

A History of Philosophy

66 Dewey's Reconstructive Philosophy

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Today, I'd like us to think about the Reconstruction book, his Reconstruction in Philosophy. I hope you have it with you. And next week, we'll be getting into phenomenology and existentialism.

Two weeks of that before we have another examination. Ouch. No, I'm not saying that for you.

I'm saying that for me. Ouch. Those exams don't take a lot for you to write up.

No, they don't. They just take an awful lot for me to write down on your exams, yeah. And then we'll have the remaining four weeks, I think it is, on 19th and 20th century empirical and analytic philosophy.

OK? OK, so I guess that's it. All right, Dewey's Reconstruction. The title is the giveaway, isn't it? And consequently, in the light of that title, I've subtitled all the chapters.

Two views of this, that, and the other. Because I think he is consistent in carrying through the theme of the overall title all the way through the book. He's talking about what philosophy classically has been and what he thinks it ought to be.

And the same with regard to each area of philosophical inquiry. And so you get these two views. But I think it's important to recognize that underlying his disagreements with what philosophy has been is a very different view of human nature than in the classical tradition.

After all, classical philosophy was substance rather than process in its metaphysics. That is to say, an unchanging, qualitatively unchanging entity is basic to everything. And so in talking about human nature, the underlying substance, of course, is that substance or those substances which make up a human being, with emphasis on a sole substance or the body substance, matter, and qualities, functions thereof.

Now, when you change from that substance view to process view, it may be difficult to say it in English that has been shaped as a language by substance thought, but the fact is that a human is a process, not a substance, ultimately. That if we're going to therefore understand human nature and implement a view of human nature into philosophy, we have, first of all, to think of the human as a process of experience. Now, if you say, why experience? The answer, I think, is twofold.

One, from an empirical standpoint, how do we talk about personal identity if it is not, as in the empiricist tradition back to John Locke, in terms of the way in which memory of the past and anticipation of the future are identified within present experience? So it is a matter of experience by virtue of which we have any identity of which we're conscious. That, if you like, is the epistemological reason. But, of course, the other reason is that in this Hegelian tradition, in which, following Kant, human consciousness is the lens through which everything is understood, and the Hegelian tradition, with its unfolding of consciousness in the process of history, how are you going to describe any evolutionary process? And inasmuch as Dewey is, as we noted last time, an evolutionary naturalist, the process of evolutionary development is really an extensive process of experience.

And certainly, for a human being, life is experience. In fact, it's interesting that in our day there's a popular use of the term reality, which makes it difficult for beginning students, I'm finding, to get a handle on what metaphysics is. Because the popular use of the term reality is what's real in my experience, rather than what is real in itself.

You get the difference? Metaphysics is concerned with the thing in itself, reality. But reality has come to mean the reality of my experience. Well, that's part of this whole movement of thought out of the 19th-century German tradition into, yeah, we'll see it into existentialism and so forth, but certainly into Whitehead and Dewey.

So the human has to be understood then in terms of this concept of experience, a very rich concept of experience, much richer than that thin sort of one-dimensional concept which John Locke has. Simply made up of simple ideas. Much richer than that.

But when you start approaching what is human nature in terms of experience, then it's understandable that he's going to be saying that human beings are first and foremost creatures of desire rather than intellect. Because concrete experience comes loaded with emotional orientation. With affective attitudes towards the past, present, and future.

The whole thing. Now add that to his functionalist psychology that we were talking about, and you can see that in any case, thought is going to be simply a function of a biological organism in response to experience, which initially is being physiologically based, and is affective initially. So, a very different conception of man than that of the rational soul inhabiting a body with some fixed essence to human nature, and so forth.

Very, very different. So then in the first chapter he stakes that out in the first half-dozen pages. If you like, as premises of the entire book.

And then goes on to point out that the old philosophy is one consolidated as theoretical doctrines because it arose from the desire. Desire is the keyword. You see, philosophies, doctrines, moral beliefs arise out of the desire to consolidate, to retain the past.

