

Richard Rorty: "Method, Social Science, and Social Hope"

Excerpt from Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972-1980)*
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 191-210)

I. Science Without Method

Galileo and his followers discovered, and subsequent centuries have amply confirmed, that you get much better predictions by thinking of things as masses of particles blindly bumping each other than by thinking of them as Aristotle thought of them - animistically, ideologically, and anthropomorphically. They also discovered that you get a better handle on the universe by thinking of it as infinite and cold and comfortless than by thinking of it as finite, homey, planned, and relevant to human concerns. Finally, they discovered that if you view planets or missiles or corpuscles as point-masses, you can get nice simple predictive laws by looking for nice simple mathematical ratios. These discoveries are the basis of modern technological civilization. We can hardly be too grateful for them. But they do not, *pace* Descartes and Kant, point any epistemological moral. They do not tell us anything about the nature of science or rationality. In particular, they did not result from the use of, nor do they exemplify, something called "the scientific method."

The tradition we call "modern philosophy" asked itself "How is it that science has had so much success? What is the secret of this success?" The various bad answers to these bad questions have been variations on a single charming but uncashable metaphor: viz., the New Science discovered the language which nature itself uses. When Galileo said that the Book of Nature was written in the language of mathematics, he meant that his new reductionistic, mathematical vocabulary didn't just *happen* to work, but that it worked *because* that was the way things *really were*. He meant that the vocabulary worked because it fitted the universe as a key fits a lock. Ever since, philosophers have been trying, and failing, to give sense to these notions of "working *because*," and "things as they *really are*."

Descartes explicated these notions in terms of the natural clarity and distinctness of Galilean ideas—ideas which, for some reason, had been foolishly overlooked by Aristotle. Locke, struck by the indistinctness of this notion of "clarity," thought he might do better with a program of reducing complex ideas to simple. To make this program relevant to current science, he used an *ad hoc* distinction between ideas which resemble their objects and those which do not. This distinction was so dubious as to lead us, via Berkeley and Hume, to Kant's rather desperate suggestion that the key only worked because we had, behind our own backs, constructed the lock it was to fit. In retrospect, we have come to see Kant's suggestion as giving the game away. For his transcendental idealism opened the back door to all the ideological, animistic, Aristotelian notions which the intellectuals had repressed for fear of being old-fashioned. The speculative idealists who succeeded Kant dropped the notion of finding nature's secrets. They substituted the notion of making worlds by creating vocabularies, a notion echoed in our century by maverick philosophers of science like Cassirer and Goodman.

In an effort to avoid these so-called "excesses of German idealism," a host of philosophers—roughly classifiable as "positivist"—have spent the last hundred years trying to use notions like "objectivity," "rigor," and "method" to isolate science from nonscience. They have done this because they thought that the idea that we can explain scientific success in terms of discovering Nature's Own Language must, *somehow*, be right—even if the metaphor could *not* be cashed, even if neither realism nor idealism could explain just what the imagined "correspondence" between nature's language and current scientific jargon could consist in. Very few thinkers have suggested that maybe science doesn't *have* a secret of success—that there is *no* metaphysical or epistemological or transcendental explanation of why Galileo's vocabulary has worked so well so far, any more than there is an explanation of why the vocabulary of liberal democracy has worked so well so far. Very few have been willing to abjure the notions that "the mind" or "reason" has a nature of its own, that discovery of this nature will give us a "method," and that following that method will enable us to penetrate beneath the appearances and see nature "in its own terms."¹

The importance of Kuhn seems to me to be that, like Dewey, he is one of these few. Kuhn and Dewey suggest we give up the notion of science traveling towards an end called "correspondence with reality" and instead say *merely* that a given vocabulary works better than another for a given purpose. If we accept their suggestion, we shall not be inclined to ask "What method do scientists use?" Or, more precisely, we shall say that within what Kuhn calls "normal science"—puzzle-solving—they use the same banal and obvious methods all of us use in every human activity. They check off examples against criteria; they fudge the counter-examples enough to avoid the need for new models; they try out various guesses, formulated within the current jargon, in the hope of coming up with something which will cover the unfudgeable cases. We shall not think there is or could be an epistemologically pregnant answer to the question "What did Galileo do right that Aristotle did wrong?", any more than we should expect such an answer to the questions "What did Plato do right that Xenophon did wrong?" or "What did Mirabeau do right that Louis XVI did wrong?" We shall just say that Galileo had a good idea, and Aristotle a less good idea; Galileo was using some terminology which helped, and Aristotle wasn't. Galileo's terminology was the *only* "secret" he had—he didn't pick that terminology because it was "clear" or "natural," or "simple," or in line with the categories of the pure understanding. He just lucked out.

