

PRAGMATISM AND HERMENEUTICS:
RORTY, JAMES AND GADAMER ON TRUTH

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Inspired by Richard Rorty's attempt to exploit both pragmatism and philosophical hermeneutics in support of his own end of epistemology project, the dissertation presents a comparative study of William James' pragmatic theory of truth and Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic account of human understanding.

Chapter 1 examines Rorty's end of philosophy project and his critique of truth as correspondence. It identifies three fundamental orientations of his thought, namely, the rejection of: representationalism, the ideal of transcendence, and scientism. It examines his claim that the pragmatic theory of truth and philosophical hermeneutic account of understanding are best understood as thorough repudiations of the representational intuition and the ambition for transcendence that inform the traditional meaning of philosophy and truth. It identifies the two aims of the thesis: first, to compare William James' pragmatic theory of truth and Hans-Georg Gadamer's account of human understanding, and second, to critically reflect on Rorty's general deconstruction of truth in light of the findings.

Chapter 2 presents a straightforward interpretation of William James' pragmatic theory of truth bearing Rorty's three orientations in mind. It employs three questions as interpretive guides: How does James' concept of truth stand in relation to the representational intuition? How does it stand in relation to the ideal of transcendence? How does it challenge scientism? The chapter situates James' theory of truth in relation to his psychological

theory, his polemic against the positivists of his day, and his understanding of pragmatism. The analysis demonstrates that while James' primary concern was to describe the temporal and situated conditions that define our concrete, (i.e. pragmatic) experience of truth, he never entirely abandoned the representational intuition nor discredited the ambition for transcendence that also must be said to contribute to the meaning of truth. In relation to scientism, James argued that numerous criteria, rooted in the totality of human interests and powers, are constantly operative in the concrete verification process. The truth value of any belief can be established only by its capacity to meet the totality of criteria over time. This left open the way to religious discourse and more, according to James.

Chapter 3 compares Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic account of understanding to James' theory of truth. It demonstrates their agreement concerning the primordial, interpretive structure of thought and the temporal, situated nature of truth. It claims that Gadamer's distinction between truth in the natural and human sciences improves on James somewhat by permitting the rehabilitation of a notion of hermeneutical truth distinct from science which places the linear progress of science within the larger historicity of the human experience of truth. The chapter points out that Gadamer also can be said to maintain the representational intuition and the ideal of transcendence.

This chapter reveals that Gadamer, like James, wants to correct false thinking about science and truth. Both reject scientism. Consequently, they propose a more primordial and universal account of human understanding and truth

than is circumscribed by science and scientific method per se. Both understand the breach between scientific consciousness and aesthetic, moral and religious consciousness to be the central problem of modern thought. Gadamer and James present a concrete account of truth. They argue that truth and understanding are conditioned by human situatedness and time. Gadamer's concept of understanding is developed within a generalized account of experience, just as James' idea of truth emerges from a descriptive account of the verification process. Gadamer, however, wants to define truth in the human sciences. Therefore, he more explicitly considers the historical meaning of truth inclusive of the notion of "application."

Chapter 4 presents a critical reflection on Rorty's general deflation of truth in light of the comparative reading of James and Gadamer. It argues that Rorty remains entrapped by Cartesian metaphysical doubt and the identification of truth with certainty and that this leads to the extremity of his incoherent repudiation of the traditional notion of truth informed by the representational intuition and the ambition for transcendence. The argument looks to Gadamer's account of the primordial unity of word and object as the ultimate source of the representational intuition. It develops James' teleological account of the relation between truth and time in order to show that the ambition for transcendence inextricably contributes to the meaning of truth and the liberal irony Rorty prizes. It argues that the notion of finality cannot coherently be extricated from the concept of truth.

This chapter attempts to make clear how non-negotiable are the ambition for transcendence and the representationalist intuition, in contributing to the

coherency of theoretical inquiry as such. It also argues that the essence of the liberal ironist society that Rorty promotes is entirely dependent upon the conception of inquiry that he denies. Rorty incongruously denies the representationalist intuition and the need for transcendence, whereas James and Gadamer, ultimately, do not. They choose instead to retain the intuition and ideal while at the same time insisting upon the temporal and situated conditions of truth.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following is a list of abbreviations of works used in the dissertation written by or related to the three philosophers examined.

RICHARD RORTY

PMN	<i>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</i>
CP	<i>Consequences of Pragmatism</i>
CIS	<i>Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity</i>
ORT	<i>Objectivity, Relativism and Truth</i>
EHO	<i>Essay on Heidegger and Others</i>

WILLIAM JAMES

PP	<i>The Principles of Psychology</i>
WWJ	<i>Thw Writings of William James</i>
MT	<i>The Meaning of Truth</i>
WB	<i>The Will to Believe</i>
EP	<i>Essays in Philosophy</i>
LWJ	<i>The Letters of William James</i>
TCWJ	<i>The Thought and Character of William James</i>

HANS-GEORG GADAMER

PH	<i>Philosophical Hermeneutics</i>
TM	<i>Truth and Method</i>
RAS	<i>Reason in the Age of Science</i>
BT	<i>Being and Tme</i>

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CHAPTER ONE - RORTY: PRAGMATISM AND HERMENEUTICS

Richard Rorty claims that modern philosophy has identified itself with epistemology. He argues that philosophy as theory of knowledge is connected to particular assumptions about the mind, knowledge and truth, and to derivative assumptions about its own purpose and task within society which stem from the thought of Descartes, Locke and Kant. According to Rorty, however, these assumptions have been shown to be untenable by a number of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers, e.g. James, Dewey, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kuhn, Sellars, and Quine. Thus, the enterprise of philosophy as epistemology is a failure, a dead end, and should give way to philosophy as edification. Philosophy as edification is best conceived in light of a pragmatic notion of truth and hermeneutic account of human understanding.

The particular assumptions concerning the mind, knowledge and truth which proceed from the thought of Descartes, Locke and Kant include the following: the mind is a distinct and separate entity which is able to know itself in a privileged manner with clarity and certainty; knowing is a matter of mental processes which, when described, define the limits of knowledge; representation is the essential process of knowledge and there are privileged representations; truth is a matter of the accurate correspondence of representations to external objects; there is an irreducible difference between the necessary and the contingent, between matters of fact and value, between extension and intension. These specific assumptions regarding knowledge and truth, coupled with more ancient metaphors governing Medieval and Greek philosophy (e.g. knowledge as the sighting of eternal truths; truth as

the mirroring of nature, the world, being) produce another set of assumptions concerning the essence, purpose and possibilities of philosophy itself, notably that philosophy as epistemology is a foundational enterprise. It is in a position to give a definitive, objective, presuppositionless account of the nature, structure, and most importantly, the limits of human knowledge. Philosophy as a discipline can justify the knowledge claims of all aspects of culture.

Rorty's project rejects both sets of assumptions. He repudiates the representational view of knowledge and the correspondence theory of truth. In consequence he denies the foundational aspirations of philosophy as epistemology.

Rorty looks to pragmatism and philosophical hermeneutics as providing a different way for philosophers to understand philosophy because he believes neither pragmatism nor philosophical hermeneutics embrace any of the assumptions which define philosophy as epistemology. Rorty proposes a new understanding of philosophy based upon a pragmatic notion of truth linked with a hermeneutic account of human understanding. He understands pragmatism and hermeneutics to be fundamentally congenial in their conceptions of truth and human understanding. Since the aim of this thesis is to compare the pragmatic notion of truth and the hermeneutic account of human understanding apropos of Rorty's project, in this chapter I reconstruct the main lines of Rorty's interpretation of pragmatism and hermeneutics. I examine his understanding of their common elements and their application towards an alternative conception of philosophy. The chapter is divided into five parts. First, I sketch Rorty's conception of philosophy as epistemology. Second, I outline his general viewpoint, called "epistemological

behaviorism" which he identifies with pragmatism. This section provides an initial insight into Rorty's understanding of pragmatism. Third, I examine his interpretation of pragmatism more explicitly. Fourth, I examine his interpretation of hermeneutics which serves as the basis for his conception of philosophy as edification. This section reveals Rorty's understanding of the important similarities between pragmatism and hermeneutics. The concluding section of the chapter outlines the parameters of the thesis' comparative study of pragmatism and hermeneutics in relation to Rorty's "end of philosophy" project.

This chapter, for the most part, relies upon *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Since I am principally concerned with Rorty's interpretation of pragmatism and hermeneutics and not the comprehensive argument of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, I focus upon Chapter 3 and the final two chapters (7 and 8) of the text.

PHILOSOPHY AS EPISTEMOLOGY

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty presents a brief (and for some philosophers, a controversial) historical account of the process which gave rise to the identification of philosophy with epistemology and its subsequent professionalization as a separate discipline. According to Rorty the process involved three steps which coincide with the thought of Descartes, Locke and Kant.

We owe the notion of a "theory of knowledge" based on an understanding of "mental processes" to the seventeenth century, and especially to Locke. We owe the notion of the "the mind" as separate entity in which "processes" occur to the same period, and especially to Descartes. We owe the notion of Philosophy as the tribunal of pure reason, upholding or denying the claims of the rest of culture to the eighteenth century, and especially to Kant, but this Kantian notion

presupposed general assent to Lockean notions of mental process and Cartesian notions of mental substance.¹

Thus, the first step on the road to philosophy as epistemology was Descartes' "invention of the Mind" (PMN 136) and his identification of knowledge with accurate representations reducible to indubitable, privileged representations. Descartes provided the mentalist orientation of modern philosophy which allowed the problem of representations to become the focus of the problem of knowledge. Philosophy had to explain how reality could be represented accurately, with certainty, by the mind. Descartes' subjectivist revolt, encouraged by the epistemological scepticism of the seventeenth century, made the status of representations, "the veil of ideas," the central problem of knowledge for philosophy.² It is precisely this association of knowledge with representations that Rorty criticizes.

I shall try to back up the claim (common to Wittgenstein and Dewey) that to think of knowledge which presents a 'problem,' and about which we ought to have a 'theory,' is a product of viewing knowledge as an assemblage of representations. . . . The moral to be drawn is that if this way of thinking of knowledge is optional, then so is epistemology, and so is philosophy as it has understood itself since the middle of the last century. (PMN 236)

As we shall see Rorty's "epistemological behaviorism," i.e. his pragmatic conception of knowledge and truth, is meant to be a repudiation of the identification of knowledge with accurate representations.

The second step in the historical process, according to Rorty, was Locke's confusion "between a mechanistic account of the operations of our mind and the 'grounding' of our claims to knowledge." (PMN 140) Rorty identifies this confusion as the confusion between "explanation" and "justification." It is the confusion between explaining or defining truth and knowledge, on the

one hand, in terms of a causal account of mental processes and, on the other hand, in terms of the communicative practices of society which legitimize assent to beliefs. This is a legitimacy provided by social processes of human conversation and language use. Rorty considers the confusion between justification and explanation to be "the basic confusion in the idea of a 'theory of knowledge.'" (PMN 161) Thus, the identification of this confusion is the ruling thesis of Rorty's overall argument and significantly informs his interpretation of pragmatism, hermeneutics and alternative conceptions of philosophy. It coincides in a fundamental way with his rejection of the Cartesian identification of knowledge with accurate representation since the Cartesian and the Lockean moments are intrinsically interconnected.

Rorty argues that a causal account of inner mental events which appeared to explain how beliefs (representations) were generated was not distinguished by Locke from the communicative habits or common linguistic practices which established the justification for holding such beliefs. Truth and Knowledge were defined in terms of the inner mental processes and representations which seem to give rise to the beliefs rather than in terms of the external customs or social linguistic practices which justify knowledge claims. Rorty argues that Locke did not make this distinction because he did not think of knowledge as a relation between a person and a proposition; rather, he thought of it as the relation between a person and an object. This is the confusion of "knowledge that" with "knowledge of."

The third and final step in the process of the identification of philosophy with epistemology was Kant's continuation of Locke's confusion by his doctrine of the synthesizing function of reason. Rorty claims that "to understand the idea of 'epistemology' as the twentieth century inherited it, we need to turn

from Locke's confusion between explanation and justification to Kant's confusion between predication (saying something about an object) and synthesis (putting representations together in inner space)." (PMN 148) Rorty argues that Kant confused predication with synthesis by thinking that an account of the latter explains the knowledge claim of the former.³

For a person to form a predicative judgment is for him to come to believe a sentence to be true. For a Kantian transcendental ego to come to believe a sentence to be true is for it to relate representations (Vorstellungen) to one another: two radically distinct sorts of representations, concepts on the one hand and intuitions on the other. (PMN 148)

In other words, according to Rorty, Kant conceived the problem of knowledge, as did Locke, in terms of the inner workings of the mind, i.e. the synthesis of intuitions and concepts, rather than in terms of a person's relation to sentences or propositions as such. In fact, like Locke, Kant makes no clear distinction between a causal account of the possibility of judgments and a justification of those judgments. Rather he entrenched the confusion with his focus on the mental structures of intuitions and concepts and the synthesizing function of reason. "He (Kant) talked about inner representations rather than sentences. He simultaneously gave us a history of our subject, fixed its problematic, and professionalized it." (PMN 149) Rorty claims that Kant, in effect, created the modern version of the history of philosophy "according to which pre-Kantian philosophy was a struggle between 'rationalism,' which wanted to reduce sensations to concepts, and 'empiricism,' which wanted the inverse." (PMN 148) This identified the history of philosophy with the modern epistemological project.

Thought is only *philosophical* if like Kant's, it looks for causes of, rather than merely reasons for, claims to empirical knowledge, and if the resulting causal account is compatible with anything which

psychological inquiry might come up with. Philosophical thinking of the sort which finds this duality inescapable is supposed to do more than just tell us that normally we have knowledge when we have justified true belief, referring us to common sense and common practice for details about what counts as justification. It is supposed to explain *how knowledge is possible*, and to do that in some a priori way which both goes beyond common sense and yet avoids any need to mess about with neurons, or rats, or questionnaires. (PMN 151)

In summary, Rorty believes that it was the focus on representations and the confusion between explanation and justification that permitted philosophy to think of itself as a nonempirical, foundational discipline, a truth defining discipline that could adjudicate the knowledge claims of all other disciplines and of culture as a whole.

Philosophy can be foundational in respect to the rest of culture because culture is the assemblage of claims to knowledge, and philosophy adjudicates such claims. It can do so because it understands the foundations of knowledge and it finds these foundations in the study of man-as-knower, of the 'mental processes' or the 'activity of representation' which make knowledge possible. To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind; so to understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to construct such representations. Philosophy's central concern is to be a general theory of representations, a theory which will divide culture up into areas which represent reality well, those which represent it less well, and those which do not represent it at all (despite their pretense to do so). (PMN 3)

Philosophy-as-epistemology will be the search for the immutable structures within which knowledge, life and culture must be contained--structures set by the privileged representations which it studies. The neo-Kantian consensus thus appears as the end-product of an original wish to substitute *confrontation* for *conversation* as the determinant of our belief. (PMN 163)

Rorty argues that Kant's distinction between intuitions and concepts, as inner representations, is the ultimate fruit of the subjectivist project of modernity and should not be identified, for example, with Plato's distinction between

sense and intellect. Plato's distinction is not about mental entities i.e. inner representations. However, Rorty believes that Kant's notions share in the more ancient, arbitrary perceptual metaphor of knowledge and the causal account of knowledge begun by Plato. Rorty claims that Plato analyzed the problem of certainty and truth in terms of the qualities of objects perceived. Mathematical objects were perceived as necessary unlike contingent sensible objects. Plato attempted to explain the certainty and truth of propositions by the qualities of objects perceived. The quality of the objects perceived were understood to cause the certainty and truth of the proposition.

[T]he notion of 'foundations of knowledge'--truths which are certain because of their causes rather than because of the arguments given for them--is the fruit of the Greek (and specifically Platonic) analogy between perceiving and knowing. The essential feature of the analogy is that knowing a proposition to be true is to be identified with being caused to do something by an object. The object which the proposition is about imposes the proposition's truth. The idea of 'necessary truth' is just the idea of a proposition which is believed because the 'grip' of the object upon us is ineluctable. Such a truth is necessary in the sense in which it is sometimes necessary to believe that what is before our eyes looks red--there is a power, not ourselves which compels us. (PMN 157-58)

Rorty rejects the Platonic causal connection between object and proposition just as he rejects what he considers to be the modern confusion between explanation and justification. This leads him to one formulation of the main thesis of his work.

If, however, we think of 'rational certainty' as a matter of victory in argument rather than of relation to an object known, we shall look toward our interlocutors rather than to our faculties for the explanation of the phenomenon. . . . Our certainty will be a matter of conversation between persons, rather than a matter of interaction with nonhuman reality. So we shall not see a difference in kind between "necessary" and "contingent" truths. At most, we shall see differences in degree of ease in objecting to our beliefs. (PMN 156)

Given this interpretation of the history of philosophy, Rorty's project for the end of philosophy as epistemology seeks to overcome the habit of identifying truth and knowledge with accurate representations; a habit claimed to be connected to confusing explanation with justification. Rorty wants to conceive philosophy anew and he believes that the pragmatic conception of truth and the philosophical hermeneutic account of understanding outline a paradigm for such a transformation. The comparative study I offer of James' conception of truth and Gadamer's account of understanding keeps this problematic in mind. I ask the question, how far does pragmatism and philosophical hermeneutics, as respectively defined by James and Gadamer, travel along the Rortian road of anti-representationalism toward the end of philosophy?

EPISTEMOLOGICAL BEHAVIORISM: ANOTHER NAME FOR PRAGMATISM

Rorty claims that the post-Hegelian thought of such thinkers as James, Dewey, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Dilthey, which challenged the project of philosophy as epistemology by raising naturalist and historicist objections was set back by Husserl's and Russell's return to the Kantian mathematical spirit in philosophy, i.e. the search for absolute certainty, apodictic truths, "privileged representations". Husserl proclaimed "essences" and Russell put forth "logical form" as the locus for privileged representations and the unique foundational nature of philosophy. However, developments within both the phenomenological and the analytic traditions, ironically derivative of their thought (Sartre and Heidegger; Quine and Sellars), have resurrected elements of the naturalist and historicist critique. Thus, the assumed privileged position of philosophy is once again put in question. If there are

no privileged representations which philosophy alone discovers, then perhaps the notion of philosophy so defined should be abandoned. In support of this position Rorty states, "The story I want to tell . . . is merely how the notion of two sorts of representations--intuition and concepts--fell into disrepute in the latter days of the analytic movement." (PMN 168) Quine and Sellars, according to Rorty, are the analytic philosophers principally responsible for the demise of these alleged privileged representations.

Rorty argues that the Kantian distinction between "intuitions" and "concepts" has been identified with the parallel distinction between the "given" and what is "added by the mind," between the "contingent" and the "necessary," and finally, with Russell and the Vienna Circle, between the "true by virtue of experience" and "true by virtue of meaning." However, Quine's and Sellars' critique of the accepted understanding of these so-called privileged representations puts in question the conception of philosophy as an autonomous, foundational discipline. According to Rorty, Quine and Sellars help demonstrate,

that the notion of knowledge as the assemblage of accurate representations is optional--that it may be replaced by a pragmatist conception of knowledge which eliminates the Greek contrast between contemplation and action, between representing the world and coping with it. A historical epoch dominated by Greek ocular metaphors may, I suggest, yield to one in which the philosophical vocabulary incorporating these metaphors seems as quaint as the animistic vocabulary of pre-classical times. (PMN 11)

Rorty understands Sellars and Quine to have developed holistic, behavioristic critiques of the Kantian foundations of analytic philosophy. Rorty identifies their critiques as "Epistemological behaviorism (which might be called simply 'pragmatism,' were this term not a bit overladen)." (PMN 176) Sellars attacks the notion of the "given." Quine challenges the

necessary-contingent distinction. Rorty reiterates the central thesis of the text as it relates to Quine and Sellars:

Their holism is a product of their commitment to the thesis that justification is not a matter of a special relation between ideas (or words) and objects, but of conversation, of social practice. . . . Sellars and Quine invoke the same argument, one which bears equally against the given-versus-nongiven and the necessary-versus-contingent distinctions. The crucial premise of this argument is that we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and thus have no need to view it as accuracy of representation. (PMN 170)

Before proceeding with Rorty's reading of Quine and Sellars, it is important for the reader to understand that I am not interested in the veracity of his interpretation of them. I am not interested in whether or not he has read these philosophers correctly, according to their own self-understanding. (Rorty himself acknowledges a distance between what they have said and what he believes they should have said.) Rather, I take his interpretations to be interesting exploitations of their thought constituting a distinct and extreme philosophical vision having its own integrity demanding its own response.

As stated, Rorty names the view that emerges from the Quine and Sellars critiques "epistemological behaviorism" which he identifies with pragmatism. Thus, his account of epistemological behaviorism provides initial insight into his understanding of pragmatism and the alternative conception of philosophy he wants to develop. A central idea of his interpretation of pragmatism is the claim that truth and knowledge is more a matter of social justification than accurate representation of reality. Rorty claims that Quine and Sellars are in agreement in the belief that "assertions are justified by society rather than by the character of the inner

representations they express" (PMN 174) Thus, "Explaining rationality and epistemic authority by reference to what society lets us say, rather than the latter by the former, is the essence of what I shall call 'epistemological behaviorism.' . . . It claims that if we understand the rules of a language-game, we understand all that there is to understand about why moves in that language-game are made." (PMN 174) Epistemological behaviorism claims that understanding social communication is all that is necessary in comprehending the justification of knowledge claims. It rejects the notion that justification requires any form of a priori psychological or ontological explanation. In so doing it rejects the notion that there is any unique "philosophical" way of accounting for, grounding or guaranteeing knowledge. Epistemological behaviorism replaces traditional epistemology with social history. It is within social history that an account of the justification of knowledge will be found. "It is the claim that philosophy will have no more to offer than common sense (supplemented by biology, history, etc.) about knowledge and truth." (PMN 176) Epistemological behaviorism denies any special normative function to philosophy. It is the rejection of the idea of philosophy as a discipline.

Epistemological behaviorism, unlike traditional epistemology, contends that the authority of any assertion resides in communicative agreement rather than the correspondence of mental phenomena to external realities which epistemology alone can explain. No other account of the authority is needed or possible. "The Sellars-Quine approach differs from the empiricist and rationalist traditions about whether, once we understand (as historians of knowledge do) when and why various beliefs have been adopted or discarded, there is something called 'the relations of knowledge to reality' left over to be

understood." (PMN 178) Quine and Sellars emphasize the existing communicative coherence when describing knowledge and truth and de-emphasize any notion of a static correspondence of representations to independent reality.

For the Quine-Sellars approach to epistemology, to say that truth and knowledge can only be judged by the standards of the inquirers of our own day is not to say that human knowledge is less noble or important, or more 'cut off from the world' than we had thought. 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 our language so as to find some test other than coherence. (PMN 178)

Epistemological behaviorism rejects an assumption essential to philosophy as epistemology. It denies the presupposition of a perpetual independent field which somehow grounds knowledge and is discoverable by philosophers. It denies that there are any privileged representations of any kind. In rejecting this assumption it rejects the conception of philosophy which holds it and seeks to confirm it.

The kind of behaviorism which dispenses with foundations is in a fair way toward dispensing with philosophy. For the view that there is no permanent neutral matrix within which the dramas of inquiry and history are enacted has as a corollary that criticism of one's culture can only be piecemeal and partial—never 'by reference to eternal standards.' It threatens the neo-Kantian image of philosophy's relation to science and to culture. The urge to say that assertions and actions must not only cohere with other assertions and actions but 'correspond' to something apart from what people are saying and doing has some claim to be called *the philosophical urge*. (PMN 179)

Rorty argues that Quine and Sellars oppose the idea that any such neutral matrix can be found. They attempt to demonstrate that there is nothing beyond what people are saying and doing to which knowledge claims can be shown to correspond or be grounded in and thus be justified

Rorty argues that epistemological behaviorism, rightly understood, is not a reductionist analysis. It does not claim that there exist certain unconditional behavioral practices which are the real foundations of knowledge. Rather, according to Rorty, the Quine-Sellars' project rejects the idea of such an inquiry altogether. In that, it abandons the epistemological enterprise as a whole. It is a rejection of a problem not a solution to one. "It amounts to a protest against an archetypal philosophical problem: the problem of how to reduce norms, rules, and justifications to facts, generalizations, and explanations." (PMN 180) Quine and Sellars simply point out that the traditional attempt to provide a foundation for knowledge by identifying representations which have a privileged connection to reality, e.g. the given or the necessary, is not possible. There are no such representations; no theory of knowledge can identify them. They have been merely assumed erroneously. It is futile and unnecessary to search for them since the justification that resides in the communicative practices of inquirers is the only guarantee of rationality and truth required.⁴ There is no need for philosophy to justify and ground truth and knowledge.

Rorty believes that the epistemological behaviorism of Quine and Sellars represents an identification of truth and knowledge with social justification. He has identified epistemological behaviorism with pragmatism because he interprets the major proponents of pragmatism, i.e. James and Dewey, as we shall see, likewise to have identified truth and knowledge with social justification. He believes his interpretation of pragmatism makes possible another view of philosophy distinguished from philosophy as epistemology. He develops his alternative view of philosophy further when he links it with his understanding of hermeneutics. In his pragmatic-hermeneutic

conception of philosophy, philosophy can serve as the liberating mediator among the various discourses of culture rather than a constraining normative authority which claims to rule over them. It will no longer stand as judge of the validity of the various discourses but it can serve as interpreter of the various discourses to one another. It is to Rorty's interpretation of pragmatism and hermeneutics that we now turn.⁵

PRAGMATISM: A NEW PARADIGM FOR PHILOSOPHY

Rorty's most comprehensive interpretation of pragmatism is found in *Consequences of Pragmatism*. The purpose of the collection of essays that make up the text is "to draw consequences from a pragmatist theory about truth."⁶ The most important consequence to be drawn from this theory is the abandonment of the effort on the part of philosophers to formulate theories of truth and limits of knowledge, i.e. to practice philosophy as epistemology. The pragmatist account of truth denies that there is anything philosophically interesting to say about truth beyond that it is "just the name of a property which all true statements share." (CP xiii) Rorty claims that pragmatists such as James and Dewey see the fruitlessness of attempts to define the essence of truth as a sign that the attempt as such is wrongheaded. "The history of attempts to do so, [define truth] and of criticisms of such attempts, is roughly coextensive with the history of that literary genre we call 'philosophy' - a genre founded by Plato. So pragmatists see the Platonic tradition as having outlived its usefulness." (CP xiv) Rorty capitalizes the term "philosophy" when identifying the tradition in order to distinguish it from a pragmatist conception of philosophy. "Pragmatists are saying that the best hope for philosophy is not to practise Philosophy." (CP xv)

According to Rorty the pragmatists want to end the questioning about the nature of truth. It is not that they have an alternative relativistic or subjectivist theory of truth. They simply hold that the traditional philosophical theorizing about the nature of truth is a waste of time. "As long as we see James and Dewey as having 'theories of truth' or 'theories of knowledge' or 'theories of morality' we shall get them wrong. We shall ignore their criticisms of the assumption that there ought to *be* theories about such matters." (CP 160) Rorty claims that the pragmatists oppose the various traditional attempts to define truth as correspondence to reality (be it spirit or matter). They reject attempts which hope to establish norms of truth that define different categories or kinds of truth--norms, for example, which would separate moral from scientific truth. The pragmatist denies the possibility of establishing such norms. For the pragmatist,

Several hundred years of effort have failed to make interesting sense of the notion of 'correspondence' (either of thoughts to things or of words to things). The pragmatist takes the moral of this discouraging history to be that 'true sentences work because they correspond to the way things are' is no more illuminating than 'it is right because it fulfills the Moral Law.' Both remarks, in the pragmatist's eyes, are empty metaphysical compliments--harmless as rhetorical pats on the back to the successful inquirer or agent, but troublesome if taken seriously and 'clarified' philosophically. (CP xvii)

Rorty's interpretation of James' and Dewey's pragmatism, as it applies to the theory of truth, understands it to be void of both idealist and realist, transcendentalist and positivist elements. According to Rorty, the pragmatism of James and Dewey steps outside of the traditional epistemological debate about the nature of truth by questioning the significance of the debate itself. (He believes this helps to account for the fact that idealists and transcendentalists often consider pragmatism a variation of positivism; and positivists often consider pragmatism to be flirting with

idealism. It is also the reason why both idealists and realists have been dismissive in their attitude toward pragmatist discussions of truth.) Rorty argues that James and Dewey were ahead of their time in challenging the entire epistemological tradition in philosophy. The place that analytic philosophy and post-transcendental hermeneutic philosophy has now reached is the place already occupied by James and Dewey. "On my view, James and Dewey were not only waiting at the end of the dialectical road which analytic philosophy traveled, [to Wittgenstein, Quine, Sellars, and Davidson] but are waiting at the end of the road which, for example, Foucault and Deleuze are currently traveling." (CP xviii) The position that contemporary analytic philosophy and post-transcendental philosophy now occupies, according to Rorty, claims that "the attempt to say 'how language relates to the world' by saying what *makes* certain sentences true, or certain actions or attitudes good or rational, is, on this view, impossible." (CP xix) Rorty understands this position to be substantially the same as the central vision of James' and Dewey's pragmatism.

He presents three characterizations to sum up the core of their doctrine: 1) pragmatism is an "anti-essentialism applied to notions like 'truth,' 'knowledge,' 'language' and 'morality'"; (CP 165) 2) pragmatism denies any epistemological, metaphysical and methodological difference between facts and values, science and morality; 3) pragmatism asserts that "there are no constraints on enquiry save conversational ones - no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of the objects, or of the mind or of language, but only those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow inquirers." (CP 165) This final characterization (preferred by Rorty) (CP 166) expresses the most central and important conviction of pragmatism. He understands it to

unite the moral and intellectual imperative of pragmatism since it points out what he considers to be the fundamental choice faced by all thinkers, i.e. accepting human contingency or striving for trans-human absolutes. It forms the centrepiece of his alternative conception of philosophy and identifies the link between pragmatism and hermeneutics. By saying that the only constraints on inquiry are the remarks of other inquirers, Rorty interprets the pragmatism of James and Dewey to claim that nothing more needs to be said about truth than that it is a name for the agreement consequent on the social justification of belief.

Rorty spells out the description of pragmatism as an anti-essentialism applied to the notions of "truth," "knowledge," etc. by commenting upon James' definition of the true as "what is good in the way of belief." Rorty sees James' definition as an anti-definition. It is James' way of denying that it is possible to give any meaningful, significant or consequential (Rorty's "interesting") theoretical (epistemological or ontological) explanation of what truth as an abstract essence is in itself. It is not a view of truth so much as it is a repudiation of all urges and attempts to think of truth as a worthwhile subject of investigation. The same can be said of Dewey's description of truth as "warranted assertion." Rorty argues that James and Dewey consider truth to be merely the name of a normative quality which all true statements have. Truth is a normative concept in the way that "good" and "rational" are. Epistemological attempts to define truth as "correspondence to reality" or "accuracy of representation" provide no real explanation of the essence of truth. These definitions merely beg the question.

According to Rorty, James and Dewey do not believe that anything is to be gained by the exercise of attempting to define the essence of truth in this

theoretical and essentialist fashion. The vocabulary of practice and action is more useful if one wants to talk about truth or knowledge. Thus, James' and Dewey's account of "the true" anticipates the central pragmatic idea of "epistemological behaviorism": "We understand Knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and thus we have no need to view it as accuracy of representation." (PMN 170) In sum, Rorty argues that the pragmatists do not disprove the definition of truth as "correspondence to reality" or "accuracy of representation," they simply question its value since the definition itself has created unsolvable philosophical problems by generating innumerable unanswerable questions and paradoxes throughout the history of philosophy.

In this respect pragmatism is a radical program for a change of attitude and focus regarding philosophical inquiry. "The issue is one about whether philosophy should try to find natural starting-points which are distinct from cultural traditions, or whether all philosophy should do is compare and contrast cultural traditions." (CP xxxviii) The pragmatist, according to Rorty, decides for the latter option. The pragmatist believes "that in the process of playing vocabularies and cultures off against each other, we produce new and better ways of talking and acting--not better by reference to a previously known standard, but just better in the sense that they come to *seem* clearly better than their predecessors." (CP xxxvii)

Rorty argues that for James and Dewey there is no significant epistemological, metaphysical or methodological difference between fact and value, morality and science. The pragmatists, for the most part, reject the idea that human rationality and inquiry can be reduced to or governed by an objective, transcendent rule or method defined by philosophy which can isolate or

separate reason from desire, reason from passion, reason from will. Human rationality and inquiry has basically one reality, i.e. "deliberation concerning the relative attractions of various concrete alternatives" (CP 164) and this applied to all areas of interest. The pragmatists reject the notion that there are certain cultural discourses that can be shown to have a special relation to reality. Scientific discourse cannot be said to limn the real in a more paradigmatic way than moral discourse. Rorty believes that the great fallacy of the tradition which produces the preoccupation with rule or method, according to the pragmatists, is "to think that the metaphors of vision, correspondence, mapping, picturing, and representation which apply to small, routine assertions will apply to large and debatable ones. This basic error begets the notion that where there are no objects to correspond to we have no hope of rationality, but only taste, passion and will." (CP 164) The pragmatists reject this reductionist vision of human reason. Human rationality is better understood as the life of Socratic conversation.

Rorty's final and preferred characterization of pragmatism is a summary expression of the central thesis of his interpretation, namely, that for the pragmatist truth is a matter of conversational inquiry or social justification, not intellectual constraint enforced by the nature of objects, the mind or the structure of language. The only way in which humans are constrained to truth is that "we can make no sense of the notion that the view which can survive all objections might be false. . . . But objections--conversational constraints--cannot be anticipated. There is no method for knowing *when* one has reached the truth, or when one is closer to it than before." (CP 165-66) As already stated this final characterization of pragmatism by Rorty can be said to unite the moral and intellectual imperative of pragmatism. It does so

because it expresses what he considers to be the fundamental option or choice presented to the reflective person, namely:

that between accepting the contingent character of starting-points, and attempting to evade this contingency. To accept the contingency of starting-points is to accept our inheritance from, and our conversation with, our fellow-humans as our only source of guidance. To attempt to evade this contingency is to hope to become a properly-programmed machine. . . . In the end, the pragmatists tell us, what matters is our loyalty to other human beings clinging together against the dark, not our hope of getting things right. James, in arguing against realists and idealists that 'the trail of the human serpent is over all,' was reminding us that our glory is in our participation in fallible and transitory human projects, not in our obedience to permanent nonhuman constraints. (CP 166)

Rorty argues that the pragmatists are critical of traditional philosophy precisely because they see it as embodying the urge to exercise constraint over human conversation and the process of social justification. According to the pragmatist, traditional philosophy does not want to recognize the ubiquity of language. It does not want to recognize that humans never encounter reality "except under a chosen description." (CP xxxix) Pragmatists understand all attempts of traditional philosophy to define the essence of truth and the limits of knowledge as an attempt to get beyond language, the situatedness of human life and the social justification of belief. It is an attempt to get beyond the finite human condition and the conventional, contingent nature of all criteria and standards. For the pragmatist it is this urge that has motivated traditional philosophy's attempt to define the essence of truth and the limits of knowledge. And it is this urge and the resultant enterprise, not the definitions as such, which, ultimately, the pragmatist's statements about truth want to repudiate. Rorty sums up the conflict between pragmatism and traditional philosophy in the following way:

The question of whether the pragmatist view of truth--that it is not a profitable topic--is itself *true* is thus a question about whether a post-Philosophical culture is a good thing to try for. It is not a question about what the word 'true' means, nor about the requirements of an adequate philosophy of language, nor about whether the world 'exists independently of our minds,' nor about whether the intuitions of our culture are captured in the pragmatists' slogans. There is no way in which the issue between the pragmatist and his opponent can be tightened up and resolved according to criteria agreed to by both sides. This is one of those issues which puts everything up for grabs at once--where there is no point in trying to find agreement about 'the data' or about what would count as deciding the question. But the messiness of the issue is not a reason for setting it aside. (CP xliii)

These remarks emphasize Rorty's belief that pragmatism should be interpreted as a proposal for a paradigm shift in philosophy. Pragmatism represents a radical attitude change toward truth, knowledge and the human condition in general. It is a proposal that philosophers accept the thoroughly situated and malleable fabric of human thought and action. Philosophers should give up the illusory attempt to define the essence of truth and to identify a secure and indisputable foundation of knowledge and measure of action. They should accept that truth and knowledge are better thought about simply as names given to the generally accepted consequences of conversation and the social justification of belief which modify human action at any given time; action, which in turn modifies conversation and justification. Since pragmatism proposes that traditional philosophy should be given up and the urge to practice it fought against, the question remains, what, then, is philosophy to be, if anything? Rorty's answer to this question provides the link between his interpretation of pragmatism and hermeneutics. Philosophy as epistemology should be replaced by "edifying" philosophy, i.e hermeneutic, pragmatic philosophy.

HERMENEUTICS: STAND-IN FOR PRAGMATISM

In support of his interpretation and defence of pragmatism, Rorty outlines an alternative conception of philosophy identified with hermeneutics. He looks to hermeneutics for an account of truth and philosophy which embraces pragmatism and does not share the assumptions, vocabularies and attitudes of philosophy as epistemology. More specifically, he refers to the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. He describes this alternative conception of philosophy as "edifying" philosophy. Rorty sees in Gadamer's account of human understanding an affirmation of the interpretation of pragmatism he outlines, particularly pragmatism's description of truth as the social justification of belief. In effect, Rorty considers hermeneutics as a contemporary stand-in for pragmatism. Hermeneutics should be understood as an application and expansion of the central claims of pragmatism. Rorty believes that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics supports a pragmatic attitude toward truth, knowledge, language, conversation, the social justification of belief, and, consequently, philosophy itself. He believes that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics repudiates the notion of objective method, rejects essentialist definitions of truth, and confirms the primacy of conversational inquiry by asserting the historicity of thought and language and the impossibility of eradicating prejudice.

Hermeneutics, according to Rorty, is not a successor subject (discipline or method) to epistemology. Rather, it is an "Expression of hope that the cultural space left by the demise of epistemology will not be filled - that our culture should become one in which the demand for constraint and

confrontation is no longer felt." (PMN 315) As we have seen Rorty describes foundational epistemology as harboring a desire for "constraint and confrontation"; constraint, in that it seeks to set limits to reason, and confrontation, in that it equates methodological argumentation with the sole legitimate contribution to cognitive discourse. Foundational epistemology expresses a totalitarian urge according to Rorty. He argues that a fundamental conviction of epistemology is that all contributions to a given discourse are commensurable, i.e. "able to be brought under a set of rules which tell us how rational agreement can be reached on what would settle the issue on every point when statements seem to conflict." (PMN 316) In other words, epistemology assumes there is an accessible, independent structure common to all discourse against which every discourse can be measured. Hermeneutics, however, like pragmatism, rejects this assumption. "The dominating notion of epistemology is 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 the maximum amount of common ground with others. The assumption that an epistemology can be constructed is the assumption that such common ground exists." (PMN 317) Rorty argues, by contrast, that hermeneutics denies the possibility of a transcendent or objective foundation beyond various discourses. Hermeneutics denies that there is any superior rationality to that of the rationality of conversation itself; there is no special, privileged common set of terms which guarantees the rationality of discourse. The hermeneutic mind is willing to entertain the language of the interlocutor's discourse; thus, hermeneutics proposes the primacy of the reasonable over the rational conceived as objective method or ground.

Given this distinction between hermeneutics and epistemology, Rorty argues that two roles are possible for the philosopher. The philosopher as hermeneuticist can perform the pragmatic function of the "informed dilettante, the polypragmatic, Socratic intermediary between various discourses." (PMN 317) The hermeneutical philosopher challenges the separateness of the various discourses and attempts to bridge conversation between disciplines. The philosopher as epistemologist, however, plays the role of the "cultural overseer who knows everyone's common ground - the Platonic philosopher-king who knows what everybody else is really doing whether *they* know it or not, because he knows about the ultimate context (the Forms, the Mind, Language) within which they are doing it." (PMN 317-18)

Rorty characterizes the opposition between hermeneutics and epistemology in a way very similar to the one in which he characterized the opposition between pragmatism and epistemology:

Hermeneutics sees the relations between various discourses as those of 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 a hope for the discovery of antecedently existing common ground, but *simply* hope for agreement, or, at least, exciting and fruitful disagreement. Epistemology sees the hope of agreement as a token of the existence of common ground which, perhaps unbeknown to the speakers, unites them in a common rationality. For hermeneutics, 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--and to be willing to pick up the jargon of the interlocutor rather than translating it into one's own. For epistemology, conversation is implicit inquiry. For hermeneutics, inquiry is routine conversation. (PMN 318)

Rorty argues that a holistic, pragmatic conception of truth and knowledge as the consequence of conversation is expressed in the idea of the hermeneutical circle. The hermeneutical circle recognizes that understanding results from the dialectical play between comprehension of the part and the whole; neither can be grasped independently from each other. "[W]e cannot understand the parts of a strange culture, practice, theory, language or whatever, unless we know something about how the whole thing works, whereas we cannot get a grasp on how the whole thing works, until we have some understanding of its parts. This notion of interpretation suggests that coming to understanding is more like getting acquainted with a person than like following a demonstration." (PMN 319) It is the gradual movement from the strange to the familiar, from the abnormal to the normal.

Rorty makes use of Kuhn's distinction between "normal" and "revolutionary" science which he generalizes to encompass normal and abnormal discourse. He does this in order to overturn the traditional conception of the division between philosophy (epistemology) and hermeneutics. He rejects the traditional partitioning of culture between epistemology (the science or province of cognitive, rational, scientific discourse) and hermeneutics (the art or province of irrational, humanistic discourse). This partition is based upon a notion of what can and what can not be rendered commensurable as defined by epistemology. The commensurable, as established by epistemology, is considered the objective, cognitive and rational; the incommensurable, also defined by epistemology, is relegated to mere matters of taste, opinion and the subjective. Rorty deflates this radical dualism between the commensurable and the incommensurable by speaking of normal and abnormal discourse. This is a hermeneutic or

pragmatic perspective on discourse. Normal discourse is merely discourse where all contributions are commensurable because of prior social justification. Abnormal discourse exists where no such agreement or justification has been achieved. Hermeneutics recognizes the importance of both normal and abnormal discourse and emphasizes the significance of the latter as a place of self-redescription and self-creation. Philosophy as hermeneutics, unlike philosophy as epistemology, does not posit a foundation or an antecedent common ground from which to judge the validity and status of abnormal discourse; it does not proclaim such discourse irrational. Philosophy as hermeneutics celebrates abnormal discourse as the place of new self-understanding and it recognizes no deep difference between normal and abnormal discourse. By extrapolation, philosophy as hermeneutics affirms a pragmatic openness that denies any radical difference between various kinds of discourse as categorized by epistemology. It rejects the significance and meaning of these categories as defined by epistemology. "From this point of view, then, the line between the respective domains of epistemology and hermeneutics is not a matter of the difference between the 'sciences of nature' and the 'sciences of man,' nor between fact and value, nor the theoretical and the practical, nor 'objective knowledge' and something squishier and more dubious. The difference is purely one of familiarity." (PMN 321) Hermeneutics, like pragmatism, represents a paradigm shift in the conception of and attitude toward the traditional divisions of knowledge.

The only line that can be drawn is the line between normal and abnormal discourse as established by the social communicative practice at the time. This line cuts across the separation between science and non-science; just as it cuts across individual discourses and diverse discourses. In making the

distinction between normal and abnormal discourse Rorty is attempting to point out that the pragmatic or hermeneutic meaning of objectivity or cognition is agreement amongst interlocutors, social coherency, not correspondence to a neutral framework. Subjectivity is the place where agreement has not yet occurred. In this light epistemology is descriptive of normal discourse and nothing more or deeper. Cognition and rationality have no deeper meaning than normal discourse. Hermeneutics is applicable where abnormal discourse occurs. Conceived in this deflationary way, epistemology and hermeneutics are not competitive. "[H]ermeneutics is, roughly, a description of our study of the unfamiliar and epistemology is, roughly, a description of our study of the familiar." (PMN 353) ⁷

HERMENEUTICS AS EDIFYING PHILOSOPHY

Rorty describes Gadamer's account of human understanding as a redescription of man which presents a rejection of the classical picture of the mind as the mirror of nature and a repudiation of the reductionist identification of human rationality with scientific method. Gadamer situates "knowledge" within a larger view of human understanding. Just as the pragmatist tend to substitute acting or coping for knowledge as the purposes of thought, Rorty argues, that central to Gadamer's description of human understanding or hermeneutical thought is the substitution of the concept of *Bildung* (education, self-formation) for knowledge as the purpose of thought. *Bildung* is accomplished in *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*, i.e. "effective historical consciousness." Effective historical consciousness emphasizes an appropriation of history which retrieves it and changes one in the process. This transformation of the self is the core of the educational

process. Thus, "In this attitude, getting the facts right (about atoms and the void, or about the history of Europe) is merely a propaedeutic to finding a new and more interesting way of expressing ourselves, and thus of coping with the world. From the educational, as opposed to the epistemological or the technological, point of view, the way things are said is more important than the possession of truths." (PMN 359) Rorty identifies his term "edification" with Gadamer's *Bildung*. Contrary to epistemology's preoccupation with normal discourse, "edifying discourse is *supposed* to be abnormal, to take us out of ourselves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings." (PMN 360)

Rorty argues that what Gadamer rejects in the traditional epistemological view of knowledge and rationality is the implicit reductive identification of edification with acquiring the facts. In other words, it is the position taken by epistemology that the only possible meaning of edifying thought is its own account of objective truth which, from the point of view outlined above, simply means familiar discourse. Rorty sides with Gadamer in holding that the project of scientific knowledge, acclaimed as the paradigm of cognition by epistemology, is only one among many possible projects of human thought, and hardly the only one that edifies. Furthermore, it must be remembered, that philosophy as edification believes the very idea of objective truth, if understood to mean something more than conformity to the present norms of justification, i.e. to normal discourse, to be self-deceptive. Philosophy as hermeneutics recognizes the absurdity of thinking "that the vocabulary used by present science, morality, or whatever, has some privileged attachment to reality which makes it *more* than just a further set of descriptions." (PMN 361) Philosophy as hermeneutics denies the identification of truth

with "essence." It rejects the notion of essence in favour of the "relativity of descriptive vocabulary to periods, traditions and historical accidents." (PMN 362)

Rorty does acknowledge a legitimate role for epistemology if understood in the deflated sense which he gives to it. That is, if understood as providing no more than an account of the norms of present social justification, i.e. normal discourse. He considers philosophy as edification a dialectical companion to this demythologized version of epistemology. This is the context of Rorty's distinction between "Systematic" and "Edifying" philosophy, where his most radical account of edifying philosophy or hermeneutic, pragmatic philosophy can be found.

Rorty considers edifying philosophy to be related to systematic philosophy in the way that abnormal discourse is related to normal discourse. He considers the former to be "intrinsically reactive" to the latter. Rorty considers the foundationalist aspirations of philosophy as epistemology or systematic philosophy to be rooted in a more or less stable feature of human society, namely, the propensity to transcendentalize or absolutize familiar discourse. Edifying philosophy, consequently, is always parasitic upon systematic philosophy in that it is constantly suspicious about its usual absolutist pretensions. Rorty considers Dewey, Wittgenstein and Heidegger to be the great edifying philosophers of the twentieth century whose edifying, holistic point was that "words take their meanings from other words rather than by virtue of their representative character, and the corollary that vocabularies acquire their privileges from the men who use them rather than from their transparency to the real." (PMN 368)

Rorty introduces an important sub-distinction when he argues that there are two types of abnormal discourse philosophers. The first type recognizes the incommensurability of their new vocabulary with the tradition but they see this as a temporary situation. They see their own vocabulary eventually becoming the institutionalized vocabulary. Thus, they are essentially revolutionary systematic philosophers. Husserl and Russell are examples of this type. It is another type of abnormal discourse philosopher that Rorty considers the true edifying philosopher.

Great edifying philosophers are reactive and offer satires, parodies, aphorisms. They know their work loses its point when the period they were reacting against is over. They are *intentionally* peripheral. . . . Edifying philosophers want to keep space open for the sense of wonder which poets can sometimes cause--wonder that there is something new under the sun, something which is not an accurate representation of what was already there, something which (at least for the moment) cannot be explained and can barely be described. (PMN 369)

Rorty admits that the edifying philosopher is confronted with what might appear to be a paradoxical situation. They have to "decry the very notion of having a view while avoiding having a view about having a view. This is an awkward, but not impossible, position." (PMN 371) This means that the edifying philosopher intentionally operates on a metacritical level, a kind of bottomless abnormal discourse, raising wonder, the response to which is further wonder. This is why Rorty characterizes edifying philosophy as "the life of Socratic conversation." The radical stance of the edifying philosopher can be expressed in reference to the central claim of pragmatism itself: even the proposition that truth is a matter of social justification is not considered or allowed to have a special representative status, i.e. it is not considered a more accurate representation of reality; it is simply a renunciation of concern about representing reality in favor of a more radical openness to reality. The

entire project of accurately representing reality is considered an habitual attempt at dogmatically constraining the real; the true purpose of the edifying philosopher is to break the habit. "One way to see edifying philosophy as the love of wisdom is to see it as the attempt to prevent conversation from degenerating into inquiry, into an exchange of views. Edifying philosophers can never end philosophy, but they can help prevent it from attaining the secure path of a science." (PMN 372)

Rorty acknowledges that the usual response of systematic philosophers to edifying philosophers is to accuse them of relativism (accusations historically made against James, Dewey and Gadamer). He does not deny that edifying philosophy embraces relativism. What he does is offer an interpretation of its significance. Edifying philosophy is a radical humanism. The relativism of edifying philosophy is a conscious rejection of the absolutist, dehumanizing urge of systematic philosophy. It is a repudiation of the self-deceptive urge to escape human finitude, contingency and freedom. Systematic philosophy is totalitarian in assuming that there is only one true description of reality.