So that the ideals that were successful in the past should be perpetuated. And so it's as if we want a quick freeze-dried past and accordingly a philosophy of static positions, unchanging. What we need to do is to recognize that experience is an ongoing thing, life is an ongoing thing, and philosophy is not to be a set of doctrines but rather a reflective attitude about experience and desires and conflicts of desire and threats to what we desire.

So philosophy for Dewey is more attitude, the philosophical attitude, if you like, than it is any set of doctrines. Which is why when I talk of Dewey as an evolutionary naturalist and ascribe to him a metaphysical naturalism as well as a methodological naturalism, I do it with a sort of hesitance in my philosophical conscience because he doesn't want to be thought of as having a set of fixed doctrines. But of course he does.

One of them is his evolutionary naturalism, and another is functionalist psychology, and so forth. So that's the first note to strike there. Feel free to provide feedback, react, question, or comment on this as I talk.

Bottom of page five, he says we need to recognize that the ordinary consciousness of the ordinary man, that's what he's after, the ordinary consciousness of the ordinary person, experience, you see, left to himself, is a creature of desires. Consciousness is a creature of desires rather than of intellectual study, inquiry, or speculation. It ceases to be primarily activated by hopes, fears, and so forth only when he's subjected to a discipline that's foreign to human nature.

Which, from the standpoint of the natural, is artificial. And so the artificiality then of classic philosophy. All right, the historical factors in chapter two, his review of some historical factors in reconstructing philosophy, really two views of knowledge.

Where the old, which he traces back to people like Aristotle, is the attempt to find an unchanging truth about unchanging essences. And you do that, of course, by abstracting from experience rather than working with experience. You abstract from it the essence of a species.

And do deductive reasoning from your knowledge of those first principles, abstract it. So that's the form that knowledge takes. But the other kind of knowledge is what was introduced by Francis Bacon with his classic dictum that knowledge is power.

Not contemplation of essences, but power. Not knowledge of the unchanging, but knowing how to effect change. Knowing how to exercise the power to change.

And that is the big watershed, that distinction. The old wanted demonstration, proof. The new is after discovery.

And so what Dewey envisions is the extension of the Baconian vision of the utility of knowledge in giving us the power to change things. The extension of that to the natural sciences was Bacon's vision. You may recall he wrote a work called *The New Atlantis*.

Which was his vision of a scientific utopia. That he thought his queen, Elizabeth I, should be mighty excited about. But he wrote that scientific utopia thing.

Well, what Dewey wants you to see is the same sort of power released in changing human experience. Now to the social sciences, to the human sciences. And consequently, his thought is that the problem-solving techniques, which his new logic develops, as we commented briefly on last time, the problem-solving capacity of knowledge can be applied to the human condition.

To social problems, political issues, and international problems. Now he's writing this primarily between the two world wars. Between 1918 and 1940.

So he's thinking in terms of the economic depression. He's thinking in terms of the development of socialism throughout the Western world. And the appearance of a communist dictatorship in the Soviet Union.

In other words, the immense upheavals in the old system. Politically, economically, and changing the face of at least Europe. He's recognizing political tensions.

And the old dream that World War I was a war to end all wars. You know, from this vantage point at the end of the 20th century, we sort of smile. I notice smiles on your faces as I said that.

A war to end all wars. Look at the way it's been. He's concerned, you see, with problem-solving.

Conflict resolution. Now, you see, the notion of conflict resolution is one of the paramount things in certain aspects of political science. There are some people who define political science as the science of resolving conflicts.

This is a John Dewey definition of politics. Politics used to be applied ethics. But thanks to its becoming a social science, and the social sciences having been taken

over by instrumentalist views of knowledge, such as Dewey's, you see it becomes not a branch of applied ethics except in the sense of Dewey's instrumentalist ethic.

