

## ON PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHERS

*On Philosophy and Philosophers* is a volume of unpublished philosophical papers by Richard Rorty, a central figure in late twentieth-century intellectual debates and primary force behind the resurgence of American pragmatism. The first collection of new work to appear since his death in 2007, these previously unseen papers advance novel views on metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, philosophical semantics, and the social role of philosophy, critically engaging canonical and contemporary figures from Plato and Kant to Kripke and Brandom. This book's diverse offerings, which include technical essays written for specialists and popular lectures, refine our understanding of Rorty's perspective and demonstrate the ongoing relevance of the iconoclastic American philosopher's ground-breaking thought. An introduction by the editors highlights the papers' original insights and contributions to contemporary debates.

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# ON PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHERS

*Unpublished Papers, 1960–2000*

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## *Note on Sources*

The essays collected in this volume are based on print or electronic documents from the Richard Rorty Papers, MS-Co17, Special Collections and Archives, the UC Irvine Libraries, Irvine, California. As far as we have been able to determine, Rorty did not leave instructions regarding the future of these papers, nor any explanation for why they never left the drawer. In our judgment, considerations of quality alone fail to account for this fate. By and large, the papers match the general standard of work that appeared in print during his lifetime. Some are as good as his best published output. We think that the fate of most of these papers had to do with the fact that they were written for particular occasions – conferences and invited talks. In such cases, where no immediate arrangement for publication was in place, it is likely Rorty simply moved on to more urgent tasks and new invitations.

Independently of their scholarly quality, all of the essays demanded editorial work, to varying degrees. Our interventions were never substantive. Typically, they were limited to correcting obvious typographical errors and adding missing references for quotations. In these cases we did not mark such interventions in the manuscript.

The minimal editorial interventions we made in preparing the papers fell into two categories. First, for consistency with the volumes of Rorty's philosophical papers previously published by Cambridge, we removed obvious traces of the papers' original contexts of presentation. For instance, in some manuscripts Rorty refers to various authors as Professor X or Y (e.g., "Professor Ricoeur"), apparently because he expected them to be present in the audience. In another manuscript, Rorty refers to Alvin Goldman's paper, "The Relation between Epistemology and Psychology," as "today's paper" since it was part of a conference at which Rorty's remarks were given. "Professor Ricoeur" was changed to "Ricoeur," "the paper given today" to "The Relation between Epistemology and Psychology," etc. In many manuscripts, Rorty used contractions characteristic of spoken English ("I'm," "isn't," etc.), which he normally did not use



in print. These were modified to make them consistent with his published work. These editorial interventions were limited to *obvious* traces of oral presentation that could be changed without affecting the content and tone of the text. We did not intervene in the style or syntax, which are sometimes rather casual.

The second type of intervention that demands a word of explanation relates to Rorty's famous habit of name-dropping, where he would simply say that a given thinker (e.g., Derrida, Foucault, or Quine) claims *p* or *q* without giving any reference to the relevant work by that author or even his or her first name. Normally, an editor's job would be to locate the relevant source and add the first name of a given author when he or she is cited the first time. However, since Rorty's practice of name-dropping was a characteristic element of his style, we usually chose not to do so. The exceptions were authors such as, for example, Wolfgang Stegmüller, who, while quite possibly familiar to Rorty's audience at the time, would be obscure to most of today's readers. In those cases we decided to add their first names and references to the works Rorty most likely had in mind, distinguishing our footnotes from Rorty's with "– *Eds.*" Where the typescripts contain Rorty's handwritten corrections or additions, we treated these as expressing his intentions for the final version and have incorporated them into the text.

A word is also due on our dating of the papers. In some cases, dates were given by Rorty himself directly in the manuscripts. In others, dates could be surmised from events where a paper was presented or from other circumstantial evidence. In several cases, a time frame could be narrowed but not precisely determined. For instance, we were unable to establish exactly when Rorty wrote his "Reductionism" paper, but since he focuses there on J. O. Urmson's 1956 book, *Philosophical Analysis*, treating it as a recent publication, and refers to "what Bergmann calls the 'linguistic turn,'" a phrase first used by Bergmann in print in a 1960 book review, it was likely written in the early 1960s. Below we provide what we have been able to gather about dates and occasions of the papers. For physical copies, we indicate the box and folder location in the Richard Rorty Papers (e.g., "B44, F12"); for digital files, we note availability in the "born-digital" online collection ("b.d."), which begins in 1988. Several born-digital texts also appear in hard copy. Five papers bore no title in the original. For these, titles were added using Rorty's own phrases from each piece. These are "Philosophy as Ethics"; "Philosophy as Spectatorship and Participation"; "Phenomenology, Linguistic Analysis, and Cartesianism"; "Philosophy as Epistemology"; and "Brandom's Conversationalism."