From this point of view, to look for commensuration rather than simply continued conversation--to look for a way of making further redescription unnecessary by finding a way of reducing all *possible* descriptions to one--is to attempt escape from humanity. To abandon the notion that philosophy must show all possible discourse naturally converging to a consensus, just as normal inquiry does, would be to abandon the hope of being anything more than merely human. (PMN 377)

Edifying philosophy tolerates relativism because it accepts human finitude and contingency, a finitude and contingency which gives rise to a multitude of possible descriptions of the real. Edifying philosophy wants to keep the conversation open to all optional descriptions. "The point is always the

same--to perform the social function which Dewey called "breaking the crust of convention," preventing man from deluding himself with the notion that he knows himself, or anything else, except under optional descriptions." (PMN 379)

In the *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty describes a society where edifying philosophy becomes the accepted notion of philosophy and is no longer parasitic; a culture where Philosophy in the traditional epistemological or systematic sense is abandoned. He calls such a culture a post-Philosophical culture. A post-Philosophical culture is one where philosophy is not obviously different from literary criticism or even history. It is a culture where a fundamental feature of Western culture will no longer exist, but this will be for the better. "If Philosophy disappears, something will have been lost which was central to Western intellectual life--just as something central was lost when religious intuitions were weeded out from among the intellectually respectable candidates for a Philosophical articulation. But the Enlightenment thought, rightly, that what would succeed religion would be *better*. The pragmatist is betting that what succeeds the 'scientific,' positivist culture which the Enlightenment produced will be *better*." (CP xxxviii)

A post-Philosophical culture looks to nothing trans-human, ahistorical or transcendental; it looks to nothing beyond ourselves and criteria we have created as a guide to understanding. Furthermore, because a post-Philosophical culture takes the *whole* of human existence as its value, it considers no one discourse to have more significance than others, no one discourse is more in touch with the real than others. Thus, it rejects positivism's idolization of science. Hermeneutic, pragmatic philosophy "views science as one genre of literature--or, put the other way around,

literature and the arts as inquiries, on the same footing as scientific inquiries. Thus, it sees ethics as neither more 'relative' or 'subjective' than scientific theory, nor as needing to be made 'scientific.' Physics is a way of trying to cope with various bits of the universe; ethics is a matter of trying to cope with other bits." (CP xliii)

In a post-Philosophical culture the hope of finding the one right vocabulary, the one right description of reality would no longer exist. A different, more modest hope would consciously replace it. Intellectual motivation would spring from the desire to pass on to later generations an account of our own experience of the world, an experience which itself considered the accounts of our ancestors.

In a post-philosophical culture, some other hope would drive us to read through the libraries, and to add new volumes to the ones we found. Presumably it would be the hope of offering our descendants a way of describing the ways of describing we had come across--a description of the descriptions which the race has come up with so far. If one takes 'our time' to be 'our view of previous times,' so that, in Hegelian fashion, each age of the world recapitulates all the earlier ones, then a post-Philosophical culture would agree with Hegel that philosophy is 'its own time apprehended in thoughts.' (CP xl)

In a post-Philosophical culture philosophy does no more than compare alternative descriptive vocabularies. It merely articulates the similarities and differences, advantages and disadvantages of the various prominent descriptions of the world at the time. The philosopher is the cultural critic writ large. "He is the person who tells you how all the ways of making things hang together hang together. But, since he does not tell you about how all *possible* ways of making things hang together *must* hang together--since he has no extra-historical Archimedean point of this sort--he is doomed to become outdated." (CP xl) Thus, a post-Philosophical, pragmatic,

hermeneutic culture recognizes the historicity of descriptions and the necessity of continuous redescription within the ongoing conversation of humanity.⁸

RORTY'S RADICAL DECONSTRUCTION OF PHILOSOPHY AND TRUTH

In writings subsequent to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and *The Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty has responded to criticism from some of his contemporaries while continuing his assault on traditional philosophy. Parts of these texts have the virtue of reiterating and clarifying central elements of his thought which bring home the substantive and rhetorical extremity of his stance. They confirm that he is unconditionally opposed to three interconnected orientations of traditional philosophy, and that he interprets pragmatism and philosophical hermeneutics to be the same. As a means of summarizing what has been stated already, I would like to emphasize these three dominant, negative elements of Rorty's outlook by reviewing a few passages from some of his more recent writings.

The *first orientation* of traditional philosophy which Rorty's conception of pragmatism and hermeneutics unconditionally repudiates is representationalism and the representationalist intuition. Rorty construes the pragmatic-hermeneutic conception of truth and understanding as renouncing the conviction that knowledge consists in accurate representations of reality. Thus, he argues that the pragmatic-hermeneutic stance renounces any attempt to *explain the conditions of representation*; in other words, it repudiates philosophy as epistemology.

What he or she [the antirepresentationalist] denies is that it is explanatorily useful to pick and choose among the contents of our minds or our language and say that this or that item 'corresponds to' or 'represents' the environment in a way that some other item does not.

On an antirepresentationalist view, it is one thing to say that that a prehensile thumb, or an ability to use the word "atom" as physicist do, is useful for coping with the environment. It is another thing to attempt to *explain* this utility by reference to representationalist notions, such as the notion that the reality referred to by 'quark' was 'determinate' before the word 'quark' came along (whereas that referred to by, for example, 'foundation grant' only jelled once the relevant social practices emerged).

Antirepresentationalist think that attempt hopeless. They see no way to explain what 'determinate' means in such a context except by chanting one of a number of equally baffling words, and so they see the realist's use of 'determinate' as merely incantatory. (ORT 5-6)

Pragmatism, as I have defined it, consists very largely in the claim that only if we drop the whole idea of 'correspondence with reality' can we avoid pseudo-problems. (ORT 132)

Philosophy (i.e. epistemology), Rorty argues, cannot guarantee the realist intuition at the heart of philosophic and scientific inquiry, namely, that the truth of a proposition (or even a network of propositions) consists in its power to represent reality as it is. Thus, neither philosophy nor science can be said to explain what is the case, i.e. to accurately represent the world. Truth is not accurate representation.

He [the pragmatist] is suggesting that instead of invoking anything like the idea-fact, or language-fact, of mind-world, or subject-object distinctions to explicate our intuition that there is something out there to be responsible to, we just drop that intuition. We should drop it in favor of the thought that we might be better than we presently are - in the sense of being better scientific theorists, or citizens, or friends. . . . On this account, to be responsible is a matter of what Peirce called 'contrite fallibilism' rather than of respect for something beyond. The desire for 'objectivity' boils down to a desire to acquire beliefs which will eventually receive unforced agreement in the course of a free and open encounter with people holding other beliefs. . . . Such a reinterpretation of our sense of responsibility would, if carried through, gradually make unintelligible the subject-object model of inquiry, the child-parent model of moral obligation, and the correspondence theory of truth. A world in which those models, and

that theory no longer had any intuitive appeal would be a pragmatist's paradise. (ORT 42)

Rorty claims that the social-linguistic justification of belief (i.e. the truth of belief) must clearly be distinguished from the existential causes of belief. Relations of justification hold between beliefs, and relations of causation hold between beliefs and things. However, there are no relations of representation or justification holding between beliefs and things.

One way of formulating the pragmatist position is to say that the pragmatist recognizes relations of *justification* holding between beliefs and desires, and relations of *causation* holding between these beliefs and desires and other items in the universe, but no relations of *representation*. Beliefs do not represent nonbeliefs. (ORT 97)

We [antirepresentationalists] do in fact describe most objects as causally independent of us, and that is *all* that is required to satisfy our realistic intuitions. We are not also required to say that our descriptions *represent* objects. Representation is. . . a fifth wheel. If we have relations of justification between our beliefs and desires, and relations of causation between those and the rest of the universe, those are all the mind-world or language-world relations we need. (ORT 101)

Rorty's pragmatic-hermeneutic outlook defines inquiry and explains the development of truth and knowledge entirely in terms of a social-linguistic, historically situated process of "interpretation," "recontextualization," and "reweaving the web of belief;" in terms of the replacement of normal discourse by abnormal discourse, the replacement of old metaphors by new ones, and the replacement of worn-out entrenched vocabularies by new vocabularies of promise. None of which can be said to accurately represent the world or describe what is the case.

Suppose we are antiessentialist all the way. Then we shall say that all inquiry is interpretation, that all thought consists in recontextualization, that we have never done anything else and never will. We shall not grant that there is a useful contrast to be drawn

between topics about which there is objective truth and topics about which there is not. (ORT 102)

Reweaving a web of beliefs is, if you like all she [the antiessentialist] does - all anybody can do. But she will add, this is not as bad as the realist makes it sound. In the first place one of her more central, difficult-to-imagine-revising beliefs is that lots of objects she does not control are continually causing her to have new and surprising beliefs, beliefs which often require hasty and drastic reweaving on her part. She is no more free from pressure from outside, no more tempted to be 'arbitrary,' than anyone else. She is free from the questions 'Are you representing accurately?' and 'Are you getting at the way the object *really, intrinsically*, is?' but not from questions like 'Can you fit in the belief that the litmus paper turned red (or that there are nonstellar sources of radiation, or that your lover has deceived you) with the rest of your beliefs? (ORT 101)

The *second orientation* of traditional philosophy which Rorty's conception of pragmatism and hermeneutics unconditionally repudiates is the desire to achieve a form of transcendental knowledge (i.e. a final, comprehensive and adjudicative vocabulary) which reaches beyond time, contingency and situatedness especially about knowledge itself. Rorty considers this desire an unfortunate remnant of the essentially religious longing for an absolute, trans-human authority grounding truth and goodness. He rejects what Thomas Nagel identifies as the "ambition of transcendence." "My principle motive is the belief that we can still make admirable sense of our lives even if we cease to have what Nagel calls 'an ambition of transcendence.'" (ORT 12)

Nagel thinks that to deprive ourselves of such notions as 'representation' and correspondence' would be to stop 'trying to climb outside of our own minds, an effort some would regard as insane and that I regard as philosophically fundamental.'

Antirepresentationalist do not think such efforts insane, but they do think that the history of philosophy shows them to have been fruitless and undesirable. (ORT 7)

The human need which is gratified by the attempt thus to stand outside all human needs - the need for what Nagel calls

'transcendence' - is one which antirepresentationalist think it culturally undesirable to exacerbate. They think this need eliminable by means of a suitable moral education - one which raises people up from the 'humility' which Nagel recommends. Such an education tries to sublimate the desire to stand in suitably humble relations to nonhuman realities into a desire for free and open encounters between human beings, encounters culminating either in intersubjective agreement or in reciprocal tolerance. (ORT 8)

The question of whether there is anything for philosophers to appeal to save the way *we* live now, what *we* do now, how *we* talk now - anything beyond our own little moment of world-history - is the decisive issue between representationalist and social-practise philosophers of language. (ORT 158)

The *third orientation* of traditional philosophy which Rorty's conception of pragmatism and hermeneutics unconditionally rejects is scientism. Scientism encompasses the philosophical attitude which claims that only science and its method (especially natural science) represents what is the case. Thus only science has the right to proclaim truth. The pragmatic-hermeneutic view stands for a renouncement of this glorification of science, as well as the elevation of philosophy to a super-science, and the resultant devaluation of other realms of discourse, e.g. poetic and moral discourse. Rorty, as we have seen, argues that no discourse, including science, "represents" what is the case, even approximately. No one discourse can be said to deliver reality as it is. Thus, science should not be recognized as having any more rights or prestige than any other discourse in society. The difference between discourses consist in their difference of purpose. None can be said to limn the real; all deserve equal respect.

The basic motive of pragmatism, like that of Hegelianism, was ... a continuation of the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment's sanctification of natural science.⁹

Antirepresentationalist see no sense in which physics is more independent of our human peculiarities than astrology or literary

criticism. For them, various areas of culture answer different human needs, but there is no way to stand outside of all human needs and observe that some of them . . . are gratified by detecting "objective sameness and difference in nature" whereas others are gratified by whomping up what Lewis calls "miscellaneous, gerrymandered, ill-demarcated" objects. (ORT 8)

My rejection of traditional notions of rationality can be summed up by saying that the only sense in which science is exemplary is that it is a model of human solidarity. (ORT 39)

Rorty argues that philosophers should abandon representationalism, the desire for transcendent explanation that accompanies it, and scientism. He states that the main point of his entire project is to end the philosophical attempt to explain knowledge and truth in terms of theories of representation and correspondence, and to end the search for a transcendent explanation of knowledge and reality. He believes that the history of philosophy and his own work points out the futility of these two aspects of the traditional project. He also believes that his position is not a representational nor, in any way, a transcendent theory of truth. He claims he is not attempting to say the last word about truth except that little more needs to be said about it, especially in representationalist terms. Philosophers should cease the glorification of science and abandon the search for the final truth about knowledge and truth. Instead they should aim for solidarity among discourses. Rorty believes that solidarity is achievable whereas satisfying the need for transcendence is not. Helping all thinkers achieve solidarity, (i.e. contingent agreement and tolerance), not transcendence, should become the goal of philosophy transformed.

Rorty has linked his conception of edifying philosophy and post-philosophical culture to an interpretation of pragmatism and hermeneutics which affirms their congeniality. His interpretation of James' pragmatic

notion of truth and Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic account of human understanding serves as a touchstone for his conception of edifying philosophy and post-Philosophical culture. He interprets pragmatism and hermeneutics to embrace the holistic, behaviorist claim that stands at the heart of his critique of philosophy as epistemology, namely, that truth and knowledge are better thought of as a matter of social justification and communicative practices only rather than a representation of or a correspondence to reality. Consequently, he claims that pragmatism and hermeneutics join forces in suggesting a paradigm shift for understanding and practicing philosophy. Philosophy which explains knowledge and truth in terms of representations of reality, and attempts to explain how and to what extent representations correspond to reality, or seeks to achieve a knowledge (about knowledge) that transcends time and chance, while glorifying science above all other discourses, should be abandoned. Philosophy instead should become an edifying discourse by conceiving itself as a pragmatic-hermeneutic mediator, not judge or critic, which promotes human solidarity among the various discourses of society.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

As a number of commentators have pointed out, in addition to Rorty's unique, "end of philosophy," philosophical vision, one of the more interesting and valuable dimensions of his thought consists in its attempt to demonstrate that there exists more convergence of outlook among twentieth century philosophers from the English and European traditions than was previously supposed. His suggestion of the complementary character of the pragmatic conception of truth and the philosophical hermeneutic account of

understanding, which stands at the heart of his own philosophical vision, is very much an example of this sort of linkage.

This dissertation intends to support at least this dimension of Rorty's work by having as one of its aims a comparative examination of the thought of two of the principal architects of each philosophical theory. Consequently, the first aim of the thesis is to provide a comparative analysis of William James' pragmatic conception of truth and Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophic hermeneutic account of human understanding. Gadamer and James want to correct false thinking about science and truth. Both reject scientism. Consequently, they propose a more primordial and universal account of human understanding and truth than is circumscribed by science and scientific method *per se*. Both understand the breach between scientific consciousness and aesthetic, moral and religious consciousness to be the central problem of modern thought. Both defend the legitimacy of the truth claims articulated in realms of discourse other than science. Gadamer defends the legitimacy of the truth of art and moral-political discourse, just as James defends the truth of religion and common sense. In other words, both claim other dimensions of the life-world to be a source of legitimate knowledge and their respective accounts of human understanding and truth are meant to justify this belief. Gadamer and James present a concrete account of truth. They argue that truth and understanding are conditioned by human situatedness and time. Gadamer's concept of understanding is developed within a concrete, generalized account of experience, just as James' idea of truth emerges from his descriptive account of the verification process. Gadamer, however, wants to define truth in the human sciences. Therefore,

he more explicitly considers the historical meaning of truth inclusive of the notion of "application."

In addition to this more straightforward analysis, the thesis examines James' and Gadamer's thought with the following Rortian inspired questions in mind. How does James' idea of pragmatic truth and Gadamer's conception of hermeneutical truth stand in relation to the "representationalist intuition?" How does each position stand in relation to the "ambition for transcendence?" How does each position repudiate scientism? Consequently, as a second aim, this thesis proposes to challenge a dimension of Rorty's project by offering a critical reflection on his general deconstruction of truth based on the comparative interpretation proposed. It does not take on his anti-foundational critique of epistemology as such. The thesis, therefore, asks a final question, how does James' and Gadamer's position stand in relation to Rorty's attack on truth and the traditional concepts and intuitions that inform it. Despite the sympathetic elements that can be found within the thought of the three philosophers, ultimately, James and Gadamer do not end up with Rorty, at the same radical deconstruction of truth.

It is true that Rorty shares with James and Gadamer the common objective of challenging scientism. He wants to defend the rights of the other discourses in society as do they. However, ultimately, James and Gadamer do not entirely discredit the representationalist intuition or the ideal of transcendence. They do not completely abandon important elements that inform the meaning of truth and the tradition of inquiry. James and Gadamer do not propose the end of the language of truth or the notion of inquiry to which it is related. In comparison to their stance, Rorty's position appears to be as radical (and dogmatic) a rejection of a vital, human intuition

about thought and language as scientism's wholesale rejection of religion. Neither James' nor Gadamer's position appears so uncompromising or dogmatic. Ultimately, James and Gadamer move in a different direction from Rorty on the means of opposing scientism. He wants to deconstruct the traditional idea of truth and theoretical inquiry whereas they want to reconstruct it. They conceive a more concrete, primordial (i.e. pre-formal, pre-reflexive, pre-critical, original cognitive experience) and universal notion of truth that, nevertheless, does not discredit the more articulated traditional intuitions and ambitions that inform it. James and Gadamer are more compromising toward the paradoxical complexities that inform the meaning of truth.

In pursuing the second aim, the thesis attempts to make clear how non-negotiable are the need for transcendence, the representationalist intuition, and theoretical inquiry as such. It also argues that the essence of the liberal ironist society that Rorty promotes is entirely dependent upon the experience of inquiry that he wants to abandon. It is important to make clear how radical is Rorty's stance, even when compared to James' conception of truth and Gadamer's account of understanding. Rorty's stance is more radical precisely in its unqualified rejection of the standard tradition of inquiry.

While Rorty wants to completely discredit and abandon the representationalist intuition and the conception of inquiry (philosophic and scientific) dependent upon it as a means of overcoming scientism, James and Gadamer choose instead to maintain the representationalist intuition and ideal of transcendence and thus maintain a more coherent conception of their own thought and inquiry. Rorty wants to overcome scientism by completely abandoning the intuition at the heart of the traditional conception of truth, in

effect, by abandoning inquiry (the idea of philosophy and science) itself. Whereas, James and Gadamer rely upon philosophical inquiry to reconstruct an appreciation of science and its relationship to the other discourses of society. They, in fact, claim that every discourse can be said to represent some dimension of reality, and philosophy can represent how this is so. They acknowledge, however, the concrete, fragmentary conditions of this representation.

James' identification of truth with the verification process, as well as his account of the verification process itself, accommodates the ideal of transcendence and the representationalist intuition. He did not understand his account to be their recantation. "Pragmatism's primary interest is in its doctrine of truth." All pragmatist writers make this the centre of their speculations; not one of them is sceptical, not one doubts our ultimate ability to penetrate theoretically into the very core of reality."¹⁰ The same thing can be said about Gadamer's account of experience and understanding. He does not renounce unconditionally the ideal of transcendence and the representationalist intuition. He situates them in relation to a complementary ideal of the continuous retrieval and application of the wisdom of the past.

NOTES - CHAPTER ONE

1. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 3-4. Succeeding references to this text will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (PMN).

2. "In the first place, I think that the notions of 'experience', 'sensation', 'mind', 'concept', 'idea', etc. which are so prominent in modern philosophy and so conspicuous by their absence in ancient philosophy, are the result of the seventeenth-century's concern with epistemological scepticism. . . . As a result of this concern, philosophy took the so-called Cartesian or subjectivist turn - attempting to find in introspective certainties a foundation for the knowledge-claims which the sceptic had questioned. Thus the identification of philosophy with epistemology, an identification which crystallized in Kant, began - and so also the distinction between mind and matter as two fields of inquiry, one philosophical and one physical." See Richard Rorty, "The Unnaturalness of Epistemology," *Body, Mind and Method: Essays in Honor of Virgil C. Aldrich*, ed. D. F. Gustafson and B. L. Topscott (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1979), p. 79.

3. In concluding his section on Kant, Rorty argues that Kant's notion of synthesis and the distinction between intuitions and concepts is, in any event, a thoroughly contrived and historically conditioned theory. That is, it has no privileged introspective ground. Rather, it is merely postulated to fit the unquestioned assumption of the *Critique*, derivative of Locke and Hume, namely, that "manifoldness is 'given' and unity is made." (PMN 153) Rorty points out that Kant's theory itself denies the possibility of being conscious of the non-synthesized manifold as such. Thus, it begs the question of its own premise. "But if it is not an evident pre-analytic fact that such a manifold exists, how can we use the claim that sensibility presents us with a manifold as a premise? How, in other words, do we know that a manifold which cannot be represented as a manifold is a manifold?" (PMN 154) This demonstrates that the Kantian concept of synthesis is contrived merely to justify the hypothetical notion of synthetic a priori knowledge but that we have no privileged access to any such synthetic activity of mind. Rorty concludes that Kant's transcendentalism, in fact, does not provide any Cartesian privileged, a priori account of how knowledge can occur. Thus, by implication, even within its own terms it fails to establish the credibility of philosophy as epistemology.

4. Rorty demonstrates the radical character of his conception of epistemological behaviorism by attacking what he considers to be Quine's and Sellars' residual epistemological inclinations which want to hold on to physical entities, if not Platonic ones, as objects of correspondence according to which present practices can be measured and knowledge claims grounded.

"Unfortunately, both men tend to substitute correspondence to physical entities, and specifically to the 'basic entities' of physical science (elementary particles, or their successors). . . . My own attitude is Strawson's (and Heidegger's): 'The correspondence theory requires, not purification, but elimination.' . . . or, more mildly, it requires separation from epistemology and relegation to semantics." (PMN 179 nt. 12).

5. Before Rorty turns to his notion of philosophy as edification connected to hermeneutics, he discusses the philosophy of psychology in Chapter Five and the philosophy of language in Chapter Six in order to dispel any notion of these investigations as continuing philosophy as epistemology. In other words, Rorty argues that both psychology and semantics can and should be kept uncontaminated by epistemology. These chapters represent an extension of the main thesis of epistemological behaviorism which rejects the notion that truth and knowledge can be "grounded" in anything more than social coherency.

6. Richard Rorty, *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xiii. Succeeding references to this text will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (CP).

7. In later essays, Rorty, develops the Kuhnian distinction between normal and abnormal discourse by relying upon Davidson's description of the function of metaphor in the evolution or transformation of knowledge. "Davidson lets us think of the history of language, and thus of culture, as Darwin taught us to think of the history of a coral reef. Old metaphors are constantly dying off into literalness, and then serving as a platform and foil for new metaphors." R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 16. Succeeding references to this text will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (CIS).

"But as metaphors get picked up, bandied about, and begin to die, and as paradoxes begin to function as conclusions, and later as premises, of arguments, both sorts of noises start to convey information. The process of becoming stale, familiar, unparadoxical and platitudinous is the process by which such noises cross the line from 'mere' causes of belief to reasons for belief.

Crossing this line is not the acquisition of a new metaphysical character, but simply the process of becoming, through increasingly predictable utterance, usefully describable in intentionalistic language - describable as an expression of belief. For a noise to become so describable is for it to assume a place in a pattern of justification of belief." R. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 171. Succeeding references to this text will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (ORT).

"Davidson lets us see metaphors on the model of unfamiliar events in the natural world - *causes* of changing beliefs and desires - rather than on the model of *representations* of unfamiliar worlds, worlds which are 'symbolic' rather than 'natural'. He lets us see the metaphors which make possible novel scientific theories as causes of our ability to know more about the world, rather than expressions of such knowledge." (ORT 163).

"The world does not provide us with any criterion of choice between alternative metaphors, that we can only compare languages or metaphors with one another, not with something beyond language called 'fact.'" (CIS 20)

8. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, the edifying philosopher is recast as the "ironist." "I shall define an 'ironist' as someone who fulfills three conditions: (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself. Ironists who are inclined to philosophize see the choice between vocabularies as made neither within a neutral and universal metavocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one's way past appearances to the real, but simply by playing the new off against the old." (CIS 73) In *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, Rorty describes the edifying philosopher as having the responsibility of reweaving the community's web of belief in terms of the literalization of new metaphors. "He [the pragmatist] thinks of the thinker as serving the community, and of his thinking as futile unless it is followed up by a reweaving of the community's web of belief. That reweaving will assimilate, by gradually literalizing, the new metaphors which the thinker has provided. The proper honor to pay to new, vibrantly alive metaphors, is to help them become dead metaphors as quickly as possible, to rapidly reduce them to the status of tools of social progress. The glory of the philosopher's thought is not that it initially makes everything more difficult (though that is, of course, true), but that in the end it makes things easier for everybody." R. Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 17.

9. R. Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 18. Succeeding references to this text will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (EHO).

10. William James, *The Writings of William James*, ed. John J. McDermott (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), p. 448.

CHAPTER TWO - JAMES: THE PRAGMATIC MEANING OF TRUTH

This chapter presents an interpretation of William James' conception of mind and pragmatic theory of truth. It prepares the way for a comparison with Gadamer's account of human understanding in Chapter Three. It also sets the stage for a critical reflection on Rorty's anti-representationalist stance. Though Rorty emphasizes John Dewey's version of pragmatism more than James', the pragmatic theory of truth is largely James' creation. He expounded the theory extensively and made it the centre piece of pragmatism. Consequently, focusing on James' thought in comparing the pragmatic conception of truth with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic account of understanding, as it relates to Rorty's "end of philosophy" project, constitutes a unique, and presumably worthwhile, contribution to contemporary philosophical discourse and the study of pragmatism and hermeneutics.

Since Rorty published *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, a number of new interpretations of James' thought have been published but none has directly compared his theory of truth to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutical account of human understanding. The analysis of James' thought presented here relies almost exclusively on James' writings. It is not the purpose of this chapter to evaluate the interpretations of others. However, I relied on prominent interpretations as guides.

The reading of James that follows keeps the previously stated three orientations of Rorty's repudiation of traditional philosophy in mind. It employs three questions as interpretative guides: How does James' theory of pragmatic truth stand in relation to the "representationalist intuition"? How

does it stand in relation to the "ambition for transcendence"? How does it challenge scientism? Throughout the chapter I have attempted to remain faithful to James' own words and terminology in reconstructing his account of truth. I present a sympathetic reading of his conception of truth which serves my purpose of comparison to Gadamer's conception of hermeneutical understanding.

In relation to cognition, James, the psychologist, was preoccupied with exposing the complex of subjective passions, interests and imperatives, "aesthetical and practical," that the mind imposes upon or demands of any scientific or philosophical theory. He concluded that the mind selected its view of reality, at least in part, to suit some of its own evolved, a priori interests. Subjective interests, he speculated, which in their own right, might somehow express elements of the objective truth of things. At the same time as he identified subjective interests that influence cognition, he appeared to grant a cognitive or truth interest per se. He acknowledged a special, ideal theoretical imperative of the mind to grasp reality objectively, absolutely and finally as it is. An imperative he himself was obeying in speculating about the possible epistemological-metaphysical significance of some of the other subjective imperatives of the mind.

As a philosopher, reflecting on the meaning of cognition and truth per se, James denied that the truth imperative is ever absolutely satisfied. However, he enthusiastically and firmly believed that the human mind was able to "penetrate theoretically into the very core of reality."¹ At the same time, he rejected what he considered to be the traditional, "abstractionist," "epistemological" accounts of this truth relation and proposed the pragmatic theory of truth in its place. James did not deny that truth consisted in the

representation of reality by the mind. However, he did deny that this intuition expressed the full, concrete meaning of truth; therefore, he rejected paradoxical epistemological accounts connected to this definition. James was ever the psychologist-philosopher. He believed it necessary to incorporate elements and implications of his psychological theory related to cognition into his theory of truth.

I believe, James never abandoned the representationalist intuition about truth. Rather, he believed the intuition to express only part of the meaning of truth, and he set out to demystify the account of the web of experience which incorporated the intuition. The passages where James seems uncompromisingly anti-representationalist should be read more as defending the practical purpose of truth, and as opposing the reductive nature of abstractionism and the absolutist identification of truth with certainty, than rejecting the representationalist intuition per se. Furthermore, in recognizing a truth imperative and a teleological criterion as expressing an ideal of finality, objectivity and comprehensiveness as motivating cognition, it can be argued that James affirmed the ambition for transcendence as also contributing to the meaning of truth.

James' philosophical goal concerning the question of truth was to describe the full fabric of theoretical truth inclusive of all its psychological and experiential import. He wanted to reveal the fullness of the temporal and concrete conditions that mark the existential meaning of truth and define all human efforts to grasp what is the case. By the same token, he never suggested that philosophy should give up the attempt "to penetrate theoretically into the very core of reality," even about the mind and

knowledge. After all, he believed that the pragmatic account of truth was itself such a penetration and discovery.

Though I present a sympathetic reading of James account of truth, I recognize there are difficulties in it. I do not explore these in any detail within the chapter since my primary objective is not to present a critique of James but to analyze his thought for comparison to Gadamer. I believe the important elements of James' thought, relevant to my investigation, that remain problematic include the following: 1) he ambiguously acknowledges the truth or objectivity interest per se; 2) he maintains the representational intuition as contributing to, though not exhausting, the meaning of truth, but leaves its relation to the other non-representationalist elements that make up the experience of truth unexplored; and especially 3) he temporalizes criteria of "objective" truth and identifies truth with the ongoing verification process itself, while attributing dimensions of permanence to truth. James believed that, while no account of things can be said to be the absolute or final truth, it can be said to be a possible addition and step toward such ideal finality in penetration, representation, and comprehension. While at this point no truth claim can be said to be absolutely accurate and transparent, it can be said to have increased and advanced in luminosity and scope. For James, truth evolves along a line of infinite progress, a line of ever increasing transcendence, i.e. finality, penetration, and comprehension. The absolute truth, including foundations, so to speak, is being built up over time by human efforts to transcend and expand beyond the present limits of understanding, even about the mind and knowledge. In relation to this understanding of truth, the representationalist intuition and the ambition for

transcendence are concepts that contribute in an indispensable way to the meaning of all cognitive and theoretical life.

Having indicated my approach to James' thought, I shall first discuss central elements of his psychological investigations which permanently defined his conception of mind and established an orientation which characterized his conception of pragmatism and the pragmatic account of truth. For the most part, James' early writings were devoted to psychology and his later works to philosophy. His pragmatism and the pragmatic conception of truth are an expression of his later philosophical thought but his earlier psychological reflections prepare the foundation for them. From the very beginning James had philosophical interests and convictions, both methodological and material, which developed within the context of his psychology.²

James' was a holistic thinker. His pragmatic theory of truth presupposes, in a number of ways, the holistic conception of mind laid out in the psychology. The central psychological theses examined are James' belief that the mind is essentially a teleological-practical power and that thought is a sensibly continuous, ever changing stream marked by substantive and transitive dimensions. His account of these transitive dimensions of thought supports the unique empiricist position that the relations between things are as experiential as the things themselves.

The second part of the chapter examines other elements of James' thought which are relevant to his doctrine of truth both in terms of its content and motivation. Here, I look at James' polemic against positivism, his conception of the "great dilemma in philosophy," and his understanding of the new conception of scientific knowledge which developed at the time. In the third

part of the chapter I examine James' conception of the pragmatic method, and the final section examines the pragmatic theory of truth as such.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PRAGMATISM: THE MIND IS TELEOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL

James' great work, *The Principles of Psychology*, was published in 1890. It took him approximately twelve years to write. During this period he published a number of essays, the main ideas of which were incorporated in *The Principles*. James' first important essay was published in 1878. It was entitled "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence." Between 1879 and 1882 he published three essays ("The Sentiment of Rationality," "Reflex Action and Theism," and "Rationality, Activity and Faith") which were originally conceived as parts of a long essay on the "Sentiment of Rationality." These essays reveal important fundamental ideas and convictions about the mind which bridge his psychological and philosophical writings. In the first section of this chapter, I want to outline the ideas and beliefs expressed in these early psychological essays and *The Principles* which are pertinent to his pragmatism and the pragmatic conception of truth.³

The most significant of James' early writings defined the mind as an essentially teleological-practical power in contradistinction to merely passive, reflective cognition. Conceptual thought was understood by James to be entirely circumscribed by teleological-practical elements of mind. In "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence," James asserted that the most distinctive aspect of mind, in contrast to outward existence, is that "It not only *serves* a final purpose, but *brings* a final purpose-posit, declares it."⁴ James believed that the mind manifested a subjective

spontaneity and selectiveness which set it apart from the non-mental. He set himself against what he considered to be Spencer's restricted definition of mind in which consciousness, described exclusively in terms of a positivist definition of cognition, was conceived as absolutely passive and merely reflective-derivative of the non-mental. James objected to the fact that Spencer appeared to define consciousness exclusively in terms of the positivist paradigm of "'scientific' thought, mere passive mirroring of outward nature, purely registrative cognition." (EP 16)

[W]hat right has one, in a formula embracing professedly the 'entire process of mental evolution,' to mention only phenomena of cognition, and to omit all sentiments, all aesthetic impulses, all religious emotions and personal affections? The ascertainment of outward fact constitutes only one species of mental activity. The genus contains, in addition to purely cognitive judgments, or judgments of the actual--judgments that things do, as a matter of fact, exist so or so--an immense number of emotional judgments: judgments of the ideal, judgments that things *should* exist thus and not so. How much of our mental life is occupied with this matter of a better or a worse? How much of it involves preferences or repugnances on our part. . . . In a word, 'Mind,' as we actually find it, contains all sorts of laws--those of logic, of fancy, of wit, of taste, decorum, beauty, morals, and so forth, as well as of perception of fact. Common sense estimates mental excellence by a combination of all these standards, and yet how few of them correspond to anything that actually *is*--they are laws of the Ideal, dictated by subjective *interests* pure and simple. (EP 8-9)

From the very beginning James' conception of mind was holistic. (As we will see, even in his theory of truth, he employed the holistic standard of a "combination of all standards.") He opposed elements of the intellectualist tradition, shared by both rationalists and positivists, which not only defined consciousness principally in terms of cognition but also defined cognition as completely passive in relation to reality, and autonomous relative to the emotional, desiderative and volitional powers of mind. James took the original position that subjective interests, i.e. aesthetic, moral and practical,

are not only fundamental and complementary elements of consciousness, they are the selective elements of mind which direct, valorize, and situate cognition. "Interests which we bring with us, and simply posit or take our stand upon, are the very flour out of which our mental dough is kneaded. The organism of thought...is teleological through and through. Not a cognition occurs but feeling is there to comment on it, to stamp it as of greater or less worth." (EP 18) Human interests and purposes are the agents of cognitive motivation, focus and discriminatory awareness. They provide the perspective, the active angle of selective vision and ideals, which circumscribe and condition all cognition of the world. Insofar as cognition finds its full meaning in resultant action, the human mind has the subjective interest of creating and adding new dimensions to the reality and truth it knows. Therefore, contrary to Spencer, James declared that he could not,

escape the consideration, forced upon me at every turn, that the knower is not simply a mirror floating with no foot-hold anywhere, and passively reflecting an order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor, and co-efficient of the truth on one side, whilst on the other he registers the truth which he helps to create. Mental interests, hypotheses, postulates, so far as they are bases for human action--action which to a great extent transforms the world--help to make the truth which they declare. In other words, there belongs to mind, from its birth upward, a spontaneity, a vote. It is in the game, and not a mere looker on; and its judgments of the *should-be*, its ideals, can not be peeled off from the body of the *cogitandum* as if they were excrescences, or meant, at most survival. (EP 21-22)

Thus, the earliest of James' writings announced the original and central thesis of his psychological theory, namely, that the mind is first and foremost an active, teleological-practical power and cognition is intricately related to and necessarily conditioned by subjective, selective interests. James held that subjective interests and volitional elements, i.e. the ideal creating or purpose positing faculties, are the higher powers of mind which influence and,

consequently, partially define cognition. "From its first dawn to its highest actual attainment, we find that the cognitive faculty, where it appears to exist at all, appears but as one element in an organic mental whole, and as a minister to higher mental powers--powers of will . . . it is more than probable that to the end of time our power of moral and volitional response to the nature of things will be the deepest organ of communication therewith we shall ever possess."^{5&6} Believing that the higher mental powers are the powers of decision and will, he believed that the mind is essentially practical and that the ultimate telos of the mind itself is resultant action. In other words, he believed that perception and cognition ultimately exist for the sake of will and action governed or focused by spontaneous, subjective ideals. "The willing department of our nature, in short, dominates both the conceiving department and the feeling department; or, in plainer English, perception and thinking are only there for behavior's sake". (WB 92) It is this teleological-practical conception of mind which provided the foreground within which James' understanding of cognition and therefore his pragmatism and theory of truth developed. Since James' conception of the teleological-practical nature of the mind forms the bedrock of his psychological thought and later pragmatism, it is important to have a clear understanding of the doctrine.

James described the more comparative element of his psychological method as a "natural history of the mind." (WB 94) He gave an account of the teleological-practical structure of mind from within the larger view point of biological evolution. The accepted physiological/psychological doctrine associated with Darwin's theory of evolution which served as the foundation for James' conception of mind was that of the nervous systems' triadic

structure of reflex action. According to the doctrine, the nervous system is conceived as a triad consisting of a first department of sensory impressions, a middle department of conception and thought, and a final department of volition, action and behavior. Conception and thought is considered to occupy a transitional stage between sensation and action.

There is no impression of sense which, unless inhibited by some other stronger one, does not immediately or remotely express itself in action of some kind. There is no one of those complicated performances in the convolutions of the brain to which our trains of thought correspond, which is not a mere middle term interposed between an incoming sensation that arouses it and an outgoing discharge of some sort, inhibitory if not exciting, to which itself gives rise. The structural unit of the nervous system is in fact a triad, neither of whose elements has any independent existence. The sensory impression exists only for the sake of awaking the central process of reflection, and the central process of reflection exists only for the sake of calling forth the final act. All action is thus *re-action* upon the outer world; and the middle stage of consideration or contemplation or thinking is only a place of transit, the bottom of a loop, both whose ends have their point of application in the outer world. (WB 92)

Thus, according to James, the triadic theory demonstrates the fundamentally practical nature of the mind and the mediative function of cognition. Action and behavior are said to be the ultimate purpose of cognition and the ruling telos to which thought is subservient. Thinking is a "place of transit" which links one practically to the outer world.

It is far too little recognized how entirely the intellect is built up of practical interests. The theory of evolution is beginning to do very good service by its reduction of all mentality to the type of reflex action. Cognition, in this view, is but a fleeting moment, a cross-section at a certain point, of what in its totality is a motor phenomenon. . . . Cognition, in short, is incomplete until discharged in act; and although it is true that the later mental development, which attains its maximum through the hypertrophied cerebrum of man, gives birth to a vast amount of theoretic activity over and above that which is immediately ministerial to practice, yet the earlier claim is only

postponed, not effaced, and the active nature asserts its rights to the end. (WWJ 330)

Conceptual and theoretic formulations are produced not only in conjunction with sensations but also for the sake of action, however remote. Consequently, impressions of sense and practical desiderative-volitional interests, together, necessarily circumscribe cognition. Echoing Heraclitus' metaphysical metaphor, James commented, "This only is certain, that the theoretic faculty lives between two fires which never give her rest, and make her incessantly revise her formulations." (WB 102) James consistently held that the middle department of mind, existed and functioned, between the ever changing horizons of perception and action. He held that cognition operated ultimately for the sake of practice and not exclusively for its own sake. Contrary to much of the philosophical tradition reaching back to Plato, he never valorized cognition itself as the ultimate human end. He never severed body and soul. He never absolutized the separation between theory and practice; nor did he posit, except as an ideal theoretical interest, an absolutely "objective," disinterested, static, final understanding of reality. Later, in describing the concrete conditions of true belief James will identify "incessant revision" as an essential element of the concrete meaning of truth.

James believed that acceptance of the triadic doctrine committed one to accept the subservience of cognition not only to perception but more importantly to the subjective interests and volitional elements of mind. It committed one to accept that goals, ideals and purposes, posited exclusively by the emotional and desiderative elements of mind, motivated cognition, made cognition selective and served as "the real *a priori* element in cognition." (EP 11 nt. 1) Acceptance of the teleological nature of the mind meant that it was

impossible to hold that cognition was simply a passive, pristine, mirror reflection of a given external order of things. It meant that human cognition is firstly an interpretive activity; cognition is primarily a qualified, selective, limited vision of reality. It is primarily a view of reality as something for the sake of something, constituted by, with and for a purpose to satisfy emotive-volitional needs of the mind. Referring to the triadic theory and its implications for cognition, James commented,

I am not quite sure that its full scope is grasped even by those who have most zealously promulgated it. I am not sure, for example, that all physiologists see that it commits them to regarding the mind as an essentially teleological mechanism. I mean by this that the conceiving or theorizing faculty--the mind's middle department--functions *exclusively for the sake of ends* that do not exist at all in the world of impressions we receive by way of our senses, but are set by our emotional and practical subjectivity altogether. It is a transformer of the world of our impressions into a totally different world--the world of our conceptions; and the transformation is effected in the interests of our volitional nature, and for no other purpose whatsoever. Destroy the volitional nature, the definite subjective purposes, preferences, fondnesses for certain effects, forms, orders and not the slightest motive would remain for the brute order of our experience to be remodeled at all. . . . The world's contents are *given* to each of us in an order so foreign to our subjective interests that we can hardly by an effort of the imagination picture to ourselves what it is like. . . . We have no organ or faculty to appreciate the simply given order. (WB 94-95)

The cognitive power evolved in the service of subjective interests and purposes situated in desire and will. These subjective interests, consequently, provide the motive and living conditions of selection which direct and circumscribe the mind's activity of conceiving the world of sense impressions. According to James, conception grasps the world in its partiality as it relates to the desire, will and anticipated behavior of a human being. Thus, cognition occurs relative to human subjective interests, ideals and inevitable action.

In "The Sentiment of Rationality," James offered a definition of *conception* which further clarified his understanding of the intrinsic relationship between subjective interests and cognition. He called a concept a "teleological instrument" since it is a limited and selective cognition of a thing constituted by the subjective purposes of the knower as well as sensation. James argued that sensations of the world are always appropriated in terms of their meaning and rationality relative to the subjective, selective interests of the knower. Concepts are means which serve the practical, subjective ends of the higher elements of mind. They grasp aspects or attributes of things relative to the purposes of an agent. They are selective, partial accounts of what is the case.

What now is a *conception*? It is a *teleological instrument*. It is a partial aspect of a thing which *for our purpose* we regard as its essential aspect, as the representative of the entire thing. In comparison with this aspect, whatever other properties and qualities the thing may have, are unimportant accidents which we may without blame ignore. But the essence, the ground of conception, varies with the end we have in view. (EP 34)

[E]very manner of conceiving a fact is relative to some interest. . . .
[T]here are no absolutely essential attributes--every attribute having the right to call itself essential in turn, and the truth consisting of nothing less than all of them together. (EP 52 nt. 21)⁷

Since cognition is always interpretive, being always a qualified, "for our purpose" rendition of reality, a selective, partial account of what is the case, the complete conception of reality or absolute truth is understood by James to consist in the totality of possible descriptions. When defending the pragmatic theory of truth, James proposed a pragmatic definition of absolute truth which echoed this position. He defined absolute truth as "an ideal set of formulations towards which all opinions may in the long run of experience be expected to converge."⁸ Thus, James acknowledged as an ideal interest of

theoretical life the desire to expand beyond or transcend the present limits of the inherently selective nature of conception. He considered the development of new facts and general conceptions to be advances along a continuum of ever increasing approximations towards the ideal. He understood truth in the concrete to have a melioristic, evolutionary quality, even in philosophy.

Because the cognitive act is situated and defined, relative to "a priori" purposes rooted in the desiderative/emotive life, cognition, even the most strictly theoretical or objective, must itself be said to be rooted in desire and purpose. Thus, even what James called the "purely intellectual," i.e. "mapping" appetite must be admitted to be a kind of interest all its own.

The world *per se* may be likened to a cast of beans on a table. By themselves they spell nothing. An onlooker may group them as he likes. He may simply count them all and map them. He may select groups and name these capriciously, or name them to suit certain extrinsic purposes of his. Whatever he does, so long as he *takes account* of them, his account is neither false nor irrelevant. If neither, why not call it true? It fits the beans-*minus*-him, and *expresses* the total fact, of beans-*plus*-him. Truth in this total sense is partially ambiguous, then. If he simply counts or maps, he obeys a subjective interest as much as if he traces figures. Let that stand for pure 'intellectual' treatment of the beans, while grouping them variously stands for non-intellectual interests. All that . . . I contend for is that there is *no* 'truth' without *some* interest, and that non-intellectual interests play a part as well as intellectual ones.⁹

Apropos of Rorty's project, I believe it can be argued that the most speculative theoretical purpose is reflected in the desire accurately to take final hold of the total relation of thought to reality. The ambition for transcendence, therefore, can be said to be posited as an a priori ideal recognized and presupposed by James as the conceptual, "pure intellectual," absolute imperative and ideal motive later to be identified in the pragmatic account of truth. James

minimized the ideal in the theory of truth in favour of expounding the more concrete, temporal, finite conditions of truth. He did claim, however, that even present truth achieved an element of permanence and, therefore, could be admitted to be a first installment toward the purchase of absolute truth. Thus, even the notion of absolute truth had a certain "cash value" for James.

As the central work of "The Sentiment of Rationality," James provided an example of how subjective interests condition cognition. He argued that there existed universal interests or ideals that guide a philosopher's overall practice of conceptualizing or interpreting the world. He called these interests the "subjective marks" which establish the conditions of "rationality" for a philosopher. Just as every individual concept is conditioned by specific, even personal, selective interests and purposes, so also the general practice of philosophizing and conceptualizing about the world is conditioned by more generalized, "a priori" subjective interests which establish an ideal interpretive framework for thought, and the more they are approached the more a theory satisfies the "sentiment of rationality" for a thinker.

James presented an original psychological thesis about the rationality of philosophical conceptions. He offered a holistic, psychological definition of rationality or cognitive satisfaction consonant with his general view of the mind. In other words, he conceived rationality in terms of the functional, interactive relation thought to obtain between the desiderative and cognitive dimensions of mind. He argued that philosophical conceptions must satisfy both "aesthetic" or "theoretical" and "practical" subjective interests in order to be accepted as rationally satisfying by a human being. He therefore linked the rationality of a philosophical theory to the satisfaction of the desiderative

and volitional, spontaneous and ideal elements of mind. In other words, James identified what he considered to be the subjective emotive-desiderative interests or demands, both theoretical and practical, which philosophical conceptions are subject to and must satisfy in order to be deemed rational and confirm in thinkers that they have achieved a rational conception of the world. A central theme that runs through all of James thought is the refusal to define the meaning of cognition and reason (and their associative adjectives, cognitive and rational, etc.) severed from the totality of mental life. James considered any strictly logical definition of rationality to be an example of "vicious abstractionism" which will be discussed below. He refused to entirely separate the psychological and the logical. His pragmatic account of truth reflects this inclusive, psychological perspective.

James held that wonder and curiosity originated in subjective interests, aesthetic and practical. He characterized the general sentiment of rationality as a feeling of complete relief from puzzlement and perplexity, a feeling of complete satisfaction of aesthetic and practical interests as they condition and enclose cognition. "This feeling of the sufficiency of the present moment, of its absoluteness--this absence of all need to explain it, account for it or justify it--is what I call the Sentiment of Rationality." (EP 33) What James here called the sentiment of rationality found its complement later in the pragmatic theory of truth as the "satisfactory working or leading" of an idea, where no feeling of alienation, contradiction or frustration, either theoretical or practical, is associated with the idea. However, the theory of truth also recognizes as an ideal interest of mind what I have called the truth imperative per se, i.e. the ambition to penetrate every dimension of reality, including knowledge, in an objective, absolute and final manner.

In the "Sentiment of Rationality," James identified the specific subjective imperatives which, when satisfied, result in general state of intellectual contentment. He dealt with the aesthetic interests which encompass cognition in the first part of the "Sentiment of Rationality." He claimed there were essentially two distinct and rival aesthetic or theoretical demands. When these two interests concerning the aesthetic structure of a philosophical conception or theory are balanced and satisfied, the sentiment of rationality is achieved. James identified the two demands as "simplicity" and "clarity": Simplicity identifies the "aesthetic Principle of Ease," i.e. the gathering up of diversity into simplicity, "the pleasure at finding that a chaos of facts is at bottom the expression of a single underlying fact." (EP 35) "More universality or extensiveness is then the one mark the philosopher's conceptions must possess." (EP 36) James considered the drive for a more extensive and unified vision of things to be the "philosophic passion *par excellence*." (EP 36) "Clarity" defines the aesthetic principle of "richness," "Loyalty to clearness and integrity of perception, dislike of blurred outlines, of vague identifications," "the passion for distinguishing" and "recognizing particulars in their full completeness." (EP 37-38) Only when these two aesthetic longings are satisfied in the conceptions of a philosopher is the theoretical dimension of the sentiment of rationality achieved. "Clearness *versus* Simplicity is then the theoretic dilemma, and a man's philosophic attitude is determined by the balance in him of these two cravings." (EP 38) "No system of philosophy can hope to be universally accepted among men [i.e. will be thought to be entirely rational] which grossly violates either of the two great aesthetic needs of our logical nature, the need of unity and the need of clearness, or entirely subordinates the one to the other." (EP 41) Subjective

interests necessitate that reality must be envisioned and conceived with ever increasing balance between extensiveness and clarity.

The second part or sequel to the "Sentiment of Rationality" which considered the *practical* marks of rationality was published later as "Rationality, Activity, and Faith." Beyond the aesthetic needs of simplicity and clarity that a philosophical conception must satisfy, the practical structure of the mind imposes its own more dominant subjective demands upon a philosophical conception. A philosophical conception must satisfy the demands of the practical, volitional powers. James insisted that nothing characterized the practical structure of mind more than its inherently temporal orientation and awareness of time. James stressed the mind's orientation toward the future and its sense of expectancy regarding the future consequences of things. Therefore, the practical-teleological structure of the mind demands that conceptions in some way define and predict the future consequences of things. They must tell us what can be expected and make the consequences of things familiar. They must render the novel and unexpected, customary and expected. They must satisfy the will's demand for a secure and predictable arena of action. They must pacify change. The mind, therefore, can be said to have a fundamental need in acquiring a permanent understanding of things. The theoretical attempt to explain novel facts and experiences aims at satisfying this profound practical need.

I therefore propose this as the first practical requisite which a philosophic conception must satisfy: *It must, in a general way at least, banish uncertainty from the future.* The permanent presence of the sense of futurity in the mind has been strangely ignored by most writers, but the fact is that our consciousness at a given moment is never free from the ingredient of expectancy. . . . Let now this haunting sense of futurity be thrown off its bearings or left without an object, and immediately uneasiness takes possession of the mind. But in every novel or unclassified experience this is just what occurs; we do not

know what will come next; and novelty *per se* becomes a mental irritant, while custom *per se* is a mental sedative, merely because the one baffles while the other settles our expectations. (WWJ 326)

We may then, I think, with perfect confidence lay down . . . that a prime factor in the philosophic craving is the desire to have expectancy defined; and that no philosophy will definitively triumph which in an emphatic manner denies the possibility of gratifying this need. (WWJ 328)

More importantly to James, not only must a philosophical conception remove the general uncertainty from the future in reaching a level of permanence in the understanding of things, it must go further; it must account for the future in a way which fits our deepest longings and does not frustrate the desire and will to act. From a practical point of view no philosophy will be deemed rational which is so thoroughly pessimistic, deterministic, cynical or nihilistic as to render human desire and will impotent and meaningless. For James, this is the deepest and definitive meaning of an irrational world. A world empty of significance is unacceptable to the human mind. James understood religion to appeal especially to this most profound of practical interests, thus he believed it to manifest a fundamentally rational element which should not be perfunctorily dismissed by any philosophical system.

