

## A "CONVERSATION" WITH RICHARD RORTY

The obvious objection to defining the mental as the intentional is that *pains are not intentional*<sup>1</sup> ... *Are you suffering?* This is the ability to distinguish the question of whether you and I share the same final vocabulary from the question of *whether you are in pain*.<sup>2</sup>

On the occasion of Richard Rorty's visit to Mexico, as a guest to the biannual philosophical congress held at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, I wanted to establish a "conversation" with him and to express my point of view concerning his philosophical project as a United States thinker, which is that of a liberal ethos and a progressive,<sup>3</sup> taking into account the radically different point of departure from which liberation philosophy sets out.

### 6.1 Different Original Situations

By "original situations"-in contrast to Rawls's transcendental version of it-we want simply to indicate different points of departure. Rorty himself describes his "situation":

The result is to leave American philosophy departments stranded somewhere between the humanities (their ancestral home), the natural sciences... and the social sciences.... My story has been one of struggles between kinds of professors, professors with different aptitudes and consequently with different paradigms and interests. It is a story of academic politics-not much more, in the long run, than a matter of what sort of professors come under which departmental budget....<sup>4</sup>

His struggle is very North American, intra-university. Rorty, who was educated within the Analytic tradition, rebelled against his old philosophical community. At age thirty two (1965) Rorty criticized the philosophers of the "linguistic turn":<sup>5</sup>

The relatively pessimistic conclusions reached in the preceding sections entail that linguistic philosophers' attempts to turn philosophy into a *strict*

*science* must fail. How far does this pessimism carry? If linguistic philosophy cannot be a strict science, if it has a merely critical, essentially dialectical, function, then what of the future?<sup>6</sup>

In fact, Rorty departs existentially and institutionally—in his philosophical practice—from a North American academic and university medium, especially from the philosophical groups focused on language, which he knows throughly from his lengthy treatment of their problematics. From both, philosophers that advocate an "ideal language" and those who depart from "ordinary language,"<sup>7</sup> it can be understood and accepted "that rational agreement is possible" within the limited sphere of their questions, but that in the last instance they fall into "circularity." That is, Rorty's philosophy departs from its empirical, concrete, and academic history, from its university situation where analytic philosophy is a "game" among many other "language games." Within the university situation the personal Rortyan "position" is critical on two fronts: 1) before its old community of analytical philosophers; 2) before the philosophers who use metaphysical notions (such as traditional Thomism, for example) or universalist rationalizations (which would be Apel's "position"). Or, in other words, skepticism versus analytic philosophy, and versus universalist rationalism. Rorty intends to affirm *solidarity* in the face of "pain" and against "cruelty," a profoundly ethical attitude, which can be assumed, thinks Rorty, without having to appeal to universal reason. Rorty's position is that of someone who stands in solidaristic responsibility before the pain of the abstract Other, from out of the contingency of someone who assumes participatorily the contents of their *Lebenswelt* (daily life).

It should be indicated, in addition, that the Rortyan position in a Latin America where analytical philosophers have "controlled," since the sixties, significant positions of power in the philosophical profession (universities, national congresses, institutions of investigations, magazines and journals, etc., that is, the "material *institutions*" of philosophy's reproduction), is extremely healthy, beneficial, and positive. In the first national colloquium of philosophy in Mexico (Morelia) of 1975, Mario Bunge identified "serious" philosophical knowledge with the possibility of formalization (quasi-mathematization). These "beliefs" are demolished by the post-analytical Rorty (if analytic or linguistic philosophy means "the view that philosophical problems are problems which may be solved—or dissolved—either by reforming language, or by understanding more about the language we presently use"<sup>8</sup>).

We can walk with Rorty a long stretch of way, with the critic of analytic thinking, with the democrat (although he does not notice that liberalism and democracy are contradictory logics), with the one who searches for solidarity. But we cannot follow him into the extreme ambiguity of the incommensurability of his ethical principles, in his neopragmatist contextualism, which in

the end turns into an accomplice to domination, from our North-South case (which he cannot criticize by definition). Nor can we follow him in his liberal Northamericanism of eurocentric character.

Liberation philosophy, instead, departs from another situation; it places philosophy originally in the context of concrete praxis, in engagement and solidarity with the oppressed (with the exploited *poor* in the periphery of capitalism, women dominated by machism, the racially discriminated Black person, and non-hegemonic cultural and ethnic groups, the ecologically responsible to future generations). It is not a question, first of all, of a reflection *on* the word, language, the "text,"<sup>9</sup> as an external observer. It is a question of a practical, concrete presence in and within popular, feminist, ecological, or anti-racist movements; in the face-to-face,<sup>10</sup> immediate relation of the "organic intellectual,"<sup>11</sup> giving obviously priority to communicative action (or the illocutory moment of the speech-act) from out of which philosophical thinking begins its work; that is, philosophical reflection begins its task *as reflection (second act) on praxis itself (first act)*. Mediation through the analysis of a text, whether it be "analytical" (since Rorty's *Linguistic Turn*) or "hermeneutical" (in the manner of Ricoeur's "travail du lecteur"), is *a posteriori* and in some cases entirely absent, as is the case with the praxis of the illiterate who does not express herself or himself through writing. The point of departure is always someone who is suffering ("I suffer..."), but as an oppressed at the political, erotic, concrete level<sup>12</sup>—not from a university or academic environment, nor solely as a dispute between linguistic or analytic philosophical schools—and who emerges as a *subject of liberation*. Reflection departs from the poor or oppressed, who in her suffering, needing corporeality, works: where there is a priority of developing an economics from the oppressed, from the suffering which is felt as *misery (Elend, Marx would say)* of the dominated (this is the ethical moment). This setting out from a "we" lies "beyond" (in an exteriority) the dominating, ruling, hegemonic, central (i.e. center-periphery) "we-intentions" of "liberal irony." Evidently the oppressed (as in the "vision of the vanquished" before the conquest of America) has her language, the "voice of the oppressed," which for the oppressor is a non-language... until it is *translated* by a liberal ironist to the language of the dominator (so that he may accept it as language, even as with liberation philosophy itself, which also must be translated into the ruling philosophical languages).

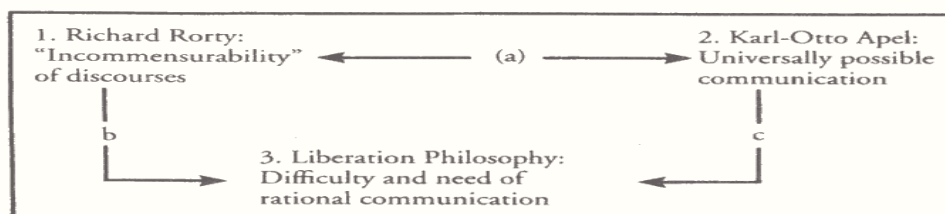
One may depart from *suffering*, as Rorty or liberation philosophy do, but some additional questions still need to be asked. What type of suffering? Which are the *causes*<sup>13</sup> of this suffering?

Liberation philosophy, once it has ethically and rationally received the interpellation of the oppressed, ought to reflect on the entire problematic which is presupposed and determines the praxis of liberation: the praxis of erotic liberation by women, the pedagogy of the son and the people, the political economy

of the poor and underdeveloped nations, etc. This is an entire program of reflection and communicative, strategic, and tactical praxis. Philosophy does not end with the reception of the interpellative speech act, which provokes, challenges to action; *it only begins with it!*

Keeping in mind what has been said, and the theoretical positions to which we have referred, we could propose the following minimal schema:

*Schema 1. Three Possible "Positions"*



There is, first of all, a confrontation between neopragmatist contextualism and rationalism (a), in which Liberation Philosophy also takes part, but with which we will not deal here; in the second place, there the confrontation between Rortyan neopragmatism with liberation, or that between the incommensurability of intercultural, inter-class dialogues and those of a Rorty (b); and, in the third place, there is the confrontation between hegemonic rationality and the reason of the other, that which is implicit in the subtle developmentalist fallacy which can fulfill the role of a rationalism which frequently is not universal, but European, liberal, capitalist, etc. (c), and with which we have dealt in numerous works.