A way of resolving problems. So the historical factors then come in at that point. And if you look at page 43, you can see how he articulates it.

Top of 43 in the language of Bacon. While we've been reasonably successful in obtaining command of nature by means of science. Look at the technological revolution.

Our science is not yet such that this command is systematically preeminently applied to the relief of the human estate. Such applications occur, but are incidental. This limitation defines the special problem for philosophical reconstruction at the present time.

So he's pretty explicit about that sort of thing. And what he wants, of course, is that the changes in society should be from some investment in eternal and universal and unchanging principles to the development of specific means for resolving problem situations as they arise. An ad hoc sort of thing, rather than anything else.

Situation ethics applied to public policy. The scientific factor underlying this reconstruction, chapter three, is really two views of the natural world. Two views of nature.

What's been going on in the history of natural science that makes the difference? And it's here that he makes plain his repudiation of the theory of fixed forms that came to us from Plato and Aristotle. The theory of forms, which translates into the fixity of species. Fixed ends.

What he calls a closed world. Let us say a universe with already defined potential. A defined potential.

Closed. Rather than an open-ended, anything is possible. Incidentally, an interesting parallel in Dewey to what you'll find in Sartre.

If God is dead, anything is possible. If there are no fixed ends, anything is possible. If there are no fixed forms, anything is possible.

And in that sense, there are some similarities between the sort of thing that Jean-Paul Sartre was doing in France. And a little bit before it, in a more benign fashion, Dewey was doing in America. Dewey is sort of the American counterpart of what was developing on the continent in existentialism.

If you have a value-free universe, then we have to create the values. And there's a sense in which Dewey is saying the same thing in his particular instrumentalist way. So then, the modern version in the light of Darwinian theory of natural selection is that there are no fixed species.

There are no fixed forms. This is an open-ended evolutionary process. An open world rather than a closed one.

And that means, of course, that there is no feudal hierarchy. There is no natural law as a basis for the jury's prudence. There's no natural law.

The ends are always situational ends emerging in the problem situation, with room then for constant evolutionary change. On page 70, he says in the middle of the page that fixed forms and ends mark fixed limits to change. They make feudal all human attempts to produce and regulate change except within narrow limits.

They paralyze constructive human inventions by a theory that condemns them in advance to failure. It wasn't until fixed ends were banished from nature that purposes became important as factors in human minds capable of reshaping existence. I'm not sure that's historically correct because it seems to me there's a lot of reshaping that goes on in the Thomistic tradition with the final causes they have.

The whole business of nature and grace is reshaping to appropriate ends. But Dewey's reading of the situation is pretty plain. Well, there you get the historical factors, really, in those first three chapters.

And that much, I think, comes through without any problem. Chapter four, entitled, Changed Conceptions of Experience and Reason. Yeah, he's talking basically of changes in the understanding of experience.

And on pages 83, 82, 83, and 84, this comes most into focus. He points out on 82, the beginning of the new paragraph, that the empiricism of luck was disintegrative in intent. Now, this time last week, we were reading a passage from Whitehead that said the same thing.

You remember that Whitehead said that experience ideas, experience for luck, were separative as well as prehensive. It was separative, and he wants it to be prehensive as well as separative. That is to say, Locke's ideas are atomistic, isolated, each an island unto itself, with no internal interrelationships.

Relationships are all external, separative. And Whitehead's arguing for prehensive relationships, whereby one naturally leads to another. There are internal relationships.

Well, Dewey is making essentially the same point, that in concrete experience, there are no isolated atoms of experience. There's a continuum. There are internal relatednesses.

So in Locke, it is disintegrative. Hume raises questions about the artificiality of that. And at the bottom of 83, he introduces two things that have made possible a new conception of experience.

One, the primary factor, is a change in the actual nature of experience as it's actually lived. He comes back to that on 86, but he goes on. The other is the development of a psychology based on biology.