For a philosophy to succeed on a universal scale it must define the future *congruously with our spontaneous powers*. A philosophy may be unimpeachable in other respects, but either of two defects will be fatal to its universal acceptance. First, its ultimate principle must not be one that essentially baffles and disappoints our dearest desires and most cherished powers. . . . Incompatibility of the future with their desires and active tendencies is, in fact, to most men a source of more fixed disquietude than uncertainty itself. Witness the attempts to overcome the 'problem of evil,' the 'mystery of pain.' There is no 'problem of good.'

But a second and worse defect in a philosophy than that of contradicting our active propensities is to give them no object

whatever to press against. A philosophy whose principle is so incommensurate with our most intimate powers as to deny them all relevancy in universal affairs, as to annihilate their motives at one blow, will be even more unpopular than pessimism. Better face the enemy than the eternal Void! . . . A nameless *unheimlichkeit* comes over us at the thought of there being nothing eternal in our final purposes, in the objects of those loves and aspirations which are our deepest energies. (WWJ 328-29)

Nothing could be more absurd than to hope for the definitive triumph of any philosophy which should refuse to legitimate, and to legitimate in an emphatic manner, the more powerful of our emotional and practical tendencies. (WWJ 332)

Subjective interests and ideals, aesthetical and practical, condition and circumscribe cognition of reality such that the world must be envisioned and conceived as predictable and purposeful, simple and clear. In other words, it serves cognition's general, subjective, aesthetic and practical interests and purposes to achieve an ever more clear, unified, coherent, predictable, permanent, and ultimately meaningful or humanly significant, conception of the world. In this way philosophical conceptions are ultimately teleological instruments of life and rationality.

The basic physiological/psychological doctrine presupposed throughout the "Sentiment of Rationality" essays is the triadic theory of reflex action. James held that subjective purposes and interests are connected and integrated with the other departments of mind such that they all must be satisfied in a unified fashion if a philosophical theory or system is to be accepted as rational. Human puzzlement and perplexity can only be eased if all three dimensions of mind and respective subjective interests are respected in unity with each other. Only then will the cognitive subject feel completely at home in the world. ¹⁰

Whether true or false, any view of the universe which shall completely satisfy the mind must obey conditions of the mind's own imposing, must at least let the mind be the umpire to decide whether it be fit to be called a rational universe or not . . . all three departments of the mind alike have a vote in the matter, and that no conception will pass muster which violates any of their essential modes of activity, or which leaves them without a chance to work. . . . Either it has dropped out of its net some of our impressions of sense--what we call the facts of nature [thwarting the interest of clarity]--or it has left the theoretic and defining department with a lot of inconsistencies and unmediated transitions on its hands [contravening the interest of unity]; or else, finally, it has left some one or more of our fundamental active and emotional power with no object outside of themselves to react-on or to live for. Any one of these defects is fatal to its complete success. (WB 99-100)

James' understanding of the "great dilemma" in philosophy, and his polemic against positivism, which will be discussed below, reflects the position taken in the "Sentiment of Rationality" that no philosophical vision will be or can be considered rationally acceptable which either does not recognize or consciously denies any department of the minds subjective interests or powers.

At the same time as James conceived cognition relative to these subjective interests identified in the "Sentiment of Reality," he rather ambiguously acknowledged the "purely intellectual" appetite, or pristine curiosity, which informs the truth ambition *per se*. "But the interest in 'truth' *per se* is an intensely *peculiar* human one, which most men are without. It resolves itself into curiosity about new facts, love of consistency, and love of simplification - immense practical urgencies."¹¹ The view of mind as a passive register of reality can be said to be ambiguously acknowledged by James, therefore, not so much as a concrete description of fact but rather as an expression of a special and distinct ideal interest all its own informing

cognition. It is correlative to the ideal of absolute truth which he will later recognize in the pragmatic account of truth.

I believe the passion for a final, objective account of what is the case regarding knowledge expresses the same determination, applied in epistemology, for what James calls the "mapping" interest. Every epistemological account, in fact, is an expression of this ideal. James' theory of truth, implicitly as a theoretical inquiry and explicitly as a claim of the theory, recognizes this fact. As will be shown, in the pragmatic theory of truth as such, James acknowledged in his own terms the "ambition for transcendence" which motivates all theoretical inquiry as an ideal, and circumscribes the concrete conditions of cognition. Absolute truth is the name given to that which would finally, ideally satisfy the truth imperative per se. However, concrete truth approaches the ideal in a melioristic and approximate way.

THE STREAM OF THOUGHT, FRINGES AND RELATIONS

In the *Principles* James stated that the thought process was characterized by five things. Thought is personal i.e. grounded in a self, about objects which appear to be independent of itself, interested and selective, ever changing, and sensibly continuous. I have discussed above James' understanding of how some subjective interests, specific and general, function as selective determinations of thought. I now want to discuss his understanding of the ever changing, sensibly continuous character of experience. James held that thought was a thoroughly temporal "stream" and that the transitive or relational elements of thought were as real and experienced as the more substantive parts appeared to be. The words and images of consciousness, which, at a superficial glance, appear to be discreet, are not so. Rather, they

are "fringed" and connected by a "transitive" dimension of thought which provides a context and a uniqueness to each successive moment. "Experience is remoulding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to date." (PP vol. 1, 234) Correlative to this doctrine is James' belief that every truth claim is fallible and open to revision.

What James meant by saying that thought is constantly changing is that "no state [of mind] once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before." (PP vol. 1, 230) There can be no exact repetition of any state of thought; novel aspects were unendingly appearing. James denied that there were simple "atoms" or elements of consciousness (e.g. Locke's "simple ideas") that always remained the same. He argued that "there is no proof that the same bodily sensation is ever got by us twice." (PP vol. 1, 231) James' point is that sensations as mental phenomena or elements of experience are never exactly the same. We abstract the "object" or the reality pointed to as the same and then erroneously apply this sameness to the sensations themselves as subjective states. (A psychological fallacy inspired by language.) Sensations, however, are never really identical.

however we might in ordinary conversation speak of getting the same sensation again, we never in strict theoretic accuracy could do so; and that whatever was true of the river of life, of the river of elementary feeling, it would certainly be true to say, like Heraclitus, that we never descend twice into the same stream. (PP vol. 1, 233)

What is true of sensations is even more true of all the other aspects of thought. When we think about a particular thing which returns as an object of thought we think the thing within the new relations of its appearance. "And the thought by which we cognize it is the thought of it-in-those-

relations, a thought suffused with the consciousness of all that dim context." (PP vol. 1, 233) However, like sensations we attribute to the subjective state of our ideas the sameness abstracted to the object. Thus we believe each idea itself, as a subjective state, to be a permanent self-identical mental fact which comes and goes disconnectedly. James argues that this misconception leads to the correlative erroneous belief that thought is not a sensibly continuous stream. The fringes and transitive elements, the "dim context," which connect ideas within the stream of thought are overlooked.

The confusion is between the thoughts themselves, taken as subjective facts, and the things of which they are aware. It is natural to make this confusion, but easy to avoid it when once put on one's guard. The things are discrete and discontinuous; they do pass before us in a train or chain, making often explosive appearances and rending each other in twain. But their comings and goings and contrasts no more break the flow of the thought that thinks them than they break the time and the space in which they lie. . . . The transition between the thought of one object and the thought of another is no more a break in the *thought* than a joint in a bamboo is a break in the wood. It is a part of the *consciousness* as much as the joint is a part of the *bamboo*. . . . Here again language works against our perception of the truth. We name our thoughts simply, each after its thing, as if each knew its own thing and nothing else. What each really knows is clearly the thing it is named for, with dimly perhaps a thousand other things. (PP vol. 1, 240-241)

James identified the object pointed to, after which the thought is named, the "substantive parts" of thought and the fringes and relational elements of consciousness the "transitive parts." He believed it was difficult, for the reasons already given, to introspect the transitive parts of consciousness but he considered this difficulty the source of basic errors in both the empiricist and rationalist traditions. James understood his identification of the transitive parts of thought to be a repudiation of both the atomism of empiricism and the resultant a priori formalism of idealism.

If to hold fast and observe the transitive parts of thought's stream be so hard, then the great blunder to which all schools are liable must be the failure to register them, and the undue emphasizing of the more substantive parts of the stream. . . . One set of thinkers have been led by it to *Sensationalism*. Unable to lay their hands on any coarse feelings corresponding to the innumerable relations and forms of connection between the facts of the world, finding no *named* subjective modifications mirroring such relations, they have for the most part denied that feelings of relation exist, and many of them, like Hume, have gone so far as to deny the reality of most relations out of the mind as well as in it. . . . The *Intellectualists*, on the other hand, unable to give up the reality of relations *extra mentum*, but equally unable to point to any distinct substantive feelings in which they were known, have made the same admission that the feelings do not exist. But they have drawn an opposite conclusion. The relations must be known, they say, in something that is no feeling, no mental modification continuous and consubstantial with the subjective tissue out of which sensations and other substantive states are made. They are known, these relations, by something that lies on an entirely different plane, by an *actus purus* of Thought, Intellect, or Reason, all written with capitals and considered to mean something unutterably superior to any fact of sensibility whatever. (PP vol. 1, 244-245)

James was an empiricist, yet, when it came to the notion of relations, he rejected the sensationalist, atomistic psychology of traditional empiricism, as well as the transcendental suggestions of rationalist psychology. He believed both to have been misled, by language and variations of the psychologist fallacy, to overlook the feelings of consciousness which he believed constituted the experience of relations. James argued that the feelings of relations must be said to exist as assuredly as the relations between objects themselves.

But from our point of view both Intellectualists and Sensationalists are wrong. If there be such things as feelings at all, *then so surely as relations between objects exist in rerum natura, so surely, and more surely, do feelings exist to which these relations are known*. There is not a conjunction or a preposition, and hardly an adverbial phrase, syntactic form, or inflection of voice, in human speech, that does not express some shading or other of relation which we at some moment actually feel to exist between the larger objects of our thought. If we

speak objectively, it is the real relations that appear revealed; if we speak subjectively, it is the stream of consciousness that matches each of them by an inward coloring of its own. In either case the relations are numberless, and no existing language is capable of doing justice to all their shadings.

We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*. Yet we do not: so inveterate has our habit become of recognizing the existence of the substantive parts alone, that language almost refuses to lend itself to any other use. The Empiricist have always dwelt on its influence in making us suppose that where we have a separate name, a separate thing must needs be there to correspond with it; and they have rightly denied the existence of the mob of abstract entities, principles, and forces, in whose favor no other evidence than this could be brought up. But they have said nothing of that obverse error, . . . of supposing that where there is *no* name no entity can exist. All *dumb* or anonymous psychic states have, owing to this error, been coolly suppressed; or if recognized at all, have been named after the substantive perception they led to, as thoughts 'about' this object of 'about' that, the stolid word *about* engulfing all their delicate idiosyncrasies in its monotonous sound. Thus the greater and greater accentuation and isolation of the substantive parts have continually gone. (PP vol. 1, 245-46)

James accepted Hume's principle linking the meaning of names to impressions, but since this position, according to James, took the lead more from the names than the total feelings of consciousness themselves, he wanted to formulate a more enlightened form of experience and empiricism which recognized the transitive elements of the stream of thought as well as the substantive. James position regarding relations was the bedrock of what he called "radical empiricism" which recognized the elemental, transitive feelings of consciousness in a way traditional empiricism had not.

James' pragmatic account of truth was understood to lend support to radical empiricism by being a case-in-point account of a most important feeling of relation largely ignored by empiricism, and even more so by rationalism,

namely, the truth relation. James considered the truth relation to be completely experiential and describable. His pragmatic account of truth was understood by him to be an example and confirmation of the expansion of the principle of empiricism beyond its psychological errors and at the same time a repudiation of rationalist transcendental abstractions. In this way, James believed that the pragmatic account of truth would challenge important epistemological theses which formed the foundation of the conflict between empiricism and idealism. The pragmatic account of truth can itself be conceived as an articulation of radical empiricism's enlightened view of experience.

Related to this distinction between the substantive and transitive elements of the stream of thought, was James' definition of a conception as the "function" of abstraction by which the mind identified a "numerically distinct and permanent subject of discourse." In other words, conception provided the substantive dimension of thought like no other. In relation to the subjective interests of mind, a concept is a teleological instrument but in terms of its essential function as such, a concept is an identification abstracted from the flow of thought. Concepts serve the function of generating the definitive, unchangeable, abstract elements of mind.

We may conceive realities supposed to be extra-mental, as steam-engine; fictions, as mermaid; or mere *entia rationis*, like difference or nonentity. But whatever we do conceive, our conception is of that and nothing else--nothing else, that is, *instead* of that, though it may be of much else *in addition* to that. Each act of conception results from our attention singling out some one part of the mass of matter for thought which the world presents, and holding fast to it, without confusion. (PP vol. 1, 461)

Conceptions form the one class of entities that cannot under any circumstances change. They can cease to be, altogether; or they can stay, as what they severally are; but there is for them no middle way. They

form an essentially discontinuous system, and translate the process of our perceptual experience, which is naturally a flux, into a set of stagnant and petrified terms. (PP vol. 1, 467-68)

James' understanding of conception, as a function of abstraction from the temporal stream of felt experience, is of central importance to the pragmatic theory of truth, and indeed to his general critique of philosophical errors, as will be pointed out below. The pragmatic account of truth examines truth in terms of the continuum of felt experience, that is, it considers truth more as a transitive relation within experience than a substantive abstraction from it. James considered the notion of truth, conceived as a static relation between a belief and the real, to be an empty abstraction which reflected the traditional error of not recognizing the concrete feelings of relations and the sensibly continuous stream of thought. Truth in the concrete is a selective account of what is the case, open to revision. From a pragmatist point of view, truth is a concrete, determinable relation, between belief and what is.

PRAGMATIC FORESHADOWING WITHIN JAMES' PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

James began to draw philosophical and methodological implications from his early psychological reflections which clearly anticipate central elements of his later pragmatism. For example, with the triadic structure in mind he began to link the meaning of a conception with the behavior or practical consequences connected to it. He began to formulate an early conception of the pragmatic method for determining the meaning of an idea.

We easily delude ourselves about this middle stage [i.e. conceptualization]. Sometimes we think it final, and sometimes we fail to see, amid the monstrous diversity in the length and complication of the cogitations which may fill it, that it can have but one essential function, and that the one we have pointed out--the function of defining the direction which our activity, immediate or

remote, shall take. . . . Indeed, it may be said that if two apparently different definitions of the reality before us should have identical consequences, those two definitions would really be identical definitions, made delusively to appear different merely by the different verbiage in which they are expressed. (WB 98-99)

James also began to approach the meaning of truth in a pragmatic way. He suggested the possibility that some subjective interests, our aesthetic and practical ideals, might satisfy, in their own right, the final "objective criterion of reality" which he identified as coerciveness over thought. He argued that the truth of an idea is known as, and only known as, whatever, in the long run, is coercive of thought. Subjective ideals themselves might contribute to such an impact on cognition. Thus, James for the first time identified what truth is known as with the particular practical consequences of an idea.

We know so little about the ultimate nature of things, or of ourselves, that it would be sheer folly dogmatically to say that an ideal rational order may not be real. The only objective criterion of reality is coerciveness, in the long run, over thought. Objective facts, Spencer's outward relations, are real only because they coerce sensation. Any interest which should be coercive on the same massive scale would be *eodem jure* real. By its very essence, the reality of a thought is proportionate to the way it grasps us. Its intensity, its seriousness--its interest, in a word--taking these qualities, not at any given instant, but as shown by the total upshot of experience. If judgments of the *should-be* are fated to grasp us in this way, they are what "correspond." The ancients placed the conception of Fate at the bottom of things--deeper than the gods themselves. 'The fate of thought,' utterly barren and indeterminate as such a formula is, is the only unimpeachable regulative Law of Mind. (EP 21-22)

These comments on the meaning of "correspond" mark some of James' earliest pragmatic reflections on the meaning of reality and truth. While focusing only upon subjective ideals, which he speculates might themselves represent reality as it is, here for the first time he conceives the practical, concrete perspective on definition which marks the pragmatic method. He

will later insist that this perspective identifies the uniqueness of pragmatism and the pragmatic theory of truth. A pragmatic or concrete definition of truth, as opposed to an abstractionist definition, is an account of what truth is experienced as. It is an account of the total, lived practical experience of the truth relation. No static, abstracted relations or simplistic metaphors can define the larger meaning of truth. The real meaning of truth emerges from the totality of lived cognitive experience concretely considered. Thus, above and beyond all other possible meanings, truth is experienced concretely as an idea's long run coerciveness over thought. There can be little question that at the centre of James' epistemological vision is the guiding conviction that the only worthy criterion of the mind having achieved truth and reality is the raw fact of a belief's capacity to command assent in the face of past, present and future experience. This marks the concrete meaning of truth.

This experience provides the lived context of truth as correspondence to reality, which would seem to have application even to the self-referential, epistemological proposition that knowledge is accurate representation of what is the case. In other words, few beliefs have been as coercive of philosophical thought as the belief that knowledge is accurate representation, and it, perhaps, is itself partially reflective of a spontaneous or subjective ideal of thought.

Our belief in truth itself, for instance, that there is truth, and that our minds and it are made for each other,--what is it but a passionate affirmation of desire, in which our social system backs us up? We want to have truth; we want to believe that our experiments and studies and discussions must put us in a continually better and better position towards it; and on this line we agree to fight out our thinking lives. (WWJ 722)

In the early essays and the *Principles*, James examined the criteria of the total psychological acceptability of a philosophical conception rather than the meaning of truth as such implied in cognition. That is, for the most part, he does not explicitly question the definition of the "agreement" and "correspondence" between a concept or belief and reality which is said to mark the truth relation itself. This accounts in part for his tendency to downplay the truth imperative per se. His teleological-practical account of mind locates the cognitive act or truth experience holistically at the centre of the totality of mental functions which condition the act, namely, sensation and subjective interests, theoretical and practical. These adjacent forces partially direct and motivate the cognitive act, regulate its application and condition its meaning. The psychological theory, by and large, provides the account of the purposes and subjective limits of our conception of reality. It defines the relation between our selective conception of the real and the subjective imperatives associated with the other powers of mind. The theory of truth, on the other hand, attempts to define a specific property of the relation of concepts and beliefs to reality, namely, the (objective) relation of "agreement" and "correspondence" as such between beliefs (judgments) and reality. Thus, James focuses his attention more directly at the truth passion and relation itself. However, his understanding of the teleological-practical nature of consciousness which grounded his formulation of the pragmatic method and his conviction regarding thought as an ever changing, sensibly continuous stream led to his unique formulation of a more holistic, practical and concrete method and account of the truth relation than was actually provided by any positivist or rationalist epistemology at the time.

POLEMIC AGAINST POSITIVISM

James' teleological-practical account of mind served as a foundation for an early polemic against positivism's rejection of the legitimacy of belief. His argument in repudiation of positivism's dogmatic rejection of religious and theological beliefs sheds light upon his understanding of the broader social and philosophical significance of his psychological account of mind. His argument against positivism also points ahead to his understanding of the "great dilemma" in philosophy and its possible solution within pragmatism and its theory of truth.

James renounced the moral censure, associated with the dogmatic claims about the illegitimacy of belief, directed at religious believers by the positivist philosophers and scientists of his time. He considered the ideological stridency of well known representatives of the "modern Aufklärung" to be more a neo-barbarism than a liberation of thought.¹² His holistic understanding of the teleological-practical structure of the mind led him to reject, as a dogmatism, the positivists' wholesale repudiation of belief and naive conception of scientific method and theory formation. He argued that religious faith was constituted in conjunction with subjective interests and purposes but so also were philosophical and scientific theories. James believed that positivism argued from within a narrow and dogmatic conception of the conditions of belief and theory formation which did not recognize the subjective interests of thought which dominated science nor the concrete complexities of the meaning of truth. James objected to this dogmatism not only for theoretical reasons. He saw it as a narrow, rather inhuman, reaction to the totality of human concerns and other subjective interests recognized by religion. James had a much more positive

appreciation of the psychological, social and historical significance of religious belief than those against whom he argued.

A number of our most influential contemporaries think that an attitude of faith is not only illogical but shameful. Faith in a religious dogma for which there is no outward proof, but which we are tempted to postulate for our emotional interests, just as we postulate the uniformity of nature for our intellectual interests, is branded by Professor Huxley as 'the lowest depth of immorality.' Citations of this kind from leaders of the modern *Aufklärung* might be multiplied almost indefinitely. . . . Pretend what we may, the whole man within us is at work when we form our philosophical opinions. Intellect, will, taste, and passion co-operate just as they do in practical affairs. . . . It is almost incredible that men who are themselves working philosophers should pretend that any philosophy can be, or ever has been, constructed without the help of personal preference, belief, or divination . . . every philosopher, or man of science either, whose initiative counts for anything in the evolution of thought, has taken his stand on a sort of dumb conviction that the truth must lie in one direction rather than another. . . . These mental instincts in different men are the spontaneous variations upon which the intellectual struggle for existence is based. The fittest conceptions survive, and with them the names of their champions shining to all futurity.

The coil is about us, struggle as we may. The only escape from faith is mental nullity. (WWJ 334-35)

As a psychologist, James conceived the struggle for truth and understanding within an holistic, Darwinian analogical framework. The path to truth was as complex and variable as the biological evolutionary road itself. No simple, preordained, direct path leads to the survival of a truth claim. No elements of the mental environment and human experience, including faith, should be discounted. Nor should any of our subjective interests be ignored or repudiated. James, himself, was devoted to science and for this very reason he considered the positivist evaluation of scientific method and conception of the cognitive act, i.e. disinterested, passive reflection of the given, and its ideological consequences, to be reprehensible and ironical since it ignored the

most scientific definition of mind formulated at the time. It ignored the scientific import the triadic structure of the mind placed upon cognition and consequently upon science itself.

Here let me say one word about a remark we often hear coming from the anti-theistic wing: It is base, it is vile, it is the lowest depth of immorality, to allow department Number Three to interpose its demands, and have any vote in the question of what is true and what is false; the mind must be a passive, reactionless sheet of white paper, on which reality will simply come and register its own philosophic definition, as the pen registers the curve on the sheet of a chronograph. 'Of all the cants that are canted in this canting age' this has always seemed to me the most wretched especially when it comes from professed psychologists. As if the mind could, consistently with its definition, be a reactionless sheet at all! As if conception could possibly occur except for a teleological purpose, except to show us the way from a state of things our senses cognize to another state of things our will desires! As if 'science' itself were anything else than such an end of desire, and a most peculiar one at that! And as if the 'truths' of bare physics in particular, which these sticklers for intellectual purity contend to be the only uncontaminated form, were not as great an alteration and falsification of the simply 'given' order of the world, into an order conceived solely for the mind's convenience and delight, as any theistic doctrine possibly can be. (WB 102-3)

What positivist ideology failed to appreciate and reflect upon, according to James, was the inescapable, subjective, desiderative, and volitional interests governing even scientific knowledge. James believed that scientific formulations were encompassed by subjective interests and elements of faith in a way not sufficiently appreciated by positivist accounts of scientific knowledge. Every truth claim whether in science or religion contained an element of faith, thus an act of faith as such cannot be discreditable. The moral and intellectual irony attached to positivism consisted in the fact that it tended to mistake fallible scientific theories and evidence in the concrete for the ideal of disinterested, comprehensive appropriation of the real which motivated scientific inquiry as a whole and informed the positivistic

conception of mind. It dogmatically posited its own limited, ill-defined, conception of mind and sense verification criterion of truth as expressing the total reality of science. It made scepticism the highest duty based on its own passion to avoid error while not recognizing the faith elements in the vast majority of concrete scientific truth claims. Furthermore, it scarcely acknowledged how limited and reductive, especially when compared to the breadth of human interests and concerns, was the object of those theories which did manage to achieve a high degree of certainty.

Certain of our positivists keep chiming to us, that, amid the wreck of every other god and idol, one divinity still stands upright--that his name is Scientific Truth. . . . These most conscientious gentlemen think they have jumped off their own feet--emancipated their mental operations from the control of their subjective propensities at large and *in toto*. But they are deluded. They have simply chosen from among the entire set of propensities at their command those that were certain to construct, out of the materials given, the leanest, lowest, aridest result--namely, the bare molecular world--and they have sacrificed all the rest. (WB 104)¹³

James respected the "propensities" of the scientific mind but not when they were uncritically and dogmatically elevated above the other interests of mind which continued to be responded to by religion, for example. James' understanding of the teleological-practical structure of mind provided the foundation for a critical philosophical outlook which challenged all forms of dogmatic reductionism including the dogmatism connected to his own empirical tradition. However, beyond this early polemic against positivism which was largely based upon his understanding of the subjective interests which condition thought, the later developed pragmatic theory of truth, was understood by James to be a more complete and explicit corrective of this shortcoming of positivism. The pragmatic account of truth provided precisely what positivism (as well as rationalism) neglected, namely, a

radically empirical, concrete account of the real meaning of truth. James came to believe that the pragmatic account of truth cleared the way for a rapprochement between science and religion, empiricism and rationalism by revealing the truth of a belief to consist in its long-term "working," irrespective of its source or specific motivation. The pragmatic account of truth was understood by James to facilitate an attitude of respect and modesty among diverse inquirers by confirming both the restraint and openness that truth demands.

A pivotal essay, "The Will to Believe," connected to James' critique of positivism, points ahead to important ideas developed in the theory of truth. In defending the right to believe religious propositions lacking definitive evidence, he revealed convictions about truth and inquiry that reached a more complete expression in the theory of truth. James argued that there was an "*empiricist* way and an *absolutist* way of believing in truth." (WWJ 723) Both maintain that truth is attainable; however, the absolutist claims it is possible to know when it is attained while the empiricist denies this can be known with surety. "To *know* is one thing, and to know for certain *that* we know is another." (WWJ 723) It was the absolutist attitude, James believed, that inspired positivism's dogmatic attack against the right of religious belief. Since the empiricist attitude toward truth recognized that all truth claims are corrigible, it admitted an element of uncertainty and faith attached to them. Thus, no dogmatic criterion should be ridden over the top of religious belief, provided it meets certain other epistemic conditions, (not inclusive of "sufficient evidence,") which James identified.¹⁴

I am, therefore, myself a complete empiricist so far as my theory of human knowledge goes. I live, to be sure, by the practical faith that we must go on experiencing and thinking over our experience, for only

thus can our opinions grow more true; but to hold any one of them--I absolutely do not care which--as if it never could be reinterpretable or corrigible, I believe to be a tremendously mistaken attitude, and I think the whole of philosophy will bear me out

No concrete test of what is really true has ever been agreed upon. . . . The much lauded objective evidence is never triumphantly there; it is a mere aspiration or *Grenzbegriff*, marking the infinitely remote ideal of our thinking life. (WWJ 725)

The empiricist attitude, here described by James, recognizes the need for transcendence in admitting the desire to know that one knows to be an ideal aspiration of all theoretical life. Every epistemological theory by definition attempts to satisfy this need in some way by contributing to an understanding of the meaning of knowledge. James' theory is obviously no exception. In fact, there is a very real sense in which the *raison d'être* of the pragmatist account of truth is the ambition to provide a full description, at least as far as the temporal structure of cognition permits, of what James claims never yet has been articulated, namely, an adequate rendering of a criterion of truth.

As part of the argument presented in the above quotation from "The Will to Believe," James reviewed criteria of "objective" truth that have been proposed by different thinkers and philosophers throughout history. He divided them into two categories: 1) those "external to the moment of perception," e.g. "revelation," "*consensus gentium*," "instincts of the heart," "the systematized experience of the race"; and, 2) those of the "perceptive moment" itself, e.g. "the inconceivability of the opposite," the capacity to be verified by sense, "the possession of complete organic unity or self-relation realized when a thing is its own other." James argued that each criterion is itself a "subjective opinion." Thus, the claim to know when one knows begs the question, and "objective" truth remains an ideal aspiration. (WWJ 725)

However, what is important and interesting to note, is that in the theory of truth James turns these criteria collectively into a definition of reality and claims that a belief "agrees" with, verifies, or is true of reality to the extent that it is able to satisfactorily meet them. In fact, James will claim that the pragmatic description of truth reveals what "objective" truth is concretely known as. The pragmatic theory of truth will be understood by James to offer a rapprochement between science and religion, empiricism and rationalism, precisely by describing how all possible criteria of truth are operative concretely in the affirmation of any belief as true. Thus, James' holistic vision and common sense evaluation of mind, which respects the "combination of all standards," ultimately finds expression in his pragmatic account of truth.

An empiricist's attitude toward truth, expressed in pragmatist terms, is described by James in "The Will to Believe." "It matters not to an empiricist from what quarter an hypothesis may come to him: he may have acquired it by fair means or by foul; passion may have whispered or accident suggested it; but *if the total drift of thinking continues to confirm it, that is what he means by its being true.*" [my emphasis] (WWJ 726) Here again James defends the "fate of thought" meaning of truth. There is truth and we should seek it, only thus will our thoughts grow "more" true. James' empiricist attitude informed his concrete conception of truth as an approximate, yet melioristic penetration of reality which revealed itself in the overall "satisfactory workings" of a belief.

THE GREAT DILEMMA IN PHILOSOPHY AND THE NEW CONCEPTION OF SCIENCE

Directly related to James' polemic against positivism's attack on religious faith were two factors of the intellectual history of his time that oriented James' philosophical thought and both motivated and influenced his conception of truth. These two factors were the general conflict between science and religion, on the one hand, and the increasingly nominalistic interpretation of the nature of scientific truth, on the part of some scientists and logicians, on the other. James believed that pragmatism and the pragmatic theory of truth provided the vehicle for a possible philosophical appeasement of the former, and interpretation and clarification of the latter.

James believed the great dilemma of modern intellectual life to be the conflict between religion and empirical science. In philosophy this dilemma translated into the argument between two temperaments and two philosophical outlooks, namely, the "tender" and the "tough" minded, the rationalist and the empiricist. The rationalism of his day found expression in the neo-Hegelian, idealism of Royce and Bradley. The empiricism expressed itself in the scientism and materialism of Spencer, Huxley and Clifford. Speaking to the modern intellectual, James commented, "This is your dilemma: you find part of your *quaesitum* hopelessly separated. You find empiricism with inhumanism and irreligion; or else you find a rationalistic philosophy that indeed may call itself religious but that keeps out of all definite touch with concrete facts and joys and sorrows." (WWJ 368). James believed that his conception of pragmatism was capable of resolving this dilemma. "I offer the oddly named thing pragmatism as a philosophy that can satisfy both kinds of demand. It can remain religious like the rationalism,

but at the same time, like the empiricism, it can preserve the richest intimacy with facts." (WWJ 373) James' development of pragmatism, culminating in the theory of truth, was worked out as an answer to this conflict in society and philosophy. While his polemic against positivism appeared to align him with tender minded rationalism, his conception of pragmatism and the pragmatic account of truth was critical of absolute idealism as well.

James understood pragmatism to be a philosophical method, attitude, and theory of truth that would allow a religious/metaphysical interest and discourse to be maintained while at the same time inquiry would be firmly attached to the empirical, i.e. the practical, the concrete and the facts. He believed pragmatism and the pragmatic theory of truth to undermine the dogmatic claims and elements of both traditions and therefore to provide an open place for philosophy to serve the greater interests of life and thought. James offered pragmatism, and particularly its account of truth, as a theory that at least attempted to recognize the full complement of subjective interests demanded of a philosophy while at the same time remained connected to facts and the rigors of experience. He saw in empiricism and rationalism, individually, the incapacity to do this. Empiricism appeared preoccupied by the ideals of clarity and factual experience at the expense of significance, while rationalism or idealism gravitated toward abstractions, simplicity, and the comfort of the Absolute. James believed that pragmatism kept thought and philosophy open to the full range of interests appealed to by empiricism and rationalism together. He believed that positivists' and idealists' lack of a concrete notion of truth served their separate reductionist and dogmatic inclinations and epistemological errors. He felt convinced that the pragmatic account of truth identified the concrete, objective conditions of

true belief, which, when acknowledged, tended to deflate the dilemma between empiricism and rationalism. The pragmatic account of truth kept open the possibility of finding truth in religious hypotheses while at the same time demonstrating the rigorous, concrete complexities that truth demands.

This mediating function of pragmatism notwithstanding, James was convinced that the English philosophical tradition found a renewed and more rounded expression in the pragmatic maxim first articulated by Peirce and expanded in its application by himself. He considered English philosophy to have reached full self consciousness of its mission in the defining of the pragmatic method and the pragmatic theory of truth. "Not until our times has it [empiricism as pragmatism] generalized itself, become conscious of a universal mission, pretended to a conquering destiny. I believe in that destiny, and I hope I may end by inspiring you with my belief." (WWJ 379)

When defending the practical, concrete orientation of Peirce's pragmatic maxim for clarifying the meaning of ideas, James situated the method squarely within the tough minded, empirical English philosophical tradition. In this belief he subtitled *Pragmatism*, "A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking."

I am happy to say that it is the English speaking philosophers who first introduced the custom of interpreting the meaning of conceptions by asking what difference they make for life. Mr. Peirce has only expressed in the form of an explicit maxim what their sense for reality led them all instinctively to do. The great English way of investigating a conception is to ask yourself right off, 'what is it *known as*? In what facts does it result? What is its *cash-value*, in terms of particular experience? and what special difference would come into the world according as it were true or false? . . . But when all is said and done, it was they, not Kant, who introduced "the critical Method" into

philosophy, the one method fitted to make philosophy a study worthy of serious men. For what seriousness can possibly remain in debating philosophic propositions that will never make an appreciable difference to us in action? And what matter it, when all propositions are practically meaningless, which of them be called true or false? (WWJ 360-61)

James considered the emphasis on concrete, practical experience to be the core of the English philosophical tradition and the key principle of a truly critical method in philosophy. Nevertheless, he understood his expansion and development of Peirce's pragmatic maxim to be a correction and completion of empiricism. He understood Hume's critical method to be a reductive account of experience and truth which ultimately encouraged both absolute idealism and positivist sensatism, scientism and materialism.

The shortcomings and the negations and baldness of the English philosophers in question come, not from their eye to merely practical results, but solely from their failure to track the practical results completely enough to see how far they extend. Hume can be corrected and built out, and his beliefs enriched, by using Humian principles exclusively, and without making any use of the circuitous and ponderous artificialities of Kant. It is indeed a somewhat pathetic matter, as it seems to me, that this is not the course which the actual history of philosophy has followed. Hume had no English successors of adequate ability to complete him and correct his negations; so it happened, as a matter of fact, that the building out of critical philosophy has mainly been left to thinkers who were under the influence of Kant. . . . The true line of philosophic progress lies, in short, it seems to me, not so much *through* Kant as *round* him to the point where we now stand. Philosophy can perfectly well outflank him, and build herself up into adequate fullness by prolonging more directly the older English lines. (WWJ 361-62)

Hume's atomistic account of experience led to Kant's transcendental critique and the modern development of rationalism and idealism. James believed that pragmatism and the pragmatic account of truth could establish a new empiricism ("radical empiricism") which confirmed the experiential nature

of relations and thus undermined atomistic empiricism, as well as, the idealist conception of knowledge and its dogmatic appeal to a trans-empirical Absolute as an explanation and guarantee of truth. Thus, though James believed pragmatism to be a continuation and fulfillment of the English philosophical tradition and a rejection of rationalist errors, he also considered it a more acceptable and balanced expansion of that tradition. Since, in his mind, it articulated a broader notion of truth defining experience, avoided scientism and absolutism and thereby brought science and metaphysics (religion) closer together. James believed that pragmatism repudiated the experience transcending pretensions of idealism while at the same time extending the arena of meaning and truth generating experience for empiricism. The pragmatic method and theory of truth enlarged the scope of empirically grounded meaning and truth by conceiving concrete experience and practical consequences more broadly than traditional empiricism's atomistic criteria of external sensations.

Pragmatism represents a perfectly familiar attitude in philosophy, the empiricist attitude, but it represents it, as it seems to me, both in a more radical and in a less objectionable form than it has ever yet assumed. A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, toward facts, toward actions and towards power. That means the empiricist temper regnant and the rationalist temper sincerely given up. It means the open air and possibilities of nature as against dogma, artificiality and the pretense of finality in truth.

At the same time it does not stand for any special results. It is a method only. But the general triumph of that method would mean a enormous change in . . . the 'temperament' of philosophy. Teachers of the ultra-rationalist type would be frozen out. . . . Science and metaphysics would come much nearer together, would in fact work absolutely hand in hand." (WWJ 379)

The philosophical novelty of James' pragmatic empiricism is his belief that the errors and shortcomings derivative of the Humean tradition could be overcome by *expanding* the principle of practical experience and results to its broadest possible application. In other words, one of the more intriguing and genuine aspects of James' pragmatism is the claim that it is precisely in virtue of its more radical empirical stance that it is able to overcome, not only the abstractions, pretensions and dogmatic elements connected to rationalism, but also the reductive, narrow inclinations of traditional empiricism as well, which, in their own way, represent a denial of empiricism. The reductive tendencies of empiricism, in effect, reject the empiricist way of believing in truth that James outlined in "The Will to Believe," namely, that all truth claims are corrigible and only defined as true so long as the "total drift of thinking continues to confirm it." James' pragmatism rejected the appeal to atomistic sensations alone as the definitive criteria of truth.

Now pragmatism devoted though she be to facts, has no such materialism as ordinary empiricism labors under. Moreover, she has no objection whatever to the realizing of abstractions, so long as you get about among particulars with their aid and they actually carry you somewhere. Interested in no conclusions but those which our minds and our experiences work out together, she has no *a priori* prejudice against theology. *If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much. For how much more they are true, will depend entirely on their relations to the other truths that also have to be acknowledged.* (WWJ 387)

James understood the pragmatic theory of truth to be the culminating expression of pragmatism's capacity to satisfy the demands of empiricism and rationalism. In defining truth as "one species of good" and "the name of whatever proves itself good in the way of belief" (WWJ 388) he believed pragmatism to be thoroughly rooted in practical experience and to be

completely undogmatic. He understood it capable of accommodating the human interests expressed in both science and religion. At the same time, he believed it could overcome the respective shortcomings of both empiricism and rationalism, namely, their reductionism and dogmatism.

She [pragmatism] has in fact no prejudices whatever no obstructive dogmas, no rigid canons of what shall count as proof. She is completely genial. She will entertain any hypothesis, she will consider any evidence. It follows that in the religious field she is at a great advantage, both over positivistic empiricism, with its antitheological biases, and other religious rationalism, with its exclusive interest in the remote, the noble, the simple, and the abstract in the way of conception.

In short, she widens the field of search for God. Rationalism sticks to logic and the empyrean. Empiricism sticks to the external senses. Pragmatism is willing to take anything, to follow either logic or the senses and to count the humblest and most personal experiences. She will count mystical experiences if they have practical consequences. She will take a God who lives in the very dirt of private fact--if that should seem a likely place to find him.

Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted. (WWJ 390)

James insisted that concrete, practical experience define the truth relation but he conceived the elements of such experience more broadly and critically than had either positivistic empiricism or absolute idealism. James' definition of the pragmatic method and the pragmatic account of truth presents his understanding of this broadened empirical conception of experience.

James' formulation of the pragmatic theory of truth developed not only within the context of the great dilemma in philosophy as he understood it but also in relation to his conception of the increasing nominalistic interpretation of the truth value of scientific theories proposed by the scientist of the late

nineteenth century. The conception of scientific theories and laws as static, rigid, absolute copies or passive, mirror image reflections of nature was being abandoned, at least by some scientists and philosophers, in favour of a more dynamic, plastic, instrumental interpretation of the truth value of scientific theories and laws. James remarked,

As I understand the pragmatist way of seeing things, it owes its being to the break-down which the last fifty years have brought about in the older notions of scientific truth. . . . Up to 1850 almost everyone believed that sciences expressed truths that were exact copies of a definite code of non-human realities. But the enormously rapid multiplication of theories in these latter days has well-nigh upset the notion of any one of them being a more literally objective kind of thing than another . . . the notion that even the truest formula may be a human device and not a literal transcript has dawned upon us. We hear scientific laws now treated as so much 'conceptual shorthand,' true so far as they are useful but no farther. Our mind has become tolerant of symbol instead of reproduction, of approximation instead of exactness, of plasticity instead of rigor. (MT 40)

But as the sciences have developed further the notion has gained ground that most, perhaps all of our laws are only approximations . . . investigators have become accustomed to the notion that no theory is absolutely a transcript of reality, but that any one of them may from some point of view be useful. Their great use is to summarize old facts and to lead to new ones. They are only a man-made language, a conceptual shorthand . . . in which we write our reports of nature, and the languages, as is well known, tolerate much choice of expression and many dialects.

Thus human arbitrariness has driven divine necessity from scientific logic. (WWJ 381)

James was influenced by the thought of such philosopher-scientists as Mach, Ostwald, and Duhem whom he interpreted as denying the belief that scientific theories were or could be literal, absolute descriptions of nature.

According to these teachers no hypothesis is truer than any other in the sense of being a more literal copy of reality. They are all but ways of talking on our part, to be compared solely from the point of view of their *use*. The only literally true thing is *reality* and the only reality we

know is, for these logicians, sensible reality, the flux of our sensations and emotions as they pass. (WWJ 427)

Enlarging upon the idea of the utilitarian and instrumental view of scientific theories, as well as his own view of concepts as teleological instruments, James, anticipating Wittgenstein's notion of language games in some respects, talked about the relative truth value of "types of thinking" and conceptual systems such as common sense, science and philosophy.

There is no ringing conclusion possible when we compare these types of thinking, with a view to telling which is the more absolutely true. Their naturalness, their intellectual economy, their fruitfulness for practice, all start up as distinct tests of their veracity. . . . Common sense is *better* for one sphere of life, science for another, philosophical criticism for a third; but whether either be *truer* absolutely, Heaven only knows. (WWJ 427)

The whole notion of truth, which naturally and without reflexion we assume to mean the simple duplication by the mind of a ready-made and given reality, proves hard to understand clearly. There is no simple test available for adjudicating off-hand between the divers types of thought that claim to possess it. Common sense, common science or corpuscular philosophy, ultra-critical science, or energetics, and critical or idealistic philosophy, all seem insufficiently true in some regard and leave dissatisfaction. It is evident that the conflict of these so widely differing systems obliges us to overhaul the very idea of truth, for at present we have no definite notion of what the word may mean. (WWJ 427-28)

James' understanding of the great dilemma in philosophy and the increasing instrumentalist conception of truth associated with the modern sciences led him to the belief in the importance for philosophy of formulating a new, pragmatic conception of truth. He believed that the pragmatic account of truth confirmed the contemporary understanding of scientific knowledge by defining truth in terms of the total, dynamic verification process itself, not a static, definitive, absolute copy of the real. James came to understand truth in the concrete as an approximate, yet progressive or melioristic, representation

of the real. In actuality, his instrumentalist view of truth never completely abandoned the representationalism at the heart of the copy theory of truth. He held on to an ideal of perfect truth as incorporating the intuition of maximum resemblance, and he also considered "copying" to be part of the web of particulars that, taken together, defined the full, concrete meaning of truth. The first philosophical step towards this pragmatic conception of truth was James' development of the pragmatic method for use in philosophical questions and disputes.

THE PRAGMATIC METHOD

Though James, himself, claimed that Charles Sanders Peirce was the first to conceive of the "pragmatic" method for clarifying the meaning of ideas, it was he who transformed the method, extended its application and brought "pragmatism" into existence. James' unique interpretation of the pragmatic method proceeded directly from his psychological thought, that is, from his understanding of the triadic structure and teleological-practical nature of the mind. The ultimate meaning of thought is to be found in its practical consequences. The originality of his use of the method lay in its extension to the dilemmas and problems of philosophy, and especially the concept of truth. Thus, pragmatism in the hands of William James came to be known not only as a philosophical method but also as an account of the meaning of truth.

The pragmatist movement per se began in 1898 with James' address to the Philosophical Union of the University of California.¹⁵ The address entitled, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," contained James' first statement of the pragmatic method. James gave credit to C. S. Peirce for

having first formulated (in "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" - 1878) the pragmatic principle for clarifying the meaning of ideas. Peirce, he explained, argued that the goal of thought was the production of beliefs which were really rules that formed the basis for habits of action. In this way Peirce connected the real meaning of an idea with its associated practical effect or habit of action. According to James, Peirce held the position that every idea of an object is more properly an idea of the conceivable sensible effects, understood as habits of action, associated with the object, and it is exclusively these habits of conduct or practical consequences which constitute the whole meaning of the thought. Peirce's pragmatic method, therefore, for identifying the real meaning of an idea consists simply in determining the practical consequences, i.e. the conceivable sensible effects and habits of action entailed by the idea.

Thus to develop a thought's meaning we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce; that conduct is for us its sole significance. And the tangible fact at the root of all our thought-distinctions, however subtle, is that there is no one of them so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice. To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what effects of a conceivably practical kind the object may involve--what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, then, is for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all. (WWJ 348)

James accepted Peirce's principle but he conceived it differently and modified it. The difference resides in divergent conceptions of the practical consequences and conceivable effects which express the real meaning of an idea. Peirce's interest in clarifying scientific and philosophical concepts proceeded from the life-world of experimental science and interests in logic, as well as a general acceptance of Kantianism. He had general behavior,

repeatable experiments and general kinds of experimental phenomena confirming universal concepts and general laws of nature in mind when speaking about conceivable, sensible effects and habits of action as the whole meaning of an idea. In other words, the conceivable effects which provided the meaning of an idea were understood as repeatable, universal, objective patterns of behavior and conduct performed by the scientist or experimenter not individual or particular experiences. Peirce put more emphasis on the general, objective conduct than on the particular experience as the criteria of meaning. James, however, considered experiment, logic and even the process of abstract conceptualization itself to be a very limited reflection of what he considered the more primary and meaningful, total fund of particular sensations and particular practical consequences associated with an idea. His thinking was guided more by his own psychological reflections and British empiricism. Thus, Berkeley's critique of "matter" was cited by James as a paradigm of pragmatic definition.

Berkeley's criticism of 'matter' was consequently absolutely pragmatistic. Matter is known as our sensations of colour, figure, hardness and the like. They are the cash-value of the term. The difference matter makes to us by truly being is that we then get such sensations; by not being, is that we lack them. These sensations then are its sole meaning. Berkeley doesn't deny matter, then; he simply tells us what it consists of. It is a true name for just so much in the way of sensations.¹⁶

James wanted to use Peirce's pragmatic principle as a means for clarifying or overcoming particular aspects or questions related to the "general dilemma" in philosophy. Thus, James believed, for his epistemological and metaphysical purposes, that Peirce's principle of pragmatism was too narrowly expressed in identifying practical consequences exclusively with the

experimental effects and conceivable habits of action or objectified, generalized conduct associated with an idea.¹⁷

James wanted to use the pragmatic principle for clarifying the meaning of traditional metaphysical/theological or religious ideas and disputes carried on between empiricist and rationalists, science and religion. i.e. issues possibly outside the range of strictly experimental phenomena though perhaps not particular experiences and conceivable practical consequences. He proposed that metaphysical propositions and conflicts could be clarified effectively and philosophical disputes resolved by emphasizing the totality of particular experiences and practical effects the proposition implied. In this way he intended to enlarge the principle beyond its exclusive emphasis on habits of action and general experimental conduct as the touchstone of meaning. Thus, he formulated the pragmatic principle with more emphasis on the totality of conceivable, particular, practical experiences and unique practical consequences or particular concrete facts associated with a philosophical concept or proposition.

I think myself that it [pragmatic principle] should be expressed more broadly than Mr. Peirce expresses it. The ultimate test for us of what a truth means is indeed the conduct it dictates or inspires. But it inspires that conduct because it first foretells some particular turn to our experience which shall call for just that conduct from us. And I should prefer for our purposes . . . to express Peirce's principle by saying that the effective meaning of any philosophic proposition can always be brought down to some particular consequence, in our future practical experience, whether active or passive; the point lying rather in the fact that the experience must be particular, than in the fact that it must be active. (WWJ 348-49)

The future, particular, concrete facts of experience make up what the proposition is really "known as." "There can be no difference which does not make a difference--no difference in abstract truth which does not express itself

in a difference of concrete fact, and of conduct consequent upon the fact, imposed on somebody, somehow, somewhere, and somewhen. The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one." (WWJ 349) James believed that the pragmatic method as he conceived it would be the vehicle by which "world formulas" could be clarified, at least, as to their real meaning and significance for a human life.

In the 1898 essay James argued that to appreciate the full meaning and significance of the pragmatic principle, as he conceived it, one must have experience of its application to specific philosophical questions. Consequently, in the remainder of the essay, he provided examples of the application of the pragmatic method to some traditional philosophical issues. These examples demonstrate his understanding of the connection between the concrete fact called for by an idea and that idea's real meaning.

His first example considered the metaphysical debate between materialism and theism. He argued that there is really no difference in meaning between materialism and theism as metaphysical propositions or world-formulas if only the past and present is considered and no future, particular, practical experience is envisioned. James asked, what real difference of meaning can be found in the two propositions, e.g. 1) the world originated in matter (impersonal, indifferent force); or 2) the world originated in God (personal, loving creator), when there is only one and the same concrete fact or practical consequence attributed to the two propositions, namely, the past and present experience of the world? If the practical consequence of the two propositions is understood to be identical, i.e. the world of past and present experience, no

real concrete difference in meaning between materialism and theism can be conceived. What can be the difference in meaning between "indifferent force" and "loving creator" when the experiential, practical consequences attributed to both is identical?

However, if one considered the foretold, different, future practical consequences associated with materialism and theism, then the real meaning of these ideas becomes clear. On the one hand, materialism, if true, promises oblivion, i.e. the cessation of personal existence; whereas theism, if true, promises a personal relationship with a concerned creator, eternal life, happiness and the triumph of good. The difference in meaning of the propositions is revealed by the conceivable difference in practical experience foretold by them. With examples such as this, James demonstrated his understanding of the pragmatic method for determining the real meaning of a philosophical conception and clarifying the ambiguities associated with specific philosophical concepts, metaphysical propositions and world formulas.

The analysis thus far in the chapter has meant to be a preparation for the study of James' theory of truth as such within the larger context of his psychological theory, his conception of the pragmatic method, and the major philosophical issues and problems to which he conceived the theory of truth to be important. His teleological-practical account of mind locates the cognitive act holistically at the centre of the totality of mental interests which condition the act. These dynamic subjective forces direct and motivate the cognitive act, regulate its application and condition its meaning. The psychological theory provides the account of the subjective purposes, theoretical and practical, and sensate limits of a conception. That is, it

describes the relation between cognition and the other subjective passions of mind which influence it. The theory of truth, however, focuses upon the unique relation true beliefs have to reality, namely, the relation of "agreement" and "correspondence," but it does so from within the holistic, psychological perspective already established. Thus, James situates and expounds a theory of truth within the broad conceptual context of the subjective interests of the mind, including a truth imperative per se, philosophical conflicts and questions, a pragmatic method for determining meaning, and paradigmatic intuitions and concepts about truth, such as "agreement," "correspondence," and "resemblance" to the real.