### 6.2 Rorty's Philosophical Project

Since Rorty is little known in Latin America, let us go through his main works, first his "Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy."<sup>14</sup> In this work we observe the expert philosopher of the *Linguistic Turn*, where he writes in the introduction: "The history of philosophy is punctuated by revolts against the practice of previous philosophers."<sup>15</sup> For this revolt, the rebellious philosophers use new methods (as in the case of Descartes, Kant, Marx, Husserl, or Wittgenstein). But, essentially, these new methods presuppose certain metaphysical or epistemological theses (metaphilosophical "criteria", says Rorty), and only through the acceptance of the theses can the method obtain validity. Therefore, one falls into "circularity."<sup>16</sup>

Since philosophical method is in itself a philosophical *criterion*... every philosophical revolutionary is open to the charge of circularity or to the charge of having begged the question.<sup>17</sup>

For Rorty, even the great philosophers fall into this same naivete:

What is particularly interesting is to see why those philosophers who lead methodological revolts think that they have, at last, succeeded in becoming *presuppositionless*, and why their opponents think that they have not.<sup>18</sup>

In the same way, Rorty shows that linguistic or analytic philosophy lacks metaphilosophical criteria, whether it is of those who propose an ideal language (like Carnap, for example) or ordinary language (the second Wittgenstein) as their point of departure, and even the philosophy of empirical linguistics (like that of Chomsky). They have all failed, thinks Rorty, because they could not define intersubjectively valid criteria for knowing, for example, when a "good *analysis*" or a "good *meaning*" have been carried out or conveyed. Rorty destroys one by one the presupposed criteria and arrives at a radical skepticism.<sup>19</sup> Through Quine, Sellars, Davidson, Kuhn, or Putnam, Rorty pulverizes the "dogmas" which were held as valid by prior generations (from Locke to Ayer or even Carnap). Slowly, Rorty will distance himself from the analytic philosophers, in order to get closer to methodological or critical contextualism, neopragmatism, historicism—setting out from the second Wittgenstein on the way toward the second Heidegger, Derrida, and the postmoderns—and all due to the crisis of 1968. Thus, Rorty concludes:

I should wish to argue that the most important thing that has happened in philosophy during the last thirty years is not the linguistic turn itself, but rather the beginning of a thoroughgoing rethinking of certain epistemological difficulties which have troubled philosophers since Plato and Aristotle.<sup>20</sup>

The university crisis of 1968 allowed young North American intellectuals, among them Rorty, to turn their eyes toward "continental" thinking. It is thus that Kant, Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, and a little latter Foucault's and Derrida's readings will be rediscovered. All of this leads Rorty to write his first and up to now only work to be structured properly as a book: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.<sup>21</sup>

With reference to the philosophical projects of Wittgenstein, Heidegger, or Dewey—the great "edifying" philosophers (in the sense of *Bildung* or *paideia*)—Rorty writes:

Each of the three came to see his earlier effort as self-deceptive, as an attempt to retain a certain conception of philosophy after the notions needed to flesh out that conception... had been discarded. Each of the three, in his later work, broke free of the Kantian conception of philosophy as foundational.<sup>22</sup>

*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* is a "therapeutic" book, "like the writings of the philosophers I most admire,"<sup>23</sup>—writes Rorty—and therefore "parasitic" of analytic philosophy. In other words, our philosopher, as a new North American

generation, uses the vocabulary of the analytic philosophers' community as a *medium*—in order to prove its inconsistency—and that of continental philosophers—like Nietzsche, Heidegger, or later Derrida—as a goal.<sup>24</sup> In order to accomplish this goal Rorty attacks frontally the "theory of representation" (Kant's *Vorstellung*). It would be interesting here to show some analogies with the thinking of Emmanuel Levinas,<sup>25</sup> who served as inspiration to Derrida,<sup>26</sup> Lyotard, and Latin American liberation philosophy itself. What is certain is that the successors of the great founders of "strict philosophy" (Husserl and Russell), after forty years (from approximately 1910 through 1950), were put in question by their best inheritors (Heidegger or Sartre and Sellars or Quine), and seventy years later (Rorty thinks here of himself) we are again as if at the turn of the 19th century: together with Royce and Nietzsche.<sup>27</sup> The overcoming of "representation" as epistemology, as a "mirror" in which we see nature (the ontic, or inner-wordly "objectivity"), opens up for Rorty the possibility to understand the attempt by hermeneutics (from a Gadamer, for example, the existential ontological). Rorty thinks that the path to be followed is that of an "edifying philosophy,"<sup>28</sup> which does not pretend to argue but simply to establish a "conversation."<sup>29</sup> Rorty wants to place himself in a peripheral line of the history of philosophy:

On the periphery of the history of modern philosophy, one finds figures who, without forming a tradition, resemble each other in their distrust of the notion that man's essence is to be a knower of essences. Goethe, Kierkegaard, Santayana, William James, Dewey, the later Wittgenstein, the later Heidegger, are figures of this sort. They are often accused of relativism or cynicism.<sup>30</sup>

It is a question, then, of an entrenched struggle against every form of essentialism, against every form of metaphysics or argumentation. As we will see, liberation philosophy, peripheral philosophy which thinks the periphery itself, does not possess the arrogance of the great systematic philosophies, but it also does not share the desperate or skeptical position of the merely "edifying philosophies"—in Rortyan parlance Liberation Philosophy ought to be equally edifying, as *ethical critique*, but its intention is constructive of liberation, as *politics and strategy*. It does not bother us that Liberation Philosophy may be considered a type of edifying philosophy (as ethics), but it would be certainly rejected for its pretension of being constructive-revolutionary (by responsibility); it would be, in that case, a "great word" in Rorty's vocabulary.<sup>31</sup> Rorty is more Kierkegaardian (who criticized Hegel as "speculative", from *speculum*, mirror—and confronted him with "irony" and from the "absurdity" of "faith") than Liberation Philosophy, although Liberation Philosophy it also departed from Kierkegaard.<sup>32</sup> Rorty wants to maintain the "conversation of humanity" without falling into the rational arguments of systematic philosophy. Rorty's *Denkweg* is the astonishing and passionate critical path of a North American

generation which, departing from the analytic style, ends up in the continental, although now its tradition is skeptical, as a critique of metaphysics in the traditional Anglo-Saxon sense.

Shortly after his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* there appears a collection of articles under the title *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980*.<sup>33</sup> This work is extremely useful for our understanding of Rorty's philosophical project. In addition, it gives us great insight into the history of North American philosophy (not "American" as it is abusively written, thus cornering Latin Americans into becoming nothing). In fact, Rorty belongs to a philosophical elite, the new generation of postwar youth, which had, for example, Rudolph Carnap and Carl Hempel as its direct teachers.<sup>34</sup> From then until today, his philosophical style will be that of the Analytic philosophers<sup>35</sup>—be they positivists or post-positivists—but we could call it the second generation, influenced already by Quine, the second Wittgenstein, Sellars, or Davidson. In other words, the dogmas of a Hans Reichenbach<sup>36</sup> are no longer acceptable, who despised with an Olympian attitude all non-analytic philosophy.<sup>37</sup> It will be a long evolution that will allow Rorty to discover the value of North American pragmatism or anti-metaphysical continental philosophy (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida). The path was approximately the following:

1. Analytic philosophy started off as a way of moving from speculation to science....
2. The notion of *logical analysis* turned upon itself, and committed slow suicide, in Wittgensteinian *ordinary language*, Quinean, Kuhnian, and Sellarsian criticism of the purportedly *scientific* vocabulary....
3. Analytic philosophy was thus left without a genealogy, a sense of mission, or a *metaphilosophy*....
4. This development hardened the split between *analytic* and *Continental* philosophy by moving the study of Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, etc., out of philosophy departments.<sup>38</sup>

In a certain manner Rorty, without renouncing the style of analytic philosophy, open himself up toward a new field, a re-defined pragmatism—in the tradition of Peirce, Dewey, and Charles Morris<sup>39</sup>—and hermeneutics in the broad sense, in Nietzsche's path, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, et al. He thus adopts a post-analytic and post-philosophical critical position, in the traditional sense of the term philosophy (postmodern already?).