The moral which seventeenth-century philosophers *should* have drawn from Galileo's success was a Whewellian and Kuhnian one: viz., that scientific breakthroughs are not so much a matter of deciding which of various alternative hypotheses are true, but of finding the right jargon in which to frame hypotheses in the first place. But, instead, as I have said, they drew the moral that the new vocabulary was the one nature had always *wanted* to be described in. I think they drew this moral for two reasons. First, they thought that the fact that Galileo's vocabulary was devoid of metaphysical comfort, moral significance, and human interest was a reason why it worked. They vaguely thought that it was *because* the Galilean scientist was able to face up to the frightening abysses of infinite space that he was being so successful. They identified his distance from common sense and from religious feeling—his distance from decisions about how men should live—as part of the secret of his success. So, they said, the more metaphysically comfortless and morally insignificant our vocabulary, the likelier we are to be "in touch with reality" or to be "scientific," or to describe reality as it wants to be described and thereby get it under control. Second, they thought the only way to eliminate "subjective" notions—those expressible in *our* vocabulary but not in nature's—was to eschew terms which could not be definitionally linked to those in Galileo's and Newton's vocabularies, terms denoting "primary qualities."

These intertwined mistakes—the notion that a term is more likely to "refer to the real" if it is morally insignificant and if it occurs in true, predictively useful generalizations—give substance to the idea of "scientific method" as (in Bernard Williams' phrase)¹ the search for "an absolute conception of reality." This is reality conceived as somehow represented by representations which are not merely ours but its own, as it looks to itself, as it would describe itself if it could. Williams, and others who take Cartesianism seriously, not only think this notion is unconfused but regard it as one of our intuitions about the nature of knowledge. On my account, by contrast, it is merely one of our intuitions about what counts as being philosophical. It is the Cartesian form of the archetypal philosophical fantasy—first spun by Plato—of cutting through all description, all representation, to a state of consciousness which, *per impossibile*, combines the best features of inarticulate confrontation with the best features of linguistic formulation. This fantasy of discovering, and somehow *knowing* that one has discovered, Nature's Own Vocabulary *seemed* to become more concrete when Galileo and Newton formulated a comprehensive set of predictively useful universal generalizations, written in suitably "cold," "inhuman," mathematical terms. From their time to the present, the notions of "rationality," "method," and "science" have been bound up with the search for such generalizations.

Without this model to go on, the notion of "a scientific method," in its modern sense, could not have been taken seriously. The term "method" would have retained the sense it had in the period prior to the New Science, for people like Ramus and Bacon. In that sense, to have a method was simply to have a good comprehensive list of topics or headings—to have,

so to speak, an efficient filing system. In its post-Cartesian philosophical sense, however, it does not mean simply ordering one's thoughts, but *filtering* them in order to eliminate "subjective" or "noncognitive" or "confused" elements, leaving only the thoughts which are Nature's Own. This distinction between the parts of one's mind which do and don't correspond to reality is, in the epistemological tradition, confused with the distinction between rational and irrational ways of doing science. If "scientific method" means merely being rational in some given area of inquiry, then it has a perfectly reasonable "Kuhnian" sense—it means obeying the normal conventions of your discipline, not fudging the data *too* much, not letting your hopes and fears influence your conclusions unless those hopes and fears are shared by all those who are in the same line of work, being open to refutation by experience, not blocking the road of inquiry. In this sense, "method" and "rationality" are names for a suitable balance between respect for the opinions of one's fellows and respect for the stubbornness of sensation. But epistemologically-centered philosophy has wanted notions of "method" and "rationality" which signify more than good epistemic manners, notions which describe the way in which the mind is naturally fitted to learn Nature's Own Language.