THE THEORY OF TRUTH

Without question the most controversial of James' use of the pragmatic principle was his application of it to the more fundamental issue of the meaning of truth. He considered the theory of truth to be the central doctrine of pragmatism, "I think that the theory of truth is the key to all the rest of our positions." (LWJ vol. 2, 271) He believed it to be an important step towards a general transformation of thought stating that the theory would "mark a turning-point in the history of epistemology, and consequently in that of general philosophy." (MT 4) As previously stated, James understood pragmatism and the theory of truth to be capable of rejuvenating empiricism while at the same time repudiating absolute idealism. He believed that traditional empiricism produced, with its atomistic conception of experience and passive view of mind, a far too narrow view of knowledge and truth, both methodological and material. Rationalism, having accepted the same atomistic account of experience, generated its dogmatic, abstractionist counterpart, the trans-empirical Absolute, said to be needed to explain and

guarantee the truth relation. James believed that pragmatism and the pragmatic account of truth could help to establish a new empiricism which undermined atomistic, reductionist sensationalism, as well as, the transcendental conception of the absolute mind. James called his empiricism, "radical empiricism" precisely because of its broadened view of the raw data of experience and its existential, concrete conception of truth. He considered relations to be as experiential as things themselves. "The parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience. The directly apprehended universe needs, in short, no extraneous trans-empirical connective or continuous structure." (MT 7) He believed, therefore, that the pragmatic theory of truth was important because of its epistemological utility in confirming the experiential nature of relations. "The pragmatist view . . . of the truth relation is that it has a definite content, and that everything in it is experienceable. Its whole nature can be told in positive terms." (MT 7) If the pragmatic theory of truth were accepted then fundamental assumptions of existing positivist and idealist epistemologies (i.e. the denial of the experiential nature of relations) and related dogmatic propensities in epistemology and otherwise would be challenged.

Correlative to the epistemological utility of the theory of truth in affirming and demonstrating the experiential nature of relations, stood the immediate and material import of the pragmatic meaning of truth itself. James wanted to repudiate any reductionist or dogmatic restrictions on what might possibly stand as truth. He believed the pragmatic account of truth did just that by revealing the existential, concrete conditions which define the real meaning of truth.

James believed that the philosophy of the day continued to labor under an outdated, abstracted and rather empty notion of truth, partially because of its traditional epistemological assumptions and methodological inadequacies. He believed that the pragmatic method was the only vehicle by which an adequate account of the truth relation could be meaningfully formulated, since he held that neither traditional empiricism nor rationalism contained a clear, concrete notion of truth. He believed this lack of a contemporary, clarified, concrete account of the conditions of true belief underwrote the errors associated with the great dilemma in philosophy as he understood it. The pragmatic clarification of the notion of truth would make a significant contribution to philosophy not only in challenging fundamental, traditional epistemological assumptions and tendencies but also by providing a more concrete and enlightened conception of the meaning of truth as such. Consequently, James believed the pragmatist theory of truth would mark a turning point in epistemology and philosophy in at least two ways. First, it would, instrumentally, challenge the atomistic epistemological assumptions of both positivism and idealism, as well as abstractionist accounts of truth, and second, it would provide a new understanding about the full fabric of truth which would generate at least a new attitude of tolerance and openness toward what might stand as true.

James' pragmatic account of truth takes aim at what he called the "copy theory" of truth, and it does so on a number of levels. While never completely rejecting the intuitive experience which underlies the theory, it challenges the copy theory's implication apropos the "why," the "what," and the "how" of truth. In fact, one way of recognizing the source of much of the ambiguity connected to James theory is to appreciate that it stems from his

discomfort about separating the responses generated by these different questions. His concrete, holistic vision tended to unite them all.

Copying is one genuine mode of knowing . . . but when we get beyond copying, and fall back on unnamed forms of agreeing that are expressly denied to be either copyings or leadings or fittings, or any other processes pragmatically definable, the *what* of the 'agreement' claimed becomes as unintelligible as the *why* of it. Neither content nor motive can be imagined for it. It is an absolutely meaningless abstraction. (WWJ 443)

James' teleological-practical account of the nature of conceptions as "teleological instruments" made it difficult for him to conceive the truth relation exclusively in terms of the traditional understanding of the mind as a passive receiver of reality. Since the ultimate purpose of conception, rooted in subjective interests, is dynamic and practical not static and speculative so also the ultimate purpose of the truth relation can not be adequately expressed as mere copying or duplication of reality in the mind. Just as no conception for James is merely a passive reflection of the absolutely given order, so also the purpose of truth can not be conceived adequately as the mere static "copying" or "duplicating" of reality; the purpose of truth must consist in the transformation of life. However, in terms of the "what" of truth, "copying" pointed to at least one elementary, pragmatically definable process, namely, the imagination's capacity for the duplication of sensation.

James argued that it was simplistic to conceive of either the purpose or total meaning of truth exclusively according to the imagination's capacity to internally duplicate or copy immediate sensible qualities. He recognized that it was this experience which served as the foundation of the copy theory of truth. However, he argued that only the most elementary images of sensible

qualities could be said to "copy" reality; and, more importantly, the purpose of truth could not be reduced to this experience.

The vulgar notion of correspondence here is that the thoughts must *copy* the reality--*cognito fit per assimilationem cogniti et cognoscentis*; and philosophy, without having ever fairly sat down to the question, seems to have instinctively accepted this idea: propositions are held true if they copy the eternal thought; terms are held true if they copy extra-mental realities. Implicitly, I think that the copy-theory has animated most of the criticisms that have been made on humanism [pragmatism].

A priori, however, it is not self-evident that the sole business of our mind with realities should be to copy them. . . . The essence in any case would not be the copying, but the enrichment of the previous world. . . . Why may not thought's mission be to increase and elevate, rather than simply to imitate and reduplicate, existence? . . . The notion of a world complete in itself, to which thought comes as a passive mirror, adding nothing to fact . . . is irrational. Rather is thought itself a most momentous part of fact, and the whole mission of the pre-existing and insufficient world of matter may simply be to provoke thought to produce its far more precious supplement. (MT 50)

James objected to the copy theory, first and foremost, because it conflicted, in a fundamental way, with his understanding of the teleological-practical nature of the mind. James could not conceive the mere "copying" of reality as the full purpose of true beliefs. It made no sense to him to say that the ultimate purpose of true ideas is simply to imitate or duplicate reality. This would deny the radically practical nature of thought. "Truth we conceive to mean everywhere, not duplication, but addition; not the constructing of inner copies of already complete realities, but rather the collaborating with realities so as to bring about a clearer result." (MT 41) For James, the purpose and meaning of truth is found in its capacity to satisfy the mind as a whole, including the totality of active subjective interests and practical orientation which determines and encompasses all conception. The purpose of truth can not be mere duplication; it must be inherently more. The theoretical appetite

is ultimately subordinate to the practical thus the duplication of the real per se is in the end subordinate to its transformation. Each human person as a knower constitutes a unique addition to reality not merely a passive reflector of it.

Mind engenders truth upon reality. . . . Our minds are not here simply to copy a reality that is already complete. They are here to complete it, to add to its importance by their own remodeling of it, to decant its contents over, so to speak, into a more significant shape. In point of fact, the use of most of our thinking is to help to change the world. We must for this know definitely what we have to change and thus theoretic truth must at all times come before practical application. . . . And, moreover, it turns out that the theoretic truth upon which men base their practice today is itself a resultant of previous human practice, based in turn upon still . . . previous truth . . . so that we may think of all truth whatever as containing so much human practice funded. (WWJ 448-449)

Adaption to and transformation of reality is James' pragmatic answer to the "why" of truth. However, even though this position in itself is somewhat a deviation from the intellectualist tradition concerning truth, it is his position apropos the "what" of truth that gave the pragmatic stance its novelty. For James argued that the "what," beyond copying, is entirely expressed and discovered in the concrete experience of the "how" i.e. the definable process of a belief's verification. The concrete experience that defines the meaning of truth is the process which establishes assent to a belief. To say that a belief truly delivers reality is to say that it has "satisfactorily adapted" to reality by surviving a concrete, describable, ongoing, verification process.

THE PRAGMATIC DEFINITION OF TRUTH

The most complete account of James' theory of truth can be found in *The Meaning of Truth* published in 1909. It was meant to be a sequel to the series of lectures published as *Pragmatism* two years earlier. Unlike *Pragmatism*,

The Meaning of Truth was addressed to professional philosophers and focused on the pragmatist theory of truth exclusively. It is composed of a collection of articles most of which were previously published between 1904 and 1909. In these essays James restates the pragmatic definition of truth presented in the earlier work but he also responds to the criticisms leveled against it. Thus, *The Meaning of Truth* presents James' most comprehensive account, not only of the pragmatic meaning of truth, but of its significance in comparison to the traditional philosophical understanding of the truth relation.

James considered truth to be a property of certain ideas or, more precisely, of the relation between particular ideas or beliefs and reality. He accepted the common sense intuition that the truth quality of an idea consisted in its "agreement" or "correspondence" with "reality." However, he considered traditional accounts of this "agreement with reality," by both idealists and positivists, to be abstracted and thin. Neither offered a concrete account of the truth relation. Speaking specifically of idealist criticism of pragmatism's conception of truth James expressed surprise at their "shallow sense of the conditions under which men's thinking actually goes on." (MT 46) Even though James understood pragmatism to be a development of the empiricist tradition and presented the pragmatist theory of truth mostly in opposition to the rationalism of his day, he believed empiricist definitions of truth often shared with idealism, what he called, the "intellectualist" or "abstractionist" fallacy, i.e. valorizing abstractions over the concretes from which they have been abstracted.¹⁸

Let me give the name of 'vicious abstractionism' to a way of using concepts which may be thus described: We conceive a concrete situation by singling out some salient or important feature in it, and

classing it under that; then, instead of adding to its previous characters all the positive consequences which the new way of conceiving it may bring, we proceed to use our concept privatively; reducing the originally rich phenomenon to the naked suggestions of that name abstractly taken, treating it as a case of 'nothing but' that concept, and acting as if all the other characters from out of which the concept is abstracted were expunged. Abstraction, functioning in this way, becomes a means of arrest far more than a means of advance in thought. It mutilates things; it creates difficulties and finds impossibilities; and more than half the trouble that metaphysicians and logicians give themselves over the paradoxes and dialectic puzzles of the universe may, I am convinced, be traced to this relatively simple source. *The viciously privative employment of abstract characters and class names* is, I am persuaded, one of the great original sins of the rationalistic mind. (MT 135-36)

James believed that traditional conceptions of truth were examples of "vicious abstractionism" and that this fallacy was the source of much of the criticism directed against the pragmatic account of truth. "I believe that this vulgar fallacy opposing abstractions to the concretes from which they are abstracted, is the main reason why my account of knowing is deemed so unsatisfactory." (MT 82) In contrast, he proposed a clarification of the conception of truth according to the pragmatic method. That is, he wanted to define the truth relation according to the entire range of concrete, practical, i.e. particular, temporal, dynamic experiences and consequences it is known as. The pragmatic method describes the constellation of experienced processes which make up the truth experience as a whole. It describes the meaning of "agreement" and "reality" in terms of the practical experiences and consequences these ideas are known as. Since according to the pragmatic method the full meaning of an idea is exhausted in the complete description of the particular, experiential consequences that attend it, and since James believed that the relations between things were as experiential as the things themselves, James believed that the meaning of the truth relation was

completely accessible through application of the pragmatic method. For James, then, the truth experience is defined by the sum of experienced particulars that at the same time define the meaning of the truth relation itself.

The pragmatist view . . . of the truth-relation is that it has a definite content, and that everything in it is experienceable. Its whole nature can be told in positive terms. The 'workableness' which ideas must have, in order to be true, means particular workings, physical or intellectual, actual or possible, which they may set up from next to next inside of concrete experience. (MT 7)

James' teleological-practical conception of mind claimed that thought is future oriented because it is ultimately subordinate to action and practical processes and consequences. Not only is thought permeated with a sense or awareness of the future, but correlatively, it, itself, is constantly changing and adapting to new experiences and expectations of the future and its practical demands. Thus, according to James, thought, while seeking permanence, is radically situated within the temporal, dynamic process of life and action. James' account of truth reflects these fundamental convictions developed within his psychological theory and pragmatism.

True ideas would never have been singled out as such, would never have acquired a class-name, least of all a name suggesting value, unless they had been [practically] useful from the outset. . . . From this simple cue pragmatism gets her general notion of truth as something essentially bound up with the way in which one moment in our experience may lead us towards other moments which it will be worth while to have been led to. Primarily and on the common-sense level, the truth of a state of mind means the function of a *leading that is worth while*. When a moment in our experience, of any kind whatever, inspires us with a thought that is true, that means that sooner or later we dip by that thought's guidance into the particulars of experience again and make advantageous connexion with them. This is a vague enough statement but I beg you to retain it, for it is essential." (WWJ 431-32)

James conceived the copy theory of truth to be partially linked to the atomistic and passive notion of experience and the abstractionist fallacy which, from the beginning, his common sense, holistic, (combine all standards), conception of mind worked against. The copy theory of truth abstracted one selected, atomistic element of the truth process and presented it reductively and statically as the whole meaning of truth, just as Spencer's psychology had done, in its own way, concerning the nature of mind as a whole. In opposition to the reductionism of the copy theory, James believed that the meaning of the truth process in its total concreteness should and could be described through the application of the pragmatic method and its emphasis on the totality of practical consequences as he defined them.

The essential point in my theory is that both idea and reality form mutually separated parts of a common world of experiences, and that the *fundamentum relationis* of the fact that the idea may mean and point to that reality, and know it truly, is to be found in the enveloping experiences and nowhere else. Take them out and the meaning and the knowing lose their foothold. (TCWJ vol. 2, 540)

The first essay in *The Meaning of Truth* is entitled "The Function of Cognition." This essay was first printed in 1885 and represents James' earliest published account on cognition and truth. He concludes *The Meaning of Truth* version of the essay with a note explaining "how much of the account of the truth-function developed later in *Pragmatism* was already explicit in this article, and how much came to be defined later." James summarizes six assertions about cognition found in the essay.

1. The reality, external to the true idea; 2. The critic, reader or epistemologist, with his own belief, as warrant for this reality's existence; 3. The experienceable environment, as the vehicle or medium connecting knower and known, and yielding the cognitive relation; 4. The notion of *pointing*, through this medium, to the reality, as one condition of our being said to know it; 5. That of *resembling* it, and eventually *affecting* it, as determining the pointing

to it and not to something else; 6. The eliminating of the 'epistemological gulf,' so that the whole truth-relation falls inside of the continuities of concrete experience, and is constituted of particular processes, varying with every object and subject, and susceptible of being described in detail. (MT 32)

James then outlined what he considered to be the "defects" of the essay. Two of which, in particular, point out the later decisive shift in emphasis that marks the distinctively pragmatic account of truth. He identifies the two important weaknesses as follows:

1. The possibly undue prominence given to resembling, which altho a fundamental function in knowing truly, is so often dispensed with; . . .
3. the imperfect development of the generalized notion of the *workability* of the feeling as equivalent to that *satisfactory adaptation* to the particular reality, which constitutes the truth of the idea. (MT 32)

While never abandoning the notion of an idea's resemblance to a reality as contributing to the meaning of that idea's knowing the object, James developed the broader account of the "satisfactory workings" of an idea as constituting the most essential meaning of truth.

In a letter written to C. A. Strong in 1907, James claimed that a thought's "resemblance" to an object, indeed, could be considered a necessary condition marking "perfect" knowledge or "maximum" knowledge, but that alone, independent of the other concrete describable experiences (i.e. the total physical and mental "environment") connecting thought referentially to the object, it did not suffice to define the essential meaning of truth. Only these concrete intermediaries, (i.e. the relations between our ideas and acts, and our acts and "objects") establish the "reference" element of the cognitive relation. "Almost no resemblance will suffice, so long as our thought carries us adaptively into the environment of which the reality forms part; while, on

the other hand, the extreme of similarity will not carry reference to any particular reality with it, or make of our thought a "portrait," unless there be some real path to the individual thing portrayed." (TCWJ vol. 2, 545)¹⁹ James made it quite clear to Strong, however, that he did not consider the notion of "resemblance" to be meaningless. He saw it, rather, as expressing an ideal element of the meaning of truth. "Our idea must not only lead into the physical and mental neighborhood of the reality, but (in ideally complete knowledge) *resemble* it. Where did I ever give color to your reproach that I have argued almost as if the saltatory relation of similarity were a non-existent intellectualist absurdity? I should like to see chapter and verse. I have indeed argued that copying is not *per se* identical with knowledge, and that much in knowing is not copying, but these are not what you accuse me of." (TCWJ vol. 2, 548-49) It is the "much in knowing that is not copying" that James made the centre of the pragmatic account of truth.

In obeying the axiom of the pragmatic method, James asked himself what particular, concrete, practical experiences and consequences, what "functional possibilities," define the meaning of the truth value of an idea's relation to reality. He argued that the meaning of the truth value of a belief consists in the total experience of interactive adaptability and usefulness (i.e. the total "workings," "satisfactoriness," "expediency," "agreeable leading") of an idea, both theoretical and practical, as it connects the mind to the addressed reality.

Pragmatism defines "agreeing" to mean certain ways of "working," be they actual or potential. Thus, for my statement "the desk exists" to be true of a desk recognized as real by you, it must be able to lead me to shake your desk, to explain myself by words that suggest that desk to your mind, to make a drawing that is like the desk you see, etc. Only in such ways as this is there sense in saying it agrees with *that* reality, only thus does it gain for me the satisfaction of hearing you corroborate me. Reference then to something determinate, and some sort of adaptation

to it worthy of the name agreement, are thus constituent elements in the definition of any statement of mine as 'true.'

[Y]ou *cannot define what you mean* by calling them [beliefs] true without referring to their functional possibilities. These give its whole *logical content* to that relation to reality on a belief's part to which the name 'truth' is applied, a relation which otherwise remains one of mere coexistence or bare witness. (MT 117-118)

Here, James identifies some of the particulars of the "fundamentum relationis" that make up the network of experience that defines the truth relation. Factors of sensate fact, causal connection, coherency, symbol, comparison and resemblance in a complex web of particular experiences identify what the truth relation is practically known as. It is the total experience of a belief's or truth claim's utility and satisfactoriness, within one's commerce with reality, and others as part of that reality, which defines the "correspondence" between an idea and reality. This total experience of an idea's sufficiency and adequacy constitutes the real and complete meaning of its agreement with the real. Thus, James claims, that the total experience of an idea's non-contradicted efficacy, both theoretical and practical, is what we mean when we say an idea is true.

To 'agree' in the widest sense with a reality *can only mean to be guided either straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed*. Better either intellectually or practically! And often agreement will only mean the negative fact that nothing contradictory from the quarter of that reality comes to interfere with the way in which our ideas guide us elsewhere. To copy reality is, indeed one very important way of agreeing with it, but it is far from essential. The essential thing is the process of being guided. Any idea that helps us to *deal*, whether practically or intellectually, with either the reality or its belongings, that doesn't entangle our progress in frustrations, that *fits*, in fact, and adapts our life to the reality's whole setting, will agree sufficiently to meet the requirement. It will hold true of that reality. (WWJ 434-435)

James describes the truth value of an idea not in terms of a static property but rather, consonant with his psychological theory, in terms of the dynamic process of mind and stream of thought, the total, temporal, living consequences for the mind of the idea. The truth value of an idea is the experienced guiding process of the idea, the property of the idea to provide continuous, uncontradicted and unfrustrated mental performance, both theoretical and practical. True ideas provide the mind a satisfactory, temporal fit with sensations, other ideas, and even its own practical powers and interests. This practical experience of efficacious fitting is the complete, concrete meaning of the truth relation. True ideas are said to be true precisely insofar as they continue to work in a commanding way in relation to all the other contents of mind. The continued workableness of a belief is its truth.

Agreement thus turns out to be essentially an affair of leading--leading that is useful because it is into quarters that contain objects that are important. True ideas lead us into useful verbal and conceptual quarters as well as directly up to useful sensible termini. They lead to consistency, stability and flowing human intercourse. They lead away from eccentricity and isolation, from foiled and barren thinking. The untrammelled flowing of the leading-process, its general freedom from clash and contradiction, passes for its indirect verification; but all roads lead to Rome, and in the end and eventually, all true processes must lead to the face of directly verifying sensible experiences *somewhere*, which somebody's ideas have copied.

Such is the large loose way in which the pragmatist interprets the word agreement. He treats it altogether practically. He lets it cover any process of conduction from a present idea to a future terminus, provided only it run prosperously. It is only thus that 'scientific' ideas, flying as they do beyond common sense, can be said to agree with their realities. (WWJ 435-36)

Here, in the image of the "prosperous running" of an idea, is echoed James' longstanding "criterion" of truth, namely, the "fate of thought." The pragmatic account of truth sees the criterion of truth to consist in the complex

of particulars that establish the prosperous running of an idea. What is novel and confusing to many about his account is that he identifies this criterion as such with truth's meaning.

In a number of places James offered a more detailed and explicit account of what he meant by an idea's satisfactory workings with reality. Characteristically, he first provided a pragmatic definition of "reality." "All our truths are beliefs about 'Reality'; and in any particular belief the reality acts as something independent, as a thing found, not manufactured. . . . 'Reality' is in general what truths have to take an account of." (WWJ 451) Reality is experienced as or known as the total "resisting factor" to our ideas.

James argued that there are three specific dimensions of reality so defined: (1) "the flux of individual *sensations*." (2) "*relations*," the mutable relations between sensations and the immutable relations between ideas. (3) the totality of *previous truths*. (WWJ 452) James considered sensations and relations taken by themselves to be "facts," i.e. immediate perceptions. As such they provide the mere facticity of reality not its meaning; that, James argued, depends more on us and our selective, teleological nature. "What we say about reality thus depends on the perspective into which we throw it. The *that* of it is its own; but the *what* depends on the *which*; and the *which* depends on *us*. Both the sensational and the relational parts of reality are dumb; they say absolutely nothing about themselves." (WWJ 452)²⁰ The totality of previous truths are about and, in fact, condition the first two dimensions of reality but they compose a dimension of reality in their own right which other more recent beliefs must recognize. For the pragmatist, 'reality' "means nothing more than the other conceptual or perceptual experiences with which a given present experience may find itself in point of

fact mixed up." (MT 59) Since James believed that truth was the relation of agreement between a belief and reality so defined, he argued that the truth relation itself was entirely describable within the confines of finite experience, that is, entirely within the finite processes of mental life as such. "Theoretic truth thus falls *within* the mind, being the accord of some of its processes and objects with other processes and objects--'accord' consisting here in well-definable relations." (MT 58-59) It is not difficult to see in this pragmatic definition of reality a collectivized description of the criteria of truth James identified in "The Will to Believe."

James, of course, postulated a belief in reality as that ultimate resisting factor totally separate and independent of the human mind. He identified it in two distinct ways. On the one hand, he linked the idea of "independent reality" to the barest of impressions and relations, the most elementary, pristine origin of experience.

It is therefore only the smallest and recentest fraction of the first two parts of reality that comes to us without the human touch, and that fraction has immediately to become humanized in the sense of being squared, assimilated, or in some way adapted, to the humanized mass already there. As a matter of fact we can hardly take in an impression at all, in the absence of a preconception of what impressions there may possibly be.

When we talk of reality 'independent' of human thinking, then, it seems a thing very hard to find. It reduces to the notion of what is just entering into experience and yet to be named, or else to some imagined aboriginal presence in experience, before any belief about the presence had arisen, before any human conception had been applied. It is what is absolutely dumb and evanescent, the merely ideal limit of our minds. (WWJ 453)

On the other hand, he also understood the idea of independent reality partially to derive its meaning from the ideal of a definitively satisfactory, end of inquiry. He claimed that the ideal of a definitive end of inquiry, a final,

absolutely satisfactory account of things, was the pragmatic synonym for our notions of absolute truth and absolute reality, i.e., respectively, the perfect correspondence between our ideas and a reality believed to be independent of them. James argued that we judge our ideas increasingly to approximate an independent reality, i.e. to become truer, to the extent that they increasingly satisfy and work, and that our inquiry is forever motivated by the ideal of a final, definitively satisfying account of reality so conceived. James' criterion of truth, the "fate of thought," is thus linked to the intuitive ideal of a comprehensive and final theoretical satisfaction. An ideal, I believe, which expresses not only the ambition for transcendence but incorporates the representationalist intuition as well.

I am, of course, postulating here a standing reality independent of the idea that knows it. I am also postulating that satisfactions grow *pari passu* with our approximation to such reality. If my critics challenge this latter assumption, I retort upon them with the former. Our whole notion of a standing reality grows up in the form of an ideal limit to the series of successive termini to which our thoughts have led us and still are leading us. Each terminus proves provisional by leaving us unsatisfied. The truer idea is the one that pushes farther; so we are ever beckoned on by the ideal notion of an ultimate completely satisfactory terminus. I, for one, obey and accept that notion. I can conceive no other objective *content* to the notion of ideally perfect truth than that of penetration into such a terminus, nor can I conceive that the notion would ever have grown up, or that true ideas would ever have been sorted out from false or idle ones, save for the greater sum of satisfactions, intellectual or practical, which the truer ones brought with them. Can we imagine a man absolutely satisfied with an idea and with all its relations to his other ideas and his sensible experiences, who should yet not take its content as a true account of reality? The *matter* of the true is thus absolutely identical with the matter of the satisfactory. You may put either word first in your ways of talking; but leave out that whole notion of *satisfactory working or leading* (which is the essence of my pragmatistic account) and call truth a static logical relation, independent even of possible leadings or satisfactions, and it seems to me you cut all ground from under you. (MT 88-89)

It is with the three dimensional, pragmatic definition of reality in mind that James argued that the truth value of an idea means its experienced total efficacy in dealing with such reality. Ideas are known as or practically experienced as true only insofar as they provide expedient and satisfactory dealings, both theoretical and practical, with all three dimensions of reality. Thus, an idea's "agreement" and "correspondence" with reality consists entirely in the concrete, describable web of particular experiences that make up the ongoing coherency obtaining between the idea and the three dimensions of the real. This defines its "satisfactoriness" and acceptance. The pragmatic account of the truth relation deflates all attempts to restrict the meaning of truth to a narrow methodological criterion and evidence such as reductive positivism proposed. At the same time it repudiates the abstractionist and dogmatic claims of absolute idealism by denying the necessity of grounding the truth relation in the trans-empirical mysteries of an absolute mind.

In "What Pragmatism Means," James provided a concrete description of this experienced agreement between an idea and reality pragmatically defined. Describing the process by which new beliefs or truths are generated, the passage graphically reveals James' understanding that the truth property of an idea is, in fact, an experienced event of rational satisfaction within an open ended, ongoing, dynamic, ("plastic") temporal process of human understanding. The passage is rather long but important to read in its entirety.

The process here is always the same. The individual had a stock of old opinions already, but he meets a new experience that puts them to a strain. Somebody contradicts them; or in a reflective moment he discovers that they contradict each other; or he hears of facts with which they are incompatible; or desires arise in him which they cease

to satisfy. The result is an inward trouble to which his mind till then had been a stranger, and from which he seeks to escape by modifying his previous mass of opinions. He saves as much of it as he can, for in this matter of belief we are all extreme conservatives. So he tries to change first this opinion, and then that (for they resist change very variously), until at last some new idea comes up which he can graft upon the ancient stock with a minimum of disturbance of the latter, some idea that mediates between the stock and the new experience and runs them into one another most felicitously and expediently.

This new idea is then adopted as the true one. It preserves the old stock of truths with a minimum of modification, stretching them just enough to make them admit the novelty, but conceiving that in ways as familiar as the case leaves possible. An *outré* explanation, violating all our preconceptions, would never pass for a true account of a novelty. We should scratch round industriously till we found something less eccentric. The most violent revolutions in an individual's beliefs leave most of his old order standing. Time and space, cause and effect, nature and history, and one's own biography remain untouched. Here truth is always a go-between, a smoother-over of transitions. It marries old opinion to new fact so as ever to show a minimum of jolt, a maximum of continuity. We hold a theory true just in proportion to its success in solving this 'problem of maxima and minima.' But success in solving this problem is eminently a matter of approximation. We say this theory solves it on the whole more satisfactorily than that theory; but that means more satisfactorily to ourselves, and individuals will emphasize their points of satisfaction differently. To a certain degree, therefore, everything here is plastic.

The point I now urge you to observe particularly is the part played by the older truths. Failure to take account of it is the source of much of the unjust criticism leveled against pragmatism. Their influence is absolutely controlling. Loyalty to them is the first principle--in most cases it is the only principle; for by far the most usual way of handling phenomena so novel that they would make for a serious rearrangement of our preconception is to ignore them altogether, or to abuse those who bear witness for them." (WWJ 382-383)²¹

A true idea adjusts to and fits reality by satisfying the lived, temporal demands of cognitive experience in all its objective and subjective complexity. Opinions or beliefs achieve the status of truth as long as they endure acceptance by the mind alongside of acceptance of all the other

dimensions of reality identified, i.e. sensations, relations and previous truths. (It is important to note James' emphasis on "older truths," which he claims critics of the pragmatic theory of truth neglect, as serving the mind's interest in achieving a level of permanent knowledge in the face of the novel.) Truth is known as this duration of the state of satisfied acceptance or satisfactory workableness of a belief by the mind. Satisfied acceptance of a belief signifies the mind holistically at peace with a belief's total relation to the "real." This is the concrete, objective meaning of the truth relation. It is a fundamental part of the experience that gives rise to the very idea of truth. It is an account of truth that is clearly reminiscent of and, analogically, the objective correlate to the "sentiment of rationality" and the mind's acceptance of a philosophical position at least insofar as it conforms to the mind's own subjective interests. The truth relation, however, presupposes the cognitive imperative and ideal per se, i.e. the interest in comprehensive penetration of the real and appropriation of what finally is the case.

This description of the concrete meaning of truth is applicable self-reflectively to truth claims which form elements of the pragmatic account of truth as well. James never abandons the intuition of truth as agreement, even resemblance, between thought and reality for no proposition could have found a more secure place in the stock of true belief. At the same time, James' purpose was to elaborate a more complete, concrete account of the meaning of truth which revealed the total experiential content of the idea. In light of the modern experience of the ambiguities connected to scientific knowledge and the conflict with religious belief, the pragmatic account of truth revealed that a scientific theory or a religious belief may count as true, as appropriating reality however proximately, to the extent that it

satisfactorily adapts to and works with "reality" in the manner pragmatically described. James believed that any other account of the meaning of truth expressed a too simplistic and vacuous abstraction.

As a short hand description of the truth relation as it has thus far been pragmatically defined, James claimed that the meaning of truth was found in the experience of the total verification process itself.

The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its *verifi-*cation. Its validity is the process of its valid-*ation*. (WWJ 430)²²

As already pointed out, James believed that nothing about the truth relation was epistemologically mysterious. He believed that the truth relation was completely describable within the concrete terms of experience, thus, he felt justified in identifying the truth relation as the verification process itself. Except for the copy theory of truth, which James critiqued as only partially contributing to the web of experiences that defined the full meaning of truth, he could not find any existential description within the philosophical tradition of the "correspondence" said to be the essence of truth. From the pragmatist's concrete point of view, the traditional position, for the most part, begs the question.

I myself agree most cordially that for an idea to be true the object must be 'as' the idea declares it, but I explicate the 'as'-ness as meaning the idea's verifiability. . . . I maintain that there is no meaning left in this notion of as-ness or trueness if no reference to the possibility of concrete working on the part of the idea is made. (MT 94)²³

James never denied that the truth of a belief or proposition consists in its pointing out what is the case. He wanted, on the contrary, to define the

concrete, existential conditions which constituted the pointing, namely, the experiences of sensate fact, resemblance, causal connection, and logical coherency that, taken together, justifies one saying that reality is as a belief states. Thus, he admitted that a true idea presents what is the case but he wanted to show that the very idea of knowing what is the case grew out of a complex web of experiences attending cognition. Thus, in experiential terms, the "agreement" is summed up entirely in a truth's verifying experiences. A judgments "representing" what is the case gets its experiential meaning from the solidity and satisfaction derived from the totality of concrete experiences supporting the assent involved. It is the satisfactory working of a judgment, in all its complexity, which indicates to us reality is as it states. This is the experiential bedrock of the pragmatic meaning of truth.

REJECTION OF ABSTRACTIONIST CRITIQUE AND NOTION OF TRUTH

The identification of the meaning of truth with the verification process was the object of the most compelling criticism leveled against the pragmatic meaning of truth. James' response to the criticism contained the clearest and most critical of James' statements identifying "concreteness *versus* abstractness" as the real difference between the pragmatic and anti-pragmatic definitions of truth. His condemnation of abstractionist conceptions of truth reveal the "anti-epistemological" significance of the pragmatic account of truth. The pragmatic account of truth does not deny that true beliefs represent reality, what it denies is that their representational efficacy lies mysteriously outside of the web of concretely describable particulars and processes, as absolute idealism, in particular, proposed.

But there exists no process which we cannot also consider abstractly, eviscerating them down to their essential skeletons or outlines; and

when we have treated the processes of knowing thus, we are easily led to regard them as something altogether unparalleled in nature. For we first empty idea, object and intermediaries of all their particularities, in order to retain only a general scheme, and then we consider the latter only in its function of giving a result, and not in its character of being a process. In this treatment the intermediaries shrivel into the form of a mere space of separation, while the idea and object retain only the logical distinctness of being the end-terms that are separated. In other words, the intermediaries which in their concrete particularity form a bridge, evaporate ideally into an empty interval to cross, and then, the relation of the end-terms [i.e. idea-object] having become saltatory, the whole hocus-pocus of *erkenntnistheorie* begins, and goes on unrestrained by further concrete considerations. The idea, in 'meaning' an object separated by an 'epistemological chasm' from itself, now executes . . . a '*salto mortale*'; in knowing the object's nature, it now 'transcends' its own. The object in turn becomes 'present' where it is really absent, etc. until a scheme remains upon our hands, the sublime paradoxes of which some of us think that nothing short of an 'absolute' can explain. (MT 81-82)

To reiterate, James recognized that the most confident and pivotal criticism against his account of truth was that he confused "what truth is" with "how its is arrived at" (verification). He believed that all other criticisms (e.g. subjectivism, relativism, solipsism) were misunderstandings connected to this one. But again, he interpreted the central conflict and confusion pointed to by this criticism as that of "concreteness *versus* abstractness."

Now the most general way of contrasting my view of knowledge with the popular view (which is also the view of most epistemologist) is to call my view ambulatory, and the other view saltatory and the most general way of characterizing the two views is by saying that my view describes knowing as it exists concretely, while the other view only describes its results abstractly taken. (MT 79-80)

The whole originality of pragmatism, the whole point in it, is its use of the concrete way of seeing. It begins with concreteness, and returns and ends with it. (MT 115-116)

James considered what is often called the "formal" or "logical" meaning of the truth relation to be an abstraction from the existential meaning of the

relation. In other words, the formal meaning of the truth relation was essentially the existential relation considered independently of time, place and the totality of finite conditions which defined the living mind. Thus, the significant difference of James' pragmatic account of truth is precisely its effort to manifest the full, concrete, experiential meaning of the word, not merely, the traditional, abstracted, formal meaning.

A favorite way of opposing the more abstract to the more concrete account is to accuse those who favor the latter of 'confounding psychology with logic.' Our critics say that when we are asked what truth *means*, we reply by telling only how it is *arrived-at*. But since a meaning is a logical relation, static, independent of time, how can it possibly be identified, they say, with any concrete man's experience, perishing as this does at the instant of its production? This, indeed, sounds profound, but I challenge the profundity. I defy anyone to show any difference between logic and psychology here. The logical relation stands to the psychological relation between idea and object only as saltatory abstractness stands to ambulatory concreteness. Both relations need a psychological vehicle; and the 'logical' one is simply the 'psychological' one disemboweled of its fullness, and reduced to a bare abstractional scheme. (MT 85-86)

The anti-pragmatist defines the truth relation abstracted from the stream of experience in which it concretely lives. "But the great assumption of the intellectualists is that truth means essentially an inert static relation." (WWJ 430) For the pragmatist the totality of mediating experience, in all of its temporal, transitive and fringed dimension, inclusive of the lived cognitive satisfaction attached to an idea is the "agreement" which defines the truth relation.

I have had to say that the truth of an idea is determined by its satisfactoriness. But satisfactoriness is a subjective term, just as idea is; and truth is generally regarded as 'objective.' Readers who admit that satisfactoriness is our only *mark* of truth, the only sign that we possess the precious article, will still say that the objective relation between idea and object which the word 'truth' points to is left out of my account altogether . . .

First, then, I will ask my objectors to define exactly what *sort* of thing it is they have in mind when they speak of a truth that shall be absolute, complete and objective; and then I will defy them to show me any conceivable standing-room for such a kind of truth outside the terms of my own description. It will fall, as I contend, entirely within the field of my analysis. (MT 86-87)²⁴

James wanted to define truth as the lived relation it is experienced as, that is as a relation embedded in time. He called this the "metaphysically prior" meaning of truth. Thus, he defined the truth value of an idea as a thoroughly finite, temporal experience. He considered the traditional or formal definition of truth, i.e. truth conceived as a static relation abstracted from experience, to be at times a useful abbreviation but ultimately a rather misleading and empty notion. James claimed that the verification process, in one and the same experience, not only establishes a belief as true but also, more primordially, establishes what it means for it to be conceived as true.

In point of fact it [pragmatism] tells us both, tells us what it [truth] is incidentally to telling us how it is arrived at--for what is arrived at except just what the truth is? . . . It is quite true that the abstract *word* 'how' hasn't the same meaning as the abstract *word* 'what,' but in this universe of concrete facts you cannot keep hows and whats asunder. The reasons why I find it satisfactory to believe that any idea is true, the *how* of my arriving at that belief, may be among the very reasons why the idea is true in reality. If not, I summon the anti-pragmatist to explain the impossibility articulately. (MT 108-9)

James understood his account of truth to side step the traditional dualistic caricatures and antinomies which often attended discussions of truth going back to Plato and Protagoras. Contrasts between absolutism and relativism, objectivism and subjectivism were believed to be a confusion of the two distinct ways of talking (i.e. abstractly and concretely) about the truth relation. He believed the concrete account included the abstract by providing the fully

articulated meaning of the latter. The abstract account excluded the concrete, being no real "account" at all. James understood the pragmatic description of truth to show what "objective" truth is concretely known as. It is the totality of the verification process itself, inclusive though not reducible to resemblance, which concretely describes the experience and defines the meaning of a belief's representation of and reference to reality.

Essential truth, the truth of the intellectualists, the truth with no one thinking it, is like the coat that fits tho no one has ever tried it on. . . . Pragmatist truth contains the whole of intellectualist truth and a hundred other things in addition. Intellectualist truth is then only pragmatist truth *in posse*. That on innumerable occasions men do substitute truth *in posse* or verifiability, for verification or truth in act, is a fact to which no one attributes more importance than the pragmatist: he emphasizes the practical utility of such a habit. But he does not on that account consider truth *in posse*--truth not alive enough ever to have been asserted or questioned or contradicted--to be the metaphysically prior thing, to which truths in act are tributary and subsidiary. When intellectualists do this, pragmatism charges them with inverting the real relation. Truth in posse *means* only truths in act; and he insists that these latter take precedence in the order of logic as well as in that of being. (MT 110-111)²⁵

The pragmatic or metaphysically prior meaning of truth proceeds from James' long held belief that human experience of reality is essentially an experienced process of change open to improvement.²⁶ Truth is a relation of agreement between beliefs and reality but the relation is defined by a temporal, finite, though melioristic, process of experience. The fundamental import of James' pragmatic understanding of truth is that truth is a finite, approximate, inherently mutable, though historically melioristic, ideational adjustment to and verification of reality. The "representational" element being concretely included in the sum total of concrete experiences which make up the verification process itself.

The fundamental fact about our experience is that it is a process of change. For the 'trower' at any moment, truth, like the visible area round a man walking in a fog, . . . is an objective field which the next moment enlarges and of which it is the critic, and which then either suffers alteration or is continued unchanged. The critic sees both the first trower's truth and his own truth, compares them with each other, and verifies or confutes. His field of view is the reality independent of that earlier trower's thinking with which that thinking ought to correspond. But the critic is himself only a trower; and if the whole process of experience should terminate at that instant, there would be no otherwise known independent reality with which his thought might be compared. . . . But, owing to the fact that all experience is a process, no point of view can ever be the last one. Every one is insufficient and off its balance and responsible to later points of view than itself. (MT 54-55)

Because James' account of truth recognizes its finite and temporal character in a way traditional philosophy did not, his description of truth was accused of relativism. He considered this accusation a further example of "vicious abstractionism." James' account of truth, linked as it is to the notion of verification, is more accurately described as probablistic than relativistic. James countered the accusation of relativism by proposing a pragmatic account of "absolute" truth which he believed avoided abstractionism and deflated the charge of relativism. Absolute truth, he claimed, is truth absolutely unalterable by any future experience. It is the ideal, future, articulate culmination of all human experience and accounts what is the case.

It is in this charge that the vicious abstractionism becomes most apparent. The anti-pragmatist, in postulating absolute truth, refuses to give any account of what the words may mean. For him they form a self-explanatory term. The pragmatist, on the contrary, articulately defines their meaning. Truth absolute, he says, means an ideal set of formulations towards which all opinions may in the long run of experience be expected to converge. In this definition of absolute truth he not only postulates that there is a tendency to such convergence of opinions, to such ultimate consensus, but he postulates the other factors of his definition equally, borrowing them by anticipation from the true conclusions expected to be reached. He postulates the existence of opinions, he postulates the experience that will sift them, and the

consistency which that experience will show. He justifies himself in these assumptions by saying that they are not postulates in the strict sense but simple inductions from the past extended to the future by analogy; and he insists that human opinion has already reached a pretty stable equilibrium regarding them and that if its future development fails to alter them, the definition itself, with all its terms included, will be part of the very absolute truth which it defines. The hypothesis will in short, have worked successfully all round the circle and proved self-corroborative, and the circle will be closed. (MT 143-145)²⁷

From a pragmatist point of view, absolute truth represents the purely intellectual interest and ideal which motivates the theoretical enterprise per se. However, it is an ideal which reflects elements of present experience, namely, the permanence that much of truth appears already to have reached. The notion of absolute truth embodies the imperative of a final and complete account of what is the case. However, it expresses and reflects not only the ideal interest and motivation of all theoretical inquiry but also the concrete experience of the melioristic advance and tendency of thought toward truth. Absolute truth, the ideal "fate of thought," is the telos of inquiry which defines the ambition for transcendence, a desire confirmed and valorized by the concrete experience of the historical enhancement and furtherance of our theoretical understanding of the world.

Little was more real to William James than the experience of truth. Just, as he claimed, Berkeley did not deny "matter," so he did not deny "truth." He did object, however, to accounts of it that reduced it to particular selective criteria, or that had recourse to logical and epistemological abstractions, vagaries, and mysteries such as the Absolute Mind.

A true belief's agreement with reality, he said, consists in the total web of particular experiences which permit a belief to overcome the feelings of

resistance and alienation which reality inevitably presents to cognition. Truth is not adequately described merely as a static, passive, ideational resemblance or mental image copy of reality, though it incorporates that particular of experience harmonized with many others, such as sensate facts, causal connections, and logical coherency. Truth consists in the totality of these describable, interconnected particulars of experience which when harmonized constitute a satisfactory verification of reality, which itself has been pragmatically defined phenomenally as the totality of such collective criteria of truth. According to James, it is the comprehensive verification process itself, in all its temporal complexity, therefore, which concretely defines the real meaning of truth. Truth is a process which periodically lays to rest the feelings of resistance, bewilderment and alienation which confronts the minds ongoing cognitive relation to the real. It is this complex of experience which indicates that our beliefs represent and are in touch with the real. It must be remembered that James spoke of "resemblance," both as a primitive, original experience and ideal perfection, as also contributing to the meaning of truth; and, more importantly, he meant to confirm, not deny, the legitimacy of stating that reality is as a true belief states.

As a philosopher James understood the problem of cognition and truth to be the central question in philosophy. He believed that the conflict between modern science and religion, between positivism and idealism which characterized modern inquiry, could be appeased if a pragmatic account of truth were to prevail. He saw in the pragmatic account of truth a confirmation of his conception of the empiricist understanding and attitude about knowledge, namely, that reality, increasingly can be known, and penetrated to its depths but that within the confines of concrete, temporal

experience it can never be known completely, nor can the quality of the mind's own penetration be known with absolute certainty. Pragmatism continues to confirm the possibility of verifying what is the case but it conceives this verification as a matter of extension in time. The longer a belief endures its ongoing encounter with the real, that is, the longer it survives the verification process, the more it is experienced as true. Thus, pragmatism tends to undermine any conceits or dogmatisms which tend to close off in advance from what discourse truth possibly might emerge or what beliefs possibly might stand for truth in the long run. Philosophic, scientific, moral and religious beliefs ultimately are sorted out theoretically as to their truth by the same describable fundamentum of experience which pragmatically defines the real meaning of truth.

James held that truth in the concrete is experienced as an ever increasing penetration and approximation of human thought to reality "ever beckoned on by the ideal notion of an ultimate completely satisfactory terminus." On this reading of James, he can be said to have deconstructed scientism, and affirmed, not repudiated, the representationalist intuition and the need for transcendence, which together, motivate all theoretical inquiry, including inquiry into the meaning of knowledge itself.

Since the primary objective of this analysis of James' pragmatic theory of truth has been to set the stage for the principal aim of the dissertation, namely to compare it to Hans-Georg Gadamer's account of human understanding developed within his philosophical hermeneutics, this will define the purpose of the next chapter.

NOTES - CHAPTER TWO

1. William James, *The Writings of William James*, ed. John J. McDermott (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), p. 448. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (WWJ).

2. "James did not turn to philosophy after abandoning psychology, as the usual periodization of his writings suppose. His philosophical interests predated *The Principles of Psychology*, published in 1890." Charlene Haddock Seigfried, *William James's Radical Reconstruction of Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 21.

3. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. (New York: Henry Holt and Co. 1890. Reprinted, New York: Dover Publications, 1950). Succeeding references to this text will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (PP). James defined psychology as the science of mental phenomena and their conditions. He identified three methods for the science, namely, introspective observation, experimentation and comparison. He excelled in the application of the first method, making use of the other two methods only secondarily, mostly through other practitioners. He considered introspection the primary and indispensable method of psychology. The virtue of James' use of introspective observation lay in his critical formulation and avoidance of two sources of error, namely, what he called the misleading influences of speech and the "psychologist fallacy." To both sources he attributed most of the errors in psychology.

James identified the two most misleading influences of speech as follows: 1) The lack of a word leads to the neglect of a phenomenon; the psychologist "overlook(s) a phenomenon whose existence would be patent to us all, had we only grown up to hear it familiarly recognized in speech." 2) Because thoughts themselves are named after their objects, attributes of the objects are believed to be attributes of the thoughts or mental phenomena. Thus, for example, "The thought of the object's recurrent identity is regarded as the identity of its recurrent thought; and the perceptions of multiplicity, of coexistence, of succession, are severally conceived to be brought about only through a multiplicity, a coexistence, a succession, of perceptions." (PP vol. 1, 196) James rejected important parts of British philosophical psychology derived from Locke and Hume as making this error. "The continuous flow of the mental stream is sacrificed, and in its place an atomism, a brickbat plan of construction, is preached, for the existence of which no good introspective grounds can be brought forward, and out of which presently grow all sorts of paradoxes and contradictions, the heritage of woe of students of the mind." (PP vol. 1, 195-96).

James identified the psychologist fallacy as the confusion of the psychologist's own standpoint with "that of the mental fact about which he is making his report." or "*the assumption that the mental state studied must be conscious of itself as the psychologist is conscious of it.*" (PP vol. 1, 196-97) James' conscientious effort to avoid these two sources of error raised his psychological reflections to a level of critical description which not only prepared for the formulation of the pragmatic method but also resulted in some of his most original convictions about the mind that later came to play an important part in his pragmatic attitude and theory of truth, for example, his conviction regarding the mental phenomena he described as "feelings of relations" suggested above, and his understanding of conception as a "function" of "abstraction."

4. William James, "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence," *Essays in Philosophy*, vol. 5 of *The Works of William James*, ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers, Ignas K. Skrupskelis, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 20. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (EP).

5. William James, "Reflex Action and Theism," *The Will to Believe and Other Essays*, vol. 6 of *The Works of William James*, ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers, Ignas K. Skrupskelis, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 110. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (WB).

6. James did not think that the "speculative conquest" of nature and being was the real meaning of human destiny. Rather human destiny was to be found in resolute moral energy. "In the silence of our theories we then seem to listen, and to hear something like the pulse of Being beat; and it is borne in upon us that the mere turning of the character, the dumb willingness to suffer and to serve this universe, is more than all theories about it put together. The most any theory about it can do is to bring us to that. Certain it is that the acutest theories, the greatest intellectual power, the most elaborate education, are a sheer mockery when, as too often happens, they feed mean motives and a nerveless will. And it is equally certain that a resolute moral energy, no matter how inarticulate or unequipped with learning its owner may be, extorts from us a respect we should never pay were we not satisfied that the essential root of human personality lay there." (EP 111).

7. In the *Principles*, James states, "This whole function of conceiving, of fixing, and holding fast to meanings, has no significance apart from the fact that the conceiver is a creature with partial purposes and private ends." (PP vol.1, 482). "Men are so ingrainedly partial that, for common-sense and scholasticism (which is only common-sense grown articulate), the notion that

there is no one quality genuinely, absolutely, and exclusively essential to anything is almost unthinkable. 'A thing's essence makes it *what* it is. Without an exclusive essence it would be nothing in particular, would be quite nameless, we could not say it was this rather than that. What you write on, for example,--why talk of its being combustible, rectangular, and the like, when you know that these are mere accidents, and that what it really is, and was made to be, is just *paper* and nothing else?' The reader is pretty sure to make some such comment as this. But he is himself merely insisting on an aspect of the thing which suits his own petty purpose, that of *naming* the thing; or else on an aspect which suits the manufacturer's purpose, that of *producing an article for which there is a vulgar demand*. Meanwhile the reality overflows these purposes at every pore. Our usual purpose with it, our commonest title for it, and the properties which this title suggests, have in reality nothing sacramental. They characterize us more than they characterize the thing. But we are so stuck in our prejudices, so petrified intellectually, that to our vulgarest names, with their suggestions, we ascribe an eternal and exclusive worth. The thing must be, essentially, what the vulgarest name connotes; what less unusual names connote, it can be only in an 'accidental' and relatively unreal sense . . . *the only meaning of essence is teleological . . . classification and conception are purely teleological weapons of the mind.*" (PP vol. 2, 334-35). "Only if one of our purposes were itself truer than another, could one of our conceptions become the truer conception. To be a truer purpose, however, our purpose must conform more to some absolute standard of purpose in things to which our purposes ought to conform. This shows that the whole doctrine of essential characters is intimately bound up with a teleological view of the world. . . . The only real truth about the world, apart from particular purposes, is the *total truth*." (PP vol.2, 336)

8. William James, *The Meaning of Truth*, vol. 2 of *The Works of William James*, ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers, Ignas K. Skrupskelis, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 143. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (MT).