On the pragmatist's account, positivism was only a halfway stage in the development of such a culture [the post-philosophical culture] —the progress toward, as Sartre puts it, doing without God.... Pragmatism does not erect Science as an idol to fill the place once held by God. It views science as one genre of literature....<sup>40</sup>

Neither "irrationalism",<sup>41</sup> nor "skepticism"<sup>42</sup> frighten Rorty. On the contrary, he sets them off against analytic philosophy, which he knows so well from "within."<sup>43</sup>

His recent work, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*,<sup>44</sup> closes the cycle and is the most up to date synthesis that we have of Rorty's position. Here what is central is the attempt to do justice to two apparently opposed positions: the self-actualization of privacy's autonomy (the "private perfection" of a Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger) and public justice (Marx, Mill, Habermas, Rawls).<sup>45</sup>

Liberation Philosophy, it may be considered, although this would be a superficial consideration, would appear to coincide with Rorty in the discovery of the suffering of the Other, which is also one of the themes of his work:

In my utopia, human solidarity [contra Lyotard] would be seen... as imaginative ability to see *strange people* as fellow sufferers. Solidarity is... created. It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of *the pain and humiliation of other*, unfamiliar sorts of people.<sup>46</sup>

This solidarity, however, has its limits since Rorty has to affirm as his only point of reference the "belonging to a particular language community,"<sup>47</sup> which in his case is the North American community.<sup>48</sup> It is thus that, against the rationalist and scientific Enlightenment, Rorty raises the romanticism that re-discovers poetry, culture, and tradition: "The imagination, rather than reason, is the central human faculty."<sup>49</sup>

For Rorty, then, the discovery of the Other, in confrontation with Davidson's "metaphors", is a function of "ethnography, the journalist's report, the comic book, the docudrama, and, especially, the novel,"<sup>50</sup> and not one of philosophy. "Only poets, Nietzsche suspected, can truly appreciate contingency":<sup>51</sup> *contingency of language*. With this gesture he takes away from us reason as a weapon, the very same philosophical reason of our liberation.

Furthermore, "for Freud's account of unconscious fantasy shows us how to see every human life as a poem—or, more exactly, every human life not so racked by pain as to be unable to learn a language nor so immersed in toil as to have no leisure in which to generate a self-description. He sees every such life as an attempt to clothe itself in its own metaphors":<sup>52</sup> *contingency of selfhood*; but incommensurable identity, and even more dangerous still when armed with computerized, highly technical, atomic weapons, as in the Gulf War.

The vocabulary, in the third place, of the rationalist Enlightenment has become an obstacle for democratic societies. It is not a matter of rationally grounding liberalism, but of discovering a more appropriate language (a new metaphor): "The citizens of my liberal utopia would be people who had a sense of the contingency of their language of moral deliberation, and thus of their consciences, and thus of their community":<sup>53</sup> "we liberals." The question is not only of the public, but "the ironist's *private* sense of identification."<sup>54</sup> The ironist Rorty is a skeptic (in the good sense, like Kierkegaard) of "final vocabulary,"<sup>55</sup> and is a liberal ("cruelty is the worst thing they do").



He is a critic of everydayness ("The opposite of irony is common sense"<sup>56</sup>), but falls into it when he affirms it ethnocentrically. In the last instance, Rorty is a critic of the pretensions of the "common sense of the West"<sup>57</sup>—Hegel, for Rorty, was a good "dialectical ironist"—but in a metaphysical sense. Irony cannot be socialized ("Irony seems inherently a private matter"<sup>58</sup>). "The ironist takes the morally relevant definition of a person, a moral subject, to be *something that can be humiliated*. Her sense of human solidarity is based on a sense of a common danger, not on a common possession or a shared power."<sup>59</sup>

Kant was able to awaken in ethics the sense of rationality and duty without dependence on the accidents of history. Rorty, instead, pretends to awaken the sense of "pity for pain and remorse for cruelty,"<sup>60</sup> from out of solidarity with "intersubjective validity" for New Yorkers as well as for the inhabitants of Malaysia:<sup>61</sup> "We can have obligations by virtue of our sense of solidarity with any of these groups,"<sup>62</sup> from out of a set of "*we-intentions*," as in the pronouncement: "We all want..." where one's membership is not indicated by an "I want..." That "membership," for Rorty, is the fruit of "certain historical circumstances,"<sup>63</sup> and therefore "we are under no obligations other than the *we-intentions* (Sellars<sup>64</sup>) of the communities with which we identify."<sup>65</sup>

Rorty explains that "the ironist... thinks that what unites her with the rest of the species is not a common language but *just* susceptibility to pain and in particular to that special sort of pain which the brutes do not share with the human's humiliation. On her conception, human solidarity is not a matter of sharing a common truth or a common goal but of sharing a common selfish hope."<sup>66</sup>

For Rorty, "pain is non-linguistic: It is what we human beings have that ties us to the non-language-using beasts. So victims of cruelty, people who are suffering, do not have much in the way of a language. That is why there is no such things as the *voice of the oppressed*<sup>67</sup> or the *language of the victims*. The language the victims once used is not working anymore, and they are suffering too much to put *new words* together. So the job of putting their situation into language is going to have to be done for them by somebody else. The liberal novelist, poet, or journalist is good at that. The liberal theorist usually is not."<sup>68</sup>

Solidarity cannot be grounded or justified, according to Rorty, in any metaphysical consideration such as, for instance, the encountering in the Other of something that "resonates to the presence of this same thing in other human beings."<sup>69</sup> One does not need to look for this "commonality" beyond history or institutions. In reality we act in solidarity, says Rorty, "by nothing deeper than *contingent* historical circumstance."<sup>70</sup> But, where does "a moral obligation to feel a sense of solidarity with all other human beings" originate?<sup>71</sup>

Rorty thinks that there is a universality, that of "ironism,"<sup>72</sup> but because of the contingency of language, selfhood, and community this cannot have "universal validity."<sup>73</sup>

Rorty avers:

Our insistence on contingency, and our consequent opposition to ideas like *essence*, *nature*, and *foundation*, makes it impossible for us to retain the notion that some actions and attitudes are naturally inhuman.<sup>74</sup>

What remains is "nothing deeper than contingent historical circumstances"<sup>75</sup> in order to act solidaristically. And with this Rorty becomes more and more sensitive to diversity ("It is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences—of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like—as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation—the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of *us*"<sup>76</sup>). The ethnographic or novelistic description of this suffering or humiliation, and not philosophy, thinks Rorty, is what allows moral progress. Also the marginalized should be included within the horizon of the "we," in order not to be cruel. "It is the ethnocentrism of a *we* (*we liberals*) which is dedicated to enlarging itself, to creating an ever larger and more variegated *ethnos*."<sup>77</sup>

What is important in Rorty is that he does not wish to affirm too quickly "human solidarity with the identification with *humanity as such*,"<sup>78</sup> and this because, historically, the "we" that could encompass humanity ought to grow in its "own sensibility to the pain and humiliation *of others*."<sup>79</sup> It is a matter of separating the question "Do you believe and desire what I believe and desire?"—a representational question—from the question "Are you *suffering*?" This means to have consciousness of the distinction between wanting to look for a "final vocabulary" and wondering "if you are in pain."<sup>80</sup>

[In any event, if two "we-intentions" confront each other, in which one of them cruelty dominates ("cruelty is the worst thing we do"<sup>81</sup>) the other, Rorty would have some difficulty. In this case there are no "we intentions" which could encompass both, and therefore the solidarity or participation of one group does not have "reasons" in order to include the other (in such a way that they do not form a "we"). What is it that allows the overcoming of our own horizon of "we intentions,"<sup>82</sup> to open ourselves to solidarity with the Other, from another world, people, culture...? Rorty may, at the most, demonstrate an *ad intra* solidarity, but never an *ad extra* to other "we intentions." His immanentist contextualism and neopragmatism do not allow it. Even the "Black" is viewed as "one of us: a North American." And the foreign Mexican? To say that she is a "human being," writes Rorty: "is a weak, unconvincing explanation of a generous action."<sup>83</sup> "The position put forward in Part I of this book is incompatible with this universalistic attitude."<sup>84</sup> But that the horizon of a previous "we" could be extended to the people who were a "they" is a contingent and historical happening, thinks Rorty.

