of such Lockean and Kantian thoughts. Rorty also blames Plato in part for

establishing the foundationalist (radical foundationalist) thesis that there are certain propositions that are immune from error. He argues that Plato's distinction of knowledge and opinion was an attempt to ground knowledge by claiming that certain portion of knowledge are immutable and such immutable knowledge should form the foundation upon which knowledge claims should be built (Rorty 1979:155).

According to Rorty, the immutable knowledge advocated by Plato becomes necessary truth, truth that is necessary independent of our human cognition. This indicates, for instance, that if the object before my eyes looks red, then it is not me but the object compelling me to recognize it as such. The result is that, Rorty says, we get behind reasons to causes, beyond argument to compulsion from the object known (Rorty 1979:159).

But epistemology, as Rorty says, is not about causation. It is about justification. And justification is not a relation between ideas and object but a relation between ideas (Rorty 1979: 9). If we accept this, then we shall see justification, as Sellars would want us see, "within a logical space of reason" rather than seeing justification as a causal relation to an object as the representationalists would want us to believe (Rorty 1979:157).

Rorty proceeds to appropriate Sellars' attack on the 'given' and Quine's attack on the analytic synthetic dichotomy as offering a kind of holism. According to Rorty, Sellars' critique of the 'given' is devastating because it refutes the foundationalist conception that there is the 'given' in perception. The foundationalist whether modest or radical, prefers that the given forms the

foundation to our knowledge claims. But Sellars argues that such considerations only offer to explain the causal condition of knowledge rather than the justification for knowledge, the act of applying reasons for our knowledge claims (Sellars 1963:169).

Taking a cue from Sellars, Rorty thus argues that the given is not important in our claim to knowledge. He borrowed from Sellars' distinction between awareness as discriminative behavior and awareness as being in the logical space of reason. Rorty argues that awareness in the first sense is only manifested by computers, rats and amoeba. He identifies it as reliable signaling. But the awareness in the second sense is only manifested by human beings in what he identifies as utterances of sentences with the intention of justifying the utterances of such sentences. It is this type of awareness that Rorty says is parallel to justified true belief (epistemology). The first is just the ability to respond to stimuli (Rorty 1979:182-183).

For Rorty the bulk of epistemology misconstrues the ability to respond to stimuli as grounding for knowledge instead of looking at it as the causal condition for knowledge. The import of Rorty's argument is that there is nothing like a belief that is non propositional, so to speak of an instantiation of redness as grounding our knowledge claim is a mistake (Rorty 1979:183). In fact, it is here that we come close to comprehending the alleged confusion between justification and the causal condition of knowledge, a mistake he attributes to Locke.

In all, the conclusion Rorty draws is that there is nothing like non propositional awareness or the 'given'. Even if there is, Rorty argues that it is

unnecessary and insufficient condition for knowledge because there is a difference between knowing what a pain is like and knowing what sort of thing pain is. The 'given' is insufficient because we can know what redness looks like without knowing whether it is different from blue or that it is a colour and so on. Similarly, it is unnecessary because we can know about redness whilst having been blind from birth (without knowing what redness is like) (Rorty 1979:184). The import is to remove from our minds the foundationalist claim that we cannot know if we cannot have raw feels. In short, Rorty's criticism against the foundationalist is that any non-propositional awareness or sense data that the foundationalist invokes can at best be a causal condition for propositional knowledge but can never serve as justificatory grounds for knowledge (Rorty 1979:184).

In the same vein, Quine's critique of analytic and synthetic dichotomy, according to Rorty equally casts doubt on the legitimacy of foundationalist epistemology. Quine in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" argues that it is erroneous to create a boundary between synthetic statement which holds contingently on experience and analytic statement which obtains come what may because there is no fact of the matter. Quine argues that there are no sets of beliefs that are immune from revision (Quine 1995:266). According to Quine then, knowledge should be likened to a field of force rather than an architectural structure guided by rigid set of ritualistic stereo-type and rigid set of rules (Rorty 1979:181).

The upshot of Quinean critique, Rorty says, is that knowledge does not have foundations and that there are no class of assertions that are necessarily true

come what may. In similar vein, Quine's critique also reinforces Rorty's position that there are no overarching vocabularies in which all enquiries would finally converge.

According to Rorty then, these two critiques when combined pave the way for his pronouncement of the death of epistemology. Rorty notes that after all he is not the precursor of the death of epistemology campaign, Quine and Sellars have earlier on announced the death of epistemology before he did. Thus, if traditional foundationalist epistemology is dead, then also is philosophy, because philosophy since Descartes, Locke and Kant till present day discussions of the subject is substantially epistemological (Rorty 1979:131 -138).

The advice Rorty offers is that we should not dedicate epistemology to the accuracy of perception as the foundationalist wants us to do. We should rather devote all epistemological enquiries to humans as a community because justification is completely a human affair (Rorty 1996:225). But to make justification a human affair we must endeavour to abandon the foundational epistemologist incessant quest for certainty, her obedience to permanent non-human constraint and her mirror imagery that has held philosophy captive since Locke. We should opt for conversation instead, but not as a successor subject to epistemology but as a consolation that the void left by the demise of epistemology still remains vacant (Rorty 1979:315).

Conversationalism

Conversationalism is Rorty's pragmatic alternative to epistemology. The term denotes the use of language by a community of language users in determining what counts as knowledge and what does not (Rorty 1996:225). The import is to shift epistemology from the point of view of traditional Platonic, Kantian and neo-Kantian methods of doing epistemology (the version of epistemology that sees knowledge as needing to be grounded on a pre-linguistic given) to the point of view of the neo-pragmatist who sees knowledge as a complete human construct. According to this, knowledge would only be defensible on the basis of agreement among a social group but not grounded on any non human reality.

The birth of conversationalism marks the untimely death of traditional foundationalist epistemology. But conversationalism does not come as the successor subject to epistemology but as a comfort that the void created by traditional epistemology is left unfilled.

Propounding conversationalism, Rorty created two worlds. The first is the world running from Plato through Kant to the present day analytic and linguistic philosophy; the worlds that depend on the ocular metaphor that our minds mirror reality and that knowledge has foundation. The discourse of this epistemological world is 'normal' after Thomas Kuhn's normal science. The philosophy of this discourse is systematic and its method is epistemological (Rorty 1979:320).

The negation of this world is the Rortian world, a world which has freed itself from the ocular metaphor or representationalism. The discourse of this

world is described as 'abnormal' a phraseology in Kuhn's conception of revolution in science. Its philosophy is not systematic but edifying and its method hermeneutics, a word Rorty borrowed from Clifford Geertz (Rorty 1979:320). Rorty likened a normal science to a normal discourse and abnormal science to an abnormal discourse. In Kuhnian sense, Rorty tells us; " 'Normal' science is the practice of solving problems against the background of consensus about what counts as a good explanation of the phenomenon and about what it would take for a problem to be solved" (Rorty 1979:320). Revolutionary science on the other hand "is the introduction of a new paradigm of explanation and thus a new set of problems" (Rorty 1979:320).

Rorty explains that normal science is close to epistemology because of its strict adherence to rationality and objectivity (Rorty 1979:320). From the above it is easier to discern the meaning of normal discourse in Rortian sense. According to Rorty normal discourse is that enquiry conducted within agreed upon set of rigid rules about what counts as contribution to the discourse, or the provision of answer to a question or what counts as a having a good argument for a proposition or against it. In contrast, abnormal discourse, for Rorty, is what happens when someone joins in the discourse and she is ignorant of the conventions of the discourse or sets them aside. Accordingly, epistemology, Rorty says, is the product of normal discourse and conversationalism or hermeneutics is the product of abnormal or revolutionary science (Rorty 1979:320).

Now Rorty introduces his key term for his anti-foundationalist, neo-pragmatic epistemology; conversationalism, a term that says it is conversation rather than structures erected on foundation that determines what counts as knowledge. Conversationalism, Rorty says:

...sees the relation between various discourses as those strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts. This hope is not the hope for the discovery of antecedent common grounds, but simply hope for agreement or, at least, exciting and fruitful disagreement (Rorty 1979:318).

At this point, Rorty draws the difference between epistemology and conversationalism. Epistemology, he informs us, is the view that, “to be rational, to be fully human, to do what we ought, we need to be able to find agreement with other human beings. To construct an epistemology is to find a maximum amount of common grounds with others (Rorty 1979:316). This is quite different from conversationalism. For Rorty, according to conversationalism,

to be rational is to be willing to refrain from epistemology...from thinking that there is a special set of terms in which all contributions to the conversation should be put...For epistemology,

conversation is implicit inquiry. For [conversationalism] inquiry is a routine conversation. Epistemology views the participants as united in what Oakeshott calls *universitas*...a group united by mutual interest in achieving a common end. [Conversationalism] views them as united in what he calls a *societas*, ... persons whose paths through life have fallen together, united by civility rather than a common goal, much less by a common ground (Rorty 1979:318).