If one believes, as I do, that the traditional ideas of "an absolute ('objective') conception of reality" and of "scientific method" are neither clear nor useful, then one will see the interlocked questions "What should be the method of the social sciences?" and "What are the criteria of an objective moral theory?" as badly posed. In the remainder of this paper, I want to say in detail why I think these are bad questions, and to recommend a Deweyan approach to both social science and morality, one which emphasizes the utility of narratives and vocabularies rather than the objectivity of laws and theories.

II. "Value-Free" Social Science and "Hermeneutic" Social Science

There has recently been a reaction against the idea that students of man and society will be "scientific" only if they remain faithful to the Galilean model—if they find "value-neutral," purely descriptive terms in which to state their predictive generalizations, leaving evaluation to "policy-makers." This has led to a revival of Dilthey's notion that to understand human beings "scientifically" we must apply non-Galilean, "hermeneutic" methods. From the point of view I wish to suggest, the whole idea of "being scientific" or of choosing between "methods" is confused. Consequently, the question about whether social scientists should seek value-neutrality along Galilean lines, or rather should try for something more cozy, Aristotelian, and "softer" —a distinctive "method of the human sciences"—seems to me misguided.

One reason this quarrel has developed is that it has become obvious that *whatever* terms are used to describe human beings *become* "evaluative" terms. The suggestion that we segregate the "evaluative" terms in a language and use their absence as one criterion for the "scientific" character of a discipline or a theory cannot be carried out. For there is no way to prevent anybody using any term "evaluatively." If you ask somebody whether he is using "repression" or "primitive" or "working class" normatively or descriptively, he might be able to answer in the case of a given statement, made on a given occasion. But if you ask him whether he uses the term only when he is describing, only when he is engaging in moral reflection, or both, the answer is almost always going to be "both." Further—and this is the crucial point—unless the answer *is* "both," it is just not the son of term which will do us much good in social science. Predictions will do "policy-making" no good if they are not phrased in the terms in which policy can be formulated.

Suppose we picture the "value-free" social scientist walking up to the divide between "fact" and "value" and handing his predictions to the policy-makers who live on the other side. They will not be of much use unless they contain some of the terms which the policy-makers use among themselves. What the policy-makers would like, presumably, are rich juicy predictions like "If basic industry is socialized, the standard of living will [or won't] decline," "If literacy is more widespread, more [or fewer] honest people will be elected to office," and so on. They would like hypothetical sentences whose consequents are phrased in terms which might occur in morally urgent recommendations. When they get predictions

phrased in the sterile jargon of "quantified" social sciences ("maximizes satisfaction," "increases conflict," etc.), they either tune out, or, more dangerously, begin to use the jargon in moral deliberation. The desire for a new, "interpretive" social science seems to me best understood as a reaction against the temptation to formulate social policies in terms so thin as barely to count as "moral" at all—terms which never stray far from definitional links with "pleasure," "pain," and "power."

The issue between those who hanker after "objective," "value-free," "truly scientific" social science and those who think this should be replaced with something more hermeneutical is misdescribed as a quarrel about "method." A quarrel about method requires a common goal, and disagreement about the means for reaching it. But the two sides to this quarrel are not disagreeing about how to get more accurate predictions of what will happen if certain policies are adopted. Neither side is very good at making such predictions, and if anybody ever did find a way of making them both sides would be equally eager to incorporate this strategy in their view. The nature of the quarrel is better, but still misleadingly, seen as one between the competing goals of "explanation" and "understanding." As this contrast has developed in the recent literature, it is a contrast between the sort of jargon which permits Galilean-style generalizations, and Hempelian specification of confirming and disconfirming instances of such generalizations, and the sort which sacrifices this virtue for the sake of describing in roughly the same vocabulary as one evaluates (a "ideological" vocabulary, crudely speaking).