9. William James, *The Letters of William James*, vol. 2, ed. Henry James, (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), pp. 295-96. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (LWJ).

10. "And, so far as we can see, the given world is there only for the sake of the operation. At any rate, to operate upon it is our only chance of approaching it; for never can we get a glimpse of it in the unimaginable insipidity of its virgin estate. To bid the man's subjective interests be passive till truth express itself from out the environment, is to bid the sculptor's chisel be passive till the statue express itself from out the stone. Operate we must! and the only choice left us is that between operating to poor or to rich

results. The only possible duty there can be in the matter is the duty of getting the richest results that the material given will allow. The richness lies, of course, in the energy of all three departments of the mental cycle. Not a sensible 'fact' of department One must be left in the cold, not a faculty of department Three be paralyzed; and department Two must form an indestructible bridge." (EP 103).

11. Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, vol. 2, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1935) p. 542. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (TCWJ).

12. "When I see their [positivists] negations acquiring almost as much prestige and authority as their affirmations legitimately claim over the minds of the docile public, I feel as if the influences working in the direction of our mental barbarization were beginning to be rather strong, and needed some positive counteraction." (EP 105).

13. "As our ancestors said, *Fiat justitia, pereat mundus*, so we who do not believe in justice or any absolute good, must, according to these prophets, [positivists] be willing to see the world perish, in order that *scientia fiat*. Was there ever a more exquisite idol of the den, or rather of the *shop*? In the clean sweep to be made of superstitions, let the idol of stern obligation to be scientific go with the rest, and people will have a fair chance to understand one another." (WB 104 nt. 9).

14. James argued that religious belief was entirely justified in a situation where the option between hypothesis is forced, living and momentous. See (WWJ 717-718).

15. H. S. Thayer argues that the history of pragmatism can really be said to begin in 1878 with the simultaneous appearance of Peirce's "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" and James' "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind" which first articulated James' belief, central to pragmatism, regarding the teleological nature of the mind. James argued that thinking operates for purposes which have their origin in practical desires, i.e. "subjective interests." Thayer states that James' concept of the teleological nature of the mind influenced Peirce's thought. He believes both can be said jointly to share the credit for inventing pragmatism, James' crediting its origin to Peirce notwithstanding. (*Meaning and Action*, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), p.144.

16. William James, *Pragmatism and Four Essays from The Meaning of Truth* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1955-64), p. 68.

17. Both H. S. Thayer and John Dewey interpret James' modification of Peirce along these lines. "Peirce, we have seen appealed to a criterion of the

conceivable consequences, i.e. the class of confirming instances, under standard test conditions, as the one right way of determining the meaning of signs (i.e., ideas, beliefs, predicates, statements). . . . The appeal is never to a particular test case, never to a single operation, a single result, and a single sense experience, as giving the meaning of a term. Meaning (as well as verification) is not had that way; particular tests, or particular sense experiences are at best but intimations, or signs of meaning. Meaning is found in the "generals" only; it is found in a kind or form of operation and result. . . . Meanings are present in formulas; not in specific actions or events, but in rules of action. Peirce's pragmatic empiricism, his 'critical common sensism,' comes from Kant (but also Berkeley) rather than from the British empiricism of Locke, Hume, and Mill. . . . The word 'pragmatism' as a name for this outlook, Peirce says, was a translation of Kant's *pragmatisch*. It does not mean 'practical,' but empirical or experimental . . .

A neat point of comparative difference between Peirce and James is found in a comment of James on the meaning of 'pragmatic.' James neglects the strict allegiance to Kantian use which Peirce intended for 'pragmatism.' Altogether contrary to Peirce's efforts to rid pragmatism of associations with the practical, or with actions, James remarks that the history of the idea shows what pragmatism means, 'the term is derived from the same Greek word [in Greek - *pragma*] meaning action, from which our words 'practice' and 'practical' come.'

James, remaining closer to British empiricism than either Peirce or Dewey, gave the principle of consequences a thoroughly nominalistic application. This, too, is a divergence from Peirce. . . . But Peirce's basic philosophical dissent from James's accounts of pragmatism is clear. It is an objection Peirce often made, and one of considerable theoretical importance. James interpreted the principle of *conceivable effects* in Peirce's enunciation of the pragmatic maxim as a procedure for determining the meaning of a concept by references to *sensations* and to particular, practical forms of sense experience. For Peirce, the pragmatic meaning of concepts cannot be reduced to experience in this sense." H. S. Thayer, *Meaning and Action* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), pp. 137-139.

Dewey remarks, "William James alluded to the development which he gave to Peirce's expression of the principle. In one sense, one can say that he enlarged the bearing of the principle by the substitution of particular consequences for the general rule or method applicable to future experience. But in another sense this substitution limited the application of the principle, since it destroyed the importance attached by Peirce to the greatest possible application of the rule, or the habit of conduct--its extension to universality. That is to say, William James was much more of a nominalist than Peirce." "The Development of American Pragmatism," *Pragmatism: The Classic Writings*, ed. H. S. Thayer, (New York: New American Library, 1970), p. 27.

18. Refer to *The Meaning of Truth*, "Two English Critics," p. 148. In reply to Bertrand Russell's critique of his account of truth, James comments, "I have sincerely tried to follow the windings of his mind in this procedure, but for the life of me I can only see in it another example of what I have called . . . vicious abstractionism."

19. According to James, Josiah Royce had argued, in *Religious Aspects of Philosophy*, that the meaning of cognition necessitated an absolute mind, as the inclusive medium, which intentionally "referred" the idea that "resembled" the object to the object as the representative symbol of that object and no other. In response to this idealist doctrine, James developed the pragmatic meaning of truth. "I came to see that any definitely experienceable workings would serve as intermediaries quite as well as the absolute mind's intentions." (WWJ 144-45 nt. 7).

20. Here James echoes the distinction made in the *Principles* between the two kinds of knowledge, i.e. "knowledge of acquaintance" and "knowledge-about." "All the elementary natures of the world, its highest genera, the simple qualities of matter and mind, together with the kinds of relation that subsist between them, must either not be known at all, or known in this dumb way of acquaintance without *knowledge-about*. In minds able to speak at all there is, it is true, some knowledge about everything. Things can at least be classed, the less we analyze a thing, and the fewer of its relations we perceive, the less we know about it and the more our familiarity with it is of the acquaintance-type. The two kinds of knowledge are, therefore, as the human mind practically exerts them, relative terms. That is, the same thought of a thing may be called knowledge-about it in comparison with a simpler thought, or acquaintance with it in comparison with a thought of it that is more articulate and explicit still. . . . The words *feeling* and *thought* give voice to the antithesis. Through feelings we become acquainted with things, but only by our thoughts do we know about them. Feelings are the germ and starting point of cognition, thoughts the developed tree. The minimum of grammatical subject, of objective presence, of reality known about, the mere beginning of knowledge, must be named by the word that says the least. Such a word is the interjection, as *lo! there! ecco! voila!* or the article or demonstrative pronoun introducing the sentence, as *the, it, that*." (PP vol. 1, 221-22).

21. As the final paragraph of this quotation suggests, some critics of James' conception of truth understood it to be a form of subjectivism. While he did understand it to be a repudiation of a passive objectivism, he certainly did not conceive of truth as cognitive willfulness. His account maintains the condition of forced assent. "Between the coercions of the sensible order and those of the ideal order, our mind is thus wedged tightly. Our ideas must agree with realities, be such realities concrete or abstract, be they facts or be they principles, under penalty of endless inconsistency and frustration."

(WWJ 434) "We must find a theory that will work; and that means something extremely difficult; for our theory must mediate between all previous truths and certain new experiences. It must derange common sense and previous belief as little as possible, and it must lead to some sensible terminus or other that can be verified exactly. To 'work' means both these things; and the squeeze is so tight that there is little loose play for any hypothesis. Our theories are wedged and controlled as nothing else is. . . . Truth in science is what gives us the maximum possible sum of satisfactions, taste included, but consistency both with previous truth and with novel fact is always the most imperious claimant." (WWJ.436) "Pent in, as the pragmatist more than any one else sees himself to be, between the whole body of funded truths squeezed from the past and the coercions of the world of sense about him, who so well as he feels the immense pressure of objective control under which our minds perform their operations." (WWJ 442) "The only *real* guarantee we have against licentious thinking is the circumpressure of experience itself, which gets us sick of concrete errors, whether there be a trans-empirical reality or not." (MT 47).

22. "Truth for us is simply a collective name for verification-processes, just as health, wealth, strength, etc., are names for other processes connected with life. . . . Truth is *made*, just as health, wealth and strength are made, in the course of experience." (WWJ 436) "*True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot.* That is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that therefore is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known as." (MT 3).

23. "Truth is essentially a relation between two things, an idea on the one hand, and a reality outside of the idea, on the other. This relation, like all relations, has its *fundamentum*, namely the matrix of experiential circumstances, psychological as well as physical, in which the correlated terms are found embedded. . . . But the 'intellectualistic' position . . . is that, altho we can use this *fundamentum*, this mass of go-between experience, for *testing* truth, yet the truth-relation in itself remains as something apart. It means . . . merely "this simple thing, *that the object of which one is thinking is as one thinks it.*" . . . It seems to me that the word 'as,' which qualifies the relation here, and bears the whole 'epistemological' burden, is anything but simple. . . . I now formally ask . . . what this 'as'-ness in itself *consists* in—for it seems to me that it ought to consist in something assignable and describable, and not remain a pure mystery, and I promise that if he can assign any determination of it whatever which I cannot successfully, refer to some specification of what in this article I have called the empirical *fundamentum*, I will confess my stupidity cheerfully, and will agree never to publish a line upon this subject of truth again." (MT 91-93).

24. "In the present question, the links of experience sequent upon an idea, which mediate between it and a reality, form and for the pragmatist indeed

are, the concrete relation of truth that may obtain between the idea and that reality. They, he says are all that we mean when we speak of the idea 'pointing' to the reality, 'fitting' it, 'corresponding' with it, or 'agreeing' with it--they or other similar mediating trains of verification. Such mediating events *make* the idea 'true.' The idea itself, if it exists at all, is also a concrete event: so pragmatism insists that truth in the singular is only a collective name for truths in the plural, these consisting always of series of definitive events; and that what intellectualism calls *the* truth, the *inherent* truth, of any one such series is only the abstract name for its truthfulness in act, for the fact that the ideas there do lead to the supposed reality in a way that we consider satisfactory." (MT 109).

25. Ellen Kappy Suckiel, criticizes H. S. Thayer's position outlined in his "Introduction" (especially pp. xl-xli) to William James, *The Meaning of Truth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), and A. J. Ayer's interpretation found in *The Origins of Pragmatism* (London: Macmillan, 1968), especially pp. 204-5, for not adequately appreciating the extent to which James understood his account of truth to be critical of the logical or formal definition of truth. In effect, both Thayer and Ayer claim that the truth of a belief must be said to be distinct from its verification and that James could have acknowledged this without detracting from either the substance or the significance of his doctrine. Suckiel, for her part, recognizes that James meant to discredit the formal definition as empty but rejects this as an error. She argues that the meaning of "theoretical concepts" such as "truth" cannot be expressed in "exclusively experiential terms." She states, truth is an "explanatory" concept not a "descriptive" one. "To say that a belief is true is not, as James would have it, to describe it as being verifiable or satisfactory. Rather, it is to explain why it is verifiable or satisfactory. The explanation lies in the fact that true propositions accurately represent reality--independently of human experience and belief. . . . Still the essential point to be preserved is that the truth of a judgment *about* experience cannot itself be considered an item of experience, however, complex." *The Pragmatic Philosophy of William James* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982). pp. 117-121. G. E. Myers claims that James did not mean even to propose a definition of truth. "He wanted not to define truth but to ascertain its role in producing and sustaining belief; most of his controversial statements about truth, which were commonly construed as his definitions or criteria of it, were intended instead to describe and dramatize its motivational role in making us believe." *William James*, (New Haven, Yale, 1986), p. 298. I believe I have made it clear that James claimed that the verification process, in one and the same experience, not only establishes a belief as true but also, more primordially, establishes what it means concretely for it to be conceived as true. In other words, I read James as saying the pragmatic definition of truth identifies the sum of experience which gives rise to the idea that, in some cases, reality is as a belief states. For James, such an idea could never have arisen had not beliefs "satisfactorily worked" as he describes. The fact remains, however, as

even these critics agree, James did not deny the legitimacy of stating that a true belief represents reality.

26. "I think the center of my whole Anschauung, since years ago I read Renouvier, has been the belief that something is doing in the universe, and that *novelty* is real." (TCWJ vol. 2, 656).

27. *'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' 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 of course; for what meets expediently all the experience in sight won't necessarily meet all farther experiences equally satisfactorily. Experience as we know, has ways of boiling over, and making us correct our present formulas. . . . The 'absolutely' true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge. . . . Meanwhile we have to live to-day by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood.* (WWJ 438).

CHAPTER THREE - GADAMER AND JAMES: HUMAN UNDERSTANDING AND THE MEANING OF TRUTH

In this chapter I present an analysis of Hans-Georg Gadamer's conception of human understanding and compare it to James' account of the meaning of truth. I argue that Gadamer is preoccupied by a philosophical (and social) question comparative to James' conception of the "great dilemma" in society and philosophy. His attempt to find a philosophical solution to the problem ultimately leads, despite the different philosophical tradition out of which he operates, to the anti-scientistic, anti-Enlightenment similarities found to obtain between his own philosophical hermeneutic account of human understanding and James' pragmatic theory of truth. Since, Gadamer, like James, wants to correct false thinking about the meaning of truth and human understanding derived from the Enlightenment, he criticizes abstractionist, objectivist conceptions of truth defended by narrow, scientifically minded philosophers who ignore or misconstrue the role played by subjective interests, prejudices, and time (history) in the acquisition of truth. He, like James, proposes a more primordial, concrete, and universal account of human understanding and truth than usually is conceived by positivistic philosophers. He understands the breach between scientific consciousness and aesthetic, moral and religious consciousness to be the central problem of modern thought. He defends a conception of truth open to realms of discourse other than natural science and its methodological stricture per se. For Gadamer there is truth in art and moral-political discourse, just as for James truth may be found in the realms of common sense and religion. Gadamer rejects any notion of truth which categorically denies the possibility that dimensions of life other than empirical science contain truth. In other

words, he, like James, claims dimensions of the life-world other than science to be possible sources of legitimate knowledge, and his account of human understanding and truth is meant to support this belief. However, though Gadamer's account of hermeneutical understanding, like James' account of truth, can be said to be anti-scientistic and even anti-foundationalist in direction and character, it, nevertheless, contains elements that do not accord with Rorty's wholesale repudiation of the traditional meaning of truth. I believe Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, like James' pragmatism, recognizes the legitimacy of the representationalist intuition and the ambition for transcendence which informs the meaning of truth. Gadamer does not deny truth as the uncovering of what is the case, nor does he repudiate the aspiration to achieve it.¹

One of the most obvious differences between Gadamer's analysis of human understanding and James' theory of truth consist in the fact that Gadamer makes central to his investigation a distinction that James does not. James takes a generalized archetype of theoretical (scientific-philosophical) inquiry as the paradigm of his analysis of truth. Gadamer, however, distinguishes between the form of truth appropriate to the natural sciences and the mode of truth characteristic of the human sciences; and he conceives this division in terms of a more classical differentiation between moral and theoretical knowledge. Gadamer makes truth in the human (moral) sciences the focus of his analysis and envisions a more primordial meaning of human understanding connected to the hermeneutical truth proper to them. Nevertheless, at the same time, he recognizes unique dimensions of the meaning of truth more definitely associated with the natural sciences (e.g. "that experience, by its nature, abolishes its history") to be equiprimordial

with that of the human sciences, and he seems to fuse these together into a more unified, comprehensive account of human understanding and truth. I believe Gadamer improves upon James in distinguishing between truth in the human sciences and the exact sciences since this allows him to emphasize and develop an analysis of the radical historicity of human cognition which James' account of cognition and truth points toward. These complexities of Gadamer's account of understanding, and his theory of language as the medium of hermeneutical experience, improve upon James account of truth by adding important clarifications and distinctions that James account neglects.

This chapter is divided into five parts. The first part discusses Gadamer's conception of the central philosophical problem of modernity, namely, the problematic rift between science and the life-world, between scientific ideology and the priority of the moral-practical dimension of the life-world. This part describes the overall aim of Gadamer's general project, which he calls "philosophical hermeneutics," as it relates to this philosophical issue. The second part of the chapter briefly reviews the anti-subjectivist perspective of Gadamer's thought and his general conception of truth in art and the human sciences. Part three presents a summary of Heidegger's distinction between the primordial and derivative structure of human understanding and truth upon which Gadamer's thought relies. It then discusses Gadamer's conception of prejudice as a source of understanding. Part four reconstructs Gadamer's theory of human understanding and truth based principally upon an analysis of the section of *Truth and Method* entitled, "Foundations of a Theory of Hermeneutical Experience." The final part of the chapter reviews Gadamer's theory of language as the medium of the hermeneutical

experience, and concludes with a general comparison of Gadamer and James on truth. Since the primary purpose of the chapter is to compare Gadamer's conception of truth with that of James, the similarities and differences between their respective positions is discussed throughout.

I - THE DOMINANCE OF SCIENCE IN THE AGE OF SCIENTISM: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS

It was shown in the previous chapter that James believed the central problem of modern intellectual life to be the general conflict between empirical science and religion. He understood this conflict to reveal itself in philosophy as the "great dilemma" between rationalism and empiricism. He opposed the reductionist, dogmatic claims of the positivism of his day. He repudiated positivism's false thinking about science contained in its dogmatic, objectivist conception of scientific method and reductionist criterion of truth, as well as its resultant moralistic attack on religious belief. In philosophy he attacked the narrow, atomistic foundations of empiricism and the absolutist, rationalist claims of idealism, and repudiated the abstractionist conception of truth assumed by both. He understood both rationalism and empiricism to entertain dogmatic elements which he wanted to overcome. He believed that the acceptance of the pragmatic conception of truth would help overcome these objectionable dogmatic elements of both empiricism and rationalism and would set the stage for a reconciliation between the world of science defended by "tough minded" empiricist, on the one hand, and the world of religion supported by "tender minded" idealist on the other.

Gadamer begins with a central problematic similar to that of James. He believes modern intellectual life to be dominated by the "idolatry of scientific method" over and against that of practical-political consciousness and the

wisdom contained in the tradition grounded humanities. He asks, "In the age of Science, is there any way of preserving and validating the great humane heritage of knowledge and wisdom?"² Gadamer defines the "central question of the modern age" in terms of the rift between our everyday experience and understanding of the life-world and the institutionalized know-how and authority of science.

It is the question of how our natural view of the world - the experience of the world that we have as we simply live out our lives - is related to the unassailable and anonymous authority that confronts us in the pronouncements of science. Since the seventeenth century, the real task of philosophy has been to mediate this new employment of man's cognitive and constructive capacities with the totality of our experience of life.³

Gadamer's central philosophical problem focuses on the dominant place that modern science and its method have come to acquire in both theoretical and practical matters of the modern world. Like James, Gadamer also conceives the problem of the dominance of science in terms of the discord between science and religion; and, like James' conception of pragmatism, he conceives philosophical hermeneutics as providing a mediation between the realm of science and other dimensions of life. However, Gadamer extends James' concern about the rift between science and religion by reflecting upon the practical, moral-political and social dimensions of the problem in addition to the more individual, psychological perspective taken by James.

Is the task wrongly posited? Though scientific and rational approaches characterize the advances in innumerable fields of endeavor, can one actually consider the organization of world affairs as a subject of such rational planning and execution?

The question we pose goes completely against the grain of the unquestioned belief in science so characteristic of our age. It has to be asked because it goes further back in time. The problem must be viewed in a more general context, as a broader question posited with

the inception of modern science in the seventeenth century and unresolved since then. All reflection about the potential ordering of our world must proceed from the deep tension which exists between the asserted authority of science and the ethics and customs of national forms of life transmitted by religion.⁴

It is urgent,

to evaluate the significance of the civilizing progress, made possible by science, in terms of our own cultural heritage and to discover ways of reconciling such progress with our moral and religious traditions. For that in truth is the problem of the world order which occupies us at present, because, by virtue of the civilizing achievements of European science, the problem has been raised to a uniform level of importance throughout the world.⁵

Whereas James recognized in religion the importance of truth claims directly related to the problem of the significance and meaning of human life, Gadamer understands religion, and other non-scientific dimensions of tradition such as art and poetry, to carry a deposit of moral and social wisdom increasingly ignored by modern scientific consciousness and its emphasis on methodical proof and certainty. Philosophy must find a way to bridge these two realms of understanding.

At the theoretical level, the fundamental problem associated with modern science and its method concerns its tendency towards ideological self-justification. The dominance of science in modern society and the justification of its method reaching back to the origin of modern subjectivist epistemology in the seventeenth century has given rise to "scientism." Exclusive legitimacy is ideologically (dogmatically) attached to scientific method and its truth claims. All other claims to knowledge and truth made by "non-scientific" dimensions of thought such as art, religion, common sense and political custom are devalued and, consequently, placed in an alienated relationship to science. From a societal perspective this becomes the

mythologizing of science and its claim to certain, objective understanding. The wisdom of the tradition in general is repudiated, since, by definition, it is pre-scientific experience. Gadamer holds that with modern science the concept of experience has been altered and narrowed to method. Only the experience connected to scientific method is understood to produce knowledge and truth. The broader, more traditional, concept of experience and the person of experience, has been eclipsed. Philosophical hermeneutics will make the rehabilitation of this more primordial notion of experience a central task. In this it resembles James' attempt to outline the meaning of truth and its verification in the broadest possible terms.

The foundation of modern science is experience in a wholly new sense. With the idea of the unitary method of the understanding, as formulated by Descartes in his *Rules*, the ideal of certainty became the standard of all understanding. Only that which could be verified could have validity as experience.⁶

The method of modern science is characterized from the start by a refusal: namely, to exclude all that which actually eludes its own methodology and procedures. Precisely in this way it would prove to itself that it is without limits and never wanting for self-justification. (PH 93)

Thus, Gadamer believes that science, as the dominant ideology (mythology) within modern society, has far-reaching, important, and questionable, practical consequences. The role and function of science is particularly questionable when the influence of its claims is extended not only to the control of nature but also towards society in the form of expertise in social engineering.

Although the new science occasionally aimed exclusively at a pure knowledge of nature, at the unlocking of her secrets by those who admired her, at knowledge of the laws of her order, which all human forms of law and order fall infinitely short of, this science was primarily a knowledge of the possibilities of controlling natural

processes, and of its own accord passed over into the limitlessly widening regions of human *praxis*.⁷

Gadamer believes that the extension of scientific expertise to the running of society is the most ominous intellectual development in the age of scientism. In this he adds something important, about which James had little to say, to the critique of scientism. Gadamer questions the capacity of scientific method to work out an adequate understanding of things that have moral-political impact. That modern science has provided an understanding and control of nature is not the principal object of Gadamer's concern. What is alarming to him is the application of scientific knowledge to the guidance and control of society and its dismissal of the practical wisdom contained in a tradition of understanding rooted in a profundity of experience.

What appears to me to characterize our epoch is not the surprising control of nature we have achieved, but the development of scientific methods to guide the life of society. Only with this achievement has the victorious course of modern science, beginning in the nineteenth century, become a dominant social factor. The scientific tendencies of thought underlying our civilization have in our time pervaded all aspects of social praxis. Scientific market research, scientific warfare, scientific diplomacy, scientific rearing of the younger generation, scientific leadership of people--the application of science to all these fields give expertise a commanding position in the economy and society. . . . The old problem of simply understanding the existing order of things is no longer the issue. It has given way to the difficulties of planning and creating an order not yet in being.^{8 &9}

It is primarily with this understanding of the relationship between science and society in mind that Gadamer claims, in a manner analogous to James, that the most important task of philosophy today is to mediate our experience of science with our total experience of the world. Gadamer doubts that the rationalization of life according to the paradigm of modern scientific method can adequately confront the more profound moral-political problems of life.

He questions the capacity of this abstracted power of reason to deal with the concrete, universal, problems of human life.

To me it seems precisely the defining characteristic of our period that...society is beginning to be organized according to the findings of the empirical scientists. Is this now the final victory of reason, the victory that beckons us to the completion of this undertaking? Is the impotency of reason that we complained about - an impotency *vis-a-vis* the passions and the interests of individuals and groups - in the end only a residual appearance within a world managed through reason, which should be able to eliminate them in a manner consistent with reason by means of individual psychology, social economics and scientific politics?¹⁰

Gadamer, of course, answers this rhetorical question in the negative. The victory of reason that the modern age so much desires is not to be found exclusively in the reason of science *per se*. The reason of science stands, if not in contradiction, than at least outside of the practical, moral-political reason of the broader cultural tradition, a tradition and conception of reason that has fallen into forgetfulness. Consequently, a deeper, more universal conception of human reason must be rehabilitated, an understanding of reason and truth which bridges the rift between science and the life-world. Gadamer believes that science's repudiation of interests and prejudice and its reliance upon a methodical search for truth, though justified as an ideal, especially in the investigation of nature, actually, dangerously conceals from view a true understanding of the role prejudice continues to play in the understanding of ourselves and the formation of our standards of action.

The more the dominant social and political prejudices are brought into play, the more fictitious the pure expert becomes and with him the notion of a scientifically certified rationality. It might hold true for the whole spectrum of modern social sciences that they are unable to control means-ends relationships, without, at the same time, implying a preference for specific ends. If, in my opinion, one were to trace the inner determinacy of this implication to its logical conclusion, the contradiction between timeless truth, which is sought after by science,

and the temporal condition of those who utilize science would be made manifest. For what is feasible is not simply what is possible or, within the realm of the possible, the purely advantageous. Moreover, every advantage and preference is weighed according to a definite standard which one posits, or which has already, been established. It is the aggregate of what is socially admissible: the norms, evolved from ethical and political convictions and fortified by training and self-education, which determine this standard.¹¹

Gadamer believes that the dominating scientific-technological consciousness of the modern world has unjustifiably overshadowed moral-political reason and the truth expressed in common sense, and the political and cultural traditions of the West. He argues that this situation is rooted in a dogmatic conception of the relation between scientific method and the meaning of truth. This dogmatism has its historical origin in the Enlightenment. Gadamer argues that the Enlightenment established an erroneous and harmful separation between scientific reflection and other important truth-dimensions of the life-world rooted in the religious, ethical and political tradition. The Enlightenment projected a belief and an attitude about scientific knowledge, objectivity, truth and human progress that, in effect, established a harmful ideological breach between science and the rest of culture. This breach set in motion the loss of respect for other dimensions of human life and thought which may contain important truths, not immediately accessible by scientific method, yet necessary for a genuinely human existence. More importantly, this breach conceals from view a realistic grasp of the true nature and possibilities of human understanding and action. "For in my opinion this abstract antithesis [between reason and the authority of tradition] embraced by the Enlightenment is a mistake fraught with ominous consequences. In it, reflection is granted a false power,

and the true dependencies involved are misjudged on the basis of a fallacious idealism." (PH 33)

Gadamer argues, that the conceptualizations of science are abstract and its varied objects are narrowly circumscribed and isolated for analysis and control. Consequently, the knowledge of science is experienced as infinite, in terms of technical possibilities, yet remote and alienated from the finite, concrete demands of everyday experience. Thus, the gap between science and life is felt most in the arena of moral and political decision making and in the everyday world of human relationships and the need for meaning. A ratio of inverse proportion appears to characterize the unending expansion of scientific expertise, on the one hand, and the feeling of decreased significance and meaningful control of human goals, on the other.

The magnificent abstraction with which the methodological ideal of modern science isolates and encloses its subject has ensured a qualitative differentiation between the infinitely expanding knowledge of science, on the one side, and the irretrievable finiteness of actual decisions, on the other. The specialist and the politician are respective embodiments of this rift. A rational model seems unable to define the knowledge necessary for the statesman.¹²

I find it ominous that modern science should revolve only around itself, that it is concerned only with those methods and possibilities which are necessary for the scientific control of things--as if the disparity between the realm of attainable means and possibilities and the norms and goals of everyday life did not exist. But that is precisely the inherent tendency of scientific doctrine: to make superfluous the scrutiny of ends by successfully providing and controlling the means at one and the same time.¹³

The Enlightenment, all too humanly, mythologized itself in a linear, one directional view of human history, culture and the pursuit of truth. It raised the concepts of technical revolution and infinite progress in knowledge to the level of idols ignoring the finitude of the human condition. In so doing it

disparaged the importance of continuous, cyclical, re-encounter with the moral-social truth claims of the past. It is precisely this antithesis concerning the meaning of truth that Gadamer makes the center of his inquiry. In opposition to the more linear experience of knowledge associated with scientific method Gadamer hopes to restore as a complement the experience of understanding which informs the hermeneutical circle.

One has to ask oneself whether the dynamic law of human life can be conceived adequately in terms of progress, of a continual advance from the unknown into the known, and whether the course of human culture is actually a linear progression from mythology to enlightenment. One should entertain a completely different notion: whether the movement of human existence does not issue in a relentless inner tension between illumination and concealment. Might it not be just a prejudice of modern times that the notion of progress that is in fact constitutive for the spirit of scientific research should be transferable to the whole of human living and human culture? One has to ask whether progress, as it is at home in the special field of scientific research, is at all consonant with the conditions of human existence in general. Is the notion of an ever-mounting and self-perfecting enlightenment finally ambiguous? (RAS 104-5)

Gadamer admits that scientific knowledge progresses, that it uncovers the world as it is in an ever increasing expansiveness and clarity. However, he challenges the belief that scientific knowledge is the only legitimate and necessary knowledge of the world. Gadamer argues that science can not comprehend the whole truth of being because elements of being (e.g. the temporal [historical] and moral) are inherently outside of its methodological grasp.¹⁴ Thus, he understands the modern exaggerated esteem accorded to the progress of science to have introduced a state of alienation into modern life and consciousness. The uncritical acceptance of scientific progress and its universalization of methodological objectivity has alienated humans from their everyday, common sense experience of nature and life, as well as, and more importantly, the moral-social truth claims of tradition and history

(culture). The immediacy of life has been disrupted, at the same time as moral and political understanding has been displaced by scientific expertise. The wisdom of the tradition and renewed experience has been discredited. Gadamer believes that this dogmatic ascendancy of scientific consciousness has eclipsed an alternative, more primordial and universal conception of human understanding and meaning of truth which needs to be rediscovered. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is meant to challenge this erroneous evaluation of science and its totalizing ideal of methodological objectivity and certainty by exposing the overlooked, fundamental (ontological), hermeneutical conditions presupposed by all human understanding, including that of science.

It is important to bear in mind that Gadamer differs from James, first, in distinguishing between truth in the natural sciences and truth in the human sciences, and, second, in differing as to the paradigm of the enlightenment process. That is, James' account of truth keeps in mind a generalized notion of theoretical (philosophical and scientific) inquiry. Thus, it has science as such more directly in mind. His account of truth, therefore, is a more direct critique and interpretation of the meaning of scientific truth and theoretical truth per se. It is prototypical of the philosophy of science. Gadamer's account of understanding, on the other hand, wants to define a conception of truth other than science. At its core, it presupposes a paradigm of moral enlightenment, more than theoretical knowledge. Thus, it considers the historical and linguistic conditions of truth in a way only suggested by James' account of truth. Gadamer's description of a mode of truth proper to the human sciences is offered in contradistinction to the alienating, objectifying mode of truth he believes to be associated with scientific method and natural

science per se. The principal difference is that James does not think of truth in terms of a primordial-derivative structure. Nevertheless, this basic difference in orientation and perspective between the two theories of truth notwithstanding, Gadamer's generalized account of the primordial meaning of experience and truth parallels James' description of the purposeful, selective, teleological structure of mind and his holistic account of the criteria of truth and the verification process.

Philosophical hermeneutics, then, as Gadamer's account of human understanding, claims to be a rediscovery and rehabilitation of the vital moral-political, universal hermeneutical dimension of human consciousness which has been driven into obscurity by the predominance of the scientific-technological consciousness of our own day.

I think, then, that the chief task of philosophy is to justify this way of reason and to defend practical and political reason against the domination of technology based on science. That is the point of philosophical hermeneutics. It corrects the peculiar falsehood of modern consciousness: the idolatry of scientific method and of the anonymous authority of the sciences and it vindicates again the noblest task of the citizen - decision making according to one's own responsibility - instead of conceding that task to the expert. In this respect, hermeneutic philosophy is the heir of the older tradition of practical philosophy.¹⁵

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is meant to challenge the reductionist conception of truth associated with the method of the empirical sciences and to rehabilitate the legitimacy of a broader, more global conception of truth related to practical, moral reason.

Gadamer believes that his account of the essence of the hermeneutical experience, based on the paradigms of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's primordial, hermeneutical, historical consciousness, Aristotle's concept of

practical reason, and Hegel's concept of experience, undermines this dogmatic, reductionist conception of truth and thus restores a needed balance between scientific thought and moral-political thought, between science and the broader life-world. Like James' belief that the pragmatic understanding of truth is able to embrace diverse types of thought, (e.g. common sense and science), Gadamer's account of truth is meant to confirm the legitimacy of the broader claims of important dimensions of the "life-world." *Truth and Method*, as a philosophical inquiry, "starts with the resistance within modern science against the universal claim of scientific method. It is concerned to seek that experience of truth that transcends the sphere of the control of scientific method wherever it is found, and to inquire into its legitimacy." (TM p. xii) Philosophical hermeneutics has brought to light that human understanding, in its primordial, essential dimensions, is best conceived in terms of the paradigm of moral thought rather than scientific method. Like James, Gadamer wants to unify the life-world and science by showing the existential conditions of their continuity revealed in his account of the broader meaning of understanding and truth. Gadamer, like James, presents a conception of truth which demythologizes the scientific conception of truth and the identification of truth with scientific method and the truth claims of science alone.

II - EXISTENTIAL-ONTOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: THE ANTI-SUBJECTIVIST PERSPECTIVE OF *TRUTH AND METHOD*

In *Truth and Method*, hermeneutics becomes "philosophy" because its object is no longer simply the clarification of a proper method for the human sciences but rather the clarification and explication of the universal, existential-ontological conditions of human understanding as such. Gadamer

believes himself to have accomplished for the primordial conditions of human understanding and truth what Kant achieved for scientific consciousness. That is, he believes he has described how understanding is possible.

He [Kant] asked a philosophic question: What are the conditions of our knowledge, by virtue of which modern science is possible, and how far does it extend? Thus the following investigation also asks a philosophic question. But it does not ask it only of the so-called human sciences (among which precedence would then be accorded to certain traditional disciplines). It does not ask it only of science and its modes of experience, but of all human experience of the world and human living. It asks (to put the question in Kantian terms): How is understanding possible? This is a question which precedes any action of understanding on the part of subjectivity, including the methodical activity of the 'understanding sciences' (verstehende Geisteswissenschaften) and their norms and rules.¹⁶

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is an existential-ontological account of the primordial meaning of human understanding meant to challenge the subjectivist, methodological epistemological perspective which originated with Descartes and was finalized by Kant. While comparing the purposes of his philosophical work to that of Kant's, the most distinctive characteristic of *Truth and Method* is the anti-subjectivist perspective derived from Heidegger. The guiding thread of Gadamer's thought is its rejection of the subjectivization of thought, originating with Descartes, which wants to ground all knowledge and truth in subjective self-certainty and its correlative, scientific objectivity. Gadamer adopts Heidegger's existential-ontological perspective about human understanding presented in persistent contradiction to the subjectivist epistemology of modern philosophy. The fruit of subjectivist epistemology, according to Gadamer, has been the narrow, reductive, definition of truth resulting from the identification of truth with certainty and the deliberate, controlling, self-conscious, methodological

activity of the subject. While not rejecting the "truth" of scientific method, Gadamer wants to explicate a more universal, primordial and ontological notion of truth. From this perspective truth is not so much a methodological activity of the subject as it is a pre-subjective, ontological "experience" or "event" in which the subject "participates."

It is important to keep in mind that insofar as Gadamer's ontological description accepts Heidegger's ontology which radically identifies existence with time, his ontology of human understanding conceives truth in terms of its radical temporality and historicity. "This is the sense in which the term 'hermeneutics' has been used here. It denotes the basic being-in-motion of There-being which constitutes its finiteness and historicity, and hence includes the whole of its experience of the world." (TM xviii)

Like James' pragmatic description, Gadamer's existential-ontological analysis is a concrete account of the meaning of truth which defines a more universal conception of truth than that associated with scientific consciousness and any abstracted, reductive epistemological or methodological conception of truth. "Fundamentally, I am *not proposing a method*, but I am describing *what is the case*. That it is as I describe it cannot, I think, be seriously questioned....In other words, I consider the only scientific thing is *to recognize what is*, instead of starting from what ought to be or could be. Hence I am trying to go beyond the concept of method held by modern science (which retains its limited justification) and to envisage in a fundamentally universal way what *always* happens." (TM 465-466) Just as James' pragmatism presents an "empirical," "concrete" theory of truth which reveals its practical, experiential, existential, anti-rationalist, anti-abstractionist, meaning, so too, Gadamer describes his philosophical hermeneutics as "a theory of the real experience that thinking

is." (TM xxiv) Both accounts seek to describe the pre-abstract, pre-methodological, holistic, existential conditions which define the broadest human experience of understanding and truth. Gadamer's account of the hermeneutical experience, as an account of "what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of world.", (TM xiii) parallels James' understanding of the pragmatic theory of truth as an account of the real nature of the truth relation which underwrites not only the scientific method of the empirical sciences but the total human experience of truth. Gadamer emphasizes the finite, temporal, social-historical situatedness of all understanding. James focuses on the finite, temporal, social-psychological conditions of truth. Like James, Gadamer considers thought to have a practical teleology at least insofar as he believes in the primacy of moral-practical reason and truth. Like James he also believes that, ultimately, cognition and truth can not be adequately understood separated from the emotional, desiderative, social and historical conditions of knowing.

Life experience and the study of Plato had led me quite early to the insight that the truth of a single proposition cannot be measured by its merely factual relationship of correctness and congruency; nor does it depend merely upon the context in which it stands. Ultimately it depends upon the genuineness of its enrootedness and bond with the person of the speaker in whom it wins its truth potential, for the meaning of a statement is not exhausted in what is stated. It can be disclosed only if one traces its history of motivation and looks ahead to its implications. From that time forward this became one of my guiding hermeneutical insights. (RAS 44)

Like James' pragmatism, then, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics attempts to present a concrete description of a primordial and universal experience of truth. Both Gadamer and James define truth in terms of its universal, existential conditions, that is, in terms of the totality of its practical

efficacy and living power. They define truth in terms of the finite, temporal, (historical), mutable, practical conditions that characterize the primordial relationship between human thought and world.

However, as previously mentioned, Gadamer and James differ as to the paradigm of the enlightenment process. James, in not distinguishing between the natural and human sciences, has in mind a generalized notion of philosophical or theoretical inquiry as such. Thus, his account of truth can be interpreted as a more direct critique of the notion of truth connected to science. Gadamer, on the other hand, focusing on truth in the human sciences, takes as his enlightenment paradigm, moral enlightenment. He does not offer a direct critique of scientific truth as such. Gadamer's thought helps to clarify some of the elements of James' account of the verification process. For example, the dialectical, interpretive relationship between emerging, new beliefs and beliefs previously held.

TRUTH IN ART AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES

Truth and Method is Gadamer's principal work. It contains the fullest account of his theory of human understanding and truth. For the purposes of comparing James' conception of truth with Gadamer's, the section entitled "Foundations of a theory of hermeneutical experience" is most important. Consequently, this section will serve as a primary focus for analysis in this chapter. However, a few things need to be said about the contents of the work as a whole.

Gadamer situates the development of his theory of hermeneutical experience within the context of a critical history of modern aesthetic theory and theory of method in the human sciences. Through a rather involved critical

interpretation of the history of modern aesthetics and the development of the literary and historical (human) sciences, particularly in Germany, Gadamer links the subjectivist aesthetic theory of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* with the problem of truth and method in the human sciences. Very briefly, Gadamer argues that the literary and historical studies of the humanist tradition, linked as they were to a concept of historical and aesthetic truth independent of science, were undermined by Kant's *Critiques*, particularly the *Critique of Judgment* and its "subjectivisation of aesthetics." Gadamer argues that Kant's *Critique*, in distinguishing aesthetic judgment from conceptual knowledge, separated the concept of truth from art. Since literary and historical studies traditionally understood themselves, in contra-distinction to science, partially in terms of a conception of aesthetic truth, this meant that the "unique method of the human sciences lost its justification" and was forced "to rely on the methodology of the natural sciences in self-analysis" (TM 39) if any claim to truth were to be found in them. Gadamer argues that modern hermeneutics, defined as the theory of the proper method in the human sciences, has been dominated by scientific method as a model and as such has not allowed the human sciences to develop a proper self-understanding. He seeks to rehabilitate a conception of truth and human understanding immanent to the humanist tradition. In order to accomplish this he first confronts the problem of truth in art. The truth of art can serve as a starting point for understanding the truth proper to the human sciences, a truth which is more primordial and universal than scientific method and knowledge per se.

Gadamer argues that Kant's subjectivisation of aesthetics ultimately led to an approach to art identified as "aesthetic consciousness." The aesthetic

approach to art encourages a process of "aesthetic differentiation," wherein the purely aesthetic pleasure of a work of art is appropriated separated from all elements of content, purpose, meaning and the context of life connected to the work. The work of art becomes merely an object of subjective aesthetic awareness. The attitude of aesthetic consciousness establishes an alienating space between the truth of art and the world of the viewer. The work of art is reduced and understood in terms of the subjective pleasure it produces independent of the larger context of meaning represented in the art, a context potentially able to challenge the worldview of the viewer. In other words, aesthetic consciousness sees in art only the possibility of a distanced appropriation of the purely aesthetic qualities of a work of art while ignoring any truth claim (e.g. moral or religious) that may be suggested by it. Aesthetic consciousness follows Kant's subjectivisation of taste by acquiescing to the claim that there is no knowledge or truth in art. Gadamer challenges this position and asserts that art also transmits truth.

Is there to be no knowledge in art? Does not the experience of art contain a claim to truth which is certainly different from that of science, but equally certainly is not inferior to it? And is not the task of aesthetics precisely to provide a basis for the fact that artistic experience is a mode of knowledge of a unique kind, certainly different from that sensory knowledge which provides science with the data from which it constructs the knowledge of nature, and certainly different from all moral rational knowledge and indeed from all conceptual knowledge, but still knowledge, ie the transmission of truth? (TM 87)

Gadamer rejects aesthetical consciousness on the grounds that it does not do justice to the real way in which art is frequently encountered. He claims art is often experienced as truth and he attempts to rehabilitate the notion of truth in art through reference to the concept of play. The concept of play sheds light on the truth of art by challenging the dominating and alienating subjectivist perspective which characterizes aesthetical consciousness. Elements of the

concept of play will also serve as a paradigm for the hermeneutical experience per se later to be examined.

To repeat an earlier point, one of the most characteristic aspects of Gadamer's project is its decidedly anti-subjectivist, anti-rationalist stance. His thought moves within the framework of Heidegger's temporal analytics and the existential ontology of Dasein. Consequently, ontological explanation characterizes the determinative perspective of his thought. Since in his analysis of the truth of art, he describes play as the "clue to ontological explanation," his account of play serves as a prototypical description of his anti-subjectivist conception of truth which is realized fully only later in his theory of hermeneutical experience.

Gadamer argues that play is the archetype of the "mode of being of the work of art itself." What then is the mode of being of play? Gadamer explains that the essence of the mode of being of play is precisely the diminished subjectivity of the player in respect to the primacy of the spirit, structure and being of play itself. "Play fulfils its purpose only if the player loses himself in his play. . . . The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave towards play as if it were an object. The player knows very well what play is, and that what he is doing is 'only a game'; but he does not know what exactly he 'knows' in knowing that." (TM 92) When in play the player does not know play objectively as a only a game or himself as only a player for then the play loses its essence as play, namely, its transforming structure and power beyond the conscious intention of the player. "For play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play. Play also exists - indeed, exists properly - when the thematic horizon is not limited by any being-for-itself of subjectivity, and where there are no subjects who are behaving

'playfully.'" (TM 92) A game reaches its full meaning and purpose as play only when the player takes the game itself more "seriously" than anything else, including himself. When a game is truly played it is the structure and spirit of the game itself that becomes the transforming focus of attention not oneself as a player. It is the particular spirit and structure of the game that is the real subject of play. This is the subject that endures in play. "[T]he actual subject of play is obviously not the subjectivity of an individual who among other activities also plays, but instead the play itself." (TM 93) Play's mode of being is the medial process which absorbs the player into itself. In play the game masters the players. "Play does not have its being in the consciousness or the attitude of the player, but on the contrary draws the latter into its area and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him." (TM 98)

Gadamer argues that the mode of being of play is the mode of being of art as well. "The work of art is not an object that stands over against a subject for itself. Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience changing the person experiencing it. The 'Subject' of the experience of art, that which remains and endures, is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it, but the work itself." (TM 92) Actually, Gadamer understands the being of the work of art to be the perfection of human play. Reflecting upon the art of theatre, Gadamer draws the analogy between a game and a play. In a play the players and the audience lose themselves and are transformed by the enduring subject which is the meaning of the play itself. The meaning of the play is reality transformed into its truth which truth is experienced by the players as inclusive and transforming of them. "The world of the work of art, in which play expresses

itself fully in the unity of its course, is in fact a wholly transformed world. By means of it everyone recognizes that that is how things are." (TM 101-2) Gadamer argues that the classical theory of art, which conceives the play of art as imitation of the real, witnesses to the truth of art for imitation contains the element of knowledge. "But the concept of imitation can only describe the play of art if one retains the element of knowledge contained in imitation. What is represented is there - this is the original imitative situation." (TM 102) Gadamer argues that what is experienced in the play of imitation in a work of art is its truth about reality and oneself. It is an experience of truth that is transforming, first, because the truth is experienced as a reality transcendent to the the subjectivity of the one having the experience but nevertheless inclusive of it, and, second, because in the experience not only the familiar is recognized and known but the new as well. But, as will become clearer below, this makes every experience of art a hermeneutical experience and an appropriation of hermeneutical truth because the experience of art itself provides a real and unending variety of interpretations and understandings of reality inclusive of self-knowledge. In the last section of the chapter we will see that the concept of play serves as the analogical paradigm for Gadamer's understanding of the primordial nature of language as opposed to the instrumentalization of language found in science.

Play is the clue to the ontology of the work of art because in art play reaches its fullest potential. However, the analysis of play challenges aesthetic consciousness' conception of art since it repudiates the dominance of the subject in the experience of art and rehabilitates the truth of art itself. We will see that Gadamer continues the paradigm of the truth of art in his analysis of the hermeneutical experience by insisting on the priority of the trans-

subjective elements within the primordial and universal meaning of human understanding.

As I pointed out above, Gadamer linked the subjectivisation of aesthetics to the problem of method in the human sciences by arguing that the demise of a credible understanding of the truth of art forced the historical or human sciences to adopt a conception of truth dependent upon the paradigm of scientific method. In other words, according to Gadamer, modern hermeneutics as a theory and method of textual interpretation and historical understanding, unfortunately, embraced scientific method and its conception of truth. Consequently, Gadamer wants to rehabilitate a more universal conception of truth at the same time as he restores a conception of truth proper to the human (historical) or "understanding" sciences.

After having attempted to rehabilitate the truth of art based on an ontology of play, Gadamer critically reviews the history of hermeneutics and its connection to the problem of method and truth in the historical (human) sciences. Gadamer shows that the central problem of modern hermeneutics is "historical consciousness," i.e. the sense of alienation from past authors and ages because of the collapse of a shared unity of meaning. He discusses the development of hermeneutics in Schleiermacher and Dilthey. He has a central criticism to make which leads to his own theory of hermeneutical experience. He argues that whether the task is to avoid all misunderstanding by knowing an author better than he understood himself, as in Schleiermacher's psychological hermeneutics based on technical procedures, or to know the facts of an historical period "objectively" based on the paradigm of scientific method, as with Dilthey, the essential and most fundamental meaning of understanding has been overlooked, namely, the

sense of coming to agreement on content, that is, agreement on the truth of a topic or thing. Gadamer argues that the primary meaning of understanding another person or age is to reach agreement on a topic, which is to say, to achieve the truth of the issue about a thing in an experience of mutual recognition. This is Gadamer's determinative and controlling insight. To genuinely understand another (the tradition) is to have come to an understanding with the other about the truth of a topic by having taken the truth claim of the other seriously. That is, in such a way as to question one's own beliefs. Understanding, therefore, is not mere disinterested, objectified description of the other which thereby alienates, and by default negates, not only the truth claim of the other but the truth about the thing itself.¹⁷

For Gadamer, understanding does not consist merely in the reconstruction of the "mind" of an author or the "objective historical facts" (were that possible) but in appropriating the truth of the issue for oneself here and now. Gadamer argues that the attempt to overcome the problem of historical consciousness by relying upon techniques of interpretation based on the paradigm of scientific method has led to the same distanced, alienated attitude toward the truth of past authors and ages that aesthetic consciousness has towards the truth of art. In other words, modern hermeneutics, because of its reliance upon scientific method as a model and its ideal of objective (i.e. abstracted and disinterested) truth rooted in subjectivist epistemology, tends to ignore the possible, here and now, engaging truth claims of history just as aesthetical consciousness ignores the encounter with the truth of art. But, for Gadamer, this is to ignore the most important dimension of the meaning of human understanding, i.e. the continuous encounter with truth.

A genuine understanding of the past (the other) is possible in the human sciences only if the issue at stake and the correspondent truth claim is taken seriously by the interpreter. That is, only if the interpreter is drawn into the question of the subject matter itself, as well as the historical answer provided as having possible application to the present, can genuine understanding occur. Genuine understanding would thus be a "reaching agreement", here and now, concerning the object, i.e. reaching its truth

As situated and historical as all truth may be, genuine understanding in the human sciences recognizes that the truth of the past can contribute to the truth of the present. Gadamer will conceive this quasi trans-historical dimension of truth as a "fusion of horizons". Like James, Gadamer conceives truth as situated or relative to the concerns of the knower and open to revision, but, again, like him, he conceives it as a penetration of reality transcendent to yet inclusive of the knower. The representationalist or realist intuition is not abandoned. Gadamer does not claim that we should give up the idea that truth is an appropriation of the way things are. He wants to describe how this should be understood in relation to the historical conditions of inquiry appropriate to the human sciences.¹⁸ This is precisely the experience of truth that he analyses within his account of the essence of the hermeneutical experience and the medium of language, which will be described more completely below. It is within this analysis of hermeneutical experience that the deepest similarities and differences to James' account of truth most clearly emerge.