From the fore-going, we discern the core criteria in Rorty's conversationalism; heterogeneity, incommensurability, tolerance and hypertextuality. Heterogeneity is the view that a particular thing consist of different kinds of things. It is contrasted with homogeneity which explains that an existing phenomenon has no multiple kinds. Recall Rorty urges that every community should possess their own set of epistemic standards so that our claim to knowledge will vary from context to context. This places different standards of justification at par in Rortian epistemology. If this assumption is right then Rorty's epistemology is heterogeneous because it will mean that different versions of epistemic standards of justification will bloom. Meanwhile, if Rorty's pragmatic epistemology allows that different standards of epistemic justification are correct and acceptable under different situations and under different environments then we can say that Rorty's epistemology is culturally permissive.

Rorty prefers that epistemology should be all-embracing and accommodating to ensure that different sets of theories bloom instead of seeking for commensurability, objectivity and rationality. Human beings should be the architect of their own philosophy. This is because, as Rorty says, we have no objective foundation or fixed goals and so we must accept “our inheritance from, and our conversation with, our fellow humans as our only source of guidance” (Rorty 1982:166). There is no need to step outside our community to any non-human framework for what counts as knowledge. Rather, we should “see human beings as generators of new descriptions rather than beings one hopes to be able to describe accurately” (Rorty 1979:378).

Hypertextuality is a post modernist theory which describes the interconnectivity of all literary works and their interpretations. Rorty says that the purpose of knowing involves that the individual constructs his/her own meaning instead of merely listening and abiding by already pre-established principles. Rorty believes that we have no objective foundation or fixed principles which should direct us to the way we construct meaning about our experiences (Rorty 1982: 166). This seems to indicate that language, meaning and knowledge are multi and interdisciplinary and so no class of discourse should be regarded as forming the foundation of all discourses. Rorty urges scientists, especially those in the physical sciences, to desist from thinking that scientific principles and procedures form the bases of all other disciplines (Rorty 1991a: 35-45). He admonishes that we should avoid the craving of devising vocabulary that will correspond to the nature of things. Instead we should engage ourselves in

“breaking free from outworn vocabularies and attitudes, rather than providing ‘grounding’ for the intuitions and customs of the present” (Rorty 1979:12).

Rorty and Truth

Truth is the central ingredient for knowledge and epistemology. Knowledge is knowledge if it is true. False knowledge or proposition is false and true knowledge is knowledge. What does Rorty say about truth then? “There is no truth” (Rorty 1998: 1) Rorty says. Truth is not correspondence to how reality is. There is nothing like a thing in ‘itself’ and a thing as it appears to us. Rorty suggests that since we have no use for appearance and reality distinction we should substitute for it a distinction between less useful way and more useful ways of talking (Rorty 1998: 1).

In simple terms there is nothing like truth as correspondence to reality. Here Rorty presents an anti-representationalist view of knowledge; knowledge not as a matter of getting reality right but knowledge as a way of acquiring habits of action for coping with reality (Rorty 1998:1).

Rorty tells us that truth is not the goal of enquiry. A goal is something you can know when you are getting closer to or farther away from. But as Rorty says there is no way to know our distance from or closeness to truth (Rorty 1998: 3-4). The only sense we can make of truth is justification and justification is relative to the audience (Rorty 1998:4). Hence, there is no truth in the absolute sense and there are no propositions known to be immune from doubt (Rorty 1998:2).

Rorty thinks that the absoluteness of the term true is a good reason for thinking that the term true is indefinable and so no theory of the nature of truth is possible (Rorty 1998:3). This is why the anti-foundationalist, neo-pragmatist should see truth not as a goal of enquiry. According to Rorty even our practices of justification will not lead us to truth because even if it does it will make no difference whatever to our practice (Rorty 1998:4).

Conclusion

This chapter, thus far, has done an expose of Rorty's anti-foundationalist, neo-pragmatic treatment of epistemology. It begins with a brief expose of pragmatism; it proceeds with a brief discussion of the three most prominent classical pragmatists and finally discusses Rorty's pragmatic epistemology. The next chapter will dwell on discussion on contemporary pragmatists. The primary focus of that chapter will be to show how Rorty's view is different from the views of the faithful followers of mainstream pragmatism.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRAGMATISTS: FAITHFULS AND DEVIANTS

Introduction

The motivation for writing this thesis is twofold. The first and primary motivation is to argue that Rorty does not really call for the end to epistemology as he purports to have done. And the second is to show how Rorty strayed from pragmatism in his treatment of epistemology. In chapter three we did an expose of Rorty's neo-pragmatic epistemology. This chapter is devoted to an exposition of contemporary pragmatist attitude towards epistemology. For the sake of clarity, we put contemporary pragmatists into two major divisions. The first is those that we call faithful followers of classical or mainstream pragmatism. They include Putnam and Haack (though my inclusion of Putnam in this group is quite debatable). The second group is those that we call the deviants of pragmatism. The frontline of this group is led by Rorty.

Our aim here is to review these contemporary philosophers' reinterpretation of the pragmatist text as propounded by Peirce, James and Dewey. We treat Putnam and Haack as holding on, somehow, to the original pragmatist ideas and Rorty as breaking away. We say 'somehow' because there is a vast variation within Putnam and Haack's attitude towards epistemology. But since neither has called for the end to epistemology, we suppose they are faithful

followers of pragmatism. Our contention is that the mainstream pragmatists do not pronounce epistemology dead even though there are variations in the way each of them expounds pragmatism.

As we shall see in the following pages, Putnam shares similar ideas with Rorty because although he speaks well of pragmatism, he considers his position more realist than Rorty. Putnam considers James and Dewey his favourite classical pragmatists though he does not forget Peirce. Haack, on the other hand, is a thorough going Peircean and foundherentist who has been very critical of Rorty's hostile attitude to epistemology and pragmatism in what she calls "Vulgar pragmatism" (Haack 1998). She is also concerned chiefly with how Rorty misrepresent Peirce and thus obscures the scientifically responsible and realistic origin of the pragmatist tradition. Before we discuss the views of these prominent contemporary pragmatists, it is expedient to tease out some core tenets of mainstream pragmatism.

There are a series of variations in the thoughts of the classical pragmatist treatment of epistemology as we have noted in chapter three. However, a common trend runs through their divergent positions. It is expected at the end of this discussion that all the three prominent classical pragmatists discussed in this study have not abandoned the correspondence theory of truth and epistemology as a normative and rational discipline as Rorty vehemently has done.

This chapter is organized in three broad sections. In the first section we try to outline some thesis of mainstream pragmatism found in the works of classical pragmatist such as Peirce, James and Dewey. In the second section, we try to

discuss the views of contemporary pragmatists such as Putnam and Haack whom we consider as faithfuls of mainstream pragmatism. Finally, in the third section we try to look at the views of the neo-pragmatists, such as Rorty, whom we consider as deviants of original pragmatism.

Some Theses of Pragmatism

We have identified principally six theses of mainstream pragmatism. These theses are reflected in the writings of almost all the three classical pragmatists. Some of these pragmatic theses can be found in (Butler 1957:443) and (Almeder 1986: 80-81).

- I. Human knowledge is best understood as an activity whereby the human species seeks to adapt to its environment. Beliefs and systems of beliefs are instruments or mechanisms generated by people for the explicit purpose of adapting successfully to the environment. Accordingly, human inquiry is the process whereby we seek to pass from a state of not knowing how to respond to the world to a state of forming beliefs that serve as ways of adapting successfully to the environment (Peirce 1934: 5.370; Almeder 1980: 1-13; James 1981: 273-275; Dewey 1960:223-226).
- II. Accordingly, beliefs or systems of beliefs are to be judged acceptable or unacceptable so that those beliefs, when adopted as rules of human behavior facilitate one's dealings *with sensory experience*. Consequently, *all the rules of evidence and rules of acceptance for*

various beliefs are valid only to the extent that they tend to produce beliefs that are successful, that is, beliefs that allow us to manipulate our environment successfully to meet human needs (Peirce 1934: 5.372; Almeder 1980:1-13; James 1968: 223-226; Quine 1981: 32ff).