This is his functionalist psychology. He picks up on that, first of all, in the immediate paragraphs that follow. Where he says that the effect of the development of biology is that where there is life, there is activity.

An activity that is continuous, adapted to the environment, and not passive. And so there is very much of the causal continuum reflected in experience. Experience, at the top of 86, becomes an affair of doing primarily.

The organism does not stand about, Macorber-like, waiting for something to turn up. Is that literary allusion lost on you? Mr. Macorber, always waiting for something to turn up? That's Dickens. And for the life of me, I forget, is it *Oliver Twist* or *David Copperfield*? *David Copperfield*.

Mr. Macorber, always waiting for something to turn up. Macorber-like. The organism doesn't stand around Macorber-like, always waiting for something to turn up.

It doesn't wait passively and inertly for something to impress itself. It acts in accordance with its own structure on its surroundings. And so you get the built-in relationships because we're creatures of desire in a biological continuum.

You see? Well, he then has that outcome of the biological experience, which then follows suit and is much more of a continuum than the atomistic view had made it seem. And when it comes to talking about reason on page 95, halfway down the page, reason was supposed to be separate from experience, introducing us to a superior region of universal truths. Reason, as a Kantian faculty that introduces generality and regularity, strikes us more and more superfluous.

The unnecessary creation of men addicted to traditional formalism and elaborate terminology. So he's rejecting that conception and instead talks of concrete suggestions arising from the past employed as aims and methods of special reconstruction tested by success and failure. That's the intelligent thinking that arises

in the course of experience as we come up with ideas for resolving problem situations.

So the kind of reason that he wants is problem-solving intelligence. Able to draw ideas from a fund of experience, select those that are appropriate to a problem situation, able to run through thought experiments, perhaps overt experiments, and then able to experientially confirm whether or not they'll actually work. In other words, the kind of intelligence that's necessary for effecting change.

For effecting change. So a whole conception, different. Now, you can see with that changed conception of experience why his conception of education was so different.

Because you're not now trying to teach people the art of dialectic or of abstraction. Plato, Aristotle. Dialectic or abstraction is needed for grasping eternal truths.

You see? Universal principles. No. Rather, what you're doing is trying to develop in people the kind of practical intelligence that can find something workable to do when a problem situation arises.

Problem solving, you see. And so was his so-called progressive education that sort of thing. So that ideally the classroom is the situation in which, as problem situations arise, people are free to explore the fund of ideas which may be in the books in the classroom or in people's own experience, and to come up with appropriate ways of handling the situation.

Rather than the systematic kind of attempt to develop intellectual ability, which can abstract and work logically from things that are abstracted. So two different conceptions. The value of the heritage of learning is in enriching the human fund of experience on which to draw in problem situations.

In the spirit of the adage that he who neglects the past will repeat the mistakes of the past. But you see, the reason for examining the past is not to understand some eternal truths about human nature or history but rather to have resources for the future. Okay.

Then Chapter 5, which I think was a chapter I omitted and said you needn't read. Am I right in that? Yeah, I said chapters 1 through 4. Well, you know, for good measure, read Chapter 5. Quality of mercy is not strained. I didn't want to impose too much.

But, you know, after reading all the rest, you can run through this one so quickly. What he's doing is simply rejecting Plato's dichotomy of the ideal and the real. Plato's dichotomy of the ideal and the real.

We've noted that Dewey and Whitehead alike are very impatient with all of the traditional dualisms. Mind and body, real. Ideal and actual.

You see. His point is that there is no Platonic realm of transcendent ideals. You see.

Unchanging eternal ideals. No. Ideals simply arise as problems occur.

The ideal is the resolution of the problem that you want. You see. And you therefore don't think of that ideal until a resolution is needed.

And then there is an ideal that is the value that you seek. Ideals are values that arise in the context of problem situations. So there is a fact-value continuum, the way he puts it.