This contrast is real enough. But it is not an issue to be resolved, only a difference to be lived with. The idea that explanation and understanding are opposed ways of doing social science is as misguided as the notion that microscopic and macroscopic descriptions of organisms are opposed ways of doing biology. There are lots of things you want to do with bacteria and cows for which it is very useful to have biochemical descriptions of them; there are lots of things you want to do with them for which such descriptions would be merely a nuisance. Similarly, there are lots of things you want to do with human beings for which descriptions of them in nonevaluative, "inhuman" terms are very useful; there are others (e.g., thinking of them as your fellow-citizens) in which such descriptions are not. "Explanation" is merely the sort of understanding one looks for when one wants to predict and control. It does not contrast with something else called "understanding" as the abstract contrasts with the concrete, or the artificial with the natural, or the "repressive" with the "liberating." To say that something is better "understood" in one vocabulary than another is always an ellipsis for the claim that a description in the preferred vocabulary is more useful for a certain purpose. If the purpose is prediction, then one will want one sort of vocabulary. If it is evaluation, one may or may not want a different sort of vocabulary. (In the case of evaluating artillery fire, for example, the predictive vocabulary of ballistics will do nicely. In the case of evaluating human character, the vocabulary of stimulus and response is beside the point.)

To sum up this point: there are two distinct requirements for the vocabulary of the social sciences:

(1) It should contain descriptions of situations which facilitate their prediction and control

(2) It should contain descriptions which help one decide what to do.

Value-free social science assumed that a thin "behavioristic" vocabulary met the first requirement. This assumption has not panned out very well; the last fifty years of research in the social sciences have not notably increased our predictive abilities. But even if it *had* succeeded in offering predictions, this would not *necessarily* have helped fulfill the second requirement. It would not necessarily have been useful in deciding what to do. The debate between friends of value-freedom and friends of hermeneutics has often taken for granted that neither requirement can be satisfied unless the other is also. Friends of hermeneutics have protested that Behaviorese was inappropriate for "understanding" people—meaning that it could not catch what they were "really" doing. But this is a misleading way of saying it is not a good vocabulary for moral reflection. We just don't want to be the sort of policy-makers who use those terms for deciding what to do to our fellow-humans. Conversely, friends of

value-freedom, insisting that as soon as social science finds its Galileo (who is somehow known in advance to be a behaviorist) the first requirement will be satisfied, have argued that it is our duty to start making policy decisions in suitably thin terms—so that our "ethics" may be "objective" and "scientifically based." For only in that way will we be able to make maximal use of all those splendid predictions which will shortly be coming our way. Both sides make the same mistake in thinking that there is some intrinsic connection between the two requirements. It is a mistake to think that when we know how to deal justly and honorably with a person or a society we *thereby* know how to predict and control him or her or it, and a mistake to think that ability to predict and control is *necessarily* an aid to such dealing. To be told that only a certain vocabulary is *suited* to human beings or human societies, that only *that* vocabulary permits us to "understand" them, is the seventeenth-century myth of Nature's Own Vocabulary all over again. If, with Dewey, one sees vocabularies as instruments for coping with things rather than representations of their intrinsic natures, then one will not think that there is an intrinsic connection, nor an intrinsic *lack* of connection, between "explanation" and "understanding"—between being able to predict and control people of a certain sort and being able to sympathize and associate with them, to view them as fellow-citizens. One will not think that there are two "methods"—one for explaining somebody's behavior and another for understanding his nature.

III. Epistemic and Moral Privilege

The current movement to make the social sciences "hermeneutical" rather than Galilean makes a reasonable, Deweyan point if it is taken as saying: narratives as well as laws, redescriptions as well as predictions, serve a useful purpose in helping us deal with the problems of society. In this sense, the movement is a useful protest against the fetishism of old-fashioned, "behaviorist" social scientists who worry about whether they are being "scientific." But this protest goes too far when it waxes philosophical and begins to draw a principled distinction between man and nature, announcing that the onto-logical difference dictates a methodological difference. Thus, for example, when it is said that "interpretation begins from the postulate that the web of meaning constitutes human existence,"³ this suggests that fossils (for example) might get constituted *without* a web of meanings. But once the relevant sense of "constitution" is distinguished from the physical sense (in which houses are "constituted out of" bricks), the claim that "X constitutes Y" reduces to the claim that you can't know anything about Y without knowing a lot about X. To say that human beings wouldn't be human, would be merely animal, unless they talked a lot is true enough. If you can't figure out the relation between a person, the noises he makes, and other persons, then you won't know much about him. But one could equally well say that fossils wouldn't be fossils, would be merely rocks, if we couldn't grasp their relations to lots of other fossils. Fossils are constituted as fossils by a web of relationships to other fossils and to the speech of the paleontologists who describe such relationships. If you can't grasp some of these relationships, the fossil will remain, to you, a mere rock. *Anything* is, for purposes of being inquired into, "constituted" by a web of meanings.