Directly related to this fundamental criticism of modern hermeneutics, is Gadamer's discussion of Dilthey's confrontation with historicism. Dilthey attempted to discover, how the historical sciences, which recognize the

historically situated character of the objects studied and even more importantly the knower, achieve objective knowledge. Gadamer argues that Dilthey's hermeneutics remained fundamentally ambiguous because it continued to be epistemologically attached to Cartesianism and the methodological ideal of the natural sciences, while at the same time it acknowledged the historicity implicit in historical experience and the human sciences. In other words Dilthey operated with the atemporal, disinterested notion of objective truth proper to scientific method while at the same time recognizing that historical truth of its nature ultimately escaped such objectivity.

In response to the inherent ambiguity of Dilthey's position, Gadamer defines his own task, "namely, to describe more adequately the experience of the human sciences and the objectivity they are able to achieve." (TM 214) Thus, an important function of his thought, in conjunction with rehabilitating the essential meaning of hermeneutical understanding, is Gadamer's attempt to overcome the problem of historicism. This is also what he sets out to do in the analysis of the essence of the hermeneutical experience. Again, this section most directly answers the question how understanding is possible and it is a key section for comparing Gadamer's account of understanding with James' conception of truth.

III - HEIDEGGER: THE PRIMACY OF INTERPRETIVE KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRIMORDIAL MEANING OF TRUTH

Gadamer's account of the essence of the hermeneutic experience, and, therefore, his conception of truth, is dependent upon Heidegger's description of human understanding and truth in *Being and Time*. According to Gadamer, Heidegger rightly abandoned the narrow foundationalist

orientation of Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl was concerned with the foundations of scientific knowledge. He believed that science rested upon many assumptions that demanded to be reduced to presuppositionless foundations established by philosophy. However, this would mean that philosophy itself would have to achieve the status of rigorous science. This was the central purpose and significance of phenomenology for Husserl. According to Gadamer, Heidegger eventually abandoned this *raison d'être* of phenomenology conceiving it to apply only to one dimension of human knowing, namely, scientific rationality *per se*. His resurrection of the question of the meaning of Being, his assertion that Being is thoroughly temporal, and his existential analytics of Dasein, made the question of the relationship between the rationality of science and the primordial rationality of life the more important philosophical issue. Gadamer admits the philosophical relevance of the foundationalist ideal *apropos* of scientific consciousness *per se* but, as we have seen, he conceives the real task of philosophy today to be the examination of the relation between the meaning of scientific truth and the larger meaning of truth which encompasses the moral-practical dimensions of human life as a whole.¹⁹

In *Being and Time* Heidegger initiated the "self-interpretation" of rationality, that Gadamer himself developed further in *Truth and Method*, by arguing that the ontological/existential structure of human existence is temporal and hermeneutical. That is, human being is primordially an interpretative mode of being because its being is radically temporal and historical, i.e. finite. Gadamer accepts Heidegger's position as the starting point for his own analytics of understanding.

The thinker who introduced the concept of hermeneutics in philosophy, and not only in the methodology of the humanities, was

Heidegger. He placed hermeneutics in the center of his analysis of existence in showing that interpretation is not an isolated activity of human beings but the basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something *as* something. That is the primordial givenness of our world orientation, and we cannot reduce it to anything simpler or more immediate.²⁰

Heidegger's temporal analytics of human existence (Dasein) has, I think, shown convincingly that understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviours of the subject, but the mode of being of There-being itself. This is the sense in which the term 'hermeneutics' has been used here. It denotes the basic being-in-motion of There-being which constitutes its finiteness and historicity, and hence includes the whole of its experience of the world. Not caprice, or even an elaboration of a single aspect, but the nature of the thing itself makes the movement of understanding comprehensive and universal. (TM xviii)

Since Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics presupposes in a significant way not only Heidegger's account of the primordial interpretive nature of human understanding but also his related concept of truth, I believe it will be helpful at this point to take a detour through Heidegger's existential-ontological analysis.

Within Division One of *Being and Time*, Heidegger lays out a line of parallel distinctions which runs through and connects his analysis of Dasein's relation to the world, understanding and truth. These distinctions may be itemized as follows: ready-to-hand/present-at-hand, the existential-hermeneutical 'as'/the apophantical 'as', interpretation/assertion (judgment), *alethia/adaequatio*. For each pair of distinctions Heidegger argues, the latter is derivative of the former in some way. Thus, Heidegger's analysis of the Being of Dasein exposes it in terms of what he calls primordial and derivative modes of being.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger argued that "Dasein", there-being, is ontologically conditioned by time. He characterized human existence as radically temporal, historical, worldly. Human existence is a "thrown/projected" existence. Dasein is radically situated by past events beyond control and future possibilities of Being not yet realized. At the same time Heidegger claimed that the defining ontological dimension of human existence is "understanding," i.e. a primordial, interpretative way of being determined or constituted by the totality of Dasein's ontological structure signified as "Care," i.e. the existential "anxiety" that totally circumscribes Dasein's thrown/projected Being-in-the-world. Since understanding is the basic mode of Dasein's Being, conceived as Care, Heidegger argued that the primordial, existential structure of human existence is interpretive, i.e. hermeneutical. Dasein's primordial way of Being is to interpret for-itself, towards its own possibilities of Being, the world in which it anxiously finds itself thrown/projected. "Understanding is the existential Being of Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being; and it is so in such a way that this Being discloses in itself what its Being is capable of."²¹ Dasein's primordial mode of being as understanding/care seeks to grasp the meaning/purpose of all things relative to its own anxious, circumspective, thrown/projected Being, its Being-toward-possibility in the world of beings. For Dasein the Being of things is grasped relative to the fact that its own Being is itself an issue and matter of "circumspective concern." Thus, for Dasein, to understand/care is to take hold of something "as" something, i.e. to grasp the world relative to its own temporally ordered purposes and concerns, i.e. its "totality of involvements." This is the human person's primordial cognitive orientation. Things first show themselves "ready-to-hand" beheld in a "hermeneutical 'as'" relation to Dasein's circumspective involvement. Unconcerned, disinterested, or

disinvolved cognition in which things appear only "present-at-hand" as themselves is entirely a derivative mode of knowing.²²

Heidegger argued that the world as "ready-to-hand" and interpreted constituted the primordial "meaning" structure of the world for Dasein, a meaning structure essentially "circular" in nature. "Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us." (BT 191-92) All understanding is grounded in a "fore-structure" of "meaning" which constitutes the totality of "fore-having, " "fore-sight," and "fore-conception" without which further understanding is impossible. *"Meaning is the 'upon-which' of a projection in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something; it gets its structure from a fore-having, a fore-sight, and a fore-conception."* (BT 193) The meaning structure of understanding constitutes the ontological "hermeneutical circle" of human understanding. Something must be understood already in order for further understanding to take place, and further understanding, in turn, has the power to modify and become the pre-understood, i.e. the fore-structure of meaning. In this way Heidegger suggested the positive as well as negative role that "prejudice" plays in human understanding.

Heidegger argued that the primordial, circular, interpretive character of understanding has been covered up by its derivative, namely, the ideal of disinterested, presuppositionless scientific knowledge. The disinterested, scientific-theoretical ("thematic") appropriation of Being presupposes the interpretative orientation of cognition out of which it emerges. Heidegger, conceived the scientific mode of knowledge, which grasped the world in a less

understanding/meaningful manner, as a subspecies of understanding. The primordial intelligibility of the world proceeds from its being interpreted relative to the complex of human involvements and concerns in relation to which it first appears. The scientific-theoretical concern that the world appear disinterestedly emerges as a specialized ideal relative to the primordial meaning of understanding as a whole. In the primordial cognitive orientation of understanding, the truth of the world is not separated from its meaning for Dasein. Scientific-theoretical truth brackets the world's meaning for Dasein and seeks instead to understand it in its alienation and disinvolvement. In the pursuit of scientific-theoretical truth, Dasein, in fact, seeks to make the alienated as such meaningful to it. Ontologically, scientific-theoretical truth gets its meaning relative to the interpretive circle and fore-structure of meaning out of which it emerged.

But if we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it, even if we just 'sense' it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up. The assimilation of understanding and interpretation to a definite ideal of knowledge is not the issue here. Such an ideal is itself only a subspecies of understanding - a subspecies which has strayed into the legitimate task of grasping the present-at-hand in its essential unintelligibility. (BT 194)

Heidegger, in fact, identified the circular, hermeneutical structure of understanding as the essential mode of knowing proper to historiography, and he raised the question of its cognitive status vis-a-vis "scientific knowledge." He denied that historiography should be evaluated in terms of the particular standard of rigour associated with the mathematical and natural sciences, namely, the standard of linear, presuppositionless demonstration. He argued that a correct appropriation of the hermeneutical circle, which included a never ending critical review of the fore-conceptions of meaning, (i.e.

prejudices) permitted historiography to achieve a primordial kind of rigour and knowledge all its own. Moreover, he claimed that historiography transcended in principle the standard of rigour proper to the exact sciences in being closer to the ontological essence and broadest existential horizons and concerns of Dasein.

In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. Because understanding, in accordance with its existential meaning, is Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being, the ontological presuppositions of historiographical knowledge transcend in principle the idea of rigour held in the most exact sciences. Mathematics is not more rigorous than historiography, but only narrower, because the existential foundations relevant for it lie within a narrower range. (BT 195)

Heidegger argued that the world as "present-at-hand" presupposed the world as "ready-to-hand." Thus, the circumspective "hermeneutical 'as'" was more primordial than the derivative "apophantical 'as'" or restricted interpretive act expressed in the predicative "assertion" or "judgment," which lets a subject be seen as a determinate, illuminating predicate. Heidegger defined an assertion as "*a pointing-out which gives something a definite character and which communicates.*" (BT 199) According to Heidegger the "assertion" is a derivative mode of interpretation which modifies the hermeneutical 'as' in such a way as to cover it over and hide it from view. Heidegger's analysis of the assertion explicitly prepared the way for his account of truth which, along with his analysis of the primordially of interpretation, is presupposed as a groundwork throughout Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

In his analysis of the assertion, Heidegger, claimed that the term signified three elements, namely, a "pointing out," "predication," and "communication." Every assertion points out or brings to view an entity to which it predicates or restricts a definite character or property. Within this restricted illumination the entity is seen explicitly as determined by the property, and as so restricted is expressive of an apophantical 'as.' The assertion also lets others see the entity so pointed out, thus it communicates and shares.²³

As already mentioned, Heidegger's account of the assertion as a derivative mode of interpretation prepared the way for his account of truth. His definition of truth reveals both a primordial meaning, i.e. truth as *Alethia*, and a derivative one, i.e. truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*.

Heidegger's phenomenological-ontological inquiry into truth proceeds from the traditional (Aristotelian-Thomistic) position that connects truth with assertion or judgment, and defines truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, i.e. a "relation" between knower and reality. Like James, Heidegger considered this definition to be "very general and empty" and in need of analysis.

Heidegger invites the reader to suppose someone asserts, while his back is turned away, "the picture on the wall is hanging askew." The assertion, as a representation, relates one to the real picture. It does not relate one to a psychical process, nor to itself as a representation. "Asserting is a way of Being towards the Thing itself that is." (BT 260) When one turns and perceives the picture, truth occurs. What, primordially, is this truth event? What is confirmed in it? "Nothing else than *that* this thing is the very entity which one has in mind in one's assertion." (BT 260-01) (Though Heidegger

will understand the definition of truth as agreement between intellect and thing to be derivative of this primordial experience of truth as uncovering, I believe that it is within the primordial experience of truth itself that the representational intuition has its ultimate origin. In this primordial experience of truth the intuition is born that reality is as one's belief declares.)

The entity itself which one has in mind shows itself *just as* it is in itself; that is to say, it shows that it, in its selfsameness, is just as *it* gets pointed out in the assertion as being--just as *it* gets uncovered as being. Representations do not get compared, either among themselves or in *relation* to the Real Thing. What is to be demonstrated is not an agreement of knowing with its object, still less of the psychical with the physical; but neither is it an agreement between 'contents of consciousness' among themselves. What is to be demonstrated is solely the Being-uncovered [Entdeckt-sein] of the entity itself--*that entity* in the "how" of its uncoveredness. This uncoveredness is confirmed when that which is put forward in the assertion (namely the entity itself) shows itself *as that very same thing*. "Confirmation" signifies *the entity's showing itself in its selfsameness*. . . . The Being-true (truth) of the assertion must be understood as *Being-uncovering*. Thus truth has by no means the structure of an agreement between knowing and the object in the sense of a likening of one entity (the subject) to another (the Object) (BT 261)

The crucial point to notice here is what Heidegger says does not occur in the most primordial experience of truth. A representation is not experienced as compared to reality since a representation is not itself represented and compared to what it represents. The assertion is simply experienced in its uncovering. Thus, in the primordial experience of truth, the concept of "agreement" has no place, it has not yet surfaced. An entity is simply uncovered, disclosed-in-its-being (*Alethia*). When an assertion represents truly it does not take itself as an entity to be compared to the entity it represents. The traditional definition of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* is a derivative definition precisely because this definition reflects an experience in which the assertion which was originally ready-to-hand has

become treated as present-at-hand and taken as an entity to be compared to the entity it represents. Even the uncovering itself has become treated as present-at-hand.

But the relationship itself now acquires the character of presence-at-hand by getting switched over to a relationship between the present-at-hand. The uncoveredness of something becomes the present-at-hand conformity of one thing which is present-at-hand--the assertion expressed--to something else which is present-at-hand--the entity under discussion . . .

When the assertion has been expressed, the uncoveredness of the entity moves into the kind of Being of that which is ready-to-hand within-the-world. But now to the extent that in this uncoveredness, as an uncoveredness of something, a relationship to something present-at-hand persists, the uncoveredness (truth) becomes, for its part, a relationship between things which are present-at-hand (intellectus and res)--a relationship that is present-at-hand itself. (BT 267)²⁴

Heidegger concluded from his account of the primordial meaning of truth that Dasein is primordially "in the truth" since disclosedness is a fundamental mode of Dasein's being-in-the-world. "To Dasein's state of Being, *disclosedness in general* essentially belongs." (BT 264) At the same time, he concluded that Dasein is equiprimordially in the untruth since only disclosedness *in general* marked its mode of being-in-the-world. In this way he acknowledged that Dasein did not have all the truth, always the truth, or just the truth. Dasein existed necessarily both in the truth and the untruth.

The upshot of our existential-ontological Interpretation of the phenomenon of truth is (1) that truth, in the most primordial sense, is Dasein's disclosedness, to which the uncoveredness of entities within-the-world belongs; and (2) that Dasein is equiprimordially both in the truth and in untruth. (BT 265)

Heidegger further concluded, since truth as disclosedness is an essential mode of Dasein's being-in-the-world, that truth can be said to exist, ontologically

and temporally, only so long as Dasein existed. "There is truth only in so far as Dasein is and so long as Dasein is." (BT 269) Finally, Heidegger argued, again since truth is an essential mode of Dasein's being-in-the-world, that the existence of truth must be presupposed in as much as Dasein must be presupposed, though why there is either truth or Dasein is, in itself, incomprehensible.

This entire existential-ontological analysis of Dasein made by Heidegger, wherein hermeneutical understanding is seen as the ontologically prior mode of human being in relationship to which all other cognition is derivative as subspecies, and wherein truth as disclosedness, i.e. *Alethia*, is argued to be the primordial meaning of truth in relation to which truth as agreement, i.e. *Adaequatio*, is a derivative form, outlines the interpretive groundwork of Gadamer's own analysis of human understanding and the essence of the hermeneutical experience.

Heidegger's analysis, upon which Gadamer's thought depends, also draws our attention to some of the similarities between his conception of the primordial structure of understanding and truth and James' position about the fundamentally future oriented, teleological-practical structure of the mind and truth. While it must be admitted that James' account of mind is psychological/epistemological and therefore conceived in terms of a perspective arguably foreign to Heidegger's and Gadamer's anti-subjectivist, ontological orientation, nevertheless, James' analysis of the teleological, purposive-selective, structure of consciousness is consonant with and anticipates their view of the primordial, temporal-interpretive nature of Dasein. However, their thought may be considered an advance over James' in that he distinguishes between the primordial and derivative structure of

knowledge more clearly and thoroughly than does James. Thus, Heidegger and Gadamer, can distinguish between primordial and derivative conceptions of truth in such a way as to reveal the inner dialectical relationship that exists between truth in its primordial concreteness and historicity, and truth as a specialized ideal associated with scientific (theoretical) inquiry.

James' distinction between "knowledge of acquaintance" and "knowledge-about" anticipated Heidegger's division between primordial and derivative modes of understanding and truth, but the distinction was not explored by James to the same effect. James acknowledged a scientific-theoretical ideal to grasp the world in terms of objective properties (as expressed, for example in the "mapping" interest), to be itself a specialized purpose and type of subspecies of knowledge but he left the meaning of that interest somewhat more ambiguous than either Heidegger or Gadamer. Nevertheless, James' insight about the sense of futurity and anxious expectancy which permanently accompanies human consciousness and search for truth anticipated Heidegger's description of the radically temporal, thrown/projected structure of human understanding situated by Care. James' belief in the teleological structure of the mind, that human conception was rooted in subjective interests and practical ends, which he called the real *a priori* elements of cognition, likewise prefigured Heidegger's analysis of the primordial, circumspective, interpretative nature of human understanding and its totality of involvements. James argued that the world is not conceived absolutely as it is in itself, in its totality separated from human involvement, but rather, selectively, as it is for us according to our "in-order-to." There are no "essential" attributes of things rather the attributes of things

are selectively appropriated relative to our purposes. James also postulated the reality of truth just as he stipulated the capacity of human cognition infinitely to penetrate reality. In this his thought compares to Heidegger's understanding of *Alethia* or disclosedness as an essential mode of Dasein's being-in-the-world which insures that truth must be presupposed in as much as Dasein exists. It compares, as well, to Gadamer's conception of language as constitutive of the human experience of the "world."

This fundamental congruence between James' psychological/epistemological reflections about the mind and Heidegger's existential/ontological account of Dasein serves as the foundation for some of the most elemental similarities between Gadamer's and James' concrete, existential accounts of the meaning and conditions of truth.

Gadamer follows Heidegger in appropriating his view of the finite, historically conditioned, primordially interpretative nature of human thought. He questions the Enlightenment assumption (dogma) that with science and scientific method there is achieved presuppositionless, atemporal thought rooted in the total suspension of all prejudice, as if one could step outside of history and being-in-the-world. Accordingly, he rejects the Enlightenment position that only in science does real knowledge and truth exist. Humans exist in truth in a more primordial way than the Enlightenment recognized. The Enlightenment doctrine is fundamentally distorting, especially when applied to the historical and human sciences. Gadamer rejects the general attitude regarding the tradition which he believes to be generated by such a conviction. It is an attitude of alienation which consists in a lack of respect for the wisdom of the tradition which continues to exist or can exist again. It is one which reduces the past and tradition (i.e. the

other) to an irrelevancy unable to make an impact upon one's own life, precisely because, intrinsic to the attitude is the prejudicial belief that one has overcome the past and stepped beyond history. This is a position which perceives the past and tradition as having no significant application to present life. For Gadamer, such an attitude prohibits the possibility of any genuine grasp of the meaning of human understanding since it places oneself, because of its distancing objectivity, above and beyond the possible, here and now, truth of the historical other. Said differently, the absolute identification of knowledge with science, constitutes a dogmatic self-deception and the condition of illusory and unauthentic historical consciousness. This is what leads him to argue that "the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its power." (TM 239-40) "The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the Enlightenment, will prove to be itself a prejudice, the removal of which opens the way to an appropriate understanding of our finitude, which dominates not only our humanity, but also our historical consciousness." (TM 244)

PREJUDICE AS A SOURCE OF UNDERSTANDING

In opposition to the Enlightenment doctrine, Gadamer argues that pre-judgements define the essentially temporal and historical nature of human understanding and truth. Human reason is primordially, temporally and historically conditioned, i.e. dependent upon the situation in which it exist. Absolute reason is impossible, especially for truth in the historical and human sciences.

Does the fact that one is set within various traditions mean really and primarily that one is subject to prejudices and limited in one's

freedom? Is not, rather, all human existence, even the freest, limited and qualified in various ways? If this is true, then the idea of an absolute reason is impossible for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms, ie it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates. This is true not only in the sense in which Kant limited the claims of rationalism, under the influence of the sceptical critique of Hume, to the a priori element in the knowledge of nature; it is still truer of historical consciousness and the possibility of historical knowledge. (TM 245)

Even though human reason is conditioned by virtue of prejudices derived from history, Gadamer argues, that contrary to prohibiting one's understanding, they are the primordial conditions of it. Prejudices provide the fore-structure of meaning in relation to which further meaning is made possible. They define the present truth claim in relation to which tomorrow's truth claim is both tested and assimilated. Understanding always involves a mode of comparison. What the "other" claims about something can be understood only within a relationship of comparison to what oneself already holds about the thing. Thus, one's own assumptions, remote or proximate, provide the indispensable point-of-origin for understanding the other. By implication, then, being situated within a tradition should be acknowledged as the pre-condition for any understanding of the world. "To stand within a tradition does not limit the freedom of knowledge but makes it possible." (TM 324)

It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and the English Enlightenment. . . . In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something - whereby what we encounter says something to us. (PH 9)

Gadamer believes that the problem of prejudice is at the heart of modernity's one-sided, distorted idealization of knowledge and truth. Consequently, he goes so far as to claim that the main task of philosophical hermeneutics is to re-legitimize the concept of prejudice through clarifying what separates "legitimate" prejudices from "illegitimate" ones.

What is necessary is a fundamental rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice and a recognition of the fact that there are legitimate prejudices, if we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being. Thus we are able to formulate the central question of a truly historical hermeneutics, epistemologically its fundamental question, namely, where is the ground of the legitimacy of prejudices? What distinguishes legitimate prejudices from all the countless ones which it is the undeniable task of the critical reason to overcome. (TM 246)

For Gadamer, the task of philosophical hermeneutics is to explicate the conditions which make genuine understanding possible. Contrary to the Enlightenment's stance, he argues that prejudice, itself, is one of these ontological conditions. However, since prejudice can also prevent understanding and the achievement of truth, the complete task of philosophical hermeneutics is to uncover the conditions of authentic or genuine understanding, including the conditions which permit the distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate prejudices in reaching truth. This is precisely what the totality of Gadamer's account of the hermeneutical experience is meant to accomplish.

James' account, in its own way, recognizes the interpretive importance of prejudice in relation to truth when he identifies the totality of previous truths as a dimension of the real which conditions the emergence of new truth. When speaking about the totality of previous opinions or "truths" held by an individual, James emphasized the conservative role they played,

as a dimension of "reality," in challenging contradictory or new truth claims. He described the process whereby a new truth comes to find its place in relation to those already held. This means, however, that the new truth must be interpreted and understood in light of the existing ones. "We get at one truth only through the rest of truth; and the reality, everlastingly postulated as that which all our truth must keep in touch with, may never be given to us save in the form of truth other than that which we are now testing." (MT 115) The existing truths constitute the fore-structure of meaning and truth which permit the new truths to be understood. They permit the new truths to be both resisted and appropriated. James' account of the role played by accepted truths within the verification process that pragmatically defines the meaning of truth, compares well with Gadamer's description of the interpretive function of prejudice within the dialectical structure of the hermeneutic experience. The fact that we are always already in the "truth," to whatever degree, provides the possibility for the acquisition of new truth. However, James' account of the verification process incorporates a notion of linear progress in truth which Gadamer's emphasis on tradition as a source of truth, open to infinite retrieval and application, for the most part, prohibits.

Gadamer argues that our pre-judgments situate us within an historical tradition and operate as the starting point of our understanding of the world. They constitute our historical rootedness and the historicity of our understanding. Our prejudices root us in the past out of which they come, while at the same time they serve as the starting point for our understanding of the present. Thus, Gadamer argues, "authentic" understanding which acknowledges its ontology of prejudice, permits a fusion of historical horizons, past and present, wherein truth is achieved. Agreement in content

is reached rather than, as in methodological hermeneutics or objectified understanding, an alienated and even illusory objectivity. Authentic understanding identifies the hermeneutical circle not simply as a methodological circle of part and whole but as an ontological, structural dimension of understanding. The acknowledged presence of the tradition within the knower permits the possibility of its appropriation in continuous transformations which in turn redefine the tradition. Understanding involves the tension between continuity and change which overcomes the temporal distance between past and present and, thus, overcomes the problem of historicism. The past is reconstituted ("fused") in the present albeit in a new and transformed appropriation.

Understanding is not to be thought of so much as an action of one's subjectivity, but as the placing of oneself within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly fused. This is what must be expressed in hermeneutical theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of a process, a method. (TM 258)

Gadamer's ontology of play as the paradigm of the truth of art has been extended to the experience of truth in the human sciences. Just as the subject is not dominant in play or in the experience of the truth of art, so also in the human sciences it is history itself which is dominant (though not absolute), not the investigating subject. Ultimately this is what Gadamer discloses in his analysis of the "essence" of the hermeneutical experience yet to be discussed. "There is in the hermeneutical experience something that resembles a dialectic, an activity of the thing itself, an activity that, unlike the methodology of modern science, is a passivity, an understanding, an event." (TM 422)

Gadamer calls the fusion of horizons in which the truth claim of the past is taken seriously and understanding means coming to agreement concerning an object, "effective-historical consciousness." It is within this process or event of "effective-historical consciousness" that the prejudices through which one understands are separated from those which cause misunderstanding. Philosophical hermeneutics must fully articulate how this is so, how history is effective in authentic understanding. Whereas methodological hermeneutics naively ignores its own historicity and therein conceals its own prejudices, authentic understanding acknowledges its true historicalness and thus is constitutively undogmatic.

A true historical thinking must take account of its own historicity. Only then will it not chase the phantom of an historical object which is the object of progressive research, but learn to see in the object the counterpart of itself and hence understand both. The true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a relationship in which exist both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding. A proper hermeneutics would have to demonstrate the effectivity of history within understanding itself, I shall refer to this as 'effective-history'. Understanding is, essentially, an effective-historical relation. (TM 267)

Gadamer clarifies the full meaning of "effective-historical consciousness" and the fusion of horizons through an analysis of a constitutive concept, i.e. "application." The experience of application is the essential condition of genuine understanding for Gadamer. Consequently, he identifies it as the fundamental hermeneutical problem. He identifies it as such because he believes that it is only within the application of a truth claim of the past to the present situation that a truth claim is fully understood. This is precisely what the previous hermeneutics of the historical and human sciences had not been able to recognize since it was dominated by the methodological paradigm of the natural sciences. In application understanding reaches a normative level

which the scientific ideal of disinterested, objective knowledge does not permit it to reach. The truth claims of the past are really understood only when their possible application to the present situation is taken seriously. True understanding of the past allows the past to reach a degree of normative life and efficacy in the present, and in reaching a normative function, a correlative anti-dogmatic function as well. To take the past's or another's truth claim seriously means to open a dialectic, a questioning of one's own truth. The questioner becomes the one who is questioned and in this one's prejudices are put to the test. This permits the "fusion of horizons" which creates authentic understanding.

IV - THE HERMENEUTICAL EXPERIENCE: THE PARADIGM OF PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

In addition to Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein, particularly important to Gadamer's explication of hermeneutical thought and especially the concept of application, is his reliance upon Aristotle's concept of practical reason, expressly *phronesis*. "If we relate Aristotle's description of the ethical phenomenon and especially of the virtue of moral knowledge to our own investigation, we find that Aristotle's analysis is in fact a kind of model of the problems of hermeneutics." (TM xxii)

Aristotle expounded his account of *phronesis*, i.e. prudence or practical wisdom by reflecting upon those to whom it is honored. Such a man is he who is able to deliberate (i.e. reason about things within one's power which may be done) well about things which advance the good and expedient for himself, that is the good life in general. Thus, Aristotle defined *phronesis* as "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for a man." (NIC. ETH. 6, v. 1140b 5)

Philosophical hermeneutics, in part, can be understood to be a rediscovery and reconstitution of Aristotle's concept of practical reason and *phronesis* applied analogically to an explication of effective-historical consciousness and the genuine hermeneutical experience. Gadamer came to see in Aristotle's account of the nature of *phronesis* a model for his own understanding of application as an integral part of hermeneutical consciousness. In so doing, he conceived hermeneutical consciousness as practical, and hermeneutics as practical philosophy.²⁵ Hermeneutical consciousness as an analog to Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* (contrasted by him to both *techne* and *episteme*) is consequently set in opposition by Gadamer to the predominant scientific-technological consciousness of today: 'a consciousness which expresses itself as a power willing to dominate even the distinctively moral-political dimensions of human life.

It is only as the idea of science has begun to subordinate all self-evidence to the new science of nature, to its methods and its requirements of verification, that legitimacy has more and more been withdrawn from the knowledge arising from this 'practical science.'²⁶

The real public responsibility of science, which has been on the conscience of the scientist ever since Hiroshima, cannot be met by any science as such. The reason of science is not the same reason which the classical *scientia practica et politica* served.²⁷

Gadamer understands the hermeneutical problem of application to be illuminated by Aristotle's moral thought because Aristotle conceived ethical truth or moral wisdom to be a fusion of knowledge involving a universal norm expressed by tradition, the particular, concrete, temporal situation and the individual person acting within it. Ethical truth involves a unification (application) of one's knowledge of the universal in the form of the principle

with a knowledge of oneself and the situation.²⁸ Furthermore, ethical truth is transformative of the person while it is, in turn, transformed for the situation. Moral wisdom does not consist simply in a knowledge of the universal, nor merely in a knowledge of the situation, but rather, in a fusion of both.

Understanding is, then, a particular case of the application of something universal to a particular situation. This makes Aristotelian ethics of special importance for us. . . . But precisely what is of interest to us here is that he is concerned with reason and with knowledge, not detached from a being that is becoming, but determined by it and determinative of it. (TM 278)

Gadamer sees in Aristotle's account of moral knowledge a paradigm for genuine hermeneutics. What is of importance is that it explicates a unique form of application. Aristotle's understanding of moral knowledge, according to Gadamer, uncovers a concrete, temporal knowledge which both determines the life of the knower while itself is determined by that life. This is the reality of authentic hermeneutics as well.

The analogy that Gadamer draws, the reason why he thinks it is a "model of the problem of hermeneutics," is that just as application is not a subsequent or occasional part of *phronesis* when we relate some pre-given determinate universal to a particular situation, this is true for *all* understanding. And just as with *phronesis* there is always a mediation between the universal and the particular in which both are co-determined and become integral to the very being of the *phronimos*, this is what Gadamer claims is characteristic of all authentic understanding.²⁹

Viewed in light of its practical impact, genuine hermeneutics overcomes the conceit of detachment and disinterest derived from the methods of modern science. Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* presents a paradigm for hermeneutics by revealing a kind of knowledge which, while partially conditioned by the knower, circles to direct and determine the decisions,

actions and life of the knower. *Phronesis* is not a merely objective, impersonal knowledge without application to one's life. Rather, it is a knowledge of personal, practical relevance.

The alienation of the objectifying methods of modern science, characteristic of the hermeneutics and historical writing of the nineteenth century, appeared as the consequence of a false objectification. The return to the example of Aristotelian ethics is made to help us realize and avoid this. For moral being, as Aristotle describes it, is clearly not objective knowledge, i.e. the knower is not standing over against a structure that he merely observes, but he is directly affected by what he sees. It is something that he has to do. (TM 280)³⁰

Gadamer points out that within Aristotle's ethics, practical knowledge is divided into *techne* and *phronesis*. It is the latter which offers a model for genuine hermeneutics. Gadamer admits that both *techne* and *phronesis* involve an element of application but that it is not the same for each. They are analogous, but they retain a difference. It is Gadamer's analysis of this difference which brings him to an understanding of the essential dimensions of *phronesis* which serves as a paradigm for genuine hermeneutics. It also permits him to make an additional distinction between science and hermeneutical truth. For Gadamer, scientific knowledge, its theoreticality notwithstanding, is a form of *techne*.

It is thus not altogether wrong to say that modern natural science - without detracting from the purely theoretical interest that animates it - means not so much knowledge as know-how. This means it is practice. It would appear to me more correct, however, to say that science makes possible knowledge directed to the power of making, a knowing mastery of nature. This is technology. And this is precisely what practice is not.³¹

Gadamer claims that the distinction between *phronesis* and *techne* is captured by Aristotle in the "odd expression 'self-knowledge.'" "Aristotle

catches this difference in a bold and unique way when he calls this kind of knowledge [*phronesis*], self-knowledge, i.e. knowledge for oneself." (TM 282) What is important, therefore, is to clarify the meaning of moral knowledge, of *phronesis*, as "knowledge for oneself" if one intends to expose the dimension of *phronesis* which distinguishes it from *techne* and determines it as a paradigm for genuine hermeneutics. Gadamer explicates three aspects of *phronesis* which shed light on its meaning as 'self-knowledge.'

First *phronesis* is not the kind of knowledge which can be learned and forgotten disinterestedly as can *techne*. That is, *phronesis*, as knowledge for and about oneself, is not an extraneous, acquired, detached, objective skill determined independently of one's self involvement and the situation necessitating action. *Phronesis* is constituted within the moment of choice even as it determines choice.

Rather, we are always already in the situation of having to act . . . and hence must already possess and be able to apply moral knowledge. That is why the concept of application is highly problematical. For we can only apply something that we already possess, but we do not possess moral knowledge in such a way that we already have it and then apply it to specific situations. (TM 283)

Second, *phronesis* embodies a peculiar articulation of the means-end relation which incorporates a type of "self-deliberation." It is a knowledge which cannot be taught. *Techne* is a knowledge which can grasp the means-end relation objectively, separately from the situation and oneself. Consequently, it is a knowledge which can be taught. However, this is not the case with *phronesis*, not least because it seeks a good life in general for oneself and not a particular end as does *techne*.

Moral knowledge can never be knowable in advance in the manner of knowledge that can be taught. The relation between means and ends

here is not such that the knowledge of the right means can be made available in advance, and that because the knowledge of the right end is not the mere object of knowledge either. There can be no anterior certainty concerning what the good life is directed towards as a whole. (TM 286-87)

It is impossible to teach *phronesis* since it is a kind of knowledge, unlike *techne*, which incorporates a discernment of the means-end relation in conjunction with deliberation about a given situation involving oneself. It is temporal self-knowledge, a knowledge for oneself. Further, in the case of *techne*, precisely because it is a kind of objective knowledge, it is possible to distinguish it from experience as such. This is not the case with *phronesis*. *Phronesis* is an "experience."

Moral knowledge is really a knowledge of a special kind. It embraces in a curious way both means and end and hence differs from technical knowledge. That is why it is pointless to distinguish between knowledge and experience, as can be done in the case of *techne*. For moral knowledge must be a kind of experience, and in fact we shall see that this is perhaps the fundamental form of experience, compared with which all other experience represents a denaturing. (TM 287-88)

Gadamer argues that *phronesis*, as moral knowledge, is essentially a type of experience, in fact, compared to all others, a primordial or paradigmatic mode of experience. When he describes the essence of the hermeneutical experience he keeps this interpretation of *phronesis* in mind.

In clarifying the third factor which distinguishes *phronesis* from *techne*, Gadamer shows that Aristotle defines at least three other kinds of practical knowledge which are derivative of or associated with *phronesis*, yet are clearly distinct from *techne*. Gadamer identifies them as understanding (*sunesis*), insight (*gnome*), and fellow-feeling (*suggnome*). These are all modifications of *phronesis* which apply in the relationships that one has with

other individuals in particular circumstances, such as counselling or advising another. As such, they cannot be taught, are forms of self-knowledge, and are not *techné*. They are modes of moral knowledge.

Gadamer emphasizes the relevance of Aristotle's description of *phronesis* for philosophical hermeneutics by claiming authentic understanding to involve an application of what is understood to oneself along the lines of the self-knowledge that characterizes *phronesis* as moral knowledge.

We, too, determined that application is neither a subsequent nor a merely occasional part of the phenomenon of understanding, but co-determines it as a whole from the beginning. Here too application was not the relating of some pre-given universal to the particular situation. The interpreter dealing with a traditional text seeks to apply it to himself. But this does not mean that the text is given for him as something universal, that he understands it as such and only afterwards uses it for particular applications. Rather, the interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal thing, the text; i.e. to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text. In order to understand that, he must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation if he wants to understand at all. (TM 289)

Authentic understanding necessitates self involvement and application. The alien can be understood only insofar as it can be seen to say something about one's own predicament and one's own project in life. Gadamer makes the experience of being able to relate the truth claims of a text to one's own concerns and problems, be they theoretical or practical, indispensable for authentic understanding. Since the structure of experience in general is dialectically involving in this way authentic hermeneutical thought has the structure of an experience.

UNDERSTANDING AND THE CONCEPT OF EXPERIENCE

As important as Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom is in establishing the practical structure of hermeneutical experience, another moral paradigm also seems to be operating within Gadamer's account. Interestingly, when this paradigm of the hermeneutical experience is explored one seems to hear more the echo of Kant's ethical insight concerning the good will, which insists upon the absolute value of the person and the concomitant imperative necessitating absolute respect for others, than, Aristotle's description of *phronesis*. This other paradigm of the hermeneutical experience is found in Gadamer's analysis of the "experience of the 'Thou.'" He, himself, claims that the account of this experience occupies the "key position" of his investigations.

The section on experience has a systematic and key position in my investigations. There the experience of the 'Thou' also throws light on the idea of the effective-historical experience. The experience of the 'Thou' also manifests the paradoxical element that something standing over against me asserts its own rights and requires absolute recognition; and in that very process is understood. (TM xxiii)

Gadamer's account of the experience of the 'Thou' is found in the section of *Truth and Method*, entitled "The concept of experience and the essence of the hermeneutical experience." This section contains the culmination of his analysis of "effective-historical consciousness." Here Gadamer presents his most concrete account of what he considers to be the primordial, universal meaning of human understanding in relation to which scientific truth must be considered a subspecies or specialized ideal. Working within his suggestion that *phronesis* as moral truth is the most fundamental form of experience, he presents an analysis of human understanding as an experiential process which discloses the meaning of truth in terms of its

primordial historicity. The essential elements of his account harmonize with James' pragmatic description of the meaning of truth as the "collective name for verification processes." Like James, Gadamer admits that human understanding necessarily incorporates an imperative or need to transcend temporal limits. In other words, it immanently posits, as an ideal telos, a trans-historical signification of truth. This signification is an authentic element of truth which has dominated the theory of experience and science but it has overshadowed truth's equally immanent historicity which philosophical hermeneutics attempts to uncover and restore as a dialectical complement.

Before proceeding to the essence of the hermeneutical experience as such, Gadamer first gives an account of the general structure of experience. He begins by insisting that "effective-historical consciousness," "has the structure of an experience." (TM 310) He claims that the concept of experience expressed in the "epistemological schematisation" of the natural sciences has hidden a more "original" meaning of experience. What is characteristic of the standard account of scientific experience is precisely the fact that it "takes no account of the inner historicity of experience." (TM 311) This is what is indicative of the so-called "objectivity" in scientific method; it denies historicity. Gadamer argues, however, that this denial of historicity inherent in scientific method and modern scientific theory is not completely arbitrary; since, experience, in part, is teleologically oriented to move beyond history. "Experience is valid only if it is confirmed: hence its dignity depends on its fundamental repeatability. But this means that experience, by its very nature, abolishes its history. This is true even of everyday experience, and how much more for any scientific version of it. Thus it is not just a chance

one-sided emphasis of modern scientific theory, but has a foundation in fact, that the theory of experience is related teleologically to the truth that is derived from it." (TM 311) Though experience immanently reveals the impulse or imperative to move beyond history, this is not an adequate account of all that experience is. Experience is equally, immanently historical. Gadamer examines the concept of experience found in Bacon, Aristotle and Hegel as a prolegomenon for his own account which emphasizes its historicity.

Gadamer explains that if we look to the inception of modern scientific method in the work of Bacon, we will see that in the formulation of his experimental, inductive method, he sought "to rise above the unruly and accidental way in which daily experience takes place and certainly above its dialectical use." (TM 312) Gadamer claims, however, that more significant than Bacon's formulation of an experimental inductive method, which emphasizes the teleological thrust of experience as science, is his analysis of the "prejudices." Even though the purpose of Bacon's teachings on the prejudices were intended to serve the employment of his method, his recognition of the persistence of the prejudices emphasized "elements in experience that are not related teleologically to the goal of science." (TM 313) It is important to Gadamer that Bacon was forced to consider elements of the structure of experience which stand alongside of its teleological aspects. Gadamer intends to emphasize the significance of these non-teleological aspects of experience while admitting the authenticity of experience's trans-historical aim.

[W]e must regard as onesided the principle of accepting teleology as the sole criterion of the achievement of knowledge . . . we cannot limit ourselves to the teleological aspect, from which until now the problem

[of experience] has largely been considered. This is not to say that this aspect has not correctly grasped a true element in the structure of experience. The fact that experience is valid, so long as it is not contradicted by new experience (*ubi non reperitur instantia contradictoria*), is clearly characteristic of the general nature of experience, no matter whether we are dealing with its scientific form, in the modern experiment, or with the experience of daily life that men have always had. (TM 313-14)

Gadamer next considers Aristotle's notion of induction. The thrust of the analysis is to establish that Aristotle likewise conceived experience, first and foremost, in terms of its scientific teleology. For Aristotle "experience is not science itself, but it is a necessary condition of it." (TM 314) For Aristotle, experience consists in the apprehension of the universal within the multiplicity of particulars. According to Gadamer, Aristotle's only concern was to understand the genesis of concepts in relation to sense observations. This is to "think of the essence of experience only in regard to science. . . . Aristotle here presupposes that what persists in the flight of observations and emerges as a universal is, in fact, something common to them: the universality of the concept is, for him, ontologically prior." (TM 316) Gadamer is critical of Aristotle's account of experience insofar as it conceives of experience only in terms of its result, its real character as a process is overlooked. "This process is, in fact, an essentially negative one. It cannot be described simply as the unbroken development of typical universals. This development takes place, rather, by continually false generalizations being refuted by experience and what was regarded as typical being shown not to be so." (TM 316)³²

In acknowledging the teleological aspiration of experience alongside of its process and negative aspects, I believe Gadamer has brought to light constitutive dimensions of human understanding equally recognized in

James' theory of truth though treated somewhat differently. Gadamer's recognition of a teleological imperative as an essential element of experience parallels James' allowance of the meaning of truth as the "ideal limit to the series of successive termini to which our thoughts have led us and still are leading us." James' "fate of thought" criterion of truth is thus confirmed by Gadamer. However, Gadamer identifies the teleological aspect of experience as the scientific element in order to distinguish more emphatically truth in the natural sciences from hermeneutical truth. He makes the process and negative moment of experience the central element of the hermeneutic experience in order to emphasize the historicity of human understanding and truth in a way different from James. James, of course, also admits the process and negative element in the meaning of truth which Gadamer makes central to his account of the hermeneutical experience. He considers all results of the verification process to be "approximations" open to contradiction and demand for continuous verification. All truth has a provisional (temporal) quality which is revealed in the negative (contradictory) element of experience. This point is fundamental for both James and Gadamer. However, because James does not distinguish between scientific and hermeneutical truth in the way Gadamer does, he does not bring out the historicity of understanding in the same way as Gadamer. This shows itself in the fact that Gadamer does not want to speak of progress or meliorism in hermeneutical understanding though he permits such a description of truth in science. James does not appear to make this kind of distinction in thinking about truth.

Gadamer claims that if one intends to understand the full meaning of experience as a negative process and as a process revealing historicity in its

essence, then it is not to Aristotle but to Hegel that one must turn. Hegel is the "witness for the dialectical element of experience. With him the element of historicity comes into its own. He conceives experience as scepticism in action." (TM 317)

Beginning with an explication of Hegel's notion of the dialectical nature of experience, Gadamer reaches a criticism of Hegel's account from which he develops the notion of the radical historicity of experience. Gadamer claims that the general structure of experience must be conceived in terms of three elemental factors. First, *experience is dialectical*. As dialectical, experience involves negation and the reversal of consciousness. Second, since experience is dialectical, *experience is self-referential*. As self-referential, experience is consciousness' experience of itself, i.e. is self-knowledge. Third, since experience is dialectical and self-referential, *experience is historical*. As historical, experience is consciousness' experience of its own finitude.

Gadamer claims that the ordinary use of the word "experience" reveals two opposite meanings which point to its essential dialectical nature. On the one hand, experience means the confirmation of expectation, i.e. repetition giving rise to the universal, the teleological ("dogmatic") aspect; on the other hand, experience means the negation of expectation. Experience in this latter sense identifies the apprehension of an object in a new and alternative way; what was seen one way/incorrectly is now seen better, differently/correctly. A new object appears, insight occurs. The universal is seen in a new light. This movement of consciousness via negation is the dialectical character of experience.

in Hegelian terms, the dialectical character of experience is conceived as a "reversal of consciousness" wherein both consciousness and its object are transformed into something new and different. Further, in this reversal of consciousness, consciousness has become aware of itself in its overcoming of what was alien to itself in the object. Experience has become self-knowledge. However, for Hegel, absolute self-knowledge is the overcoming of experience itself in its history and the resolution of the dialectic into science. Absolute self-knowledge as the overcoming of all experience is the point at which Gadamer separates himself from Hegel and interprets experience in terms of its thorough historicity. "We can now understand why Hegel's application of history, insofar as he saw it as part of the absolute self-consciousness of philosophy, does not do justice to hermeneutical consciousness." (TM 319)

Gadamer rejects Hegel's emphasis on absolute knowledge and the notion of science as the overcoming of experience. He chooses instead to think the truth of experience strictly in terms of its dialectical movement. Only in this way, can the truth of hermeneutical experience as such be revealed. Unlike the teleological meaning of truth associated with science, i.e. definitive information and assent, the hermeneutical meaning of truth is "openness" and the possibility of negation. Truth in its dialectical historicity.

The truth of experience always contains an orientation towards new experience. That is why a person who is called 'experienced' has become such not only through experiences, but is also open to new experiences. . . . The experienced person proves to be . . . someone who is radically undogmatic; who because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. The dialectic of experience has its own fulfillment not in definitive knowledge, but in that openness to experience that is encouraged by experience itself.

But then this gives the concept of experience that we are concerned with here a qualitatively new element. It refers not only to experience in the sense of the information that this or that thing gives us. It is that experience which must constantly be acquired and from which none can be exempt. Experience here is something that is part of the historical nature of man. (TM 319)

The dialectic of experience involves negativity in the reversal of consciousness; expectations are negated and new insight appears, along with openness to such insights. This is the negative moment of experience reaching again, the positive.

Like Gadamer, James understood the experience of truth to reside essentially within a temporal, dialectical verification process, a process wherein beliefs held as true are contradicted and negated by further experience which, in turn, necessitates the reformulation of those beliefs in search of more satisfactory ones. However, since James' account of truth is dominated by the paradigm of science he maintains the teleological element in a way Gadamer does not. Thus, he associates the notions of progress and betterment with truth; whereas, Gadamer, when describing interpretations per se, tends to speak of "new," "different" or "alternatively" true understandings. Both claim truth to uncover what is, though Gadamer appears to emphasize its strict historicity more radically than does James, at least in terms of the human sciences.

Gadamer makes use of Aeschylus to bring out the deepest meaning of the negativity and historicity involved in experience. It was Aeschylus who conceived experience as 'learning through suffering.' Ultimately, what is learned is the reality of human finitude. The historicity of experience

reveals itself in the awareness of limitation, particularly in the awareness of the limits of time and experience itself.

The experienced man knows the limitedness of all prediction and the uncertainty of all plans. In him is realised the truth-value of experience. . . . In it all dogmatism, which proceeds from the soaring desires of the human heart, reaches an absolute barrier. Experience teaches us to recognize reality. (TM 320)

'To recognize what is' does not mean to recognize what is just at this moment there, but to have insight into the limitations within which the future is still open to expectations and planning or, even more fundamentally, that all the expectations and planning of finite beings is finite and limited. Thus true experience is of one's own historicity. (TM 321)

In the dialectic of experience what is shows itself but it shows itself in its finitude, that is in relation to its situatedness and future possibilities. Thus, in asserting what is the case the experienced person wisely remains open to the possibility of reversal. In the claim to truth an ambiguous tension is acknowledged between what is and what might be. The "soaring desire" for final and comprehensive truth, which itself defines experience and motivates inquiry, is confronted by an awareness of the finitude of what is known. This expresses the deepest sense of Gadamer's claim that experience is dialectical, self-referential and historical. He describes the hermeneutical experience in its essence in light of this description of the general structure of experience. The hermeneutical experience will reflect the dialectical, self-referential and historical elements of experience in general.

THE ESSENCE OF THE HERMENEUTICAL EXPERIENCE

As previously stated, the hermeneutical experience in its essence is explicated within Gadamer's reflections on the experience of the "Thou." Gadamer explains that the hermeneutical experience is concerned with tradition

which, rooted in language, "expresses itself like a 'Thou.'" (TM 321) He, consequently, develops an analogical argument based on the experience of the "Thou" which is meant to reveal the essential character of the hermeneutical experience. Hermeneutical experience, because it has the character of the "I-Thou" relationship is a modification of the general dialectical structure of experience insofar as it reaches a moral dimension. "Since here the object of experience has itself the character of a person, this kind of experience is a moral phenomenon, as is the knowledge acquired through experience, the knowledge of the other person." (TM 321) Gadamer speaks about three kinds of experience of the "Thou"; the last of which expresses the essential nature of hermeneutical experience. Since, however, the third "I-Thou" relationship is developed somewhat in contrast to the first two, it is important to review his description of them.

The first kind of experience of the "Thou" can be designated as the experience of the "Thou" as a "thing." Here the "Thou" is scrutinized as a mere object among other objects having a certain behaviour, nature and predictability. In this case, the "Thou" is perceived merely as a possible means to one's ends. It is the understanding of the "Thou" in terms of its instrumental use only. This experience of the "Thou," in fact, is a rejection or denial of the moral dimension of the experience of the "Thou." Here Gadamer makes a very telling remark which reveals, as does this entire section, the partially hidden and often overlooked Kantian fore-structure of his understanding of the essence of the hermeneutical experience.

From the moral point of view this attitude to the 'Thou' is something that is directed ultimately towards oneself and contradicts the moral definition of man. Kant, as we know, in interpreting the categorical imperative said, *inter alia*, that the other should never be used as a means, but always as an end in himself. (TM 322)

This first experience of the "Thou" reduces the "Thou" to the status of a thing. In terms of the hermeneutical problem this is equivalent to a naive attempt to understand the human tradition as a mere "object" to be investigated exclusively in terms of inductive, scientific method as is actually found in much of the social sciences. Here the "Thou" is not allowed to make any personal and moral claims upon the "I."