This is where he breaks with not only Plato's dualism but also the Enlightenment dualism of fact and value. Living in a value-free universe, you see. Values are sort of external intuitions.

No, not so for Dewey. It may be that nature is in and of itself a value-free universe. But our experience is not value-free.

Our experience is primarily of desires. And if survival is threatened, then the ideal of survival comes into focus. It's valued.

You see. And so, there is a continuum between fact and value, even though there are no eternal, unchanging values. The continuum is in the process of experience.

Well, that's the theme of what you're not reading. The following chapter, number six, two views of logic. All right, the old logic was formal.

It was deductive. The new logic is experiential. Well, he calls it experimental.

Yeah, it's the scientific method. The kind of logic is structured, of course, in order. The kind of pattern of thought that is needed for problem-solving.

That's the sense of logic he's using. Experimental thinking. It begins with observation of what the problem is.

With recognition of what is at stake. The values that emerge. The values that are threatened.

The values that are possible. And then there arise ideas. What are ideas? Oh, not simple ideas of secondary qualities, etc.

No. Ideas are hypotheses. So that when you're in a mess, and you say, well, I've got an idea of how to get out of this, that's the sort of idea we want.

An idea is simply a plan for action. What can we do about it? That, if you like, is ordinary usage. A sense of an idea.

And so the structure of thought, you see, is about ideas that are hypotheses rather than fixed conceptions, theoretical dogmas. Ideas that are simply instruments. They're of instrumental value.

They have no intrinsic value. They're not intrinsically true. So James's discussion of truth as cash value applies perfectly here.

It's the cash value in the situation where you are that's important. And truth, accordingly, is not some fixed realm. It's rather having to do with satisfied desire. That is to say, an idea can be regarded as true if it is useful in satisfying the desires that exist in a given situation.

And on pages 155 to 157, the crux of that, the bottom of 157, let me just read this part, truth as utility means service in making just that contribution to reorganization and experience, that is to say, adjusting to the environment, making just that contribution to reorganization that the idea claims to be able to make. The usefulness of a road is not measured by the degree in which it lends itself to the purposes of a highwayman but by whether it actually functions as a road, as a means of easy and effective transportation, and so with the serviceableness of an idea. It's a hypothesis.

And its truth is measured by whether it's a useful hypothesis. Simply. Now, that sort of background is necessary, really, for getting at the moral reconstruction chapter, and here there are some subtleties which I think we have to watch carefully.

Firstly, his use of the term utility in talking of ideas may tempt you to say that Dewey is a kind of utilitarian, but he would categorically repudiate the suggestion. Now why? Well, you see, utilitarianism is a product of the old empiricism. An empiricism that built knowledge and decided what to do in the future, but built it on the basis of past empirical generalizations.

So that you develop moral rules for a utilitarian, you develop moral rules in terms of what past experience has taught you about maximizing the happiness, or whatever good it is, for the maximum number of people. The focus of knowledge is the past, even when you're trying to anticipate the future. Now, for Dewey, the focus of knowledge is always the future, not the past.

So what you want is knowledge of the future. Now, how do you get knowledge of the future? Only in the form of a hypothesis. You see? Only in the form of a hypothesis.

Now, granted, past experience may propose the hypothesis, but keep in mind that every problem situation is going to be somewhat different from any other problem situation. He's not speaking of general rules for the maximum number of people's happiness. You don't say general rules based on empirical generalizations in the past.

No. He's addressing a new problem. And trying to know what's going to be the outcome of actions that we might perform in the future.

And so the knowledge that you want is not of empirical generalizations from which you deduce something, but rather a hypothesis that is, oh yes, suggested, not deduced, suggested by funded experience from the past. But from the hypothesis, you can then deduce what is likely to happen if the hypothesis is true. But you don't know if it's true.

Because it's true of, if it's true at all, of the future. So this is not then a utilitarian kind of approach. First, it's oriented to the future rather than the past.