### 6.3 Rorty's Pragmatism and Liberation Philosophy

When reading, listening, and "talking" with Rorty himself, here in Mexico, about the two works to which I will refer, only then did I understand the opinion of some North American friends when they indicated the apparent similarity between Liberation Philosophy and North American pragmatism. It is time to see such a similarity, but also their great differences.

The articles in question are: "Feminism and Pragmatism" (Rorty, 1990) and "Human Hope and History in a Comic frame" (Rorty, 1991). The first of these, which enters because of its thematic (but not by intention, which is always and only the philosophy of language) within women's liberation philosophy,<sup>85</sup> can help us see the similarities. However, we ought not to deceive ourselves. Rorty occupies himself with the problem of feminism in order to show the the advantages that this movement could obtain by adopting his neopragmatism. *In reality, it is a reflection on the philosophy of language.* A text by Catherine MacKinnon is his support point, especially when she writes:

I'm evoking for women a role that we have yet to make, in the name of *a voice that, unsilenced, might say something that has never been heard.*<sup>86</sup>

From this positive assertion, Rorty will deduce the convenience of abandoning essentialist, representational, universalist, realist, teleological, or rationalist language.<sup>87</sup> It is a question of allowing the "logical" or "semantic space" to grow, until now dominated by males, so that a "femenine language" may be created. What is interesting is that Rorty captures perfectly that the oppressed situation of woman demands not to recognize the masculine semantic horizon as the language which could express the "nature" or "essence" of humanity in general. This leads Rorty to negate all rationality, universality, etc., and to assume a neopragmatic, ambiguous irrationalism:

This means that one will praise movements of liberation not for the accuracy of their diagnoses but for the imagination and courage of their proposals.... They abandon the contrast between superficial appearance and deep reality in favor of the contrast between a painful present and a possibly less painful, dimly seen, future.<sup>88</sup>

What remains for movements of liberation are, then, "imagination" and "courage," and they ought, therefore, to renounce "reason,"<sup>89</sup> for "the function of philosophy is instead to *clear*" the path that in reality prophets and poets traverse.<sup>90</sup> And taking an expression from Marilyn Frye, Rorty cites that "it takes courage to overcome a mortal dread of being outside the field of vision of the arrogant eye."<sup>91</sup> Rorty ratifies this when he affirms:

If you find yourself a slave, do not accept your masters' descriptions of *the real*; do not work within the *boundaries of their moral universe.*<sup>92</sup>

This is the question that in Liberation Philosophy we have placed under the thematic Totality-Exteriority. Thus, I think, Rorty steps over the limits of critique when he rejects *every possible reason*, or every sense of reality. The boundaries of his moral world, his reasons, or his descriptions of the real ought not be confused with the ethical and the rational, nor with reality in its critical sense, without falling into metaphysical essentialism which Habermas himself has already clearly superseded.<sup>93</sup> I believe that the background theme to be discussed with Rorty (and with Apel, but precisely in the opposite sense) is that of the reach of "reason." If by reason is understood the *limited* comprehension of the ruling totaliy, the representational horizon as dominating semantic system, then Rorty has reason in thinking that its pretension to universal validity has to be rejected—because it is no more than a particular reason which has been totalized. But Apel is clearly forewarned of this objection since he takes recourse to a communication community, always already presupposed by every seriously performed communicative speech act (and we leave aside in what sense we mean "argumentative" in order not to exasperate Rorty). In Apers case, reason does not close upon itself in terms of the *acceptance of the established or valid agreement*. Instead, rationality is essentially played out in the continuous aperture to the "acceptance" of new words, languages, or reasons, which are more valid because they are intersubjectively better proved and justified (in the case of feminism, this will "demonstrate," through its praxis of liberation, the "reasons" of its "reality," constructed historically and with novelty, indispensable and unique, *new*). It is a rationality of "discourse," which emerges from the practical construction of reality (if we speak of "human reality"). It is a rationality which is non-metaphysical, in its naive sense. Apers "transcendentality," however, can make him lose the need and urgency for a more detailed description of the empirical, always changing, and new implementation of the semantic content of the now and here valid—this would be the "level B," empirical, hermeneutic of the architectonic of his discourse ethics. Liberation philosophy accepts perfectly the non-ultimate (absolute) validity of what is held to be valid, truthful, essential, or universal by the ruling, hegemonic, and dominating Totality, in which we are then in agreement with Rorty, a matter which was demonstrated by Levinas. But we are against Rorty when he thinks that the negation of the universal validity claims of a concrete, dominating (such as "machism" or "bourgeois ideology," which he rejects as a great word) agreement, is at the same time the negation of a dialectical, diachronic concept which unfolds and proceeds from the "rational" to the "real." Women's reality actualizes and manifests itself (in and through historical praxis) historically, not as if it were incrementally revealing aspects of an ahistorical or eternal essence, but inasmuch as it "phenomenizes" itself in a concrete, practical, historical, changing, dialectical world. This is the "realization" (more than mere "production") of what "woman" *becomes as it*

*produces itself* (a *Selbst-herzeugung*, Marx would say) .

It is in this way that we may entirely accept Rorty's expression: "What looked like nature [for the oppressing machist language] begins to look like culture [for the feminist]." <sup>94</sup> This, however, instead of negating reason or valid knowledge, only puts in question the alleged "naturalness" of a semantic Totality of the ruling language, from the Exteriority of a person who slowly creates a new language which confronts the prior (the machist) as an historical and cultural product (and not "natural"). <sup>95</sup> This then is a dialectical, historical process, just as "reason" itself is. <sup>96</sup> As I wrote almost twenty years ago in my book *Philosophy of Liberation*:

The ineffable, wordless "saying"... that springs from the exteriority of the oppressed questions the fetishist absolutization of a semiotic system.... <sup>98</sup> The interjection as exposition of *the pain of the oppressed*, <sup>99</sup> the protest of women's liberation, the rebellion of the young man against his teachers, are messages, words, revelation, or metaphoric apocalypse, for they take us beyond the spoken word toward the one who speaks as a distinct exteriority.... A semiotic of liberation should describe the process of the passage of a given system of signs to a *new order* that surges forth when the *old order* is surpassed. <sup>100</sup>

I think Rorty does not give sufficient reason to abandon the "rational" horizon—which however ought not to be "totalized," in Martin Jay's sense, by the hands of the dominator, so as to not abandon the work of liberation to a few souls filled with a pure sensibility of courage or blind praxis. The negation of "a" certain illegitimate use of reason (essentialist, "metaphysical") and "a" dominating language does not negate the necessity of an affirmation of a "new" moment of rationality's exercise, of a "new" liberating language. Rorty identifies the dominating reason with "historical reason," which is always dialectical, and thus negates its capacity to create new "logical spaces": *liberating* reason continuous y opens itself to *new* futures. <sup>101</sup>

But it is now, when going to the second work which Rorty presented in Mexico, "Social Hope and History as Comic Frame," that our philosopher starts manifesting a deep performative self-contradiction or, simply, inconsistencies. In his reflection on women, he took them seriously, and thus saw the need for a new language that would occupy the "logical space" feminist liberation would create. Before the poor, the worker, the exploited peripheral countries, instead of being in solidarity with this new subject and attempting to find a new language to speak its sufferings (*pain*), he closes the door. He does this, interestingly, basing himself on the work of an exiled Argentinian (as I am) who now lives in England, Ernesto Laclau. <sup>102</sup> Rorty's text, selected and perhaps written *ex professo* in order to be read in Mexico, is an apology against marxism in the name of contextualist neopragmatism, which takes as "proof" the "fact" of 1989. Laclau or Kenneth Burke are anti-Marx, Vaclav Havel is the anti-Lenin.