III. All beliefs or system of beliefs are fallible and subject to revision. At any time the truth value assigned to our beliefs is subject to revision or withdrawal in the light of new evidence and changes *in the rules for determining the validity of that evidence*. Pragmatists believe that even in mathematics the truth of our belief is how we choose to define the basic terms, which if our needs were different we would have defined differently. In short, pragmatists believe that there are no propositions whose truth is not in principle subject to revision in the light of future evidence (Peirce 1934: 7.568; Almeder 1980:44ff; Dewey 1913: 8; James 1968).

IV. Pragmatists also believe that the only method for determining which belief about our external world is acceptable is *the scientific method*. Indeed, the only criterion for meaningfulness of a proposition about the physical world is whether it is confirmable or falsifiable under the method of natural sciences. For the classical pragmatists, especially, Peirce, only the method of natural sciences has succeeded in providing us with beliefs that in the long run are successful and has enabled us to adapt to our physical environment. This means that differences in beliefs, according to the pragmatists, must lead to *sensory* difference

that should count for confirming or falsifying those beliefs (Peirce 1934:7.377; James 1968: 201; Dewey 1917:29-53). Here we see that the pragmatists test for whether the method of acquiring beliefs is a valid method or not is whether the application of that method helps us develop beliefs that allow us to adapt successfully to our environment. The point must be established that this utility principle in pragmatism does not imply that the pragmatists abandon truth as the goal of scientific enquiry. It tacitly assumes that general successful beliefs be regarded as true and the scientific method is the most efficient method for achieving such an objective. Again we see here that the idea of representationalism and correspondence is overt in classical pragmatism. The point is that the scientific method allows that our ideas about the external world are verifiable through experience.

V. Unlike classical empiricism as expressed by Locke, Berkeley and Hume wherein the truth of a proposition is anchored on how it originates from experience. Pragmatism considers the truth or acceptability of one's belief as a function of whether what one expect if the belief were true, will continue to obtain in future. According to James, it is not in the root, but in the fruits of our beliefs that truth lies (James 1968: 14ff). What this means is that all beliefs are virtual predictions or hypothesis about experience and regardless of about how they originate their truth value is a function of whether they will obtain in future. If they do, then such beliefs are true or *warrantedly assertible*

under the scientific method (Peirce 1934: 7.78; James 1968: 195; Dewey 1960).

VI. Sentences or statement about physical objects are to be regarded as true if they are warrantably assertible or authorizable under rules of induction and in the rules of deductive inferences. *These rules* are in turn acceptable only to the extent that they produce the beliefs that allow us to accommodate our basic needs in an ever changing environment (Peirce 1934:1.634; Almeder 1980:55ff.; James 1968: 49; Dewey 1946: 169-186).

Thesis I shows the pragmatic utility principle. It stands out as the most popular thesis of pragmatism. Mostly accredited to James as his major contribution to the pragmatic discourse (Hamlyn 1970:1190), the thesis has traces in Peirce's pragmatism, where Peirce put forward practical usefulness as the criterion of meaningfulness or belief as a habit of action.

“Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object” (Peirce 1934: 5.402).

This thesis captures the most widely cited pragmatic definition of truth which says that truth is what is satisfactory to believe (James 1907: 59). Contemporary pragmatists such as Haack have consistently argued that James insistence on truth as what is useful in the way of belief does not exclude the fact that truth is correspondence. According to Haack, therefore, what James means about beliefs which are useful or good or expedient are beliefs which are safe

from danger of inconsistency with subsequent experience (Haack1976: 233). It means that true beliefs, according to James, are beliefs which are verifiable and confirmed by experience. It is for this reason that James argues that “Experience, as we know, has ways of boiling over, making us correct our present formulas” (James 1907:145).

Theses II and IV combine the utility principle with the idea of correspondence and representationalism. In thesis II the point is clearly made that our beliefs must correspond to our sensory experience about the external world. However, they (beliefs) are only valid if they produce beliefs that are eventually successful to serve human needs. The scientific method alluded to in IV indicates representationalism, the idea that there is an external world out there that we come to know as copies on our minds. But representationalism implies correspondence and correspondence also implies foundationalism, the belief that there are epistemically basic beliefs justified in virtue of their relation to a privileged class of sensory representations which provides us with unmediated acquaintance with things in the external world. The correspondence theory is what sustains the foundationalist thesis. It is for this reason that Rorty thinks that once he has proven the correspondence theory of truth unintelligible, epistemology should be abandoned.

The upshot is that mainstream pragmatists will remain foundationalist so far as the foundationalist doctrine provides some benefits that help us to successfully adapt to our environment. Apart from that all rules of evidence and

acceptance for various beliefs (epistemic norms) are valid on the basis that they have a utility value.

The III thesis tacitly indicates fallibilism. Fallibilism is an essential recipe of modest foundationalism. Fallibilism is the idea that propositions are fallibly true or justified. It is opposed to the Cartesian foundationalism where propositions are certainly true or justified. Fallibilism means that if ideas are probably true then the true value of propositions will immediately be annulled in the light of new evidence. The VI thesis reiterates the principles of deduction and induction in traditional epistemology. The principle of deduction is employed in Cartesian foundationalism where the inferential connections between basic and non basic beliefs are deductive. The principle of deduction is employed in modest foundationalism where inferential connections between basic and non basic beliefs are inductive.

The morale to be drawn from the interpretation of these theses is that the classical pragmatist did not abandon epistemology completely as Rorty and his adherents have done. The fact that the classical pragmatists subscribe to the correspondence theory and the rules of induction and deductions, we assume that they did not abandon epistemology. Our main criterion for distinguishing between contemporary mainstream pragmatists and deviants such as Rorty is their attitude towards epistemology. The mainstream pragmatists though do not embrace epistemology wholeheartedly; (because they merge it with the utility principle) they do not repudiate epistemology either. But the deviants such as Rorty repudiate epistemology. So our yardstick for measuring whether one is a faithful

adherent of pragmatism or not is whether or not he repudiates epistemology. In what follows, we shall look at two mainstream contemporary pragmatists and how they have strengthened the doctrine in recent times. After that we consider the arguments of the deviants such as Rorty.

Contemporary Mainstream Pragmatists

When we take a close inspection of the ideas of the classical pragmatists discussed above, we recognize that a common trend runs through their ideas, namely; they all seem to subscribe to the view that knowledge cannot be removed from experience and rationality. It follows from this that the correspondence theory, in divergent degrees, still permeates the classical pragmatist conception of knowledge. How does Putnam react to the question of correspondence in his version of pragmatism? It is quite fascinating to observe in the following pages that Putnam rejects the correspondence theory of truth but at the same time he clings to some form of ideal truth.

One of the central issues that are more conspicuous in Putnam concerns the notion of truth. Putnam rejects the correspondence theory just as Rorty does but a bit differently (Putnam 1981). Putnam rejects what he calls metaphysical idealism i.e. the view that the world possesses its own intrinsic nature and pre-categorized ontological structure which can, in principle, be described by means of single true theory that corresponds to the way the world really is independent of the one perceiving it. Putnam argues that we cannot make sense of non-epistemic, metaphysically privileged correspondence relation between the

mind and the external world of which ideas represent. Nonetheless, he argues that we need standards of ideal truth and rationality that transcend the limits of our own cultural or historical context. Even though this practical need is something that belongs to our life within this particular context.

What Putnam seems to indicate is that we should not give up our commitment to epistemology and rational acceptability that go beyond cultural and historical periods. He disagrees with Rorty's claim that truth is an empty notion, something that is not worth pursuing (Putnam 1994:331). He argues that even though we cannot talk about truth in a heavy metaphysical and correspondence sense, we should not deny the philosophical and common sensical notion of truth as representation of non-linguistic reality. He says

I agree with Rorty that we have no access to "unconceptualised reality" [...] But it doesn't follow that language and thought do not describe something outside themselves, even if that something can only be described by describing it (that is by employing language and thought): and, as Rorty ought to have seen, the belief that they do plays an essential role within language and thought themselves and, more importantly, within our lives (Putnam 1994:297).

Putnam urges that philosophers like Rorty should take caution against the manner in which they attack the correspondence theory of truth. He argues that

the fact that realism is unintelligible or incoherent does not mean that realism is false. And this should not deprive us from thinking that we can describe the world as it is in itself independently of our cultural and ethnocentric perspectives (Putnam 1995).