Someone who understands tradition in this way makes it an object, i.e. he confronts it in a free uninvolved way, and by methodically excluding all subjective elements in regard to it, he discovers what it contains. We saw that he thereby detaches himself from the continuing action of tradition, in which he himself has his historical reality. (TM 322)

This first type of experience of the "Thou" is not a paradigm of either the true hermeneutical experience or of effective-historical consciousness.

The second type of experience of the "Thou" can be designated as the experience of the "Thou" as the projected self. Here the "Thou" is recognized as a "person," yet the relationship still does not contain a true moral dimension. This experience continues the self-centered character of the first type of experience of the "Thou" since the "Thou" is only allowed to appear through concealed, anticipatory conditions and restrictions projected by the self. The "I" claims to know the "Thou" better than the "Thou" knows itself while at the same time concealing from itself its own pre-judgments. In this way, the "I" continues a form of domination over the "Thou" as manifested in the first type of experience of the "Thou."

This second type of experience of the "Thou" imitates the first in refusing to allow the "other" to render a claim upon the self. "The claim to understand

the other person in advance performs the function of keeping the claim of the other person at a distance." (TM 322) In clarifying this relationship, Gadamer makes reference to the master/slave relationship. He explains that even the most extreme forms of this relationship are dialectical and reciprocal. However, it is precisely this "dialectic of reciprocity that governs all 'I-Thou' relationships [which] is inevitably hidden from the mind of the individual." (TM 323)

In terms of the hermeneutical problem of application, Gadamer understands this second type of experience of the "Thou" to be reflective of "what we generally call historical consciousness," (TM 323) i.e. romantic hermeneutics. Here, hermeneutical consciousness, self-deceptively believes that it can transcend its own historical condition in its understanding of the past. In this way, it claims to be the master of tradition. Historical consciousness denies its own pre-judgements in its attempt to understand tradition and in so doing conditions and subordinates the tradition to itself while conceiving itself beyond it.

A person who does not accept that he is dominated by prejudice, will fail to see what is shown by this light. It is like the relationship between the 'I' and the 'Thou.' A person who reflects himself out of the mutuality of such a relation changes this relationship and destroys its moral bond. A person who reflects himself out of a living relationship to tradition destroys the true meaning of this tradition in exactly the same way. (TM 324)

The third type of experience of the "Thou," which for Gadamer is reflective of the true essence of the hermeneutical experience, can be designated as the experience of the "Thou" as "Thou." In this experience of the "Thou," the "Thou" is not only recognized as a person but is respected as one. The "Thou" is recognized as the source of valid claims upon the self; claims

which have application to oneself here and now. This experience of the "Thou" contrary to the first two types, affirms the moral definition of man for here the "Thou" is respected as an end in himself. This experience of the "Thou" is a refutation of any form of domination and slavery. Here it is precisely the claim of the "other" and what he has to say which is recognized and listened to. This experience of the "Thou" involves a dimension of the renunciation of the self. Gadamer characterizes this relationship as a relationship grounded in "openness," the openness of listening which reaches application.

To this end, openness is necessary. But this openness exists ultimately not only for the person to whom we listen, but rather anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without this kind of openness to one another there is no genuine human relationship. Belonging together always means being able to listen to one another. When two people understand each other, this does not mean that one person 'understands' the other, in the sense of surveying him. Similarly, to hear and obey someone does not mean simply that we do blindly what the other desires. We call such a person a slave. Openness to the other, then, includes the acknowledgement that I must accept some things that are against myself, even though there is no one else who asks this of me. (TM 324)

In terms of the hermeneutical problem, Gadamer claims that this experience of the "Thou" which achieved a true moral dimension characterized by "openness" is "the parallel to the hermeneutical experience." (TM 324) The genuine hermeneutical experience, which is an expression of effective-historical consciousness is grounded in openness and permits an understanding of tradition which allows its truth claims to have an impact upon oneself in the present situation.

I must allow the validity of the claim by tradition, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me. (TM 324)

The hermeneutical consciousness has its fulfillment, not in its methodological sureness of itself, but in the same readiness for experience that distinguishes the experienced man by comparison with the man captivated by dogma. (TM 325)

The genuine hermeneutical experience is one in which tradition is not only recognized but respected. It is respected, firstly, in that one acknowledges one's own prejudices before it and thus undermines the will to dominate, and secondly, one openly acknowledges the possibility of the validity of its claims upon oneself. In doing so, authentic hermeneutical experience overcomes dogmatic consciousness which isolates tradition and renders it inaccessible to the genuine understanding achieved in effective-historical consciousness, i.e. understanding incorporating application. The sorting of legitimate and illegitimate prejudices occurs as an essential element of effective-historical consciousness itself because of its fundamental, dialectical openness to the possibility of the negation and reversal of one's own stance.

My thesis - and I think it is the necessary consequence of recognizing the operativeness of history in our conditionedness and finitude - that the thing which hermeneutics teaches us is to see through the dogmatism of asserting an opposition and separation between the ongoing, natural 'tradition' and the reflective appropriation of it. For behind this assertion stands a dogmatic objectivism that distorts the very concept of hermeneutical reflection itself. In this objectivism the understander is seen - even in the so-called sciences of understanding like history - not in relationship to the hermeneutical situation and the constant operativeness of history in his own consciousness, but in such a way as to imply that his own understanding does not enter into the event. (PH 28)

THE PRIORITY OF THE QUESTION

The openness and element of negation which characterizes the essence of the hermeneutical experience is further analyzed by Gadamer in terms of the "hermeneutical priority of the question." The dialectical, undogmatic

structure of the essence of the hermeneutical experience reveals the priority of questioning inherent within it.

It is clear that the structure of the question is implicit in all experience. We cannot have experiences without asking questions. The recognition that an object is different and not as we first thought, obviously involves the question whether it was this or that. The openness that is part of experience is, from a logical point of view, precisely the openness of being this or that. It has the structure of a question. And just as the dialectical negativity of experience found its fulfillment in the idea of a perfect experience, in which we become aware of our absolute finitude and limited being, the logical form of the question, and the negativity that is part of it, find their fulfillment in a radical negativity: the knowledge of not knowing. (TM 325)

The knowledge of not knowing, of course, is the wisdom of Socrates found in the Platonic dialogues. Thus, Gadamer ends his analysis of hermeneutical experience by reflecting upon the priority of the question as revealed in the dialectic of genuine conversation where truth is an issue. Gadamer argues that the dialectic of conversation reveals the priority of the question in knowledge. Wisdom is to be found more in the dialectic of questions than in opinions. The question perceives opposites, it recognizes possibilities; opinion does not. "Questions always bring out the undetermined possibilities of a thing." (TM 338) The questioning at the heart of dialectical discourse reveals the priority of the question for understanding and thus, at the same time the subordination of method. The question is prior to all method since there can be no method for questioning as such.

The priority that the question holds in knowledge shows in the most basic way the limitedness of the idea of method for knowledge from which our argument as a whole has proceeded. There is no such thing as a method of learning to ask questions, of learning to see what needs to be questioned. (TM 329)

In light of the priority of the question at the heart of the hermeneutical experience and effective-historical consciousness, Gadamer concludes that understanding and truth, especially in the human sciences, rest more in the awareness of one's own ignorance than in the surety of scientific method and objectivity, or as he says, in the "chimera of perfect enlightenment." (TM 340)

V - LANGUAGE AND THE HERMENEUTICAL EXPERIENCE

The final step in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in *Truth and Method* is a theory of language as the medium of the hermeneutical experience. His analysis proceeds by an interpretive, critical review of ancient, medieval and modern European thinking about language. Here, in the final section of this chapter, I want to examine the major themes about language which clearly develop his account of the nature of hermeneutical truth, and that also have relevance either to James' understanding of truth or to things to be said in the final chapter related to Rorty's project.

Gadamer's analysis of language is meant to show how the nature and functioning of language in general demonstrates the attitudes, concepts and structures already brought out in his analysis of effective-historical consciousness and the essence of the hermeneutical experience. I am referring to such ideas as, the antisubjectivist structure of play and its analogical application to the experience of art, effective-historical consciousness, and the essence of the hermeneutical experience; the finitude and historicity of human existence, understanding and truth; the illuminative function of prejudice, the distinction between the primordial and derivative structure of our experience of understanding and truth.

Gadamer argues that our natural linguistic experience of the world expresses the primordial universality of the hermeneutical experience. The language of science, he claims, is to be understood as a derivative mode of linguistic experience. The point of the analysis is to show how our experience of the world through language is coincidental with a primordial meaning of understanding and truth as an "event" we experience, an event we come upon, participate in, or that happens to us more than one we orchestrate and control as in science. Gadamer identifies the hermeneutical experience and the hermeneutical meaning of truth with the primordial structure of the natural word (historical language[s]) and the logic of historical experience found in it. The natural, historical word provides a primordial natural light of understanding and truth which stands in contradistinction to the Cartesian scientific word and ("natural light") criterion of truth as methodological, subjective, (mathematical), absolute, self-certainty. In articulating the tension that persists between the instrumentalization of language in science and the open, ambiguous, metaphorical nature of the historical languages, he identifies the problematic linguistic intersection of the human experience of truth that has existed since the birth of philosophy and about which his thought is concerned.

Gadamer argues that the entire process of the hermeneutical experience is fundamentally a linguistic event. Language determines the hermeneutical *object* insofar as tradition is preeminently linguistic in nature. Language also determines the hermeneutical *act* because language is the medium in which understanding takes place; thus, the linguistic structure of the human world is the concrete condition that makes effective-historical consciousness possible. Language has a universal function thus hermeneutics has a

universal significance. Since history, the human tradition and human understanding exists pre-eminently within the medium of language, "The linguistic quality of understanding is the concretion of effective-historical consciousness." (TM 351) Thus, an analysis of language as the medium of the hermeneutical experience is required.

The major premise of Gadamer's theory of language is that words are not merely "signs," arbitrary "tools" that are assigned to objects and acquire meaning only by conventions of social agreement, nor are they natural "similarities" or "copy representations" of objects. Gadamer argues, "Both these [ancient/traditional] interpretations of language start from the existence of words and regard objects as something we know about previously from an independent source. Thus they start too late." (TM 367-68) For Gadamer the mystery of language is the mystery of the primordial unity of word and object. He holds that there is a unity between word and object such that in the word the object (world) is known primordially. Language understood as a system of signs or system of copy representations is forgetful (though the latter less so) of the more primordial unity of word and object which defines the real nature of language. Both the conventionalist and natural similarity view of language reflects the birth of the ideal of science which forgets the primordial unity of word and object. It reflects a Platonic suspicion of language which identifies truth with the objects (*iedos*) themselves, grasped by reason (*logos*), according to which words (*onoma*) are to be judged. Gadamer is critical of the fact that the Greeks did not face up to the inseparable unity of word and object. They wanted to escape the "confusion of thought" found in the ambiguous, metaphorical variety of historical language(s).

Gadamer argues that the conventionalist "sign" theory of language found its origin with the birth of ancient science/philosophy and has been assumed and idealized even further by modern science in its aim and practice of constructing a technical, univocal, artificial (mathematical) language of the totality of objects. "[L]anguage is taken to be something wholly detached from the considered object and to be, rather, an instrument of subjectivity." (TM 377) The word as sign becomes a mere tool of operation, experienced as subject to the investigators will, manipulation and control. The "natural word" or historical language(s) is considered to be an impediment which must be overcome and dominated by an ideal technical language. Gadamer understands this instrumentalized conception of words to be a "violence against language." Such an ideal represents an abstraction, a derivative of the more primordial nature of (historical) language in which words express a multitude of metaphorical meanings of the world which the theory of the natural meaning of words more accurately suggests but does not itself fully comprehend. The metaphorical structure of the natural word permits an unending uncovering of the world, albeit always with degrees of inherent ambiguity proper to the very nature of metaphorical comparison. Gadamer holds that words are not merely signs nor even simply similarities but something more like "images," coextensive with experience, "belonging" to and sharing an identity with the object.³³

The word is not just a sign. In a sense that is hard to grasp it is also something almost like an image. . . . The word has a mysterious connection with what it represents, a quality of belonging to its being . .

Language and thinking about objects are so bound up together that it is an abstraction to conceive of the system of truths as a pre-given system of possibilities of being, with which the signs at the disposal of the signifying subject are associated . . .

We seek for the right word, ie the word that really belongs to the object, so that in it the object comes into language. Even if we hold to the view that this does not imply any simple copying, the word is still part of the object in that it is not simply allotted to the object as a sign. (TM 377)

Gadamer speaks of the word as incarnating the object in such a way as to disappear itself in its uncovering the object of thought. In the word an object shows itself as in a mirror that does not extend beyond the boundaries of the object. The word "has its being in its revealing." (TM 381)

Just as James' theory of truth considered it an abstraction to think of truth as somehow existing prior to and independently of the concrete experiences of the knower so Gadamer refuses to think of the primordial meaning (and truth) of objects as somehow given in advance of the experience of words and language. Gadamer considers it an error to conceive of objects as known separately from language. Experience itself is not wordless. An inseparable unity exist between word and object which the notion of word as sign betrays and covers up. In this conception of the primordial unity of word and object, Gadamer appears to have appropriated Heidegger's understanding of truth as *Alethia* and applied it analogically to the primordial meaning of language. In language objects are uncovered in their identity, originally, for the first time. This understanding of the pristine unity of word and object is central to Gadamer's account of the primordial truth of language and the primacy of hermeneutical truth. It grounds his insistence that human existence is primordially in meaning and truth as in an event beyond our willing and doing. In language there is a primordial unity of humanity and world which guarantees truth and is presupposed by any methodological signification and guarantee of truth.

Gadamer considers the logical ideal of the formation of univocal concepts in science to be derivative of the metaphorical development of concepts in the life of historical languages as such. He emphasizes the narrowing, derivative understanding of language which occurred even at the beginning of theoretical discourse with the Greeks. The logic of univocal definition and demonstration (proof) according to genus and species was proclaimed superior to the more ambiguous meanings and probable truth of rhetoric.

The logical ideal of the ordered arrangement of concepts is here [in Aristotelian science] superior to the living metaphoric nature of language, on which all natural concept formation depends. For only a grammar that is based on logic will distinguish between the real and the metaphorical meaning of a word. What originally constituted the basis of the life of language and made up its logical productivity, the spontaneous and inventive seeking out of similarities by means of which it is possible to order things is now pushed to the side and instrumentalized into a rhetorical figure called metaphor. (TM 391-92)

In contrast to the instrumentalization of language that occurs in science, historical languages have developed according to a logic of historical experience which "follows entirely the human aspects of things, the system of man's needs and interests." (TM 394) Precisely insofar as the historical languages arise out of the self-involving totality of human experience do they contain dimensions of meaning and truth not reducible to the ideal of language put forth by science. The historical experience of language has a legitimacy all its own which needs to be recognized along side of the legitimacy of science for in it is contained the ever developing totality of the human understanding of the world. In it the ambiguous meanings and probable truth of the human concrete order live in tension with the ideal order.

[T]he tendency towards conceptual universality and that towards pragmatic meaning are never completely harmonized. . . . That is why

it is always artificial and contrary to the nature of language to measure the contingency of the natural formation of concepts against the true order of things and to see the former as purely accidental. This contingency comes about, in fact, through, the necessary and legitimate range of variation in which the human mind is able to articulate the essential order of things. (TM 395)

Just as the life of language develops by a constant process of concept formation rooted in the possibility for infinite metaphorical comparisons, so too human thought is open to an infinite variety of new understandings, i.e. interpretations of the human world. In this way we "penetrate what is meant ever more and more." (TM 387)

Gadamer emphasizes the fact that language is all encompassing of humanity and constitutive of the "world." Human existence in the world is a thoroughly linguistic mode of being and the human world is linguistic in nature. The world as "world" is constituted by language and it is more true to say that we belong to it than that it belongs to us. "Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact that man has a world at all." (TM 401) Humanity does not dominate language but is rather dominated by it. The totality of our linguistic experience of the world has a radically trans-subjective character. That is, it has the structure of a game and play. The most primordial experience of language contains within itself the structure of the hermeneutical experience in which agreement is found between humanity and world, an agreement which identifies the most primordial meaning of truth.

The linguistic nature of human existence in the world provides for humanity's liberation through the transcendence of meaning. It is because of the linguistically created world that humanity is able to transcend the

environment as mere habitat. In this sense the 'world' separates human beings from the other animals. They have a habitat but not a 'world' in which to live. Only humanity lives in an environment of self-involving meaning and interpretative truth. This environment of meaning is absolute and is constituted by the ever expanding totality of our linguistic experience which cannot be reduced to subjective self-certainty or the linguisticity of science alone.

Gadamer argues that "language has its true being only in conversation, in the exercise of understanding between people." (TM 404) Language as conversation and dialogue represents the "living process in which a community of life is lived out." (TM 404) The function of language is the continuous establishment of an illuminating world view in which agreement takes place and life is lived. However, every language-world, i.e. unique linguistic and cultural heritage, is essentially an open structure able to embrace all possible insights. In this fundamental openness, which is of the essence of language, every language, while being a view of the world, is open to all other language-worlds, including those of the past. In this way the conversational, dialogical, infinitely open structure of language grounds the hermeneutical experience, i.e. it is the condition of the possibility of effective-historical consciousness. It grounds how understanding and interpretation, as a dialogue with the past, are possible.

The linguistic nature of the human experience of the world gives to our analysis of the hermeneutical experience an extended horizon. . . . The linguistic world in which we live is not a barrier that prevents knowledge of being in itself, but fundamentally embraces everything in which our insight can be enlarged and deepened. It is true that those who are brought up in a particular linguistic and cultural tradition see the world in a different way from those who belong to other traditions. It is true that the historical 'worlds' that succeed one another in the course of history are different from one another and from the world of

today; but it is always, in whatever tradition we consider it, a human, ie a linguistically constituted world that presents itself to us. Every such world, as linguistically constituted, is always open, of itself, to every possible insight and hence for every expansion of its own world-picture, and accordingly available to others. (TM 405)

Gadamer answers the question of the relation between linguistic "views of the world" and the "world in itself" in a way reminiscent of James' account of the relation between truth and "absolute reality" or "reality in itself." Just as in James' account of truth, reality in itself is assumed, so Gadamer argues that the idea of the world existing independent of man is part of every linguistically constituted view of the world. "In every view of the world the existence of the world-in-itself is implied. It is the whole to which the linguistically schematized experience is referred." (TM 406) Gadamer's point, which is similar though somewhat more radical than James', in avoiding the question of progress, is that the "whole" shows itself in all the varieties of views. "The variety of these views of the world does not involve any relativisation of the 'world.' Rather, what the world is is not different from the views in which it presents itself." (TM 406) Gadamer analogically relies upon Husserl's phenomenological description of the thing-in-itself. Just as the thing-in-itself is constituted by the continuum of nuances of perception so the world-in-itself is constituted by the linguistic nuances of different linguistic views, linguistic views, however, which, precisely as language, are open to one another. Through the totality of language, the world as it is becomes our world which is finite but open to the infinity of what is. It is in this radical openness of language, despite its finitude and historicity, that the "objectivity" possible to human understanding and truth resides.

These two--total understanding and adequate expression--are limit cases of our orientation in the world and of our infinite interior dialogue with ourselves. What I want to say is this: precisely because

this dialogue is infinite, because this orientation to things, given in the pre-formed schemas of discourse, enters into our spontaneous process of coming to an understanding both with one another and with ourselves, there is opened to us the infinity of what we understand in general and what we can intellectually appropriate. There are no limits to the interior dialogue of the soul with itself. With this thesis I would oppose the suspicion that language is an ideology. I want to argue for the pretention to universality of the act of understanding and of speaking. We can express everything in words and can try to come to agreement about everything. (TM 493)

Language as a whole embraces multifarious forms, concerns and objects within a totality of relative meanings which constitute the world in its fullness; science is only one relative meaning. The totality of language embraces numerous forms of the uncovering and interpretation of being, e.g. common sense, poetry, religion, science, none of which alone attains absolute being, or being as it is in itself, i.e. in its fullness. It is part of the hermeneutical essence of the totality of language that all forms of meaning are interpreted and understood relative to each other. The world as "object" appropriated in methodological, subjective self-certainty is the view of only one relativity, namely, that of science.

The truth that science states is itself relative to a particular attitude to the world and cannot at all claim to be the whole. But it is language which really opens up the whole of our attitude to the world, and in this whole of language appearances [e.g. the "setting" sun] find their legitimacy just as much as does science. (TM 407)

The experience of the world in language is 'absolute'. It transcends all the relativities of the positing of being, because it embraces all being-in-itself, in whatever relationships (relativities) it appears. The linguistic quality of our experience of the world is prior, as contrasted with everything that is recognized and addressed as being. The fundamental relation of language and world does not, then, mean that world becomes the object of language. Rather, the object of knowledge and of statements is already enclosed within the world horizon of language. The linguistic nature of the human experience of the world does not include making the world into an object.

The 'objective situation' that science knows, and from which it derives its own objectivity, is one of the relativities embraced by language's relation to the world. (TM 408)

Gadamer's position is analogous to James' belief in the relative legitimacy of the various teleological determined realms of thought, i.e. common sense, religion, science, etc. Science can not be said to achieve absolute knowledge because it is only one of the ways in which language presents the world. The truth of science must be understood (interpreted) in relation to the totality of the ways in which language presents the world. Gadamer, follows Heidegger, and thinks about science in terms of its present-at-hand view of the world, and power to dominate and control. Thus he presents an account of the ready-to-hand primordially of language and its infinite openness to being as something beyond our willing and doing. In this view of language Gadamer believes the process of understanding in the moral sciences is recognized as a corrective to the dominance of natural science for in it other dimensions of being and truth are recognized.

Gadamer calls language the continuously developing "record of finitude" which "mediates the finite, historical nature of man to himself and to the world." (TM 415) He argues that it is precisely the finite, developing nature of our linguistic appropriation of the world that occasions the infinite perfectibility of human understanding and truth characteristic of the hermeneutical experience.³⁴

All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is within it an infinity of meaning to be elaborated and interpreted. That is why the hermeneutical phenomenon also can be illuminated only in the light of this fundamental finitude of being, which is wholly linguistic in character. (TM 416)

Gadamer describes language and interpretation as having a "speculative structure." By this characterization Gadamer means that just as the natural word or historical language is able to provide an infinity of open "views" or "reflections" of the world, so too does interpretation present "views" of the historical object. "What is true of every word in which thought is expressed, is true also of the interpreting word, namely that it is not, as such, objective." (TM 431) Interpretation is infinitely, dialectically open and resists dogmatic determinations of meaning at the same time as it opens up the possibility of new meanings.

But there is no possible consciousness - we have repeatedly emphasized this, and it is the basis of the historicalness of understanding - there is no possible consciousness, however infinite, in which the 'object' that is handed down would appear in the light of eternity. Every assimilation of tradition is historically different: which does not mean that every one represents only an imperfect understanding of it. Rather, every one is the experience of a 'view' of the object itself.

The paradox that is true of all transmitted material, namely of being one and the same and yet of being different, proves all interpretation to be, in fact, speculative. Hence hermeneutics has to see through the dogmatism of a 'meaning-in-itself' . . . all interpretation is speculative as it is actually practised, quite apart from its methodological self-consciousness. . . . This means that assimilation is no mere repetition of the text that has been handed down, but is a new creation of understanding. (TM 430)

Within the speculative structure of language the infinite possibility of human understanding finds its concrete condition. Through the speculative structure of language, human understanding is opened to the totality of the meaning of being since in the open mirror that language is, being is disclosed and made intelligible as what is. Language is the ground of intelligibility; thus, "Being that can be understood is language." (TM 432) Language, therefore, has a universal, ontological and hermeneutical significance, since,

within it as a medium, being and understanding unite. The hermeneutical experience is as primordial and universal as the life of language itself. It is the finite, historical, dialectical, realm of intelligibility and truth within which we live as humans.

For man's relation to the world is absolutely and fundamentally linguistic in nature, and hence intelligible. Thus hermeneutics is, as we have seen, a universal aspect of philosophy, and not just the methodological basis of the so-called human sciences.

The objectifying procedure of the investigation of nature and the concept of being-in-itself, which is behind all such knowledge, proved to be an abstraction when viewed from the centre that language is. Abstracted out of the fundamental relation to the world that is given in the linguistic nature of our experience of it, it seeks to become certain about entities by methodically organizing its knowledge of the world. Consequently it condemns as heresy all knowledge that does not allow of this kind of certainty and hence is not able to serve the growing domination of being. As against this, we have endeavoured to liberate the mode of being of art and history, and the experience that corresponds to them, from the ontological prejudice that is contained in the ideal of scientific objectivity; and, in view of the experience of art and history, we were led to a universal hermeneutics that was concerned with the general relationship of man to the world. (TM 432-33)

Science as methodological self-certainty has been fearful and forgetful of the primordial structure of human understanding and truth which shows itself in the finitude and historicity of our linguistic experience of the world, a finitude and historicity which, nevertheless, guarantees an unending uncovering of the multiple dimensions of being relevant to human existence as a whole. Modernity as scientific discourse has been forgetful of a primordial realm of human understanding and truth grounded in the natural, historical word (i.e. dimensions of common insight and probable truth). It has forgotten regions of truth, funded by the logic of historical experience and its continuous interpretation, concerned with the totality of

humanity's needs and interests apropos the uncovering not only of what is but of what is good and beautiful.

Gadamer offers one final analogy meant to complete his account of the meaning of truth and its relation to the hermeneutical experience. Our primordial experience of truth is akin to our experience of the "radiance," the "light," the "clarity" of the beautiful. Truth as the "disclosure," "uncovering," "shining through," and "self-presentation" of being has a quality of immediacy like our experience of light, the clear, and the beautiful, an immediacy which ever precedes and is presupposed by all scepticism, and critical reversal that gives rise to the problem of certainty and the demand for methodical proof.

[T]he hermeneutical experience, as the experience of transmitted meaning, has a share in the immediacy which has always distinguished the experience of the beautiful, as it has that of all evidence of truth (TM 441)

What Gadamer's account of the hermeneutical experience has shown is that what makes understanding possible is the primordial immediacy of the truth of language itself in which we live and, as it were, play. "In understanding we are drawn into an event of truth and arrive, as it were too late, if we want to know what we ought to believe." (TM 446)

TRUTH: THE TEMPORAL AND SITUATED VERIFICATION AND UNCOVERING OF THE REAL

I began this chapter by pointing out that Gadamer and James shared a similar understanding of the central problem facing modern intellectual life. Both philosophers believed the conflict between science, the philosophical self-understanding of science, and the truth claims of the broader life-world to be in need of clarification and resolution. James emphasized the antagonism

between science and religion, between empiricist and idealist conceptions of knowledge and truth. Gadamer focused on the alienation between scientific expertise grounded in the methodology of the natural sciences and the moral-political knowledge of humanity based in the historical tradition. I have stated that their respective attempts to find a philosophical solution to the problem led to the similarities found in their separate accounts of human understanding and truth. Both philosophers attempt to resolve the modern philosophical crisis by deflating either the hubris of science itself or the philosophical abstractions and dogmatisms that tend to support such hubris. They accomplish this by showing how other discourses in society may rightly lay claim to the concept of truth as well.

Gadamer's account of the hermeneutical experience and James' description of the meaning of truth conceive truth as a universal experience which embraces the multifarious cognitive dimensions of the life world, including but not reducible to that of science. In both cases the meaning of truth is more expansive than the restrictive, methodological definition of truth associated with science. Both accounts of truth define the "objectivity" attributed to truth in a more universal way than is connected to reductive criteria or scientific method as such. To this end both Gadamer and James conceive truth in terms of the totality of its human, existential meaning. In both accounts of truth the entire experience of the person is taken as the ground of the experience of truth. The totality of the psychological, cultural and historical existence of a person is understood to be involved in the meaning of truth. In both accounts truth is conceived as part of the broad and complex, ambiguous spectrum of human experience which surrounds it and within which it appears. This means, the objectivity of truth is understood to

incorporate the totality of the subjectivity of the knower. One way of clarifying the similarities of the two approaches, while exposing important differences, is to reflect on the significance of teleology and criteria of truth in each account.

James attempted to effect a rapprochement between science and life, between empiricism and rationalism by refusing to identify truth with any one criterion. Instead he chose to conceive truth in terms of a totality of historically recognized candidates including subjective psychological needs and interests, and he connected these to a process of verification. As pointed out in the previous chapter, James reviewed, in the "Will to Believe," criteria of "objective" truth formulated historically in philosophy. He divided them into two categories: 1) those "external to the moment of perception," e.g. "revelation," "*consensus gentium*," "instincts of the heart," "the systematized experience of the race"; and, 2) those internal to the "perceptive moment" itself, e.g. "the capacity to be verified by sense," "the inconceivability of the opposite," "the possession of complete organic unity or self-relation realized when a thing is its own other." James remarked that each criterion is marred by some form of restrictiveness and subjectivity. Thus, the claim to "objective" truth in no way could be identified with any one criterion. "Objectivity" as a designation of truth remained an ideal aspiration implying the unity of all criteria. James defined truth in terms of the concrete, finite, spatial and temporal structure of human experience. Thus, truth is "situated" and "selective" and experienced as the appropriation of only part but never the whole of being. As temporal, truth is rooted in a process of verification, i.e. open to negation and revision, subject to an ultimate, temporally related, teleological criterion of truth, i.e. the fate of thought.

Even though James was critical of the hubris of science, he thought about truth primarily in terms of it. He thought about truth with the future oriented experience of scientific discovery, as well as, modern technological creation in mind. Unlike Gadamer he does not have the paradigm of the moral and cultural wisdom articulated in the historical tradition as his principal model. Therefore, he understood truth to possess a teleological dimension, insofar as he thought of truth melioristically, in terms of progress and ever greater approximation and penetration of reality.

Both Gadamer and James recognize the tension between the teleological meaning of truth, i.e. the urge to escape history, and the radically historical limits of the concrete truth process. In this the paradoxical structure of the meaning of truth is outlined which is treated in different ways by James and Gadamer. Gadamer improves upon James by attempting to articulate a notion of truth according to a paradigm other than science while at the same time recognizing the legitimacy of science. This permits Gadamer to uncover a thoroughgoing historical notion of truth in contrast to the teleology of science. Whereas Gadamer attempts to demarcate between the life world and science, between the primordial and the derivative, and therefore is able to fully explore a notion of truth alternative to science, James unites all criteria in order to expand the idea of truth to include elements of the life world outside of science per se.

Like James, Gadamer thinks in terms of a balance between science and life but his focus is the rehabilitation of a distinct notion of truth proper to the experience of art and the historical or human sciences. He thinks about the meaning of truth not in terms of the paradigm of science per se but in terms of the practical, historically situated, moral life of humanity. Following

Heidegger, Gadamer thinks about the meaning of truth in light of the primordial/derivative analytic. He thus takes science to be derivative of the more primordial notion of truth he wants to rehabilitate. Gadamer can be said to have emphasized and developed, within the phenomenological tradition, the distinction that James made between the criteria of truth that are "external" and "internal" to the moment of perception. Gadamer has attempted to formulate a description of truth, which can be said to approve the "external" criteria of truth suggested by James, and to have seen in them the primordial meaning of truth. He explores the nature of the non-methodological experience of truth reflected in the experience of art and in the common sense, historical tradition which is suggested by James' "external" criteria. Gadamer's account of the meaning of truth forgotten by science is laid out, therefore, partially in contrast to a conception of science identifiable with James' "internal" to the moment of perception and teleological criteria of truth.. Gadamer separates the teleological criteria from the hermeneutical meaning of truth altogether, and by so doing attempts to uncover an intrinsically historical, hermeneutical notion of truth.

Gadamer is at one with James in thinking about truth in terms of the concrete, finite, dialectical, temporal structure of all experience but since his paradigm is explicitly not science and technology but rather the moral and historical tradition per se, he avoids the notions of meliorism, progress and ever increasing approximation to the real. Rather he describes the experience of truth as retrieval, renewal and recreation. He thinks of truth in terms of Aristotelian moral knowledge, i.e. the interpretation and application to oneself, in one's present situation, of the normative ethos. He thinks about truth in terms of the Hegelian dialectic of experience (minus the teleological

absolute) and the meaning of true conversation in which the truth claim of the other negates one's own thus opening the possibility of a fusion of worlds.

James defines the truth of a belief in terms of a holistic conception of "satisfactory working," and "verification." These terms are meant to express the ultimately practical purpose of truth, as well as the situated and temporal experience that defines it and announces its achievement. They explicate what truth is known as from a concrete human perspective. That truth is about reality, penetrates reality, and represents what is the case, albeit approximately, is not denied by James' account of truth. His point was to describe truth in its concrete, human fullness.

Gadamer also thinks of truth as an event that happens to us concretely, in space and time, but he describes the event in terms of the complex of traditional light related metaphors, i.e. the "disclosure," "uncovering," "shining through," and "self-presentation" of being. As previously shown, for Gadamer, the primordial experience of truth is like the experience of the light-clear, radiance of the beautiful. Our primordial experience of truth has an immediacy like our experience of beauty. It comes before and is presupposed by all sceptical concern that gives rise to the problem of certainty and preoccupation with methodological guarantees.

Both James and Gadamer can be said to agree with Heidegger, that to humanity, truth, i.e. *"disclosedness in general"* essentially belongs." Yet, they will also agree that humanity is in the untruth and may never possess all the truth, always the truth, or only the truth. But this latter fact does not cause either James or Gadamer to think of abandoning the language of "truth" or to

deny that it means the possession of being. In the following, final chapter I want to return to Rorty's project, and critically evaluate his apparent denial of the meaning of truth as an account of what is the case. I shall consider his views in light of the comparative study of James' and Gadamer's thinking about truth that has been outlined here.

NOTES - CHAPTER THREE

1. Brice Wachterhauser describes Gadamer's account of hermeneutical truth as a "perspectival realism." He interprets Gadamer as claiming that reality, the thing itself, is able to be known but only from a temporally situated perspective. He argues that Gadamer denies that a final, comprehensive view of reality is possible, or even approachable, but not that reality is not represented at all. "In my opinion, Gadamer's epistemological theory is best described as a perspectival realism. I call his realism 'perspectival' because Gadamer insists again and again that the thing itself is always grasped from a historically contingent, linguistically mediated perspective. Gadamer stresses both sides of this claim. We do in fact know the things themselves but we know them only as they are given in linguistic/historical perspectives. . . . One might say that for Gadamer our historical involvement makes possible a revealing of an aspect of the thing; we never can see the whole truth but only a partial truth or a perspective *but a truth about the thing itself nevertheless*. . . . Despite all the insistence on historical perspective and disavowals of a 'pure' vision of presence, Gadamer nevertheless insists that we can know reality itself and are not necessarily condemned to know only what we construct. It is Gadamer's unique contribution to combine a kind of realism with a kind of perspectivism which insists on the relativity of human knowing. The upshot of such a position is a view of human knowledge which is inherently 'open,' unable to come to final closure, or chart an unambiguous line of progress but which does not despair of the possibility that finite human beings can know reality itself. What we cannot do is style ourselves as having 'the last word' or even coming ever closer to it." "Gadamer's Realism: The 'Belongingness' of Word and Reality", *Hermeneutics and Truth* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1994), pp. 154-55. I believe this is a legitimate reading of Gadamer but it omits the distinction that Gadamer makes between hermeneutical and scientific truth, the latter of which admits a notion of progress. Also, Gadamer's denial of finality is problematical, since it is hard to make sense of a notion of truth which categorically separates it from the idea of permanence. These issues will be taken up again when I return to Rorty in the final chapter.

2. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. F. G. Lawrence, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 159. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (RAS).

3. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans, and ed. David E. Linge, (Berkley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1977), p. 3. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (PH).

4. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Notes on Planning for the Future," *Daedalus* 95 (Spring 1966): p. 575.
5. "Notes on Planning for the Future," pp. 575-76.
6. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Theory, Technology, Practice: The task of the Science of Man," *Social Research* 44 (Autumn 1977): p. 533.
7. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Power of Reason," *Man and World* 3 (1970): p. 9.
8. "Notes on Planning for the Future," p. 572.
9. Gadamer fears that the triumph and domination of scientific consciousness in the societal realm would permit, ironically, the possibility for self-interested societal groups to conceal their social prejudices and interests behind the mystique of scientific objectivity and expertise. "Thus it [science] gives the appearance of being total in its knowledge and in this way provides a defense behind which social prejudices and interests lie hidden and thus protected. One need only think of the role of experts in contemporary society and of the way economics, politics, war and the implementation of justice are more strongly influenced by the voice of experts than by the political bodies that represent the will of the society." (PH 93).
10. "The Power of Reason," p. 9.
11. "Notes on Planning for the Future," pp. 580-81.
12. "Notes on Planning for the Future," p. 582.
13. "Notes on Planning for the Future," pp. 576-77.
14. "It is important to recognize that Gadamer does not dispute the fact that objective science knows things as they truly are, even though that implies that everything in the world of science is subject to human calculation and control. What he does contest is the supposition that being in itself is singular and, in particular, that being as science knows it comprehends all that in truth is. . . . If natural science--however rigorous its methods or extensive its research--will never comprehend the whole truth, that is ultimately because the whole truth does not and never will exist. This is the negative import of the historicity of truth; more positively, it implies that science cannot claim to be exhaustive, because truth keeps happening." Joel Weinscheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 9.

15. Hans-Georg Gadamer "Hermeneutics and Social Science," *Cultural Hermeneutics* 2 (1975), p. 316.

16. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), p. xviii. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (TM).

17. Dieter Misgeld has succinctly and clearly reiterated this ruling insight of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. "The more of what a cultural tradition says is applied to the interpreter himself, such that the truth of his own preconceptions comes into play and into question and he can see a text representing a tradition containing a claim to truth, the better the understanding. Hermeneutical understanding is thoroughly self-applicative.

This means that one learns, that one only understands a philosophical text . . . if and when one learns that the truth about a particular issue addressed by it cannot be found without appreciating what it says. When this no longer occurs, there is no reason for preserving it by means of the employment of historical-critical methods. "On Gadamer's Hermeneutics," *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, ed. Robert Hollinger, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 152.

18. "In examining the impact of historical prejudices on the social sciences and *Geisteswissenschaften*, Gadamer does not deny that these forms of knowledge get at what their objects really are, as Rorty claims. The different historical vantage points from which texts and text-analogues are viewed reveal different aspects of them; every generation of interpreters participates in different dialogues and arrive at new mediations with their objects. Still, it is crucial for Gadamer's view that these dialogues remain dialogues over *die Sache* and that the different dimensions revealed are facets of it. The important point about effective-historical consciousness, then, is not only that inquiry is always oriented by our concerns; although Gadamer makes this point, his argument is also that inquiry is always inquiry into a subject-matter and that the consensus reached about this subject-matter can reveal something "true" about it." Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 146.

19. "But how can one give up ultimate foundation? Certainly, one cannot give it up if one insists on a narrow sense of rationality, of rigorous science in the sense of mathematics and its analogues. For transcendental phenomenology, which should fulfill Husserl's ideal of science, one needs apodictic evidence and a consistent development of all valid consequences from this evidence. But is that possible? I mean, does it explain the full claim of rationality to self-understanding? That is the philosophical problem. . . . The question at stake is, What is the relation of rationality as rigorous science to the rationality of life? And here I think that the ideal of

foundation as an ultimate principle indeed misses the point. That is the reason why Heidegger did not remain with his earlier foundation. That is the reason why I tried to do something in the same direction. We had to seek for another self-interpretation, *not* for a foundation. By 'self-interpretation of our doings,' I mean not my or Heidegger's doings, but all our doings including, on the one hand, the rationality of science and, on the other hand, the rationality of practical reasoning." Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, ed. Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), pp. 61-62.

20. "Hermeneutics of Suspicion," p. 58.

21. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 184. Succeeding references to this book will be given parenthetically using the abbreviation (BT).

22. "That which has been circumspectively taken apart with regard to its 'in-order-to', and taken apart as such - that which is *explicitly* understood - has the structure of *something as something*. The circumspective question as to what this particular thing that is ready-to-hand may be, receives the circumspectively interpretive answer that it is for such and such purpose. . . . The 'as' makes up the structure of the explicitness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation. . . . That which is understood gets Articulated when the entity to be understood is brought close interpretively by taking as our clue the 'something as something'; and this Articulation lies *before* [liegt vor] our making any thematic assertion about it. . . . When we merely stare at something, our just-having-it-before-us lies before us *as a failure to understand it any more*. This grasping which is free of the 'as', is a privation of the kind of seeing in which one *merely* understands. It is not more primordial than that kind of seeing, but is derived from it." (BT 189-90).

23. "Something *ready-to-hand with which* we have to do or perform something, turns into something '*about which*' the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand. Both *by* and *for* this way of looking at it [Hin-sicht], the ready-to-hand becomes veiled as ready-to-hand. Within this discovering of presence-to-hand, which is at the same time a covering-up of readiness-to-hand, something present-at-hand which we encounter is given a definite character in its Being-present-at-hand-in-such-and-such-a-manner. Only now are we given any access to *properties* or the like. When an assertion has given a definite character to something present-at-hand, it says something about it *as* a 'what' and this 'what' is drawn *from that* which is present-at-hand as such. The as-structure of interpretation has undergone a modification. In its function of appropriating what is understood, the 'as' no

longer reaches out into a totality of involvements. . . . The 'as' gets pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand. It dwindles to the structure of just letting one see what is present-at-hand, and letting one see it in a definite way. This levelling of the primordial 'as' of circumspective interpretation to the 'as' with which presence-at-hand is given a definite character is the specialty of assertion. Only so does it obtain the possibility of exhibiting something in such a way the we just look at it." (BT 200-1)

24. David Ingram has concisely explicated Heidegger's account of the derivative structure of the traditional definition of truth. "Once the proposition is further removed from immediately indicating something within our experiential horizon and is reified into a piece of information for purposes of transmission, it becomes possible to view it as a thing to be compared with an objective state-of-affairs. Hence, just as 'thinghood' is revealed as a limited manner of projecting a scientific, theoretical world which is parasitic on an *a priori* matrix of practical involvements, so too, Heidegger argues that the correspondence theory of truth is likewise possible only against the background of a more universal experience of truth conceived as 'disclosedness, (*alethia*). "Hermeneutics and Truth," *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, ed. Robert Hollinger, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 35.

25. As Richard J. Bernstein remarks, "Understanding for Gadamer is a form of *phronesis*." "From Hermeneutics to Praxis," *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, ed. Robert. Hollinger, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 276.

26. "The Power of Reason," p. 8.

27. "The Power of Reason," p. 12.

28. "The concept of "situation" has played a particularly significant role in the rejection of scientific methodology of the Neo-Kantian school of thought. Indeed, according to Karl Jaspers' analysis, the concept of 'situation' encompasses a logical structure which transcends the simple relation of universal and particular, of law and case. To find oneself in a 'situation' involves an experiential moment which the objective cognition cannot fully grasp. . . . 'Situations' do not possess the characteristics of a mere object which one meets face to face; consequently, certainty does not arise from the simple understanding of objectively existing phenomena. Even the adequate knowledge of all objectively given facts, such as are provided by science, cannot fully encompass the perspective as seen from the standpoint of a man involved in a particular situation." "Notes on Planning for the Future," p. 581.

29. Bernstein, "From Hermeneutics to Praxis," p. 278.
30. "And this understanding, [hermeneutical] like *phronesis*, is a form of moral-practical knowledge which becomes constitutive of what we are in the process of becoming. What Gadamer seeks to show is that authentic hermeneutical understanding truly humanizes us, it becomes integrated in our very being just as *phronesis* itself shapes the being of the *phronimos*." Bernstein, "From Hermeneutics to Praxis," p. 280.
31. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Theory, Technology, Practice: The Task of the Science of Man, *Social Research* 44 (Autumn 1977), p. 534.
32. Popper's theory of scientific truth, which clearly incorporates an acknowledgment of a teleological criterion and process of negation, has been affirmed by Gadamer as uncovering a more universal notion of rationality than can be restricted to science per se. I believe his remarks about Popper's theory can be applied justifiably to James' understanding of the verification process which defines his pragmatic conception of truth. "Finally the theory of trial and error that Popper worked out is not at all confined to the logic of specialized inquiry. Despite all the foreshortening and stylizing in this schema, it makes plain a notion of logical rationality that reaches far beyond the field of scientific research and describes the basic structures of all rationality, even that of practical reason." (RAS 165).
33. Gadamer develops his understanding of the unity of word and object based upon an anthropological reflection on the significance of proper names in ancient cultures, especially the Greeks. "In the earliest times the intimate unity of word and object was so obvious that the name was considered to be part of the bearer of the name, if not, indeed, to substitute for him. In Greek the expression for 'word', *onoma*, also means 'name', and especially 'proper name', ie the name by which something is called. The word is understood primarily in terms of a name. But a name is what it is because it is what someone is called and what he answers to. It belongs to its bearer. The rightness of the name is confirmed by the fact that someone answers to it. Thus it seems to be part of his being." (TM 366).
34. Reminiscent of James' repudiation of abstractionism, Gadamer rejects the claim that his position is self-contradictory and, therefore, defeated by the traditional critique of relativism. He argues that the concrete awareness of the historical contingency of truth is not defeated by rationalist logic. Lived experience is not entirely reducible to the a priori demands of logic. It is a mistaken, rather superficial, application of logic when it is used to deny the lived relations of life which language as a whole is able to embrace. "Even if, as historically enlightened people, we are fundamentally aware of the historical contingency of all human thought concerning the world, and thus of our own contingency, we still have not taken up an absolute position. In

particular, it is no refutation of the acceptance of this fundamental contingency if this acceptance itself seeks to be true absolutely, and thus cannot be applied to itself without contradiction. The consciousness of contingency does not do away with contingency. It is one of the prejudices of reflective philosophy that it understands as a relationship of propositions that which is not at all on the same logical level. Thus the reflective argument is out of place here. For we are dealing, not with relationships between judgments which have to be kept free from contradictions, but with living relationships. The linguistic nature of our experience of the world is able to embrace the most varied relationships of life.

Thus the sun had not ceased to set for us, even though the Copernican explanation of the world has become part of our knowledge." (TM 406-7).

CHAPTER FOUR - TRUTH: REPRESENTATION AND THE IDEAL OF TRANSCENDENCE

In this final chapter I want to reflect critically on Rorty's deconstruction of the concept of truth in light of the comparative reading I have offered of James' and Gadamer's investigations of truth and understanding. Despite all the sympathetic elements that can be found within their thought, ultimately James and Gadamer do not share with Rorty the same conception of truth or philosophy. Rightly, I believe, they stop short of his unconditional repudiation of representationalism and the ambition for transcendence connected to the traditional meaning of truth and philosophy. Let me, first, mention the following theses as a brief re-formulation of Rorty's deconstruction of truth and end of philosophy, pragmatic-hermeneutic project before advancing my comments.¹

1) *The (anti)epistemological-metaphysical claim:* Rorty claims that philosophy as epistemology has been a completely misguided enterprise because it has operated on the basis of an erroneous intuition about the relation between mind (sensations, ideas, thoughts, beliefs, propositions, words) and reality (things-in-themselves), and a kind of misanthropic, pathological ambition linked to this intuition. Knowledge is not an accurate "representation" of extra-mental entities . Truth is not "agreement" or "correspondence" between mental representations and being. The search for "privileged," i.e. indisputably certain, foundational representations of reality that transcend all criticism, fallibility, and doubt reveals a misanthropic ambition that should be discouraged.

According to Rorty, the truth of a proposition (or even a network of propositions) does not consist in its power to represent reality as it is. Thus, neither philosophy nor science can be said to explain what is the case, i.e. to accurately represent being. Truth is not accurate representation of what is the case. Rorty claims that the social-linguistic justification of belief clearly must be distinguished from the existential causes of belief. Relations of justification hold between beliefs; and relations of causation hold between beliefs and things. However, there are no relations of representation or justification holding between beliefs and things. In saying this Rorty holds that there is some form of efficient causality operating between ideas and things (i.e. mind independent realities), but this causal relation is not the meaning of knowledge or truth. Truth is a property of ideas which identifies merely how they fit or cohere with one another but not how they fit mind independent realities. The central error of traditional epistemology, according to Rorty, consists in trying to explain how or to guarantee that ideas fit or represent reality. The idea of fitting only makes sense in terms of the relation between reasons or words themselves. Traditional epistemology represents the erroneous attempt to ground the meaning of truth in elements beyond discourse.

Understanding social communication and social-linguistic history is all that is necessary in comprehending the justification of belief and the meaning of truth and knowledge. The authority or truth of any assertion resides entirely in social-linguistic, communicative coherence and agreement, not the indubitable correspondence, which traditional epistemology attempts (and fails) to identify and explain, between mental representations or words and external realities. The search for privileged, foundational representations of

reality has proved futile and can only continue to do so. No other account of truth or knowledge is needed or possible than that of the description of social-linguistic practice. The intuitive notion of thoughts or words "representing" or "corresponding" to reality is entirely dispensable when discussing or explicating the meaning of knowledge and truth.

In chapter six of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty outlines a deflated notion of "reference" which is meant to support his anti-representationalist account of truth and his anti-epistemological stance. He situates his account of reference within a wider discussion of the difference between "pure" and "impure" philosophy of language. Impure (i.e. epistemologized) philosophy of language focuses upon "how language hooks onto the world," while pure language philosophy simply describes "how language works," that is, how we cope with reality through its use.

While conceding that true statements can be said to "refer" to the world at least insofar as by them we interact with reality in "better or worse" ways, Rorty repudiates the intuition that they themselves refer to or "picture" objects in the world as they are in themselves. He claims that we can make no sense of this intuition. There is no sense in which the world would understand itself as rightly pictured by statements. As with the representational intuition and the correspondence theory of truth, Rorty believes the picture theory of reference has been shown to be untenable. "I would prefer to say that no true statements picture the world - that picturing is "only a picture," one which has served only to produce ever more convoluted *Sprachstreit*." (PMN 301) It is because he insists upon eradicating from the concept of reference any ontologically determinant relationship

between true statements and the extra-linguistic, that he is forced to interpret reference and truth exclusively in terms of justifying inference.

Rorty claims that his anti-representational understanding of knowledge and truth is not an "epistemological theory" because it has nothing to say about the relation between thought and things except that they are causally related. Rorty believes, that traditional epistemology is preoccupied with explaining the relation between thought and things, or language and things; whereas, he believes that nothing interesting has or can be said about it beyond how we causally relate to one another and the world through or on account of language. Traditional epistemology has been preoccupied with a foundational, transcendent view of knowledge and truth. It wants to achieve a final, certain account of the nature of knowledge and truth which makes absolutely evident the representational relation between mind and reality, ideas and things, words and being, somehow from outside or above that relation. All theorizing about truth and knowledge as a representational relation should be brought to an end and the futile quest for a foundation should be abandoned.

This first thesis defines the "epistemological behaviorist," "linguistic social-practice" core of Rorty's position which he has largely identified with an interpretation of pragmatism and philosophical hermeneutics.