The “narration” begins by considering recent history, starting with the events that were unleashed on 9 November 1989, and arrives at conclusions on the immediate political events as though they were self-evident or irrefutable (since “facts” do not speak by themselves, it is the “interpretation” of these which speaks, as does Rorty’s). Rorty’s ironical nominalist practice tends to take all meaning away from the “Great Words” of the “Great Narratives”<sup>103</sup> which had been used by the left, such as capitalism, working class, bourgeois ideology:

Since capitalism can no longer function as the name of the source of human misery,<sup>104</sup> nor *the working class* as the name of the redemptive power, we need to find new names for these things. But until some new meta-narrative replaces the Marxist, we shall have to characterize the source of human misery in such untheoretical and banal ways as *greed, selfishness, and hatred*.<sup>105</sup>

Rorty finds now a hero, a symbol of this post-1989 epoch: Vaclav Havel,<sup>106</sup> There is no longer the “incarnation of logos,” nor “capitalism or bourgeois ideology as the name of *The Great Bad Thing*.”<sup>107</sup> Marx’s discourse, as so many other apocalyptic narratives, disappears from the Rortyan horizon as if in a certain “End of History”; although Rorty does not accept Fukayama’s interpretation. he does accept Laclau’s.

Feminists can use terms like feminism, male domination, nature, culture, or Dewey’s “masculine experience of things.”<sup>108</sup> while the economically and politically oppressed must resign themselves to “banalize the entire vocabulary”<sup>109</sup> of oppression. In other words, Rorty deploys his entire anti-essentialist argumentation against Marxist terminology, and thus simply leaves the exploited of the “capitalist system” (horrible expression of a “Great Narrative,” before which Rorty’s irony must feel sorry for such great naivete) —the workers, the marginalized, the poor or miserable masses (in Latin America there are more than 100 million person living under the level of absolute poverty), the peripheral nations—he leaves them. I say, *without words, without language*. The Rortyan radical critique to language does not direct itself against the dominant language (of Hayek’s or Friedman’s neoliberal and conservative market economy, for example) but, instead, against the beaten, criticized, and stammering language of the poor and exploited (to which Marx has still a lot to say<sup>110</sup>).

Applauding Habermas, Rorty speaks of the “logic of the self-regulation of a market economy.”<sup>111</sup> Franz Hinkelammert<sup>112</sup> has shown the disguising and mystifying character of this concept. Now Rorty develops his own narrative on the “Great Good Thing” which is called the market economy, but in his ears this is a non-metaphysical, non-essentialist expression. Again, as in the case of feminism, the theme is not that of the liberation from *pain* since 1989 (as is the case in Liberation Philosophy), but that all these events are an occasion for the “narrator” (Rorty) to illustrate an example in the exercise of the philosophy of language; that is, of how a language can disappear (that of the Marxist

left), and how it would take an unacceptable and untenable essentialism to try to revive it. This manifests, as is evident, profoundly political intentions, especially if we consider that Rorty is writing this paper precisely while the Gulf War is being waged, and there is no reference to this event of infinite "cruelty," which demanded from him "solidarity" with those victims of thousands of tons of bombs dropped by "we Americans." The worst is that, in this case, there is no pretension, nor are positive steps taken, toward the reconstruction of language, as in the case of feminism.

A discussion would still be relevant on what "liberal democrat" could mean.<sup>113</sup> We cannot refer to the long tradition that is inaugurated by John Locke, and which culminates with John Rawls. Both, in the end, must postulate political equality (freedom of the citizen before the law), but both admit economic inequality (which in Rawls calls for the subterfuge of a second principle of "the difference"). In reality the liberal democrat must overcome this contradiction: How to govern a *majority*, who in economic inequality are "the poor" (Great Word) or the "least lucky" (word of a more "discrete Narrative," that is to say, more liberal)?

In Rorty's narrative he never takes the first person ("I") when he speaks of pain. He also does not consider the suffering corporeality itself of an ethics, of an economics of need-work as reproduction of human *life*. His philosophy always remains as a philosophy of language (pain as a non-representational moment, as a counter-linguistic example!), against every "final vocabulary"; as a provisional language of narratives; all the same, a "conversation" without great pretensions, apparently.

Liberation Philosophy can thus appreciate that Rorty raises the question, as a central problem: *Are you suffering?*<sup>114</sup> The goal of coming to an agreement with the other as to what vocabulary ought to be employed with respect to the question *Are you in pain?* is a central point in his exposition. A "conversation" between Rortyan neopragmatism and liberation philosophy could be established on the grounds of this theme. But the "intention" of that conversation would immediately distinguish and separate us: for Rorty the conversation ought to deal with *language*; for the Philosophy of Liberation we ought to talk and do something about *the suffering of the Other*, about the *cause* of this pain and the way to abolish it and overcome it.

I think that Rorty, in agreement with his project of the last thirty years (at least since the first article, in 1965), in the end, has remained caught in the net—to talk with Foucault—of his own point of departure: the philosophy of language. Relentless critic from out of the very logic of analytic thinking, his only possibility for philosophical "exercise" is the "conversation," which speaks with some on different themes concerning language itself. Eventually he is critical, in a cutting manner, of certain other languages of the left which are located at the economic and political level: he leaves the poor without words.

"Are you suffering?" If in this conversation the other would respond: "Yes, I suffer... I suffer because I am tortured, because I am beaten when our union marches in protest, because I have nothing to eat, because I have nothing to clothe myself with, because I have no roof, because I cannot give my children the possibility of education. Yes I suffer...." I believe that the conversation may, honestly and seriously, only continue thanks to two questions: first, *Why do you suffer?* and second, and inevitable if Rortyan solidarity is to be serious, *How can I help?* But, in order to seriously and honestly ask these questions, it is necessary to have a disposition to understand, comprehend, reason what the other tells me. It would be necessary to use reason in order to interpret a meaning, a referent. Furthermore, the description of the *type* and the causes (the *why*) of suffering demands to move from personal and private structures (ontogenetic or biographical) to socio-historical and public structures (phylogenetic or economic-political). It is precisely here where we must abandon *mere* conversation with Rorty, and to engage ourselves in the practical use of reason.<sup>115</sup> It seems as though Rorty found himself in the situation of Sartre in *Les Mots*, or as the popular Italian song says: "Parole, parole, parole...." In the peripheral world (the so-called Third World, to which Rorty makes no reference, the 75 percent of humanity!), the poor, the miserable, the marginals of the metropolises in peripheral capitalism in India, Africa, Latin America, every "conversation" cannot evade the fact: "I am hungry! Help me!" Solidarity manifests itself necessarily as action, as praxis, as politics, as strategic and tactical reason—having been in its beginning communicative action (for Habermas), face-to-face (for Levinas), from out the perspective of utopia as a transcendental regulative or situational idea of Marx's "community of a free humanity"

No one can banalize or trivialize their own hunger; much less can the "interpellation" that emerges from the suffering of the poor be taken in a comic spirit (the matter is tragic). Nor can the languages which attempt to explain the causes of their suffering (like Marx) and, which above all, strive for their practical elimination be trivialized.

To conclude I will cite a Great Word of a Great Narrative, from Marx, who today is not in fashion in the North American universities:

Suddenly, however, there arises the voice of the worker, which had previously been stifled in the sound and fury of the production process.... You may be a model citizen [exclaims the worker], perhaps a member of the R.S.P.C.A [an association for the protection of animals in England], and you may be in the odour of sanctity as well; but the thing you represent when you come face to face with me has no heart in its breast.... I demand the value of my commodity.<sup>116</sup>

I believe this text still makes sense in Chicago (especially if one speaks of an Afro-American) or Los Angeles (especially if one speaks of a Hispanic); in



New Dehli, Nairobi, or São Paulo. This "language" has relevance where there is "capital": that is, where a worker sells his labor for a salary which produces a profit—more precisely, as Marx would say, surplus value. Its effective relevance, its contemporaneity (reality?), encompasses the entire earthly globe (so as to not talk about "universality" and thus awaken the process of anti-meta-physical, anti-essentialist immunization).