Reviewing the classical pragmatist ideas about epistemology, Putnam finds a philosophical use both for what James calls ‘truth’ and what Dewey calls ‘warranted assertibility’. To this end, Putnam does not share Rorty’s conviction that epistemology is over as soon as we have realized that the problem of skepticism and the foundationalist project that grounds it (a project that is based on the notion that truth is correspondence or accurate representation of a mind – and language independent reality) should be abandoned. It is worth noting that Putnam thesis concerning warrant which he developed is genuinely epistemological thesis which is far different from Rorty’s death of epistemology rhetoric.

Putnam advances some few arguments to debunk Rorty’s claim that epistemology is dead. He argues that (1) “in ordinary circumstances, there is usually a fact of the matter as to whether the statement people make are warranted or not” (2) that whether or not a statement is warranted or not “is independent of whether majority of one’s cultural peers would say it is warranted or unwarranted” (2) that our norms governing warrant are “historical products” and evolve in time (4) that those norms and standards “always reflects our interest and values” in the sense that our “picture of intellectual flourishing is part of, and only makes sense as part of, our picture of human flourishing in general”

and (5) that any norm or standard is capable of reform, for there are “better and worse” norms and standards (Putnam 1990:21).

As we indicated earlier my inclusion of Putnam among the faithful of mainstream pragmatism is quite debatable since many scholars consider him as a neo-pragmatist of the Rortian stripe (see Pihlstrom 2001; McDermid 1998) because of his attacks on the correspondence theory of truth. The reason why we have included him here is that he does not repudiate epistemology though he attacks (correspondence) the core tenet of foundationalist epistemology. Our argument is that mainstream pragmatists do not repudiate epistemology and traditional theories of knowledge.

Haack is a striking and appealing figure in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy. Though she had British education, she appears to bridge the gap between the analytic philosophy and pragmatism with its more diverse influences and sources. Susan Haack is one of the incisive critics of Rorty, who among others, she labeled as ‘the new cynics (Haack 1998:91). Haack is impatient with some philosophers such as Rorty who think the traditional projects of epistemology are misguided. She remarks:

There are strong trends in philosophy today hostile to the traditional projects of epistemology, projects which a great clamor of voices, from enthusiasts of the latest development in cognitive science and neurophysiology, through *revolutionary self-styled neo-pragmatists*, to followers of recent Paris

fashion, would have us believe are radically
misconceived I disagree (Haack 1997:7; my italics)

As we have shown earlier, Haack is a thorough going Peircean who is critical about Rorty for his consistent attacks on Peirce. In the *Manifesto of the Passionate Moderate*, Haack devotes an ample time defending the classical pragmatists; Peirce, James and Dewey against the latter day neo-pragmatists exemplified by Rorty. Though Haack expresses profound admiration for the three classical pragmatists, she offers to be a hard core Peircean. Rorty is rather fascinated by James and Dewey with little or no admiration at all for Peirce. Rorty's lack of admiration for Peirce is the central issue that provokes a number of counter criticisms from Haack.

Haack shows profound dissatisfaction against Rorty for describing "philosophers who think of themselves as seeking the truth" in Peircean fashion as 'Lovably old-fashion prigs'" (Haack 1998:7). Elsewhere in PMN, Rorty says that Peirce contributed nothing to the development of Pragmatism except merely giving it a name and further stimulating James to popularize the pragmatist doctrine. In a counter response to Rorty's undeserving attacks on Peirce, Haack in the second essay of the *Manifesto*, which she titled "We Pragmatist...: Peirce and Rorty in Conversation", debunks Rorty's current misappropriation of the core tenets of pragmatism. She does this by means of selected quotation from Peirce and Rorty in order to expose their conflicting positions. In reply to Rorty's doubt about priggish truth seeking, Peirce replies that "In order to reason well..., it is absolutely necessary to possess... such virtues as intellectual honesty and

sincerity and a real love of truth” and [genuine inquiry consists] “in diligent inquiry into truth for truth’s sake” (Haack 1998::31).

The nub of Haack’s claim is that Rorty’s view about pragmatism is alien to the tradition. Rorty we recall from our earlier submission frowns at the pursuit of truth for truth sake. This is because for Rorty truth is not the goal of enquiry. A goal is what you can tell whether you are close to or not. And since we cannot tell how close or distant we are from truth, truth is not worth pursuing (Rorty 1998: 19-42). Where Haack quotes Rorty to the effect that “the very idea of the ‘fact of the matter’ is one, we would be better off without” Peirce replies that “he wishes his opinion to coincide with fact”. While Rorty insists on his anti-representationalism and rejection of truth as correspondence, Peirce obviously thought otherwise “Truth is the conformity of a representation to its object (Haack 1998:33).

Haack in the above quotations represents Peirce’s views. Her concern is that Rorty simply abandons how typically the classical pragmatists concern themselves with rationality and knowledge founded on experience (Haack 1976). Though Haack seems to subscribe to the traditional pragmatist mode of thinking, her epistemology is slightly different but in tune with them. Like Rorty, she attacks the major traditional theories of epistemology. But she disagrees with Rorty about whether epistemology should be abandoned. She remarks:

It is held in some quarters that the issues of the epistemological tradition are misconceived, and should be abandoned or replaced. This fashionable

cynicism has been encouraged by a conviction that the traditional problems have not been resolved either by foundationalism or by coherentism. *I share that conviction.* The pessimistic conclusion, however, is obviously too hasty if the traditional rival theories do not exhaust the options (Haack 1993a:114; my italics)

Haack's alternative is foundherentism. But before we delve into discussing foundherentism it is expedient to establish first how Haack's foundherentism is a species of pragmatic epistemology. Traditional conception of epistemology basically involves two basic concepts. The concept of epistemic justification, that is, the thesis that justified true belief is a necessary condition for knowledge. And the ratification criteria of justification, the idea that truth is at least an essential component of the goal of enquiry. This traditional conception of knowledge centrally involves the investigation between relation of justification and truth. Traditional epistemology recommends that this investigation (the investigation of justification and truth) should be done a priori. Some pragmatists accept the legitimacy of the traditional project of epistemology but reject the a priori approach, preferring to undertake it in a naturalistic fashion. These scholars are not nihilist about epistemology, they are just reformers. Haack is a moderate reformist because she combines the method of empirical investigation with justification and the ratification (this is not to say that all reformers are pragmatists). Her foundherentism is a hybrid theory combining experiential

foundationalism, which says that a privilege class of basic beliefs is a representation of how the world really is, and coherentism, which indicates that beliefs must cohere with other beliefs in a web of beliefs. The point Haack wants to establish is that our claim to knowledge can be a causal and logical concept contrary to Sellars and Rorty's claim that the causal condition of knowledge implies correspondence or 'mirroring' and thus should be abandoned. She notes that:

A person's experience can stand in causal relations to his belief-states, but not in logical relations to the content of what he believes. Popper, Davidson, Rorty et al., conclude that experience is irrelevant to justification. I conclude, more, plausibly, that only a double-aspect theory, partly causal and partly evaluative [logical], can account for the role of experiential evidence (Haack 1997: 8).

According to Haack, foundationalism and coherentism are not exhaustive of possible styles of epistemic justification. Coherentism cannot allow for the relevance of experience to empirical justification. But foundationalism can only by the fact that there are some beliefs which are justified exclusively by experience and not at all by the support of other beliefs, and which constitute the ultimate grounds of all justified beliefs. Foundherentism is an intermediate theory, which according to Haack, (unlike coherentism) allows the relevance of experience but (unlike experientialist foundationalism) requires neither privileged

belief justified exclusively by experience nor an essential one-directional notion of evidential support (Haack 1993a: 113).

Haack argues that foundherentism is superior to foundationalism because it provides “Pervasive mutual support” among beliefs; there are not basic beliefs and justification is not “exclusively one directional”. Moreover, Foundherentism is superior to coherentism because it explains how justified beliefs are responsible to experience (Haack 1993b: 19).

According to Haack, there is a distinction between states of a subject and the sentences or propositions that may be the content of these states. Belief states participate in causal relations, while belief-content stands in logical and epistemically “evaluative” relations (Haack 1993b:70-71). Haack explains that the relations of epistemic justification can be understood on the model of cross word puzzle (Haack 1993b: 80-82). The explanation is that in a cross word puzzle, entries must answer to the clues and fit happily with one another. Justified beliefs are like these entries and the experiences are like the clues. So justified beliefs must answer to experience and at the same time must comport well with others in all cases as proper entries do.