To put this another way: if we think of the fossil record as a text, then we can say that paleontology, in its early stages, followed "interpretive" methods. That is, it cast around for some way of making sense of what had happened by looking for a vocabulary in which a puzzling object could be related to other, more familiar objects, so as to become intelligible. Before the discipline became "normalized," nobody had any clear idea of what sort of thing might be relevant to predicting where similar fossils might be found. To say that "Paleontology is now a science" means something like "Nobody now has any doubts about what sorts of questions you are supposed to ask, and what sort of hypotheses you can advance, when confronted with a puzzling fossil." On my view, being "interpretive" or "hermeneutical" is not having a special method but simply casting about for a vocabulary which might help. When Galileo came up with his mathematicized vocabulary, he was successfully concluding an inquiry which was, in the only sense I can give the term, hermeneutical. The same goes for Darwin. I do not see any interesting differences between

what they were doing and what biblical exegetes, literary critics, or historians of culture do. So I think that it would do no harm to adopt the term "hermeneutics" for the sort of by-guess-and-by-God hunt for new terminology which characterizes the initial stages of any new line of inquiry.

But although this would do no harm, it also would do no particular good. It is no more useful to think of people or fossils on the model of texts than to think of texts on the model of people or of fossils. It only appears more useful if we think that there is something *special* about texts—e.g., that they are "intentional" or "intelligible only holistically." But I do not think—*pace*, e.g., Searle's notion of "intrinsic intentionality"—that "possessing intentionality" means more than "suitable to be described anthropomorphically, as if it were a language-user."⁴ The relation, on my view, between actions and movements, noises and assertions, is that each is the other described in an alternative jargon. Nor do I see that explanation of fossils is less holistic than explanation of texts—in both cases one needs to bring the object into relation with many other different sorts of objects in order to tell a coherent narrative which will incorporate the initial object.

Given this attitude, it behooves me to offer an explanation of why some people *do* think that texts are very different from fossils. I have suggested elsewhere, in arguing against Charles Taylor,⁵ that such people make the mistaken assumption that somebody's *own* vocabulary is always the best vocabulary for understanding what he is doing, that his own explanation of what's going on is the one we want. This mistake seems to me a special case of the confused notion that science tries to learn the vocabulary which the universe uses to explain itself to itself. In both cases, we are thinking of our explanandum as if it were our epistemic equal or superior. But this is not always correct in the case of our fellow-humans, and it is merely a relic of pre-Galilean anthropomorphism in the case of nature. There are, after all, cases in which the other person's, or culture's, explanation of what it's up to is so primitive, or so nutty, that we brush it aside. The only general hermeneutical rule is that it's always wise to ask what the subject *thinks* it's up to before formulating our own hypotheses. But this is an effort at saving time, not a search for the "true meaning" of the behavior. If the explanandum can come up with a good vocabulary for explaining its own behavior, this saves us the trouble of casting about for one ourselves. From this point of view, the only difference between an inscription and a fossil is that we can imagine coming across another inscription which is a gloss on the first. By contrast, we shall describe the relation between the first fossil and the one next door, even though perhaps equally illuminating, in a nonintentional vocabulary.