Acceptance of this thesis amounts to acceptance of the following four sub-theses:

- a) The pragmatic-hermeneutic perspective rejects any philosophical attempt to formulate a representational, transcendent view, i.e. a final, non-contextual vocabulary about the essence of truth, knowledge or reality.

Rorty's stance constitutes a rejection of representationalism, essentialism and foundationalism, (i.e. a rejection of modern epistemology and the entire metaphysics of knowledge tradition reaching back to Plato); it constitutes a rejection of all philosophical theories which attempt to provide (i.e. are themselves) the presuppositionless foundation of knowledge and culture insofar as they claim, in representational and transcendental terms, to clarify the meaning of truth as correspondence, and identify the conditions of the possibility of knowledge and truth.

b) The meaning of truth and knowledge is to be explained entirely in terms of a social-linguistic, historically situated processes of "recontextualization," and "reweaving the web of belief;" in terms of the replacement of normal discourse by abnormal discourse, of the replacement of old metaphors by new ones, of the replacement of worn-out entrenched vocabularies by new vocabularies of promise. None of which can be said to accurately represent the world or deliver what is the case. Rorty argues that ideas are said to fit one another, i.e. become true, only to the extent that they have become accepted and assented to in the way of normal, habitual discourse. To the degree that a new metaphor or idea becomes part of normal discourse, that is, to the extent that it is accepted, put into use, and generally fits in with the other ideas of an accepted vocabulary, to that extent it is defined as true.

The old epistemological metaphors, e.g. mind is a mirror, truth is a unity between mind and being, have outlived their use. Their dominance should come to an end. Philosophy should understand itself as hermeneutical, "edifying discourse," i.e. discourse that somehow acts as an interpretative liaison between discourses, normal and abnormal, but which has abandoned

the intuition and ideal of accurately representing knowledge and reality. Edifying discourse aspires to normalize abnormal discourse and metaphors (especially the new metaphor of philosophy as edifying discourse) in the service of social improvement and personal creativity.

c) The pragmatic-hermeneutic viewpoint sidesteps the traditional epistemological and metaphysical controversies (i.e. realism vs idealism, objectivism vs subjectivism, physicalism vs mentalism) as fruitless controversies preoccupied with pseudo problems which ultimately have resulted from the failure to distinguish and separate the social justification of beliefs from their existential causes.

d) The pragmatic-hermeneutic view rejects scientism. It represents a denouncement of the Enlightenment's sanctification of natural science, elevation of philosophy to a super-science, and the devaluation of other realms of discourse, e.g. poetic and moral discourse. Rorty argues that no one discourse can be said to deliver reality as it is, even approximately. The difference between discourses consist in their difference of purpose. None can be said to limn the real; all deserve equal respect.

2) *The logical claim:* The pragmatic-hermeneutic outlook claims that the relativistic paradox and apparent contradiction associated with repudiating the representationalist intuition and the possibility of transcendent views of knowledge while claiming not to be articulating a representationalist, transcendent view oneself (i.e. the inherent contradiction of "overcoming authority without claiming authority") indicates only the difficulty of overcoming the traditional vocabulary while still using much of it. It indicates the difficulty of replacing an old metaphor (inquiry) by a new one

(edification). Thus, the ambiguity or self-contradiction of the pragmatic-hermeneutic stance represents irreconcilable options that will most likely be determined only by additional beliefs. The additional motivating beliefs assented to by Rorty can be summarized as follows: 1) that the vocabulary and discourse of traditional philosophy has reached an uninteresting and fruitless impasse; 2) that traditional philosophy is motivated by an ancient pathological desire i.e. the need for a trans-human authority, that should now, at last, be abandoned; 3) that modern liberal society is in need of an improved self-description. On the whole, the logical thesis amounts to the belief that, ultimately, it is more a matter of a social-linguistic transformation (a linguistic evolution) in the choice of paradigmatic metaphors and ruling vocabulary adopted by philosophers than philosophical argumentation which will determine whether or not the intellectual elite accept a post-philosophical, liberal-ironist culture in place of the continuation of traditional philosophy.

3) *The social-moral claim:* The pragmatic-hermeneutic stance claims that social justice (i.e. alleviation of suffering) and contingent human solidarity (i.e. agreement where possible, tolerance where not) and individual freedom (individual self-creation) encompass the highest values. The turning away from the need for transcendence and the full-hearted acceptance of the thoroughly temporal and contingent fabric of human existence is the noblest act. This amounts to edifying support for the ideal of a post-philosophical, liberal-ironist culture which embodies an egalitarian view of human purposes and related realms of discourse.

4) *The historical-psychological claim:* Underlying the first three theses is an historical-psychological interpretation of the Western thought which

claims that the primal motivation and psychological cause of the epistemological-metaphysical tradition is an essentially religious, misanthropic need for transcendence, i.e. the need for an eternal, absolute (unconditionally certain), objective, trans-human authority grounding truth and goodness. The history of Western philosophy represents the gradual (evolutionary) repudiation of the eternal and the need for transcendence, (i.e. "God's-eye view," the longing to overcome time and chance), that originally found expression in religion.

Metaphysics and epistemology, have been merely contingent, disposable episodes in intellectual history, just as was religion. Philosophy, in its various historical guises, has been religion by other means. Philosophy has been an attempt to replace religion by appropriating God's viewpoint, i.e. an absolute account of things. The tradition of philosophy has been driven by the hope that the acquisition of unconditional knowledge, a final vocabulary, (i.e. indubitable knowledge of Being), would be achievable in lieu of lost religious certitude. Science, grounded in philosophy as epistemology, would become a near-worthy surrogate for the vanquished religious certitude and meaning. In place of a reliance upon the absolute authority of God's word as the guide to life, the authority of philosophy's own absolute self-knowledge would suffice.

Rorty reads the intellectual history of the West as an evolutionary development towards the abandonment of the need for transcendence, beginning first with the turn away from religious myth and poetic narrative toward theology and its philosophical foundation, metaphysics; then with the turn away from theology toward science and its philosophical foundation, epistemology; and finally, completing the circle of disenchantment, with the

turn away from science (or at least scientism) toward humanistic narratives and poeticized discourse, and its philosophical defenders, pragmatism and hermeneutics, i.e. philosophy which denies the possibility and the need of a final vocabulary while itself not claiming to be such a vocabulary. The pragmatic-hermeneutic stance represents an interpretation of the meaning of truth and knowledge based upon the abandonment of this long-standing, essentially religious, need for transcendence. The end of philosophy represents the final chapter in the story about the end of religion.

Rorty argues that philosophers should abandon representationalism and this desire for transcendent explanation that accompanies it. He claims that the main point of his entire project is to end the attempt to explain knowledge and truth in terms of theories of representation and correspondence, and to end the search for a transcendent explanation of knowledge and reality. He believes that his work points out the futility of both aspects of the traditional project and that his position is not a representational nor, in any way, a transcendent theory of truth. He claims he is not attempting to say the last word about truth except that little more needs to be said about it, especially in representationalist terms. Philosophers should abandon the representational intuition, as well as the search for the final truth about anything, especially knowledge and truth. Instead they should aim for solidarity. Rorty believes that solidarity somehow is achievable whereas satisfying the need for transcendence is not. Helping all thinkers achieve solidarity, (i.e. contingent agreement and tolerance), not "truth" or transcendence, should become the goal of philosophy transformed, or in effect, ended.

Philosophers (and scientist) should give up the intuition that what they have to say represents what is the case, and they should abandon the ambition to

transcendence conjoined to it. They instead should devote their efforts to help the various discourses of society achieve as much solidarity as possible, since that is the real possible good. Rorty claims that the aim for a transcendent account of what is the case, especially about knowledge itself, is the final, dispensable remnant from the religious worldview. It is the last and most tenacious illusion articulated by the religious worldview, since it is the denial of the radically temporal and contingent conditions which permeate every aspect of human existence. The very idea of truth as an accurate representation of being is itself the final idol of the tribe. Rorty argues that dropping the representational intuition and aim for transcendence will allow philosophers (and scientists) to fully accept the radical limits of their thought and lives without distraction. This, in turn, will help them to see human solidarity (and self-creation), in the face of the legitimate plurality of discourses which serve diverse human purposes, as the real and highest meaning of human existence. Philosophers should accept the radically temporal (historical) and contingent status of "truth" (and their lives), abandon the "dream at the heart of philosophy" (Derrida), and devote their energy to humanistic, edifying discourses which will contribute to the mitigation of scientism and the defence of liberal society.

The critical comments I want to make on Rorty's project focuses primarily on his general deconstruction of the meaning of truth and only derivatively on his critique of epistemology per se. This approach reflects a fundamental questioning of Rorty's thinking about the relation between truth and certainty. Believing that no privileged representations have been ascertained or seem able to be ascertained by philosophy and believing that no indisputable account of being or of our knowledge of being seems possible,

Rorty extends this disenchantment unjustifiably to the general meaning of truth. If there is no absolutely certain account of what is the case, if we have no unconditionally indisputable grasp of being, then we should categorically abandon the intuition that we have any grasp of being at all, and we should unequivocally repudiate any ambition to finality and certainty.² This is the ultra-sceptical, relativistic tenor of Rorty's discourse. It mirrors Descartes' own extreme form of "metaphysical doubt." Unlike James and Gadamer, Rorty lets the problem of certainty dominate his entire approach to the general meaning of truth. James and Gadamer tend to relativize the problem of certainty while not discounting truth as description of being. They maintain the representationalist intuition and recognize the ambition for transcendence as an ideal while emphasizing the situated and temporal conditions of the human experience of truth. They can be said to acknowledge that the representationalist intuition and the ideal of transcendence inextricably inform the meaning of truth and are non-negotiable elements of any form of theoretical discourse. At the same time they recognizing that the temporal, situated structure of experience correlatively defines the idea of truth.

Rorty remains entrapped in the problem of foundations. This has lead to the extremism of his deconstruction of the concept of truth. On my reading, James and Gadamer are more interested in distancing the idea of truth from its identification with certainty than of unconditionally repudiating the representationalist intuition or the ambition for transcendence associated with the traditional meaning of truth. James and Gadamer acknowledge that both elements are implicit in the meaning of any and all demonstrative discourse, especially, philosophic and scientific discourse. The need for

transcendence and the representationalist intuition are built into the grammar of truth and theoretical discourse, regardless of the object, be it nature or knowledge. The representational intuition is grounded in the primordial experience of meaning, in the unity of word and object and a primordially concomitant experience of facticity, i.e. of existence. The ambition for transcendence is coincidental with the theoretical discourse and the meaning of truth, not only insofar as such discourse is linked inescapably to temporal concepts such as change and permanence, but also insofar as it incorporates such spatial notions as quantity, closeness, and distance. To deny the representational intuition and the need for transcendence is to deny, as Rorty has, the significance and motivation of theoretical discourse in any form. I believe the ambiguity in Rorty's thought, concerning the status of his own "inquiry" and, more importantly, the meaning of "edifying" discourse and the future of philosophy, is related to this fact.³ His belief that he has stepped outside of epistemological categories, that his unconditional deconstruction of the elemental imagery, intuitions and concepts traditionally associated with the meaning of truth allows him to escape accusations of scepticism and relativism is mistaken.

The ambiguous status of Rorty's own inquiry carries over and clearly reveals itself in his conception of the liberal ironist. Rorty remains equivocal on the future of philosophy because his conception of edifying discourse (as well as the idea of solidarity) is incoherent in relation to the meaning of inquiry and truth. Does the liberal ironist even attempt to say what is the case or not? In radically deconstructing truth and repudiating the need for transcendence and the representationalist intuition, Rorty's thought appears completely to undermine the meaning and motivation of any form of demonstrative or

theoretical discourse. If so, edifying discourse, self-consciously severed from the idea of truth, must be an extremely narcissistic mode of discourse and edification indeed.

I shall define an 'ironist' as someone who fulfills three conditions: (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself. Ironists who are inclined to philosophize see the choice between vocabularies as made neither within a neutral and universal metavocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one's way past appearances to the real, but simply by playing the new off against the old. (CIS 73)

This account by Rorty which defines the liberal ironist, *particularly the third condition*, expresses the ambiguity at the heart of his conception of edifying discourse. It pushes the meaning of irony to the breaking point. The "radical" doubt attached to these conditions reveals the dominance of the problem of certainty, i.e. the absolutizing of the identification between truth and certainty, which permeates his deconstruction of truth. There is a very real sense in which Rorty remains preoccupied by the methodology of radical doubt, and this absolutizing of the relation between truth and certainty. On the one hand, by unconditionally denying that theoretical discourse is in touch with being, the concern with certainty is denied significance. If theoretical discourse is not an attempt to fight past appearances to the real, what is the context, object and significance of doubt?. Doubt is neutralized. However, one must then ask the ironist, what is the point of playing off new against old vocabularies? On the other hand, Rorty's ironist remains within the certaintist attitude precisely by categorically doubting that all discourses

and vocabularies in anyway represent or are in touch with the real. Rorty gives the impression of having so thoroughly accepted the identification of truth with certainty that he considers the failure to achieve the latter as justification for thoroughly discrediting the most rudimentary meaning and primordial intuitions and concepts that inform the former. Contrary to James' empiricist attitude which expressed the conviction that we can know the world but not with absolute certainty, Rorty's attitude reverses the sentiment. Since absolute knowledge is unavailable it is illusory to speak of knowledge and truth at all. Not only does Rorty's stance tend to misconstrue, viz-a-viz the liberal ironist society he holds up as an ideal, the significance of the aspiration toward certainty and transcendence, it also leaves no place for the notion of probable truth. His position is too uncompromising even to be called probablism. Yet I believe this to be the most accurate appellation of James' and Gadamer's understanding of truth.

It is true that Rorty shares with James and Gadamer the common objective of challenging scientism. He wants to defend the rights of the other discourses in society, as do they. However, ultimately, James and Gadamer do not forsake the ideal of transcendence and the representationalist intuition which informs the general meaning of truth. They do not want to abandon the inherent meaning and intent of the tradition of inquiry. They would not assent to Rorty's attachment to the categorical doubt which defines the liberal ironist. In comparison to their stance, Rorty's position appears to be as radical and dogmatic a rejection of theoretical discourse and truth as scientism's rejection of religion. Neither James' nor Gadamer's position appears that uncompromising or dogmatic regarding the meaning or the pursuit of truth. Ultimately, James and Gadamer move in a different direction from Rorty on

the means of opposing scientism. Whereas Rorty is content to say that no discourse does or can limn the real, they affirm the meaning and the pursuit of truth and extend it to all of human experience and the interconnected multiplicity of discourses as a whole.

James and Gadamer do not want to claim, as does Rorty, that neither philosophy, science nor any other discourse can be said in any way to represent reality. Rorty's position is more extreme than either James' or Gadamer's. They do not take his more incoherent, self-refuting, ultra-sceptical and ultra-relativistic stance which completely denies the intuition that theoretical discourse may represent reality, even if only in a fallible, proximate and probable way. The Jamesian pragmatic and Gadamerian hermeneutic accounts of truth present a broad analysis of the dynamics of theoretical discourse which shows its inherent temporal and situated elements; they do not deny representation or unconditionally repudiate the ambition for transcendence. Rorty stands alone in the extremity of his negation.

I believe it important to make clear how uncompromisingly ultra-sceptical and ultra-relativistic Rorty's stance is, when compared to James' conception of truth and Gadamer's account of understanding. Rorty remains unqualifiedly negative toward the traditional meaning and pursuit of truth. He unconditionally denies the representationalist intuition and the need for transcendence, whereas James and Gadamer, ultimately, do not. They, instead, retain the intuition and ideal while at the same time insisting upon the temporal and situated conditions of truth. They are content to live with a conception of probable, approximate truth.

While Rorty wants to completely discredit and abandon the representationalist intuition and the conception of inquiry (philosophic and scientific) dependent upon it as a means of overcoming scientism, James and Gadamer choose instead to maintain the representationalist intuition and ideal of transcendence and thus maintain a more coherent conception of their own thought and inquiry. Rorty wants to overcome scientism by completely abandoning the intuition at the heart of the traditional conception of truth. He appears to demand that inquiry (philosophy and science) abandon its own self-understanding yet somehow continue to behave as normal. James and Gadamer, however, respect the rudimentary intuitions and ambitions connected to truth and inquiry. They rely upon philosophical inquiry to represent science and its relationship to the other discourses of society. They, in fact, believe that every discourse can be said to put us in touch with some dimension of reality, and that philosophy should attempt to put us in touch with how this is so. They emphasize, however, the situated and temporal structure of all these connections and accounts. I read James and Gadamer as saying that distinct discourses, defined by distinct purposes, each represent some aspect of both the world and the knower, and that philosophy can contribute to sorting out the relation (cognitive and otherwise) between them all, but only approximately. There is no other way to make sense of the intent of their own theoretical efforts or what they actually claim about truth and understanding. They are probablists, perspectivists and proximists in their conceptions of and attitudes toward truth, not ultra-sceptics and relativists.

James' identification of truth with the experience of verifiability presupposes the ideal of transcendence and the representationalist intuition. He did not understand his account to be their recantation. "Pragmatism's primary

interest is in its doctrine of truth. All pragmatist writers make this the centre of their speculations; not one of them is sceptical, not one doubts our ultimate ability to penetrate theoretically into the very core of reality." (WWJ 448) The same thing can be said about Gadamer's account of experience and understanding. He does not reject the ideal of transcendence and the representationalist intuition. He acknowledges that experience is inherently teleological in "seeking to abolish its history." His account of the primordial unity of word and object and acceptance of Heidegger's existential analysis of *aletheia* as the original experience of truth, as disclosedness itself, uncovers a primitive source of the representationalist intuition which, upon reflection, is brought into a derivative mode of awareness. It must be remembered, that Gadamer's account of the historicity of human understanding did not deny progressive truth to science rather it defended a complementary notion of hermeneutical truth as a continuous appropriation (application) of truth already found and preserved in the tradition. On my reading of James and Gadamer, neither can be said to deny that human discourse is able to represent what is the case. Though they can be said to claim that the representation is approximate and fallible, yet open to increased perspicuity and comprehensiveness.⁴

I want to argue in what follows, relying in part on the thought of James and Gadamer, that the ambition for transcendence is not a misanthropic desire in the way Rorty suggests. Rather, it is an essential ingredient, not only of the meaning of truth and all theoretical discourse, but of the liberal, ironical society he prizes. First, however, I want to discuss the inextricable unity of the representational intuition and the general, primordial meaning of truth.

What I have to say here should be taken as a criticism of Rorty's argument that justification, i.e. "truth," is merely a matter of social practices and linguistic coherence, and as a criticism of his entrapment in the problem of certainty. Rorty's distinction between relations of justification and causation, linked, as I believe it is, to an absolutist identification of truth with certainty, unjustifiably eliminates the notion of reference, and therefore the representational intuition, from the experience of language and truth. Since reference seems to be indeterminable atomistically, Rorty believes it should be considered an entirely illusory concept. Truth is merely a matter of linguistic coherence; we can not get outside of language to guarantee reference to what is the case. If we cannot guarantee reference, why speak of what is the case? I believe Gadamer's account of the unity of word and object and Heidegger's account of truth taken up by him shows us a better way of thinking about truth.

Gadamer's phenomenological realism, his account of the unity of word and world linked with Heidegger's analysis of *alethia* reveals that the primordial origin of the representational intuition lies in a sediment of original experience where meaning and truth have not yet been divided.⁵ As Gadamer points out, the world comes into being in language. To have language is to have a world that exists. Primordially, it is to have meaning and truth in a unity of experience. In the most primordial experience of language, concept and sensation have not yet been divided, meaning and reference are one. Confrontation is inextricable from conversation. Even Heidegger's account of *alethia*, as the primordial experience of the uncovering of the being of what is meant, must be said to have identified a derivative mode of awareness since it already presupposes a consciousness of

a distance between meaning and being, between concept and sensation, a distance where the meaning of reference resides. Atomistically, reference may be indeterminable but primordially and holistically, it is one with the original experience of certainty itself. In the childhood of experience, meaning, truth and certainty have the same identity; this is the inextricable ground of the representational intuition uncovered by Gadamer and ultimately taken for granted by James. The ambition for transcendence and the experience of probable truth opens up once the unity of the triumvirate of meaning, truth (reference), and certainty is shattered by the multiplicity of words and the freedom of the human imagination linked to the experience of time; in Cartesian psychological terms, by the juxtaposition of an infinite will, a finite intellect, and a growing multiplicity of ideas.

Let me turn now to the ambition for transcendence and the notion of probable truth. The general concept of transcendence embraces both temporal and spatial ideas. Applied to the concept of truth, the ambition for transcendence means, on the one hand, the desire to get beyond, outside of change, time and contingency, to the final, eternal truth about reality. This means discovering the changeless, fixed or *final account* of things. Thus, the ambition for transcendence includes the quest for certainty. The spatial imagery of transcendence is more complex than the temporal. It incorporates the notions of quantity, distance and closeness. It expresses the desire to see *all* of reality: to see from a distance, from the highest point, to see reality from the *outside*, and to get as close as possible, to penetrate reality, to see it from the *inside*. This means discovering the *total account* of what is. In epistemological terms the ambition for transcendence expresses the desire to view the relationship between human thought and being from an ideal

eternal "nowhere." (However, abstracted from the temporal and spatial imagery, the ambition for transcendence can be thought of as the desire to recapture the primordial unity of meaning and being that accompanies the first experience of language.)

Truth transcendent as a *final* account of being expresses the meaning of truth in relation to time. Explaining the meaning of truth in relation to time is clearly at the heart of the pragmatic-hermeneutic conception of truth. Though an inescapable ambiguity is contained in describing the dynamics of the relationship between truth and time, James and Gadamer do not let this difficulty force them to deny the somewhat antinomian elements that define the complexity of the case. Both James and Gadamer understand finality as informing the meaning of truth. They acknowledge that every scientific and philosophical truth claim aims to transcend time and contingency and that the meaning of truth, in fact, necessarily incorporates this intuition. James spoke of the "fate of thought" as an ultimate criterion of truth, and the final, absolute truth as the ideal end of inquiry by which it is ever motivated, toward which it is ever moving. Gadamer acknowledged the truth of Aristotle's account of the inherently teleological, trans-historical thrust of experience to fulfill itself in the repeatable which announces the primordial meaning of science as "eternal" truth seized upon by Greek philosophy. Even hermeneutical truth implies a trans-historical dimension insofar as it relies upon a recognition of a tradition of insight, a realm of permanent wisdom, ever open to retrieval and interpretive application in the present.

The ambition for transcendence as the thrust toward finality and comprehension, broadly defined, inextricably contributes to the meaning of truth. Every philosophical (or scientific) vision, including Rorty's, implicitly

presents itself as final and distanced, or at least more final and more distanced than all others. In other words, there are always central elements of every theoretical vision which are presented as possibly irrefutable and thus possibly triumphant over time and contingency. Rorty's philosophical vision (theory) is no exception. He speaks as if he possibly has moved philosophy and thought, in a final way, beyond past errors and towards better self-understanding by his use of the distinction between relations of justification and relations of causation. His interpretation of the history of philosophy is teleological, both, in terms of the relation of philosophy to religion and in terms of the relation of his own thought to epistemology. The teleological view of knowledge is itself an expression of the ambition for transcendence and is an essential element of the nature of demonstrative discourse.

Let me develop this point by continuing with a very short historical perspective on the progress of thought in the West that parallels Rorty's but reaches a contrary conclusion apropos the interpretation that the ambition for transcendence is misanthropic and should be abandoned. No one doubts that the developments of modern science, in conjunction with various elements of modern philosophy, has put in question the truth value of much religious discourse, a process begun, of course, in antiquity with the birth of theoretical investigation in general. The claim to finality and totality inherent in religious myth and discourse was challenged by the relentless questioning that characterizes inquiry. The complex relation between truth and time became self-conscious. The birth of inquiry was simultaneous with the self-awareness of the possible distance between belief and truth. In this self-awareness, inquiry transformed the implicit claim to finality and totality of knowledge found in religion into *an ideal* for itself. That is, the full self-

consciousness of the need for transcendence came about simultaneously and ironically with the deconstruction of the erroneous claim to actual transcendence that permeated religious narrative. The hope of transcendent enlightenment, a final and total worldview, therefore, became idealized as the *future goal* of science and philosophy. Science and philosophy have wanted to achieve a transcendent knowledge of nature (being) and humanity's place in it. Philosophy, in particular, has wanted to achieve a transcendent knowledge of knowledge, i.e. of science and itself as inquiry, and all other forms of discourse purporting truth. It has even sought to give an account of the significance of human existence relative to being in general, which to a great extent, has always been the *raison d'être* and most justifiable aim of religious discourse *per se*.

In this pursuit of truth transcendent, however, science and philosophy have uncovered and reflected the deep, future oriented, dialectical structure of all theoretical inquiry ("argument"). As yet, no truth transcendent, no final or total worldview has been reached in either science or philosophy. In philosophy, in particular, the push toward transcendence, ironically, has increased its own awareness of the temporal and situated conditions of knowledge and truth even in the most mathematical of sciences. In the very activity of continuously constructing and deconstructing its own truth claims about knowledge, and by describing a similar process within scientific truth claims about nature, philosophy has produced a profound awareness of the difficulty and complexity involved in achieving a transcendent grasp of the makeup of knowledge and truth. The pursuit of a final and total account of knowledge seems more and more to have pointed to the remoteness of the goal. However, this very awareness is an advance that cannot be understood

except as a further step towards transcendence, i.e. movement towards an ideal, final and total account of what can be said about truth and knowledge. The ideal or future aim, in both science and philosophy, is truth transcendent. The experience or achievement has fallen short. Inquiry remains on the way. However, this sense of being on the way, itself is given meaning by the ideal of transcendence, and vice versa. Triumph over ignorance alongside a core permanence of discovery shows itself despite the temporal, situated trappings of discourse. Each new contribution brings a sense of progress at the same time as it reveals the distance from the goal. It remains a truism of the inquiring consciousness that the more one knows the less one seems to know. A history of thought experienced as a history of perspectives, self-consciously appropriated as such, yet at the same time anticipated as containing trans-historical application, is itself, as Gadamer has shown, motivated by and constitutive of an experience of transcendence. It is indicative of the ambition for transcendence as the thrust toward a comprehensive totality of critically sorted perspectives. That inquiry is essentially teleological shows itself factually in the accumulative self-criticism of its own history not only in its aspiration.

All theoretical inquiry manifests the ideal of truth transcendent at the same time as it provides the experience of truth on the way. It is this, future-oriented, dialectical, inherently ironical quality of thought which separates the workings of theoretical *inquiry* from religious *faith*. The "truth" of religious faith is entirely abstracted from any future-oriented dialectic precisely insofar as it brackets questioning relative to itself. (Thus, it doesn't raise the critical question about truth itself which the birth of inquiry necessitates and is evident even in the earliest philosophical theologians,

Xenophanes and Heraclitus.) Religion claims to already possess what philosophy and science pursues. It knows the past and the future, the beginning and the end. It thus insulates itself from the essential and necessary source of irony connected to knowledge, i.e. awareness of the distance between ideal and achievement concerning truth. The irony of the discursive society resides entirely within an experience of this distance which necessarily presupposes a sincerity toward the ideal as well as what has been attained. Modern western religion produces irony only in the consciousness of the distance between ideal and achievement regarding goodness, not regarding truth. Irony about truth has been the fruit of philosophy and science, and it is inseparable from the ambiguity between the ideal of transcendence and the sense of being on the way. Truth transcendent and truth concrete are two sides of the same ironical coin. If either the aim for transcendence or the representational intuition that informs the meaning of truth is somehow overturned, the irony of thought collapses. It cannot be maintained by an ultra-scepticism and relativism since they make the very idea of demonstrative discourse and investigation absurd. Epistemic irony can only be maintained if one is willing to say sincerely, like Socrates, that knowing one does not know may *possibly* be the only wisdom available to humanity.

The need for transcendence is built into the grammar of truth and theoretical inquiry, regardless of the object, (be it nature or knowledge), insofar as it is self-consciously a future-oriented activity. Inquiry is wedded to a sense of movement and time in a way that recounting myths is not. It includes not only an awareness of change but also a sense of duration. The notion of truth when linked to the sense of time, particularly the sense of the future,

produces the ideal of transcendent truth as an extrapolation of the ambiguous sense of actuality and possibility, present and future, associated with assent and affirmation to what is the case. James maintains the notion of truth transcendent in his conception of an ideal end of inquiry. He recognizes that every scientific and philosophical truth claim aims to transcend time and contingency and that a mark of truth, in fact, is partly the degree to which it does. Thus, the ideal of transcendence informs the meaning of truth and theoretical discourse in a fundamental and necessary way.

James argues that the attribution of truth to any proposition is coincidental with the assent given to it on account of its satisfactory working. Its satisfactory working indicates to us that reality is as the belief states. However, since assent is given in time, the *duration*, i.e. the permanence of the assent itself, contributes to the meaning of truth. Our sense of time and certainty includes a sense of the future as the realm of *possibility*. Since we cannot know, either what will be thought or what will command assent in the future, the truth value of every present claim admits the possibility of its refutation, as well as its continuation. The less sense one has of the possible refutation of a claim, the greater the sense of its probable truth. It is within this sense of distance between present assent and future possibility that the ideal of truth transcendent and probable truth finds its meaning. Every truth claim aims at a finality. In terms of time, it is the *possible* finality of every truth claim which expresses the ideal of truth transcendent. It points out what truth transcendent is known as. (James gives a temporal [and spatial] connotation to the concept of theories "approximating" the real.) Much of the ambiguity associated with the idea of truth is connected to the potential (future) refutability or irrefutability of a truth claim, i.e. the relation between

time and assent and the consciousness thereof. The aim for transcendence is rooted in the meaning of truth. In a very real sense it is synonymous with our sense of time itself and the desire to anticipate and possess the future. As James pointed out, "a prime factor in the philosophic craving is the desire to have expectancy defined."

James' account of truth recognizes that the ambition to transcend time and contingency is as built into the meaning of the truth relation as are time and chance. His stance is more cogent and less dogmatic than Rorty's precisely because his account of truth reflects the understanding that the possible finality of a truth claim is as much a non-dismissable element of the meaning of truth as its possible refutation. Truth is inherently a teleological concept. "On the one hand there will stand reality, on the other an account of it which it proves impossible to better or to alter. If the impossibility proves permanent, the truth of the account will be absolute. Other content of truth than this I can find nowhere." (WWJ 453-54) The totality of the meaning of truth cannot be coherently expressed independently of either of these two correlative ideas, i.e. possible finality or refutation. The ambition for transcendence expresses finality and certainty as an ideal which informs the meaning of truth; however, the experience in which assent is maintained, but open to possible refutation, provides the sense of probability attached to the existential meaning of truth.

Gadamer's conception of the hermeneutical experience seems to come closer to affirming Rorty's unconditional rejection of the ideal of transcendence, at least in terms of the aim toward finality, than does James' conception of truth. This, however, is due primarily to the fact that Gadamer has in mind moral enlightenment with its dimension of self-involved application to a

present (new) situation as the paradigm of understanding. Otherwise, there are elements of Gadamer's thought that do suggest the goal of transcendence. First of all, insofar as philosophical hermeneutics itself is a theoretical inquiry into the nature of the hermeneutical experience, it clearly aims at transcendence and presupposes the representationalist intuition. Gadamer himself claims that the reality of understanding is as his account states. Secondly, as has already been indicated, Gadamer recognizes the inherent trans-historical thrust of experience, for his account of the dialectical structure of experience and of the experienced person as one who remains open to the possibility of reversal only makes sense in light of it. The experienced person discovers the probable nature of truth only because of the dialectical relation that obtains between the elements of durability and possible refutation that are intrinsic to the temporal structure of experience. The probable is that which stands thoroughly rooted in time stranded between the refuted and the possibly irrefutable, but the possibly irrefutable cannot itself be refuted. The hermeneutic experience implicitly acknowledges the aim of transcending time and contingency, even with the insistence that interpretive understanding is always an historically situated experience of truth. Gadamer never abandons the ideal of subjecting prejudice to critical examination, in fact, this is inherent in taking the truth claim of the other seriously.⁶ Every authentic interpretation, in recognizing the possible legitimacy of the truth claim of the past, acknowledges the possible transcendence inherent in tradition. Gadamer's understanding of effective historical consciousness mitigates a radical version of historicism by pointing out the possibility of a trans-historical dimension of truth arising out of and with application to temporal human situations. Every fusion of horizons implies an historical continuity of experience, a bridge of transcendence, insofar as a truth claim of

the past finds a form of continuance and permanence in its reinterpretation in the present and possibly the future.

As previously suggested, the notion of truth transcendent also incorporates a complex of spatial imagery which complements the temporal. Thus, the ideal of truth transcendent expresses the ambition toward a *total* or *comprehensive* account of reality, i.e. the desire to see all reality from the outside and the inside. James, for example, often spoke of the "real" or "absolute" truth as the "complete" or "total" truth. This spatial sense appears to be as much a part of the grammar of truth and inquiry as is the temporal, and it participates in the ambiguities of the temporal by being thought in connection with it. Hence the sense of the *growth and expansion* of knowledge, i.e. an increasing of the dimension and the amount of truth on the way to totality. The experience of the growth and expansion of knowledge along with the sense of its possible increase towards totality implies the ideal of transcendence as much as does the possible irrefutability of a truth claim. James' conception of the progress of truth involves the notion of expansion toward comprehensive totality as much as it incorporates the ideal of finality. Gadamer's respect for the history of thought reveals the ideal of transcendence, both in terms of finality and comprehension, in that it implies that in each great thinker something lasting, albeit perspectival or approximate, has been uncovered; the totality of which defines our comprehension to date. The ambition for final and total transcendence, consequently, informs the meaning of truth and inquiry in an inextricable way since it provides the ideal in relationship to which our contingent and situated cognitive experience derives will and significance.

It cannot be denied that part of the originality and force of Rorty's thought consists in the extremity of its attempt to erode the ideal of transcendence and the representationalist intuition that informs the meaning of truth by creating a philosophical vocabulary that purports successfully to ignore it and by attempting to imagine an intellectual discourse which thoroughly and self-consciously repudiates it at every turn. However, in its extremity and incoherence, it reveals its incapacity to recognize its own teleological assumptions and to live with the idea of probable, yet expansive, truth as the most cogent expression of the complex of intuitions and ambitions that inform the primordial human experience of truth.

On the one hand it is the denial of the ambition for transcendence which renders Rorty's project incoherent. His differentiation between relations of justification and causation must not be said, by himself or his readers, to aim at or contain any final insight into the relation between thought and being. On the other hand, it is the denial of the representational intuition that undermines coherence. For the seminal distinction must not be said actually to represent any aspect of the real nature of theoretical discourse, knowledge and truth. In other words his own discourse must not be said to deliver what is the case. Unlike some of the thinkers from whom he derived the fundamental distinction (e.g. Quine), he dogmatically extrapolates from the distinction an unconditional repudiation of the rudimentary intuitions grounding the meaning of truth and inquiry; intuitions needed to make sense of any theoretical claims or inquiry, including his own. Whatever the distinction means, it can only mean it by assuming the primordial intuitions and ambitions that inform the meaning of truth.

Rorty's repudiation of the representational intuition and the ambition for transcendence must conclude, as it does, with the unconditional deconstruction of theoretical discourse and inquiry as a legitimate form of discourse. The idea of theoretical discourse is rendered not only incoherent but unpracticable if one tries to assent to the full negative implication of Rorty's deconstruction of truth. The same applies to the concept of solidarity if it is intended to mean intellectual agreement of any kind and not simply moral tolerance (were that possible) of one another. Reaching understanding can not be reduced to non-interference.

Rorty's stated philosophical purpose, i.e. to avoid "one more philosophical closure, one more metavocabulary which claims superior status," seems to overlook the implicit and indispensable creative power of the ideal of transcendence inherent in theoretical inquiry. (One must admit it is difficult to know how to conceive Rorty's distinction between relations of justification and causation except as a metavocabulary? And it may turn out to be as difficult a distinction to maintain as that between analytic and synthetic seems to be.) His sketchy account of the dialectical process between new and old metaphors ignores not only the point that every new metaphor aims at transcendence and presupposes the representational intuition, but also that this process itself is historically, largely coincidental with theoretical inquiry per se. In other words, it is doubtful that any new metaphors would be or could be generated either by any group of thinkers that sincerely accepted his radical deconstruction of truth or that abandoned the tradition of inquiry as it has been understood. Could the DNA double helix, for example, have been formulated by someone who held there is nothing of permanence in the idea, or that as a description it can not be said in any way to represent what is the

case or be more in touch with the real than any other possible metaphor? Could it have been formulated by someone not engaged seriously by the life of investigative argumentation?. The generation of new ideas, the ironical, probabilistic sense of truth, the hope of universal solidarity and tolerance have developed largely coincidental with the advance of theoretical inquiry which has presupposed inherently the ambition for transcendence and the representational intuition.

What generates the liberal irony, ideal of universal solidarity and tolerance Rorty prizes, it seems to me, is the long-standing Socratic experience of inquiry and probabilist conception of truth that has for the most part actually defined the Western tradition of philosophy and science. Rorty proposes liberal irony, universal solidarity and tolerance as something not only beyond religious aspiration but also beyond the rich tradition of philosophical and scientific inquiry which has been based upon the representational notion of truth and the ambition for transcendence. However, these very things, i.e. his social ideals, would seem to be the concomitant of that tradition of inquiry itself. The ironical experience of truth, and the ideal of universal solidarity and tolerance are the defining cultural characteristics uniquely produced by the history of scientific and philosophical inquiry inseparably informed by the ideal of transcendence and the representationalist intuition.

It is the self-conscious pursuit of transcendence at the heart of philosophy and science which uncovers the deep irony about truth. The ambition for transcendence which motivates science and philosophy is the ultimate source of all liberal irony as well as the ideals of universal solidarity and tolerance. A great irony attaches to Rorty's own position insofar as the cultural and intellectual virtues he promotes are themselves most assuredly produced by

the dialectic of inquiry and the pursuit of an ideal which he believes can and should be abandoned. To abandon the need for transcendence would be to abandon inquiry as a discourse, as well as the unique intellectual and cultural virtues it has produced. When it comes to the habits and ideals of liberalism, it is neither the actual achievement of truth transcendent nor the abandonment of the ambition for transcendence that ensures them; they are effected by its pursuit, alongside the experience of the probable, approximate, situated nature of truth. It is doubtful that any other form of discourse or ultra-sceptical repudiation of the rudimentary intuitions and concepts that inform the meaning of truth will do as well.

Acceptance of a Jamesian-Gadamerian pragmatic-hermeneutic conception of truth affirms the legitimacy of the "ambition for transcendence" and "the hope of getting things right" as an ideal which inherently and inextricably informs the meaning of truth and motivates all theoretical discourse. However, it also requires an acknowledgment of the probabilistic and approximate quality which defines most of our concrete experience of truth, and is likely to for a long time to come. Rorty's ideal of a liberal ironist culture, that embraces universal solidarity and tolerance, is best served by pragmatically acknowledging that the notion of truth and the practice of inquiry, scientific and philosophic, informed by the ambition of transcendence and the representational intuition, is what satisfactorily works.

The great contribution of James and Gadamer to philosophy certainly has been to provide significant evidence of the temporal and situated conditions that attend all human efforts to understand and know reality, inclusive of ourselves, (about this Rorty is correct), while at the same time, demonstrating

that it neither makes sense to despair of truth nor dogmatically to confine it exclusively to any one discourse or method.

James' critique of science revealed the continuing fund of subjective interest and belief that necessarily accompanied even the most mathematical of the sciences, while at the same time pointing out the narrow, selected object of each scientific investigation. His general account of truth emphasized the fact that numerous criteria, rooted in the totality of human interests and powers, are constantly operative in the concrete verification process which, he emphasized, is thoroughly temporal in nature. Therefore, it was dogmatic to attempt to reduce the meaning of truth to any single criterion. The truth value of any belief, consequently, had to be measured, not by any arbitrary reduction of criteria, but by its success relative to them all over time. This left open the way to religious discourse and more, according to James.

Gadamer's account of understanding parallels James' conception of truth and is even more emphatic in its emphasis upon truth's temporal and situated nature, since he explicitly focuses upon truth in the human sciences. He, like James, objected to the fact that truth had been reduced to scientific method. However, of equal if not greater importance to him was the fact that the narrowed object of investigation and technological goal proper to the natural sciences left out of consideration not only the question of the greater religious, moral-political human purposes of life, but also the wisdom of tradition, open to the human sciences if properly understood and practiced, that might speak to these greater purposes. By focusing upon the truth proper to the human sciences, Gadamer has been able to rehabilitate a notion of hermeneutical truth distinct from science which places the linear progress of science within the larger historicity of human existence and truth.

The philosophical thought of both James and Gadamer has been successful in demonstrating that philosophy, in fact, may be able to provide a bridge of understanding among the various discourses of society provided that it continues to aim at transcendence and pursue, in a broad way, a final and comprehensive, critical understanding of how the various discourses of society (including itself) do in fact represent reality, knower and known, as each and as all.⁷ It is not yet either possible or desirable for the "dream at the heart of philosophy" to be given up. What the thought of James and Gadamer exemplifies, apropos the meaning and significance of philosophy, is that it can only serve our humanity if a great deal more is said about the meaning and pursuit of truth.

NOTES - CHAPTER FOUR

1. Throughout the late eighties and early nineties Rorty has continued his renunciation of representationalism, foundationalism and the realist intuition about truth. He has interpreted and exploited Donald Davidson's coherence theory of truth rather extensively. Rorty understands Davidson as denying that "true" has any "explanatory use." Rather, "true" has only an "endorsing use," a "cautionary use," and a "disquotational use." What is common to all these latter uses, according to Rorty, is that they exclude any reliance upon the intuition that there are "relations of 'being made true' which hold between beliefs and the world." Rorty interprets Davidson as believing that "any 'theory of truth' which analyzes a relation between bits of language and bits of non-language is already on the wrong track." Rorty believes Davidson has establishing more than his claim that "coherence yields correspondence;" he understands him as debunking the notion of correspondence altogether. See the following: "Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth," and "Representation, Social Practise and Truth," in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. "Is Truth the Goal of Enquiry? Davidson vs Wright," in *Philosophical Quarterly*, 45 (180), 281-300, J1 95. "Putnam on Truth," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 52(2), 415-18.

2. Richard Bernstein has pointed out that the extreme negativity of Rorty's critique of epistemology in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* reveals a continuation of the "Cartesian anxiety," which, broadly speaking, can be said to be the radical identification of truth with certainty. "[O]ne way of reading Rorty is to interpret him as trying to help us set aside the Cartesian anxiety - the Cartesian Either/Or - that underlies so much of modern philosophy. But there is a variation of the Either/Or that haunts this book - Either we are *ineluctably* tempted by foundational metaphors and the desperate attempt to escape from history *or* we must frankly recognize that philosophy itself is at best a form of 'kibitzing.'" "Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind," ed. Robert Hollinger, *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985) p. 77.

3. Everything I have to say in this chapter is said in agreement with Brice Wachterhauser's estimation of Rorty's unconditional deconstruction of the concept of truth. It also is said in agreement with his reasoning which explains why the concept of truth can not be so easily abandoned. "While it may be fair to say that those who have made the hermeneutical turn would agree that absolute certainty or dialectical completeness can no longer be considered as unproblematic hallmarks of truth, this does not imply that the concept of truth itself has outlived its cognitive usefulness and philosophic importance as some, like Nietzsche and Rorty, would have us believe. There is, it seems to me, 'truth after interpretation.' To think otherwise is to

involve one's thought in irresolvable self-referential paradoxes of the type that occurs when someone like Rorty offers a view of knowledge which claims that views about knowledge are passé. Rorty would have us believe that we can 'contribute to the conversation' without making a claim to truth. This seems impossible to me not only because it inevitably involves one in self-referential paradoxes but the very language of reason and rationality, of what it means to be part of a *rational* conversation, cannot be separated from concerns about the truth of what is said. It is much easier to incorporate into our concept of rationality an awareness of the contingent cognitive, rhetorical, practical, and aesthetic considerations that inevitably make thought a kind of interpretation than it is to separate the notion of truth from our concept of rational conversation. Only by seeing our conversation as ultimately governed by the norm of truth do our many attempts to make a point in conversation become something more than the utterance of a series of sounds which we hope will effect the behavior of our interlocutor for our own advantage. Only the sincere search for truth adequately distinguishes rational inquiry from mere sophistry." "Introduction: Is There Truth after Interpretation?", *Hermeneutics and Truth*, ed. Brice R. Wachterhauser, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1994), pp. 2-3.

4. "It is because Gadamer rejects in principle all unbridgeable dualism between the world and our linguistically mediated perspective on it that he feels confident in repeatedly claiming that though knowledge is mediated by language and history the truth of our knowledge must still be conceived in terms of their adequacy or correspondence to the things themselves (*die Sachen selbst*). Gadamer has a strong element of correspondence in his account of truth. *Die Sachen* of interpretation are the transcultural referents of our discourse. It is our first and last task as interpreters to find the right speech that will allow the truth about these *Sachen* to be made manifest." Brice R. Wachterhauser, "Gadamer's Realism: The 'Belongingness' of Word and Reality," *Hermeneutics and Truth*, ed. Brice R. Wachterhauser, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 153.

Gary B. Madison argues that what separates Gadamer's hermeneutical truth from Derrida's (and Rorty's) deconstructed "truth" is that for Gadamer "there is something *outside* the linguistic code" to which the code refers. However, Prof. Madison denies that Gadamer's conception of truth in any way affirms the representational intuition or the idea of correspondence with reality. Gadamer's notion of truth is held to be neither representational i.e. "serious" nor ultra-relativistic i.e. "frivolous." Truth, for Gadamer, he argues means "the disclosure of possibilities for being and acting. . . . Truth refers not to a static, mirroring relation between a subject and an object but to the transformation process which occurs in all instances of genuine understanding. Truth refers to the self-enrichment that occurs as a result of the play of meaning." G. B. Madison, *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 117. There are two

problems I see with this interpretation of Gadamer's notion of truth. First, it remains difficult to distinguish from Rorty's deconstruction of truth since Rorty also identifies truth with transformed behaviour and "self-enrichment." (It seems to be only the attitude toward and evaluation of the self-enrichment which distinguishes Prof. Madison from Derrida and Rorty.) Second, the interpretation appears to confuse the unique property of language with the behaviour the property facilitates. For it is not behaviour, according to Gadamer, which presents being as what is understood; rather it is language. If one accepts that language provides the being of the world as world, then it is not the representational intuition that is illusory; rather, it is Cartesian metaphysical doubt that has missed the point.

5. Jean Grondin has argued that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics develops an alternative notion of truth as "meaningfulness" without discrediting the notions of correspondence and coherence. "Without denying the critical import of the notions of correspondence and coherence, hermeneutics explores another approach to truth. For hermeneutics truth isn't primarily a matter of correspondence (a criterion that is not applicable everywhere), but of 'meaningfulness.' An experience of truth is an experience of something meaningful that helps us 'cope,' to use the central verb in the pragmatist vocabulary. Even if it may seem awkward, at first, to identify truth with meaningfulness, this characterization is a fair description of what is *held* to be true by human beings in the absence of a criterion of correspondence." "Hermeneutical Truth and its Historical Presuppositions: A Possible Bridge between Analysis and Hermeneutics," ed. Evan Simpson, *Anti-foundationalism and Practical Reasoning: Conversations between Hermeneutics and Analysis*, (Edmonton, Alberta: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1987), p. 51 I support this view but would not want to separate the three notions of truth quite so distinctly. In other words, I want to suggest that the real significance of James' and Gadamer's contribution to our understanding of truth is to have recognized that the meaning of truth necessarily involves a combination of all three definitions or perspectives only emphasized somewhat differently according to distinct social discourses.

6. Charles Larmore argues that Gadamer's insistence on the necessity of separating legitimate from illegitimate prejudices, as far as possible, accepts the importance of maintaining a trans-historical ideal of truth in conjunction with recognizing the probabilistic nature of it. "Now the precise force of Gadamer's argument must be kept in mind. Although we must recognize that the ideal that at least epistemologically we can completely neutralize the force of tradition by subjecting all of our beliefs to critical examination will not be realized, we do not thereby have reason to discard that ideal as one worth pursuing as far as possible. . . . Nonetheless, we should not let the ideal of self-transparency skew our perception of what, with every likelihood, inquiry will always be." "Tradition, Objectivity, and Hermeneutics," ed. Brice

R. Wachterhauser, *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 151.

7. Some critics of Rorty's interpretation of pragmatism and hermeneutics make a similar point central to their critique, namely that philosophy can still serve a normative function of some kind relative to the various discourses of society. "As long as we can think of knowledge and its growth, and the possibility of judgments of better and worse in respect to it, however analyzed, we can retain a notion of the mainstream of philosophical problems. Philosophical analyses that are pluralistic or that insist on a contextual approach are none the less philosophical though usually less pretentious. Philosophical analyses geared to a world of change, of time and particularity, are not less philosophical than those flaunting eternity and universality. To amend one specific tradition is not to overcome philosophy." Abraham Edel, "A Missing Dimension in Rorty's Use of Pragmatism," *Transactions of the Charles Sanders Peirce Society*, 21 (1985) pp. 30-31.

"I agree that a project of finding foundations for knowledge-in-general is not appropriate right now. If epistemology means the search for such foundations, then its end is in sight, an end foreseen by Dewey. But if 'epistemology' denotes an attempt to understand the possibility and nature of the various kinds of knowledge and styles of reasoning, then Plato, Locke, and Dewey are part of a persistent tradition that has to do with one of the essential characteristics of our civilization." Ian Hacking, "Is the End in Sight for Epistemology," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LXXVII, No. 10 (1980) p. 586.

"I would suggest that, even if we accept the Kuhnian premise, we need not accept the nihilistic conclusion about the possibility of systematic philosophy. Instead we can alter the Kantian conception of philosophy as the Queen of the Sciences, namely, a study of eternal, interparadigmatic problems. There is another conception of philosophy, equally venerable and in fact commonplace, which views philosophy as the Handmaiden of Science. It views philosophy as an essentially *intraparadigmatic* inquiry concerning the conceptual, foundational, and regulative aspects of a given paradigm. It seems to me that this is one perfectly good traditional sense of philosophy, a sense that does not assume the existence of a 'neutral matrix' outside any and all paradigms." Jaegwon Kim, "Rorty on the Possibility of Philosophy," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 77 (1980) p. 595.

Georgia Warnke gives what she believes to be a Gadamerian criticism of Rorty's vision of a post-Philosophical philosophy and its devaluation of commensuration. She concludes, "In my view, Gadamer shows that we cannot throw out the epistemological concern with commensuration without jettisoning our interest in 'truth' and we cannot jettison our interest in 'truth' without destroying the basis of understanding. For Gadamer,

hermeneutics does not signal a break with philosophy as a search for foundations; it suggests that this search is compatible with historical life." Georgia Warnke, "Hermeneutics and the Social Sciences: A Gadamerian Critique of Rorty," *Inquiry* 28 (1985) p. 356.

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