Second, it's oriented to a distinctive particular situation rather than to generalizations about a supreme good. The happiness of the maximum number of people. Or whatever, you see.

And third, it's not a morality of rules in any case. It's not going to be a morality of rules in any case. But rather than how to resolve this conflict.

Weren't they using, weren't the empiricists also using hypothesis when they were doing their scientific research? For example, even in the 17th century? Yeah, but you see, he's talking about problem-solving thinking. Where the emphasis is on knowledge of the future. Now, the utilitarian drawing on knowledge of the past is doing so with regard to some fixed ideal which extends from the past on into the future.

That fixed ideal is whatever the particular utilitarian in mind defines as the highest good for the maximum number of people. If it's Mill with his hedonism, it's the maximum pleasure of the maximum number of people. With what we call an ideal utilitarian, it may be the maximum good of a richer variety than that.

But it's always that there is this conception of a fixed end, a highest good, which applies in the past and in the future. You have that continuity. Now, with Dewey, you don't have that continuity.

There is no highest end. Values are situational. Goods are situational.

So, in addressing a particular issue that's arising with regard to the future, it's without that degree of continuity from the past. The end is different. Yes, sir? No, wait a minute.

He's not talking at this juncture about scientific discovery. He's talking about moral thinking. Okay.

This is the chapter about moral conceptions. And what I'm doing is trying to distinguish the utilitarian ethic, which you're likely to identify him with if you're not careful, the utilitarian ethic from Dewey's situational kind of ethic. The utilitarian, number one, is looking to the past.

The utilitarian, number two, has some unchanging ideals all the way through to the future, which are translated into general rules. But not Dewey in either of those points. Okay.

The other thing in this moral reconstruction chapter is the comment he makes on the problem of evil. And this very much in the same pragmatic spirit, he says the real problem of evil is not the theoretical one, but the practical one. It's not a logical problem.

How can you make the existence of purposeless evil, seemingly purposeless evil, logically consistent with the existence of a God who is altogether good, wise, and powerful? That's the logical problem. No, the real problem of evil is the practical one. What can we do about it? Back to problem situations.

So he's not interested then in theoretical debates and understanding. For Dewey, those are irrelevant. Why irrelevant? Notice that word.

Irrelevant because of the pragmatic theory of meaning. The term irrelevant means pragmatically meaningless. You see? The cash value is lacking.

So, I think I mentioned this on Monday, distinguishing in thinking about pragmatism, Dewey included, the pragmatic theory of meaning, that the meaning of an idea is found in its practical consequences. The test of truth, that the truth of a theory can be tested experimentally. And the definition of truth is that truth is nothing but workability.

And the problem is what somebody has called nothing buttery. In the definition of meaning and the definition of truth. Nothing buttery in the definition of meaning and the definition of truth.

All right, that's my quick run-through of Dewey's book. Comments, questions? Are you finding it easy to read? My guess is it's the easiest since before Kant. You look at me, gape.

Yeah, it's not difficult. You have to get used to his style. He writes in English rather than German, but his style is rather like Hegel's.

In the sense that it is not linear thinking moving step by step from one proposition to another, such as you find in, say, Locke or Hume. It's more dialectical thinking. Taking a concept and unraveling it in a thesis-antithesis-synthesis sort of style.

So it's more a matter of unfolding a concept by contrasting the thesis of the old with the antithesis of the new. Get it? And so there's quite a bit of repetition. You'll frequently find at the beginning of one chapter, he reruns all he's done in the previous chapters and then moves on for another whirl at it.

It's as if his thinking goes this way, where each chapter advances a little, but only by getting a head start by going back over what's gone before. Once you get used to that style, he reads very fast. Let's see.

A word about pragmatism today. Dewey died in the 1950s, but pragmatism continues to have an influence on contemporary work. And you find it in a number of individuals.