1. “Philosophy as Ethics” (B44, F12) is an undated manuscript from a manual typewriter that we have narrowed to the early 1960s or, possibly, the late 1950s. The version reproduced here includes two pages of Rorty’s handwritten text we found appended to the typescript.<sup>1</sup>
2. “Philosophy as Spectatorship and Participation” (B44, F12) is an untitled, undated manuscript typed on loose-leaf paper with heavy handwritten edits throughout. Since Rorty alludes to the “excitement over existentialism at the present time,” and we know he was interested in existentialism already in the 1950s, we conjecture that this paper is most likely from the early 1960s, maybe the late 1950s.<sup>2</sup>
3. “Kant as a Critical Philosopher” (B44, F12; B8, F17), an undated, typed manuscript, was initially prepared as a talk, with significant editing in Rorty’s own hand, from the same period as the first two papers. We encountered an additional, also undated, partial version of the first six pages in a different folder that had been retyped to incorporate the handwritten edits on the original copy.
4. “The Paradox of Definitism” (B10, F4), a similar typed manuscript, dates either from the late 1950s or early 1960s.<sup>3</sup> This manuscript contains typed subscript numbers that indicate footnotes, but unfortunately we were unable to locate the content of the notes. We kept the footnotes attached to quotations and used them to provide a reference for the quote; the rest have been removed from the published version.
5. “Reductionism” (B12, F1) is a typed manuscript with minor handwritten edits, likely from the early 1960s, as we explain above.<sup>4</sup>
6. “Phenomenology, Linguistic Analysis, and Cartesianism: Comments on Ricoeur” (B13, F14) is Rorty’s typed remarks on Paul Ricoeur’s paper, “Husserl and Wittgenstein on Language,” delivered at the

<sup>1</sup> According to archive notes, the first three papers in this volume originally were in an undated folder of Rorty’s labeled “Popular Lectures.” See *Guide to the Richard Rorty Papers MS.C.017*: [www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt9p3038mq/dsc/](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt9p3038mq/dsc/), accessed June 19, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Rorty indicated his interest in existentialism in a draft of his application letter to Yale’s PhD program, which he entered in 1952. See Neil Gross, *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 137.

<sup>3</sup> In the paper, Rorty treats the debate in the early fifties over the so-called prediction paradox as a live topic, calls an argument made by P. F. Strawson in a 1956 paper “recent,” and does not cite any publication later than 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rorty’s 1961 paper, “The Limits of Reductionism,” recently republished in Richard Rorty, *Mind, Language, and Metaphilosophy: Early Philosophical Papers*, ed. Stephen Leach and James Tartaglia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 39–54.

- Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy meeting on October 22, 1966.<sup>5</sup>
7. “The Incommunicability of ‘Felt Qualities’” (B8, F8) was given at the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association meeting in 1968.<sup>6</sup>
  8. “Kripke on Mind-Body Identity” (B8, F18) is mimeographed text of a lecture given at the State University of New York at Binghamton in April 1973, with minor handwritten edits.<sup>7</sup>
  9. “Philosophy as Epistemology: Reply to Hacking and Kim” (B12, F12) was prepared for an APA Eastern Division symposium on *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* that took place on December 30, 1980. Wilfrid Sellars chaired the panel, and Ian Hacking and Jaegwon Kim presented papers, which were later published.<sup>8</sup> Rorty’s in-depth reply has never appeared in print.
  10. “Naturalized Epistemology and Norms: Replies to Goldman and Fodor” (B13, F13) was delivered at a conference on “Cognitive Psychology and the New Epistemology” held at Loyola University of Chicago on March 6, 1982. Rorty’s lecture includes responses to papers by Jerry Fodor and Alvin Goldman that preceded his on the program.
  11. “The Objectivity of Values” (b.d.) is a curious case in that it exists only as a born-digital file tagged with the date January 25, 2000. However, internal textual evidence suggests a much earlier provenance; we believe it dates to 1981.<sup>9</sup>
  12. “What Is Dead in Plato” (b.d.; B12, F11) is an address prepared for a February 1988 event featuring political theorist Dante Germino.
  13. “The Current State of Philosophy in the U.S.” (B7, F9) is a lecture that Rorty dated September 22, 1994. Handwritten notes at the top suggest that it was given on more than one occasion.

<sup>5</sup> For the program of the symposium on “The Philosophy of Language: Husserl and Wittgenstein,” see *The Journal of Philosophy* 63, no. 15 (1966), 452.

<sup>6</sup> See “News and Notes,” *Philosophy East and West* 19, no. 1 (1969), 113–114. The reading of Wittgenstein Rorty develops here is marshaled to evaluate the perspectives of Pitcher and Cook in Rorty’s 1970 article, “Wittgenstein, Privileged Access, and Incommunicability,” reprinted in *Mind, Language, and Metaphilosophy*.

<sup>7</sup> Correspondence indicates that Rorty was invited by Theodore Mischel (see B8, F18).

<sup>8</sup> See Ian Hacking, “Is the End in Sight for Epistemology?,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 10 (1980): 579–588; and Jaegwon Kim, “Rorty on the Possibility of Philosophy,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 10 (1980): 588–597.

<sup>9</sup> At the end of the text, Rorty lists his affiliation as “Princeton University,” where he taught from 1961 to 1982, and refers to “the late J. L. Mackie of Oxford,” who passed away in 1981.

14. “Brandom’s Conversationalism: Davidson and *Making It Explicit*” (b.d.; B13, F9) was prepared for an Author Meets Critics session on Robert Brandom’s book at the APA Pacific Division meeting on March 31, 1995.
15. “Bald Naturalism and McDowell’s Hylomorphism” (b.d.) was given at Columbia University on August 3, 1995.<sup>10</sup>
16. “Reductionist vs. Neo-Wittgensteinian Semantics” (b.d.) is a paper prepared in 2000.
17. “Remarks on Nishida and Nishitani” (b.d.; B13, F21) is the text, dated September 1, 1999, of the introductory lecture delivered the same year at Otani University in Japan.

<sup>10</sup> See Lance P. Hickey, *Hilary Putnam* (London: Continuum, 2009), 187.