## Notes

1. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 22.
2. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 198.
3. Rorty thinks that "liberals are the people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we do" (Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. xv). The problem resides in being able to come to an agreement as to what cruelty is. For example, is it cruelty to throw hundreds of tons of bombs on the enemy and to kill thousands of enemies in order to "save lives" ("our boys"), as was the case in the Gulf war of 1991 or in the Panama "invasion" in 1990—this last one an invasion of the same type as the one Iraq carried out in Kuwait? In the first case the United States struggles to "liberate" Kuwait; in the second it occupies Panama without there being a liberator that might throw out the invader? What type of "solidarity" can be ethically demanded by Kuwaitis or Panamanians to United States citizens if these last ones are participants of another "*we intention*"? Perhaps, thinks Rorty, to solve this dilemma means to transform oneself into either a theologian or a metaphysician. Were this the case, then the entire peripheral world (the old Third World) would be criticized by Rorty for being "theological" or "metaphysical" when using reason against the genocide that we suffer today in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.
4. Rorty *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 228.
5. Rorty, ed., *The Linguistic Turn* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 9, shows that Bergmann used that expression for the first time.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 24ff.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 3. Rorty shows, as we have indicated above, the circularity into which analytic or linguistic philosophy fell.
9. See, for instance, Paul Ricoeur.
10. See, for example, Emmanuel Levinas.
11. See Antonio Gramsci.
12. Ethically, a toothache because one has a cavity is not the same as the suffering which is "produced" by an act of torture (for instance, as when the torturer pulls out a tooth from a political prisoner in order to "produce" a certain "suffering" so as to obtain certain information by attrition, and thus "treason" to his comrades.
13. It is known, and we will return to this theme, that for Marx the "rational" problem consists in knowing the *origin* or *cause of pain*, the "misery" of the worker, to which he says: "We saw in Part IV, when analysing the production of

relative surplus-value, that within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productive of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; that all means for the development of production undergo a dialectical inversion so that they become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate [*emfremden*] from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the juggernaut of capital. But all methods for the production of surplus-value are at the same time methods of accumulation, and every extension of accumulation becomes, conversely, a means for the development of these methods. It follows therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the situation of the worker, be his pay high or low, must grow worse. Finally, the law which always holds the relative surplus population or industrial reserve army in equilibrium with the extent and energy of accumulation rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. It makes an accumulation of misery a necessary condition, corresponding to the accumulation of wealth. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital." *Capital*, Vol. 1, pp. 798-99; *MEGA* II, 6, pp. 587-88. This is the "rational" question par excellence, which would appear not to preoccupy Rorty, but which to us is of the utmost importance, even if we take it in the strictest sense of North American pragmatic philosophy: Marx is *useful* to us because he allows us to respond to the question that "hurt" us in our flesh, the carnality of the poor and exploited, the sick with cholera.

14. Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn*.

15. *Ibid.*, p.1.

16. *Ibid.* For Apel this is Rorty's permanent argumentative strategy: "Im Grunde ist Rortys Argumentationsstrategie sehr einfach: Geht es um die Frage der normativen Maßstäbe oder Kriterien einer kritischen Beurteilung oder Legitimation moralisch-politischer Ordnungen, so wird diese Frage *als metaphysisches Scheinproblem* zurückgewiesen" (K.-O. Apel, *Diskurs und Verantwortung* [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988], p. 400; Apel dedicates the entire section 1.3.2 of the last chapter of this book to Rorty. Since metaphysical or essentialist problems are *a priori* discardable, it is concluded that the argumentation of a rationalist or analytic philosopher can just the same be discarded.

17. Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn*, p. 2.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

19. Karl-Otto Apel, in contrast, radicalizes the presupposed criteria and shows how everyone presupposes always already a "communication community." Rorty's method is destructive; Apel's is reconstructive.

20. Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn*, p. 39.

21. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

22. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
24. The strategy, as it can be seen, is in a certain sense similar to that of Apel. Apel also uses analytic philosophy in order to show its achievements—in contrast to Rorty—but just as well its limits. Apel achieves this by appealing to certain continental philosophers (for example, by articulating Wittgenstein through Heidegger, or Morris and Peirce through Gadamer) in order to arrive at the always already presupposed (the “communication community”), but in an entirely different way to how Rorty uses the “edifying” philosophers.
25. On Levinas's view on Husserl's theory of representation see *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973). Against Husserl, Levinas wrote: “But we are far from thinking that one starts with representation as a non-conditioned condition! Representation is *bound* to a very different 'intentionality,' which we are endeavoring to approach throughout this analysis” Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), (p. 126). This is a point of departure for Liberation Philosophy: the Other as other who is beyond every initial “representation” (see *Philosophy of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), pp. 39ff (2.4), and pp. 120ff (4.2.)). Only through “revelation” or “analogy” (initially) can be “comprehended” the word or speech of the other. Rorty's critique of “representation” has been subsumed by Liberation Philosophy as a critique of the Totality—a critique of *hegemonic* reason, reason of domination, one-dimensionally closed upon itself, to say it with Marcuse—but not as critique of *historical* reason or liberation.
26. See Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), the chapter on “Meaning and Representation,” pp. 48ff. See my work *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973), Chap. 6: “El método de la ética” (pp. 129-95).
27. This is presented in Chapter 4 of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* where he deals with Quine and Sellars.
28. Rorty *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* Chap. VIII, 2, pp. 365ff.
29. This anti-epistemological concept was suggested to Rorty by M. Oakeshott *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind* [London: Bowes and Bowes, 1957]. For Oakeshott “conversation” is the quasi-poetic act through which a group of persons, mutually conscious of their belonging to a community (*universitas*), are united eventually from out of diverse life paths, in order to traverse a stretch of life in mutual respect and solidarity (without need of either strategic or tactically common interests). It is a gratuitous act.
30. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* p. 367.
31. Rorty writes magnificent lines on these themes (*ibid.*, pp. 367 -68).
32. See my *Método para una filosofía de la liberación*, paragraph 20: “La primera síntesis de la crítica, pero nuevamente teologizante: Sören Kierkegaard” (pp. 149ff).
33. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*.
34. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* p. xiii.
35. It is noteworthy, however, that Rorty does not articulate the analytic-pragmatic line, represented, for instance, by Austin (in *How to Do Things with Words?*) or Searle (*Speech Acts*). This is important in order to understand Rorty's “closure” within an analytic propositional (of sentences) tradition and not within a practical-communicative (of statements) one. See chapter 2, above.
36. See for example his work *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

37. This attitude of "scientific" arrogance also took root in Latin America after World War II, and, as we already noted, assumed control of many educational and philosophical organisms since the sixties, thus coinciding with the military dictatorships, since this type of philosophy possessed a particular "blindness" to philosophy as practice, ethics, or politics, allowing it to "live" without "seeing" the tortures, suffering, injustices, which are taken as mere empirical experiences without philosophical relevance or pertinence to philosophy. Rorty writes: "The great emigrés—Carnap, Hempel, Feigl, Reichenbach, Bergmann, Tarski—began to be treated with the respect they deserved. Their disciples began to be appointed to, *and to dominate*, the most prestigious departments. Departments which did not go along with this trend began to lose their prestige" (Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 214).
38. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
39. Charles Morris can be considered the first pragmatist philosopher who brings together analytic philosophy and pragmatism. It is possible that the early discovery of Peirce (1961) by Rorty might have led him to view skeptically the whole analytic tradition.
40. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* 1982. p. xliii.
41. See especially Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*. pp. 160ff.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 176ff; pp. 181ff.
43. It is clear, however, that the later Habermas's or Apel's critiques would not be so easy to answer since these stem from the continental tradition which Rorty does not dominate as well as the analytic. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. 206-207; Karl-Otto Apel, *Diskurs und Verantwortung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), pp. 161ff, 176ff, 381ff, 394ff, 399-413, 426ff. where Apel gives Rorty a central position.
44. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*.
45. "This book tries to show how things look if we drop the demand for a theory which unifies the public and private, and are content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, *yet forever incommensurable*" (*ibid.*, p. xv).
46. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
47. This is also Habermas's consideration; *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 135-37. This point is of extreme importance in terms of a North-South dialogue.
48. Apel tells us that during a debate with Rorty in Vienna, he responded to the question about the grounding of moral principles by stating: *Its just common sense, I am just an American, We have just to persuade the others that our way is the right one*. Then I asked him [Apel], somewhat scandalized: "Could I simply say: I am just German. It's just common sense." With this I wanted to mean that "Common sense" was what among us, during the Third Reich, was called the healthy feeling of the people." Apel, *Diskurs und Verantwortung*, p. 409. For us Latin Americans, the question is even more acute because "immanentist contextualism" is dangerous not because it could *have been Nazi*; rather, it is dangerous because *it is actually* the point of departure of the invasion of Grenada, Nicaragua.
49. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 7.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