On foundationalism, Haack asserts that Rorty confuses foundationalism; the theory that posits basic beliefs justified exclusively by experience as the foundations of all justified belief with *foundationalism*, the view that a priori epistemology is the foundation of scientific knowledge, and FOUNDATIONALISM, the thesis that criteria of justification need to be founded in relation to truth. Haack argues that what Rorty repudiates is

FOUNDATIONALISM manifested in his conventionalism which denies that there could be more to justification than practices of this or that community (Haack 1997:10). Wanting to differentiate herself from Rorty, Haack says about herself; “I am a foundhrentist, not a foundationalist; modestly naturalistic, not a *foundationalist*; but a FOUNDATIONALIST, not a conventionalist. I take the question of ratification seriously” (Haack 1997:10).

Looking at Haack, it is difficult to classify her. This is because even though she speaks fair of pragmatism, her epistemology is quite different from the epistemology of the classical pragmatist especially from that of Peirce. This is because she does not subscribe to Peirce’s pragmatic version of belief as a habit of action and inference involving expectation and future reference (Thayer 1996: 616). One of the essential elements of pragmatism, especially the Peircean version, is that it regards the future consequences of a belief as essential to the analysis of meaning and truth of justification. It seems to me that what Haack is keenly concerned about is how the classical pragmatists employ the correspondence theory and the epistemic norms involve in the concepts of knowledge and justification (Haack 1976). Even Susan Haack herself finds it difficult to secure for a herself a philosophical tradition in which she could conveniently occupy. She says of her dilemma:

Some of you will recognize in this, as in my conception of experience, my critical common-sensism, my quasi-holism, my account of belief, my distrust of easy dichotomies, my modest naturalism,

my penchant for neologisms, etc., *my indebtedness to the classical pragmatist tradition*. Some of you, I fear, will conclude that I must be an oxymoron –an epistemologist who takes the history of philosophy seriously?! *a pragmatist epistemologist?!...* (Haack1997: 11; my italics).

Contemporary Deviant Pragmatists

Of the many neo-pragmatists, Rorty is the most vocal member of the anti-foundationalist campaign. Since we have discussed Rorty extensively in Chapter three, we shall briefly present some core issues in this section that separates Rorty from the main stream pragmatists. Rorty's argument is that foundationalist epistemology is misguided. The idea that justification of a belief lies in its relation to what is given in experience is a misconception resulting from confusion with causation. This idea according to Rorty requires the case of truth as correspondence or as faithfully picturing the external objects. Since Sellars has shown that this idea is unintelligible, epistemology should be abandoned. Rorty urges that epistemology should be abandoned and not replaced by any natural scientific successor subject. Rorty also argues that there is nothing plausible to say about truth. Truth is not a goal of enquiry. A goal is something you can tell when you are closer or distant away from. But there is no way we can tell how close or near we are from truth. Similarly there is nothing like a thing- in- itself and a thing as it appears to us. Rorty thus suggests that since we have no use for

appearance and reality distinction, we should substitute for it a distinction between less useful way and more useful ways of talking (Rorty 1998: 1). These arguments are discernable in all his major writings:

“There is no point in raising question of truth...because between ourselves and the thing judged there always intervenes mind, language, a perspective chosen among dozens, one description chosen out of thousands” (Rorty 1982: 67).

“There is no way to get outside of our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence” (Rorty 1979: 178).

The quest of theory of reference represents a confusion between the hopeless “semantic” quest for a general theory of what people are “really talking about”, and the equally hopeless “epistemological” quest for a way of refuting the skeptic and underwriting our claim to be talking about notifications...the latter demand is for some transcendental standpoint outside our present set of representations from which we can inspect the relationship between those representations and their object (Rorty 1979:293).

There is no way to think about either the world or our purpose except by using our language. One can use language to criticize and enlarge itself, but one cannot see language as whole in relation to

something else to which it applies, or for which it is a means to an end...The attempts to say “how language relates to the world” by saying what makes certain sentences true... is the impossible attempt to step outside our skins—the traditions, linguistic and other, within which we do our thinking and self-criticisms—and compare ourselves with something absolute (Rorty 1982:xiii).

“We can only compare language or metaphors with one another, not with something beyond languages called ‘facts’ (Rorty 1989:20).

The basic anti-institutionist and anti-fundamentalist point common to Derrida and these others [namely, Sellars, Quine and Davidson] is that knowledge is a matter of asserting sentences, and that you cannot validate an assertion by confronting object (e.g. a table, the concept “tablehood” or Platonic Idea of Table) but only by asserting other sentences. This point is linked to other holist and antiessentialist doctrines, doctrines that make it possible to aside the subject-object, representationalist notions we inherited from the Greeks (Rorty 1991b: 110).

There is no independent test of the accuracy of correspondence...unless we can attain what

[Putnam] calls a God's eye standpoint-one which someone broken out of our language and our beliefs and tested them against something known without aid. But we have no idea what it would be like to be at that standpoint (Rorty 1991b:6).

The sorts of thing philosophers typically have said, that truth is some sort of correspondence to, or accurate representation of, reality seemed empty and pointless to James and Dewey. They agreed with their idealistic opponents that doubts about a beliefs correspondence to reality can only be settled by assessing the coherence of the dubious with belief with other beliefs (Rorty 1998:281).

The above remarks show Rorty's critique of the correspondence theory of truth. The imports of such arguments are directed towards debunking the traditional theory of epistemology (foundationalism) as unrealistic. Recall that Rorty does not subscribe to coherentism either. This is because he argues there is no final vocabulary, no single way or rational way to capture the meaning of human life. All we need to do is to continue talking without rules and constraints. But the coherence theory allows for the use of pre-establish criteria in order for belief to cohere with other beliefs in a system of beliefs. But Rorty will not have problem with coherence so long it avoids overarching rules and procedures. Whenever, Rorty makes use of coherence, he only applies it in the loose sense,

strictly not applicable to what we normally refer to in traditional epistemology. But he rejects the correspondence theory of truth wholeheartedly.

The correspondence theory is the blood of epistemology from Rorty's perspective. And once he has proven it unintelligible, then epistemology is to be renounced. He prefers conversationalism instead. Conversationalism is the view that knowledge is the expression of judgment of a community of enquirers. Rorty's neo-pragmatism is different from the mainstream pragmatist because 1. He debunks the idea of correspondence, rationality and epistemic normativity wholeheartedly whereas the mainstream pragmatists accept epistemic norms and correspondence (for correspondence, Putnam is an exception) theory given that it satisfies the utility criterion (it should be noted that contemporary mainstream pragmatists are not too particular about the utility principle in their explication of epistemology. The reason is, perhaps, that Rorty accepts the utility principle. Recall he says that enquiry should provide a meaningful means of coping with the world). 2. He repudiates epistemology completely and argues that the death of epistemology should be left with no successor subject. Mainstream pragmatists want to continue to engage in epistemology. Contemporary mainstream pragmatists believe that though traditional theories of epistemology may have problems, the solution is not to abandon it altogether. Theories of epistemology can be adjusted or reformed to correct the defects it in them. It is only when we do this, contemporary pragmatist claim, that we can restructure the epistemological enterprise to fit current challenges in the scholarly world.

Conclusion

We see from the foregoing that the point of departure of deviants of pragmatists such as Rorty is the repudiation, as it were, of epistemology. The mainstream pragmatists do not repudiate epistemology. At worst, we can say they are reformers rather than repudiators or nihilists of epistemology. The fallibilist epistemology expounded in thesis three is a case in point. The fact that the demonstration of a belief lies free from all actual doubt but not ultimate and indubitable premises like Descartes will want us believe is an indication that pragmatists want all our beliefs considered fallible so that they could be revised in the light of new evidence. That at least is a shift from the main tradition of the theory of knowledge (rationalism) from Plato and perhaps ending with Locke. So instead of epistemology being undertaken a priori, pragmatists argue that it could be undertaken as an empirical investigation. It is here that the idea of knowledge as correspondence crops in. We see from the above that James and Dewey also did not abandon the correspondence theory. They agree with Peirce that truth is correspondence to reality. The supposition is that they want epistemology undertaken as empirical study. Haack's foundherentism, thus, is a species of pragmatic epistemology since it captures the idea of correspondence.

Rorty's case would have been different if after he rejected copy theories of epistemology like foundationalism, he opts for a form of coherentism. That way, he would have been considered a reformist under such a situation. But Rorty rejects coherence too. For Rorty, coherence theory allows for the application of pre-established, rational criteria to determine which belief fits in well with the

web of belief we already hold. But Rorty conversationalism has no pre-established criteria for determining which conversation makes sense or not. This is because we converse by using language and every language community knows the rules of the language. So what we need to do is just to keep talking, because we cannot cite criteria of what get included in a language (Rorty 1979).