The two that I think I said we'd take note of, one is W. V. O'Quine at Harvard, who has a little book called *The Web of Belief*. In which he talks of the way in which ideas, beliefs, and theories interweave like a spider's web to form a rather mutually supportive, unified, consistent whole.

Sort of a coherence to a web of belief. What Quine is doing, you'll see, is rejecting any foundationalist approach and is maintaining that beliefs do not come in an isolated fashion such that they could be propositions at the end of a syllogistic proof. The web is what has grown.

And the whole scheme tends to emerge in one's thinking in a natural process. You find yourself believing a whole cluster of things interwoven. Now underlying that notion, of course, is a naturalized epistemology.

That is to say, the view that belief arises as a part of a nature-based psychology. That the value of our beliefs is instrumental rather than simply speculative. At an earlier stage in his work, Quine had repudiated the old analytic-synthetic dichotomy.

Criticized it very severely. Pointing out that for all practical purposes, theoretical ones as well, a statement, a proposition, rather, may be analytic or synthetic depending on its context. That's a contextual distinction.

So that, for instance, the statement, and this is my example, not his, the statement, God is good, might be regarded by a theist as an analytic proposition. It's simply unfolding what is already logically contained within the concept of God. It's an analytic proposition.

But on the other hand, it functions as a synthetic proposition in other contexts of discourse. If one is introducing the concept of a good God to somebody for the first time, or if you're saying to somebody recently suffering some tremendous woe, some words of comfort, and say, "Remember, God is good. You're affirming something of God, which in the anguish of her problem, the person may have left out.

You see. So the point is that depending on the instrumental function of a proposition, get that, the instrumental function of a proposition, the analytic synthetic status may vary. You see.

So you get pragmatism in that kind of form. You get it as well in Richard Rorty. And those of you who were at the pluralism lecture last night heard some things about Richard Rorty.

What he did was to put the whole contemporary debate about religious pluralism in the context of postmodernism. You see. The religious pluralism debate is over the tendency to regard different religious positions as equally acceptable, as relative, so that no truth judgments can be made between one and the other.

Now, in trying to help the audience understand how a position like that could arise, he said it has arisen within the ethos of postmodernism. You see, which rejects the Enlightenment kind of epistemology with its attempts to prove a position true. Opts instead for such degrees of subjectivity ever since the Copernican Revolution, that nothing could be proven, and so the relativizing that results.

Well, in introducing postmodernism and its influences, he talked about Richard Rorty, one of the two whom he stressed. Foucault was the other, the European. But Rorty used to teach at Princeton, now at Virginia, used to be in philosophy, has moved to the humanities, because he's given up on the philosophical enterprise.

The crucial thing was his book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, about, oh, 10, 15 years ago, in which the mirror of nature stands for the view that ideas are representations of an otherwise unknown reality. The representational view of Descartes, Locke, Kant, and so on and so forth. And his point is, because of the failure

of that representational view that thinks that in our minds we have a mirror of nature, because of the failure of that epistemology, what is left for philosophy to expect? In other words, for him, it's either logical certainty within a representational view or sheer skepticism.

Nothing is knowable. And if nothing is knowable for sure, if the truth cannot be demonstrated, then we simply have a whole variety of alternative positions, and the most we can hope for is an interesting conversation. Which is, some people think, why he moved to Virginia.

To humanities. Well, the pragmatism in it is, in part, his working with, in the book, with Dewey's ideas, along with others, and the acceptance of simply a pragmatic theory of meaning and truth, because that was the way to, say, all that's left for philosophy, if the representational theory is missing. Now, you can tell, obviously, that other people don't agree with him, because not everybody has left philosophy.

And obviously, what's happened is that there is a third alternative, namely, other epistemological directions that aren't representational, as in that 19th, 18th-century sense. Which would be no surprise, those never were the only two alternatives, skepticism or complete certainty. So, pragmatism is involved there.

Well, I see our time has gone. Okay, Monday, a few comments further about pragmatism, opportunity for discussion, and then on we go.