53. Ibid., p. 61. Commenting on the article "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy." which originally appeared in M. Peteson and R. Vaugh, eds. *The Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press. 1987), and is reprinted in Rorty's *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers, Volume One* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1991), pp. 175-96, Apel quotes Rorty: "But such a philosopher [philosopher of liberal democracy] is not thereby justifying these institutions by reference to more fundamental premises, but the reverse: He or she is putting politics first and tailoring a philosophy to suit" (R. Rorty. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 178). Apel comments, "Here it is hard for me not to make the following comment: approximately that was what many philosophers in fact did during the Third Reich" (Apel, *Diskurs und Verantwortung*, p. 403). Again Apel criticizes Rorty as "Nazi." Apel and Habermas are rationalists before the *terror of nazism*. Liberation Philosophy affirms an anti-eurocentric historical reason before the *terror of North American power* (but also before Latin American *populism*, which coincides with nazism in its profound, anti-rational ambiguity). Rorty, in his immanentist contextualism, turns himself before our eyes into something extremely disquieting, someone may even use a "great word": a liberal democrat in the United States may support the "contras" in Nicaragua and not criticize the invasion of Panama. There is a certain solidarity with the "American way of life" which is deathly, unjust, and tyrannical for a "Latin American way of life." The *Lebenswelt* as such can never be the criterion of rationality (although it may be affirmed reflexively).
54. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 68.
55. Ibid., p. 73.
56. Ibid., p. 74: "The ironist is a nominalist and a historicist." He only speaks of *Weltanschauung*, perspective, dialectic, conceptual framework, historical epoch, language game, redescription.
57. Ibid., p. 77.
58. Ibid., p. 87.
59. Ibid., p. 91.
60. Ibid., p. 192.
61. However, he destroys his own bridges to a dialogue with the inhabitants of the Pacific once the "we intentions" of Rorty the "American" are articulated as an incommensurable point of departure.
62. Ibid., p. 195.
63. Ibid.
64. See Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968).
65. Rorty *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 198. "That is the ethnocentrism of a *we (we liberals)* which is dedicated to enlarging itself, to creating an even larger and more variegated *ethos*."
66. Ibid., p. 92.
67. As we will see later, he will contradictorily approve this expression in the mouth of MacKinnon.
68. Ibid., p. 94. This is the historical function of Liberation Philosophy.
69. Ibid., p. 189.
70. Ibid., p. 189.
71. Ibid., p. 190.
72. Ibid., p. xv: "a liberal utopia: one in which ironism, in the relevant sense, is univesal."
73. Ibid., p. 67.
74. Ibid., p. 189.

75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p. 192.
77. Ibid., p. 198.
78. Ibid., p. 198.
79. Ibid., p. 198.
80. Ibid., p. 198.
81. Ibid., p. 197.
82. See Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, p. 222 "It is a conceptual fact that people constitute a community, a *we*, by virtue of thinking of each other as one of us, and by willing a common good *not* under the species of benevolence, but by willing it as one of us, or from a moral point of view." Sellars identifies the "we-consciousness" with Christian *caritas*.
83. Rorty *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 191.
84. Ibid.
85. See my work "La erótica latinoamericana" in *Filosofía Ética de la Liberación* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1977) Vol. III, pp. 25-121.
86. Cited in Rorty, p. 231.
87. It is interesting to note that Rorty criticizes the position of Hispanic woman, Maria Lugones, as "an example of a feminist theorist who sees a need for a general philosophical theory of oppression and liberation. She says, for example, that 'the ontological or metaphysical possibility of liberation remains to be argued, explained, uncovered' ([Maria Lugones] "Structure/Antistructure and Agency under Oppression," *Journal of Philosophy*, 87, October 1990, p. 502). I should prefer to stick to merely empirical possibilities of liberation." Richard Rorty, "Feminism and Pragmatism" (Tanner Lectures on Human Values, University of Michigan, December 7, 1990). *Michigan Quarterly Review* 30, 2 (Spring 1991), p. 254, note 22). This essay has also appeared in Richard Rorty, et al., eds. *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Vol. 13, 1992 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), pp. 3-35.
88. Rorty "Feminism and Pragmatism", pp. 239-40.
89. The strategic, tactical, and "decadent" use of *reason* will be that exercised by, for instance, the Pentagon in order to carry out "invasions." Rorty denies that he himself is the "comfort of metaphysics" of the "great words," but with the same gesture he takes reason away from the oppressed.
90. Rorty "Feminism and Pragmatism", p. 240. In any event, just as Rorty, we have always shown that philosophy, in great measure, has the labor of clearing the obstacles that block thinking. I wrote some time ago: "The pertinence of a philosophy can be shown by its *negative critical destructive capacity*. It would seem that the Philosophy of Liberation has a tremendous destructive potential because it can not only assume critical methods, but it can in addition criticize those critical methods.... [The Philosophy of Liberation] *clarifies* the praxis of militants in the process of liberation" (*Philosophy of Liberation*, 5.9.5.51 pp. 179-80).
91. Rorty, "Feminism and Pragmatism", p. 240. We have also referred on numerous occasions to the metaphor of the eye. It should also be remembered that Marx spoke of "exteriority" as an eye: See *Manuscripts of 44*, II; MEW; EB I, pp. 523-24). On exteriority in Marx's see my *La producción teórica de Marx* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1985), pp. 137-48, 337-43; *Hacia un Marx desconocido* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1988), pp. 61-68, 290-97, 365-72; *El último Marx* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1990), pp. 138-44, 336-85.
92. Rorty, "Feminism and Pragmatism", p. 241. On the back cover of our work

*Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, Vol. II, we wrote: "The moralities of the past are moralities of the law; they applauded past heroes, and lived from their glories and killed, and continue killing the present and future heroes of future nations. This *anti-ethics* lifts itself, as consciousness, against all of them and declares them immoral." All of what we have written over the last twenty years indicates this theme: the *without sense* (for the ruling morality) of the oppressed's liberation praxis.

93. In Jürgen Habermas *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, pp. 28ff. We can affirm that liberation philosophy has a concept of metaphysics or reality in the Habermasian sense of post-metaphysical. The totality of the system of meanings, of a phenomenal "world," encircles what Rorty denominates "the master's control over the language spoken by the slaves—their ability to make the slave think of his pain as fated and even somehow deserved, something to be borne rather than resisted" (Rorty, "Feminism and Pragmatism", p. 244). In the Totality what appears as real, as the essential (in Rorty's sense) is grounded and justified through the very same ruling semantic system: "The one-dimensionality of everyday discourse, the impossibility of discovering a sense other [MacKinnon, for example] than the one that has been imposed [sexist language], the only sense accepted by all, the one *everyone says*, is converted into a gigantic tautology" (Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, 4.2.5, p. 120).
94. Rorty, "Feminism and Pragmatism", p. 232.
95. Apel, for instance, argues even more adamantly. For instance, he will show that *pacta sunt servanda* is an ethical principle accepted factually by every possible *Lebenswelt*. This will show the weakness of Rorty's pretended "strategy of argumentation's immunity" (See Apel, *Diskurs und Verantwortung*, p. 400ff). The "basic consensus" of a *konkrete Lebensform*, or *common sense*, is not sufficient in intercultural dialogue, i.e., North-South. One must look for the presupposed conditions of every cultural everydayness (Totality) which allow for the laying of a bridge for the establishment of rational dialogue. This does not negate but affirms the Exteriority of the Other. It calls for careful solicitude for the other's "interpellation."
96. The problem is that Rorty understand "reason" only in a totalized sense, as the reason of the dominator. He does not admit into the definition of reason, in its content, a dialectical, diachronic, historical sense. For Liberation Philosophy reason is "historical reason." In other words, inasmuch as we reason or argue, reason can open itself up to other "reasons." See chapter 2, above.
97. Levinas speaks of *le Dire* (saying) as a verb, as the other's self-presentation in her carnality, in the possibility of her living trauma, in contrast to *le dit* (the said), as works which express facts, things with sense.
98. This representational Totality is what Rorty negates.
99. It should be kept in mind that the question of pain is central to Rorty's thought, but with a different sense than that it has for the Philosophy of Liberation. For Rorty pain expresses a non-representational realm—it is a question, again, of a *philosophy of language*. Pain for Liberation Philosophy is the reality product of the injustice that is suffered in the carnality of the oppressed. It is thus an ethical question which calls me to be a responsible person (I am the one that ought-to-take-charge [*spondere* in Latin] of the other).
100. Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, 4.2, pp. 123-25.
101. Rorty too quickly dismisses Sabinas Lovibond's position, who refuses to abandon Enlightenment universalism (see "Feminism and Postmodernity," *New Left*