In Putnam's case, though he rejects the correspondence theory, he wants us to still engage in some form of epistemology. However, he does not develop any theory of knowledge like Haack has done. So the form of epistemology Putnam wants us engage in has not been well identified. But Putnam's rejection of correspondence and his acceptance of the traditional theories of epistemology place him in a middle path position between the mainstream and the deviant pragmatists such as Rorty (Rockwell 2003). The problem with Putnam, we think, is that he rejects scientific or empirical realism and embraces another form of realism, that is, internal realism, the idea that truth or reality is internal to our internal perspective. Truth or reality is also to be considered independent of what majority of people believe so that whether a change is good or bad is logically independent of our belief about it (Putnam 1990: 24). It is this metaphysical implication of Putnam's realism, perhaps, that drags him into epistemology. If there is a reality internal to a perceiver's perspective and at the same time independent of the perceivers mind, then one may want to know that reality.

In all, what we have done in this chapter is to try to show how Rorty and the deviants of pragmatism strayed from pragmatism. Our criteria for determining

who is a mainstream pragmatist and who is not is basically founded on who repudiates and who does not repudiate epistemology.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LEGITIMIZATION OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter we defend the view that Rorty does not abandon epistemology even though he professes to have done so. But before we delve into discussing this position it is important to offer a recapitulation of Rorty's pragmatic epistemology. According to Rorty, the traditional foundationalist project needs to be abandoned because it is unintelligible. Moreover, the project confuses justification with mechanistic causal conditions of knowledge and seeks for indubitable and immutable truth that is unattainable (Rorty 1979). Rorty explains that the traditional foundationalist problem, though as old as Plato, was brought to the limelight by Descartes' creation of the mind; Locke's confusion of justification with causation and Kantian subsequent confusion of predicate with synthesis. On this construal, we see epistemology as resting on a metaphor of the mind trying to mirror reality accurately or inaccurately. But Rorty argues that there is nothing like external world or sense data which our minds must mirror.

According to Rorty, the assault waged by Sellars and Quine was enough to scuttle the epistemological enterprise. Sellars and Quine, Rorty is convinced, have shown respectively that there is nothing like the pre-linguistic awareness or sense data and there are no propositions that are immune from revision. Rorty argues

that Sellars and Quine's attacks on traditional epistemology indicate that traditional foundationalist epistemology is misconceived. In its place, he recommends conversation not as the successor subject but as a consolation, that the void created by the demise of epistemology is left unfilled. With this argument, Rorty believes that he has successfully overthrown epistemology. He promotes conversationalism in place of epistemology since in his view knowledge should be founded on the expression of judgment of a community of enquirers. Rorty believes that if we accept conversationalism as a method of justification, then traditional foundationalist epistemology becomes incoherent. Thus, Rorty concludes that the birth of his conversationalism marks the death of epistemology. Epistemology is dead and no successor discourse could fill the void created by the demise of epistemology.

Contrary to Rorty's conviction, we argue that his death of epistemology thesis rather reinstates epistemology. We offer two main arguments in this direction to support our position that Rorty's attempt at overthrowing traditional foundationalist epistemology and epistemology in general has not been successful.

The Confusion of Answer with Question

In chapter two we briefly presented an outline of various responses to the epistemological question, how do you know? These responses include: infinitism, coherentism, foundationalism, contextualism and foundherentism. Epistemic infinitism is the view that regress of inferential justification is infinite and no end

is ever reached in justification. Coherentism is the epistemic theory that holds that justification for any belief should end in a system of beliefs with which the justified belief coheres. Contextualism is the view that contextually basic beliefs whilst themselves lacking justificatory support can provide support for other beliefs. Foundationalism is the view that there exist some basic beliefs which are themselves justified and also provide justificatory support for other beliefs in a chain of justification. Finally, Foundherentism merges responses (II) and (IV) above. Foundherentists hold that experience can be relevant to justification of empirical belief but denying that justification is one directional. Having outlined briefly these responses, let's indicate by way of illustration how these responses are represented as a reply to the question: How does S know that p?

For the epistemic infinitist: S knows that p iff S can provide infinite justificatory support for p in a manner that S's provision of justificatory support for p will have no end.

For the coherentist: S knows that p iff p coheres with some other beliefs F in such a manner that p and F confer mutual justificatory support upon each other.

For the contextualist: S knows that p iff there are some contextually basic beliefs F which themselves lack justification but confer justificatory support on p

For the foundationalist: S knows that p iff S's belief that p is supported by some other beliefs F which themselves are non-inferentially justified and at the same time provide justificatory support for p.

For the foundherentist: S knows that p iff S's belief that p is founded on experience F in a way that p and F provides pervasive mutual support for each other.

The problem with Rorty is now quite obvious. He misconstrues one of these epistemic answers, precisely epistemic foundationalism, with the epistemological question: how do you know? Rorty's argument in brief has it that traditional foundationalist epistemology has outlived its usefulness because Sellars and Quine have shown that the enterprise is unattractive. Therefore he urges that we should abandon epistemology and adopt conversation as the alternative criteria for doing epistemology. But as we have tried to show in the above, traditional foundationalism is just one of the few answers posed to the perennial epistemological question: how do you? The question itself stands unaffected by Rorty's assault. So Rorty is not after all waging a war against epistemology; the branch of philosophy that studies about the nature, extent and limits of human knowledge but attacking an epistemological answer. His death of epistemology gambit is after all unwarranted when we take this into account. Accordingly, just like Locke is guilty of confusing causal relations with issues of justification and Kant guilty of confusing predicates with synthesis so is Rorty guilty of confusing epistemological question with answer.

We urge that the question that confronts Rorty should not be whether epistemology should be pronounced dead. But rather, the question should be asked in Rorty's own phraseology "whether the idea of epistemic authority having a 'ground' in nature is a coherent one" (Rorty 1979: 178). And if it is not then

how do we make reforms to this answer? But because Rorty thinks that doing epistemology is not like responding to a question but rather providing a kind of answer, he pronounces epistemology dead. So he treats epistemology not by the question it asks but the answer it gives. But as we have indicated earlier, if Rorty is only waging an assault against an epistemological answer this has no impact on the legitimacy of the epistemological enterprise itself. Rorty by thinking that foundationalism is synonymous with epistemology presents a parochial picture of epistemology as if all the answers offered to the epistemological question is epistemic foundationalism and therefore as long as we have stumbled upon flaws in the discussion of foundationalism then we should no longer do epistemology. Besides, this idea invites the argument that all epistemologists must accept that knowledge has foundation or they ceased to be worthy of that name. But this claim is misconceived as well. Even though foundationalism is a popular epistemological theory, it is not the only epistemological theory in existence. From the foregoing, we have tried to show that Rorty after all does not attack epistemology itself. What he succeeds in waging an assault on is epistemic foundationalism. But the question is; does he even succeed in overthrowing foundationalist epistemology?

The Reinstatement of Foundationalist Epistemology

Rorty seems to accept that the following constitute the definitions of his conversationalism:

(I). “It is merely to say that nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and that there is no way to get outside our beliefs and language so as to find some test other than coherence” (Rorty 1979: 178).

(II). “So all “fact of the matter about whether p is a warranted assertion” can mean is “a fact of the matter about our ability to feel solidarity with a community that views p as warranted”” (Rorty 1998: 53).

(III). “There are all sorts of occasions on which we say that our concept of X needs to be changed and old intuitions thrown overboard, not for metaphysical reasons, but for reasons that are called, depending on context, “Ethical”, or “practical” or “political?” (1998:56).

From the above showing (I) and (II) denotes conventionalism or tribalism. But (III) denotes contextualism. Conventionalism is the view that our claim to knowledge should be founded on the conventions or the already accepted beliefs or standards of one’s community. For the conventionalist, knowledge should be the expression of judgment of a social group and this judgment should be founded on standards, ideas and worldviews that govern this community. According to Rorty, rationality and epistemic authority should be founded by reference to what a society let us say. Rorty believes that epistemic norm is like a Wittgensteinian language game. If we understand the rules of the language then we will understand why certain moves are made in the game. Invariably, what Rorty means is that we stand a good chance of making epistemological assumptions within our community if and only if we understand the norms that guide those

epistemic assumptions. The following consequences are apparent within Rorty's doctrine:

- A. The notion that epistemic authority has a social foundation
- B. What makes an argument or an inference permissible is its relation to the norms legislated by the society
- C. These societal norms are basic and they provide justificatory support for person's belief.

Looking at the above consideration, Rorty espouses an outright foundationalism.

Again in (III) Rorty espouses contextualism, the view that contextually basic beliefs though themselves lack justificatory support may provide justification for other beliefs. The contextualist maintains that what one knows is relative to a context. Needs, desires, intentions and presuppositions of members of a community are features that shape the standards that one must meet in order for one's belief to count as knowledge. Contextualism allows for the possibility that different contexts set different epistemic standards. It flows from this thesis that epistemic standards do in fact vary from context to context.

Rorty agrees with this assertion when he remarks that his cautionary use of the word "true" is to point out that "justification is relative to an audience and that we can never exclude the possibility that some better audience might exist, or come to exist, to whom a belief that is justified to us would not be justifiable" (Rorty 1998:22). But whether a belief will be justified to an audience at time T or place y would depend on the context. It is the context that will dictate the best explanation of the epistemic judgment or standards that we should adopt. And as

such these contextual standards provide foundation for other beliefs. This granted, then contextualism is also a form of foundationalism. So we find out that conventionalism and contextualism are forms of foundationalism. As we have seen from this brief explication, Rorty endorses both foundationalisms yet he appears to reject foundationalism in general. This means that Rorty himself is a foundationalist. Rejecting foundationalism means Rorty seems to slashing the very branch on which he sits.

The upshot with the above analysis shows that Rorty presents a parochial picture of foundationalism. Rorty seems to think that once one version of foundationalism proves unattractive then the whole foundationalist enterprise should be abandoned. The version of foundationalism which Rorty think is representative of all versions of foundationalism is experiential foundationalism; the view that sensory experience, perceptual experience or sense data is basic and provide justificatory support for other beliefs which are non-basic. It is for this reason that Rorty argues that “once conversation replaces confrontation, the notion of the mind as mirror of Nature can be discarded. Then the notion of [epistemology] as the discipline which looks for privileged representations among those constituting the mirror becomes unintelligible” (Rorty 1979:170). But the question is: does Rorty succeed in overthrowing experiential foundationalism? The argument that follows will clarify this point.

If Rorty is a contextualist then he accepts that justification should be relative to a context. If justification is relative to a context then epistemic standards vary from context to context. But if epistemic standards differ from

context to context, then all epistemic standards have equal validity. This also means that “what can be justified to some audiences cannot be justified to others” (Rorty 1998: 27) given that the contexts vary. This means that Rorty advocates epistemic plurality (Boghossian 2006) the notion that all epistemic standards are at par and none is wrong or superior. But the problem is how we can determine which standards are right and which wrong. But first let us tease out the implication of Rorty’s epistemic plurality.

Rorty’s epistemic plurality will ensure that there are different strands of epistemic theories such as those indicated above that possess equal validity for their respective audience. If this is true then it will be a mistake for Rorty to think that experiential foundationalism should be abandoned. The idea that experiential foundationalism should be abandoned will invoke a contradiction. If Rorty accepts the deliverance of other epistemic systems to enjoy no higher epistemic status as his own conversationalism why then does he prescribe his alternative as enjoying a higher epistemic status? Why does he want foundationalism abandoned in place of conversationalism? Rorty’s acceptance of his system as superior to other systems, especially experiential foundationalism, reveals that he violates the concept of epistemic plurality, the central plank of his conversationalism. From all indications it appears Rorty does not value the concepts of heterogeneity, tolerance, incommensurability and so on, that are deeply embedded in his conversationalism. Neither does he understand the full implication of his theory. We think such negligence is responsible for Rorty’s call for the demise of experiential foundationalism. But as we have shown Rorty’s

conversationalism rather validates experiential foundationalism than overthrows it.

So far we have tried to show that Rorty does not succeed in overthrowing epistemology. As indicated in the above, Rorty conflates epistemological question with an answer. That is once the answer, epistemic foundationalism, is said to be unattractive, *pace* Quine and Sellars, then the whole epistemological question, how does S know that *p*, needs to be abandoned. We have tried to show that such an argument does not affect epistemology in any manner. So epistemology survives Rorty's death sentence. But if Rorty does not succeed in overthrowing epistemology; does he succeed in overthrowing epistemic foundationalism since it is the target of his assault? We also have shown that Rorty again does not succeed in overthrowing foundationalist epistemology. We argue that his attack on foundationalism is unjustified since he himself accepts some forms of foundationalism. Besides, we argue that such depiction of foundationalist epistemology presents a parochial picture of the enterprise. This is because what Rorty really wants dead is experiential foundationalism which he mistakenly thinks is a representation of all foundationalisms. Again, does Rorty succeed in overthrowing experiential foundationalism? Here again, we see that Rorty does not succeed in overthrowing experiential foundationalism. We note that Rorty's conversationalism professes that there are many radically different epistemic methods yet equally valid ways of knowing the world. This granted, Rorty's conversationalism would accommodate rather than dismiss experiential foundationalism. Here, again, experiential foundationalism survives Rorty's

assault. Having done these brief analyses on whether Rorty succeed in overthrowing epistemology, we shall look briefly at Rorty's conversationalism within the framework of constructivism. Here we shall try to look at the problems that could evolve from conflict of standards. If Rorty claims that different epistemic standards are at par, then which epistemic standard prevails if two or more standards are in conflict. We look at this in relation to his concept of truth.

Rorty, Truth and Constructivism

Constructivism is the view that knowledge is a social product. It is an epistemological standpoint, according to which the truth of a belief is not a matter of how things stand with an independent existing reality; and its rationality is not a matter of its approval by transcendent procedures of rational assessment. So constructivists believe that since we have no grasp of transcendental reality, our world is a humanly constructed world (Osei 2008: 68). The motivation for constructivism is basically for the development of conception of knowledge that involves the idea of social construction. The basic tenets of constructivism are contrasted with what Boghossian refers to as the "The Classical Picture of Knowledge" according to which;

1. a "The world we seek to understand and know about is what it is largely independent of us and our beliefs about it"
2. a " Facts of the form –information E justifies belief B –are society independent fact" and

3. a “Under appropriate circumstances, our exposure to the evidence alone is capable of explaining why we believe what we believe” (Boghossian 2006:22).

Constructivist conception of knowledge disputes each of these claims of the classical conception of knowledge and offers an alternative account as follows:

1. b “The world which we seek to understand and know about is not what it is independently of us and our social context; rather, all facts are socially constructed in a way that reflects our contingent needs and interests”
2. b “facts of the form -information E justifies belief B- are not what they are independently of us and our social context; rather, all such facts are constructed in a way that reflects our contingent needs and interests”
3. c It is never possible to explain why we believe what we believe solely on the basis of our exposure to the relevant evidence; our contingent needs and interest must also be invoked” (Boghossian 2006:22-23).

These constructivist theses underline Rorty’s notion of truth and his conception of reality. According to Rorty truth is not correspondence of the external world but rather a name given to those beliefs that prevail in the market place of ideas (Rorty 1998:3). “Truth is made, not found” (Rorty 1989:3) and there is no absolute truth that lies anywhere beyond human cognition. Within Rorty’s mode of thinking we shouldn’t dissipate our effort striving for truth as correspondence; rather we should see truth as a way of coping with reality (Rorty 1991a:1). This in truth invites a problem.

Rorty in our earlier submission pronounces that there is no external reality because Sellars had discovered that the idea of external reality made no sense in our claim to knowledge. Yet Rorty recognizes that truth should provide a framework for coping with reality. What reality does Rorty refer to? One's own constructed reality, of course. It means that Rorty after all does not abandon the idea of experience forming the foundation of our knowledge claims.

Perhaps Rorty might have recognized this difficulty and so does not refer to himself as a constructivist. Rather he prefers to be associated with minimalism (Rorty 1998:21), the view that there are no general problems about what makes sentences or propositions true (Blackburn 2005:235). The minimalist, sometimes called quietist or deflationist or disquotationalist argues that there is nothing to say about truth. Toeing the minimalist line, Rorty argues that truth is not the goal of enquiry; "to say that truth is our goal is merely to say something like 'we hope to justify our belief to as many and as large audiences as possible'" (Rorty 1998:3). If Rorty says that there is nothing like truth then he needs to account for a difficulty. First, his conversationalism asserts that knowledge should be what a social group let us say. But a social group does not just endorse a belief unless the members of such group accept that belief as true. On this showing our argument runs like this; S believes that p, p is supported by the norms of a social group. These norms are not only accepted by the society S belongs, but are also regarded as true. Hence, S is justified in believing p and p is true. This is an indication that Rorty still talks about truth though he wishes to be seen as a quietist on the issue of truth.