*Review*, Winter 1989, p. 12; (Rorty, "Feminism and Pragmatism", p. 236). Liberation Philosophy might be able contribute some useful insights to this debate. It would appear that for Rorty "objectivity" necessarily stands in opposition to liberating reason: "We do not pretend to be *objective* concerning this. We are trying to represent woman's *point of view*." From expressions like this, Rorty concludes that it is not necessary to be objective, but instead we must be pragmatic (in Dewey's sense). If objectivity refers to the representational "machist" world, then it is impossible to be in agreement with such objectivity. This, however, does not deny that we ought, through a better established intersubjective agreement, to bring about a new objectivity, which hitherto has not been considered. "The point of view" of the oppressed can never, initially, coincide with the dominating objectivity. In Rorty there is a lack of certain distinctions that Liberation Philosophy has developed and constructed in a "pragmatic" sense (now in an Aristotelian sense).

102. Ernesto Laclau *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* (London: Verso, 1990). In his introductory talk, Rorty advised us Latin Americans to abandon Marxist great narratives, at least when we present our thinking to North Americans. This discourse, he suggested, has lost all of its validity. It would be interesting, instead, to compare the book by Laclau with that by Enrique Semo, *Crónica de un derrumbe. Las revoluciones inconclusas del Este* (Mexico: Grijalvo-Proceso, 1991), where he concludes: "The barbarity of Stalinism and the failures of real existing socialism ought not to be translated into apologies of a system, such as capitalism, which multiplies the productive capacities and exults individual freedom, but which consumes and destroys millions of men and women as if they were disposable containers" (p. 235).
103. With respect to feminist prophetism, and with great reason, Rorty did not label it a Great Narrative; instead, he was inspired to his own poetry, prophetism, and courage. Now, in contrast, he uses the same argument in order to destroy all proletarian or Third World "prophetism" (a theme fact entirely non-existent in Rorty, although he knew he was coming to Mexico to read his work).
104. It would be good to know how Rorty arrives at this conclusion, knowing that he is presenting this in a philosophical institute in Mexico, that is, in Latin America, in the periphery which suffers United States imperialism (a "Great Word" for Rorty). Prof. Bolivar Echeverria, who was present at the event, raised a well-aimed and spirited critique against Rorty's presentation. He practically said (with respect to the comparisons Rorty made between Darwin and Sartre, James and Nietzsche) that if, in our university environment, someone were to express such suggestions, they would be dismissed as naive.
105. Rorty, "Social Hope and History as Comic Frame", p. 13. Rorty adds: "One reason why all of us in the international left are going to have weed terms like *capitalism*, *bourgeois culture* (and, alas, even *socialism*) out of our vocabulary is that our friends in Central and Eastern Europe will look at us incredulously if we continue to employ them" (p. 18). Later he equates "Hitler and Mao—to avoid imitating them" (*ibid.*, p. 25).
106. When Havel came through Mexico in 1991, there appeared in the press (*La Jornada*) an article: "Havel's naivetes." In Mexico he declared that Czechoslovakia admires the people of the United States because they saved his nation on three occasions: in the First World War, the Second, and beginning with 1989. Havel said this in Mexico, a country which in 1848 lost half of its territory to the United States, and a little after the United States (like Iraq in



Kuwait) carried out its Panama invasion. Havel travelled to Nicaragua, where he compared his government to that of President Violeta Chamorro, entirely forgetting that Czechoslovakia was invaded by Stalinist tanks and Nicaragua suffered an undeclared war, for ten years, waged by the United States, and not by the Soviet Union. In other words, Chamorro succeeded the Sandinistas, who had struggled against an invasion, just as the Czechs had struggled against stalinism. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is as though Havel were a Stalinist. But Havel is a great poet, and this is why he is admired by Rorty and all of us, but he is far from understanding rationally (therein lies the danger of a narrative without rationality!) —as Rorty is also—the peripheral world, the Third World, poor and impoverished by the “Great Word” of the “Great Narrative,” such as is the neoliberal word of market economy, free competition, of which Hayek speaks, or of Nozick’s minimal state: “The Great *Good* Thing” presupposed in Rorty’s every conversation. It is interesting that Rorty says that “he feels a guilty relief by the fact that they were not born [his generation of honorable, white males] women or homosexual, nor black” (Rorty “Feminism and Pragmatism”), but he forgets to add, “nor Latin American, African, or Asian.” This negativity does not even cross his imagination.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

108. This last phrase is cited by Rorty, “Feminism and Pragmatism” “Philosophy and Democracy”, p. 241 (John Dewey, in *Middle Works of John Dewey* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976-83). Vol. II, p. 145).

109. Rorty. “Social Hope and History as Comic Frame” p. 2. “As one argument in favor of such banalization, I can invoke Laclau’s claim that *the transformation of thought—from Nietzsche to Heidegger, from pragmatism to Wittgenstein—has decisively undermined philosophical essentialism*” (*ibid.*, pp. 2-3).

110. I asked Rorty at the philosophy institute in Mexico: “Pragmatically, in Dewey’s sense, speaking, if someone is in misery, in absolute poverty, with a salary of 50 dollars a month, with five children, living in house made of cardboard, illiterate, living next to garbage dumps, with a daughter turned to prostitution, etc., which language will be, “pragmatically,” more useful: either the banalization or the serious consideration of Marx’s language which tries to rationally explain the *causes* of their pain, and who pronounced the “law of accumulation” thus: the accumulation of wealth is the reverse of the accumulation of misery?” Rorty could not but answer that Marx’s language would be more useful. With this the entire question of Liberation Philosophy becomes clear, at least from the point of view of Dewey’s “pragmatism”!

111. Rorty, “Social Hope and History as Comic Frame”, p. 12.

112. Franz Hinkelammert in *Critica a la razón utópica* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1990) shows the “metaphysics” (in the essentialist and realist sense of Rorty) that underlie a “market of perfect competition” or the “self-regulation of a market economy.”

113. “Merely formal democracy,” without an economic project that would supersede the neoliberal market economy, which is dominant today in Latin America, would lead to disaster and more misery. A *rational* discussion on this theme, as a Latin American political philosophy, would be necessary to formulate here, and would show Rorty the ambiguity of calling oneself in Latin America an “American liberal democrat.”

114. Rorty *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 198.

115. Marx indicates clearly this movement from “conversation” to solidaristic and

responsible “action” in the eleventh of the *Theses on Feuerbach*: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it” (Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 423; MEW 3, p. 7). This would appear to be a strictly pragmatic (in Dewey’s sense) slogan. For Marx, it is necessary: to change the social structures in order to end the pain of those who suffer, or at least mitigate it. In contraposition, the greatest cruelty a liberal may commit consists, precisely, in proclaiming rights and negating them in fact, as John Rawls does when he accepts as a point of departure the *naturalness* of economic inequalities (this is the “second principle” or “difference principle”), inequalities that ought to be judged as unjust, but which instead are taken as a point of departure in the “original position,” where justice will be exercised as impartiality—a *contractio terminorum*: given that it is an impartiality that accepts “partiality,” in favor of the rich, as origin. The liberals, Locke or Rawls, set out from inequality as “nature” (at least both Rousseau and Hegel anticipated Marx in questioning this “nature”). Rorty cannot agree with them because of their universalistic rationalism, but in the last instance, and as a “liberal,” he cannot evade their contradictions.

116. *Capital*, Vol. 1, pp. 342-43; German [*MEGA* 11, 6], pp. 240-41). We have argued this text with Apel, against whom we emphasized that this “voice” interpellates from beyond the empirical communication community (although the Other can also be situated in the ideal communication community). Now, against Rorty, this text reminds us that the “*new word*” of the other, in a situation of economic-political exteriority, ought to be able to be accepted within more than just a mere “conversation” in the incommensurable of our *Lebenswelt*.