Rorty's minimalism, from our perspective, does not disengage him from indulging in constructivist discourses. His idea that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon is still evident in his conversationalism. This is because for Rorty, justification is exclusively relative to an audience and there are many audiences as well as many world views and norms. The test on whether my world view is right is dependent on whether it enables me to procure a successful life or whether the belief is a useful tool for constructing my own world (Osei 2008:69). But as Wilshire has pointed out "useful tools" 'fit the world' in some sense or they wouldn't be useful" (Wilshire 1997:105). As we have been saying, it is this world, external world, which Rorty abandons yet it always seems implicit in his epistemology.

Going back to Rorty's constructivism, it is expedient to identify the problems of constructivism of which the issue of conflict of standards is central. Constructivism raises the following difficulties. First, there is the problem of causation, how can our description or our personal view point cause the existence of things, say the existence of mountains, whose existence seems to antedate ours? The second problem is the problem of conceptual competence, i.e., how can we hold coherently that things like electrons are dependent on our descriptions, given that part of the concept of electrons is that their existence is independent of our human cognition and the third problem is the problem of disputes of standards. The problem of dispute of standards has it that given the contingent nature of our social needs, interest, desires and activities, how can constructivism avoid violating the law of non-contradiction? How could it be true that the world

is flat (fact constructed by pre-Aristotelian Greeks) and that it is spherical (the fact constructed by us) (Boghossian 2006: 40). According to Boghossian Rorty tries to get around this problem by going thoroughly relativistic i.e., by postulating that all talks of fact are relativistic and the way the world is is dependent or relative to a theory, language game, way of talking and so on (Boghossian 2006: 44-47).

Boghossian distinguishes between description dependent of fact, characteristic of Putnam and Goodman's constructivism which says: that there cannot be a fact of the matter as to how things are with the world independent of our propensity to describe the world and Rortian social relativism of description which argues that which scheme we adopt to describe the world will depend on which scheme we find it useful to adopt and which scheme we find it useful to adopt will depend on our contingent needs and interest as social beings (Boghossian 2006:28-29).

We believe that Rorty does not get around this problem with his social relativism of description like Boghossian has suggested. Even though the description of the world is socially dependent in relation to the contingent needs of the people, as Rorty seem to suggest, such a claim does not rule out the fact that there would be plurality of norms. Having plurality of norms will suggest that there should be plurality of interest and standards. For instance, supposing that members of a community A kill their first born children for a dinner in praise of their god for giving them children. Another group B thinks that first born children should never be allowed to leave their parents home because they shall be

inheriting their father's wealth. Another community C could have a different treatment for their first born as well. Which of these standards becomes acceptable in case there is a conflict of standards in the treatment of first born children? Whose standards should we adopt and who forfeit his or her standard?

The truth of the matter is that there are no absolute facts, in Platonic terms and we agree with Rorty on that. But we don't disagree that there are objective fact or objective way of describing the world. Such objectivity normally arises from intersubjective experiences. If different communities come to accept a fact of the matter based on their intersubjective experience, and though the origin of their beliefs is subjective at the time of agreement, such subjective or relative experiences become objective.

In fact, various forms of experiential foundationalism which Rorty has attacked have been modified to withstand such criticisms. Apart from strong foundationalism which regards foundational beliefs to be indubitable, certain and immutable, various forms of modest foundationalism have eschewed such absolutist notion of knowledge and have embraced objectivism. In various versions of modest foundationalism, basic beliefs are not immune from revision, so beliefs can be defeasible, i.e., beliefs that are found to have problems are abandoned for new basic beliefs. Such a system does not grant that we have absolute truth in Platonic sense, but rather objective truth from inter-subjective point of view.

From our point of view, we don't disagree with Rorty that there are different epistemic norms fundamental to different communities. But we agree

that there should always be a 'better' standard which should serve as a guide or reference point in case there is conflict of standards. Such acceptance of a particular standard as 'better' does not render such a standard absolute. Neither does it imply that the other standards are inferior, but rather such systems help us and guide us through life in relation to our contingent needs and interest and also in the interest of our fellow human beings.

Summary and Conclusion

The first chapter is the introduction of this study. In the second chapter we discuss foundationalist epistemology. Here we talked briefly about the concept of justification which led to the various responses to the perennial epistemological question; how do you know? After presenting these responses in brief, we discuss foundationalist epistemology in-depth. We discussed the weakness of foundationalist epistemology in order to know why Rorty thinks that the enterprise should be pronounced moribund. The third chapter is an expose of Rorty's neo-pragmatic epistemology. Here we discuss briefly the classical pragmatist doctrine from the perspectives of Peirce, James and Dewey. The motivation is to prepare the ground for us to discuss Rorty's neo-pragmatism. In the fourth chapter we look at how Rorty deviated from main stream pragmatism. We observe that Putnam and Haack somehow do not abandon epistemology as a rational and normative discipline as Rorty does. On that showing, we conclude that Rorty's pronouncement of the death of epistemology is too revolutionary and alien to the pragmatist doctrine. In chapter five we show why we think Rorty does

not succeed in pronouncing epistemology dead. We also show that Rorty's constructivism will breed the problem of conflicts of standards. We canvass that we should have an objective way of looking at the world around us for the sake of uniformity in standards.

The position we have assumed does not reject Rorty's pragmatic epistemology, neither do we place preference on foundationalist epistemology for surviving Rorty's attack. The thesis we espouse has been fair to the two schools of thought. This objective, we believe, is more novel than the wrangle that both Rortian adherents and adherents of traditional foundationalist have engaged in so far over the supremacy of their respective disciplines. Our concern is to offer an agreement between Rortian scholars and foundationalist scholars over the legitimacy of their respective disciplines.

What we have done is that first, we attempted to debunk Rorty's position that epistemology is dead. That has been our primary focus. The strategy has been to cool the nerves of traditional foundationalist epistemologists who believe that their enterprise stands threatened by Rorty's assault. We have espoused that after all Rorty does not succeed in dismantling traditional foundationalist epistemology.

In the same vein, we do not reject conversationalism though we made mention that Rorty's conversationalism reinstates foundationalism. Indeed, in this thesis, we did not attack conversationalism; we only draw some logical implications from it that reinstates foundationalist epistemology. What we have tried to show is that Rorty's conversationalism qualifies as one of the answers to

the traditional epistemological question; what do you know? Or what justifies S in asserting that p? This in Rortian sense can be answered as: S believes that p iff p is supported by proposition F in such a manner that F is a convention or norm which is recognized by the community in which S is a member. On this showing, we recommend that the birth of Rorty's conversationalism should not be seen as marking the death of epistemology. So we treat Rorty's conversationalism as offering an answer to the traditional epistemological question; how does S know that p? Hence, conversationalism, infinitism, contextualism, foundationalism, coherentism as well as foundherentism are different responses to the same epistemological question.

This aside, we have shown that Rorty does not overthrow epistemological foundationalism in general and experiential foundationalist epistemology in particular though they are the targets of his assaults. We conclude that Rorty's conversationalism advocates pluralism of doctrines and so such pluralism will have to accommodate rival systems such as experiential foundationalism. In the case of foundationalism in general, we argue that Rorty presents a parochial picture of foundationalism. By looking at foundationalism from a narrow perspective it virtually does not occur to Rorty that his conversationalism is a form of foundationalism. Therefore, while he purports to have successfully abandoned traditional foundationalist epistemology he was nonetheless endorsing one other form of foundationalist epistemology.

Notable scholars have waged assaults on Rorty due to his death of epistemology thesis. But it appears such philosophers have not taken ample

opportunity to assess the central principle of Rorty's conversationalism. So Rorty and some of his critics as well have come to accept that Rorty's pronouncement of the death of epistemology is really so. What we have done in this study is to refute such assertion. We have tried to show that Rorty does not really pronounce epistemology dead.

Besides, we have tried to show how Rorty strayed from the original pragmatist doctrine. Pragmatism presents a complex and interlocking thesis. Peirce, James and Dewey, the classical pragmatists, have presented various assortments of pragmatic principles ranging from scientific realism, nominalism and a combination of both realism and nominalism. Thus it becomes quite difficult when it comes to reinterpreting the original pragmatist doctrine. Rorty has been attacked by his colleagues in the pragmatic tradition, Putnam and Haack for abandoning the central doctrine of the original pragmatism as espoused by Peirce, James and Dewey. From our findings, it happens that Rorty has really strayed from pragmatism. We acknowledge that the classical pragmatists do not abandon experience, rationality, and normativity as constituting the foundation of our knowledge claims as Rorty has done. Thus, we have accomplished two feats. The first accomplishment is to debunk the claim that Rorty pronounces epistemology dead as he purports to have shown. The second is to show how Rorty diverged from the pragmatist terrain in the treatment of his neo-pragmatic epistemology.

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