In addition to the mistake of thinking that a subject's own vocabulary is always relevant to explaining him, philosophers who make a sharp distinction between man and nature are, like the positivists, bewitched by the notion that the irreducibility of one vocabulary to another implies something ontological. Yet the discovery that we can or cannot reduce a language containing terms like "is about," "is true of," "refers to," etc., or one which contains "believes" or "intends," to a language which is extensional and "empiricist" would show us nothing at all about how to predict, or deal with, language-users or intenders. Defenders of Dilthey make a simple inversion of the mistake made, e.g., by Quine, who thinks there can be no "fact of the matter" about intentional states of affairs because different such states can be attributed without making a difference to the elementary particles. Quine thinks that, if a sentence can't be paraphrased in the sort of vocabulary which Locke and Boyle would have liked, it doesn't stand for anything real. Diltheyans who exaggerate the differences between the *Geistes-* and the *Naturwissenschaften* think that the fact that it can't be paraphrased is a hint about a distinctive metaphysical or epistemic status, or the need for a distinctive methodological strategy. But surely all that such irreducibility shows is that one particular vocabulary (Locke's and Boyle's) is not going to be helpful for doing certain things with certain explananda (e.g., people and cultures). This shows as little, to use Hilary Putnam's analogy, as the fact that if you want to know why a square peg doesn't fit into a round hole you had better *not* describe the peg in terms of the positions of its constituent elementary particles.

The reason definitional irreducibility acquires this illusionary importance, it seems to me, is that it is important to make a *moral* distinction between the brutes and ourselves. So, looking about for relevantly distinct behavior, we have traditionally picked our ability to *know*. In previous centuries, we made the mistake of hypostatizing cognitive behavior as the possession of "mind" or "consciousness" or "ideas" and then insisting on the irreducibility of mental representations to their physiological correlates. When this became *vieux jeu*, we switched from mental representations to linguistic representations. We switched from Mind to Language as the name of a quasi-substance or quasi-power which made us morally different. So recent defenders of human dignity have been busy proving the irreducibility of the semantic instead of the irreducibility of the psychical. But all the Ryle-Wittgenstein sorts of arguments against the ghost in the machine work equally well against the ghost between the lines—the notion that having been penned by a human hand imparts a special something, textuality, to inscriptions, something which fossils can never have.

As long as we think of knowledge as representing reality rather than coping with it, mind or language will continue to seem numinous. "Materialism" or "behaviorism," and the Galilean style, may continue to seem morally dubious. We shall be struck with this notion of "representing" or "corresponding to" reality as long as we think that there is some analogy between calling things by their "right"—i.e., their conventional—names and finding the "right"—i.e., Nature's Own—way of describing them. But if we could abandon this metaphor, and the vocabulary of representation which goes with it—as Kuhn and Dewey suggest we might—then we would not find language or mind mysterious, nor "materialism" or "behaviorism" particularly dangerous. If the line I am taking is correct, we need to think of our distinctive moral status as just *that*, rather than as "grounded" on our possession of mind, language, culture, feeling, intentionality, textuality, or anything else. All these numinous notions are just expressions of our awareness that we are members of a moral community, phrased in one or another pseudo-explanatory jargon. This awareness is something which cannot be further "grounded"—it is simply taking a certain point of view on our fellow-humans. The question of whether it is an "objective" point of view is not to any point.

This can be made a bit more concrete as follows. I said that, *pace* Taylor, it was a mistake to think of somebody's own account of his behavior or culture as epistemically privileged. He might have a good account of what he's doing or he might not. But it is *not* a mistake to think of it as morally privileged. We have a duty to listen to his account, not because he has privileged access to his own motives but because he is a human being like ourselves. Taylor's claim that we need to look for *internal* explanations of people or cultures or texts takes civility as a methodological strategy. But civility is not a method, it is simply a virtue. The reason why we invite the moronic psychopath to address the court before being sentenced is not that we hope for better explanations than expert psychiatric testimony has offered. We do so because he is, after all, one of us. By asking for his own account in his own words, we hope to decrease our chances of acting badly. What we hope for from social scientists is that they will act as interpreters for those with whom we are not sure how to talk. This is the same thing we hope for from our poets and dramatists and novelists.

Just as I argued in the previous section of this paper that it is a mistake to think that there is a principled distinction between explanation and understanding, or between two methods, one appropriate for nature and the other for man, I have been arguing in this section that the notion that we know *a priori* that nature and man are distinct sorts of objects is a mistake. It is a confusion between ontology and morals. There are lots of useful vocabularies which ignore the non-human/human or thing/person distinctions. There is at least one vocabulary—the moral—and possibly many more, for which these distinctions are basic. Human beings are no more "really" described in the latter sort of vocabulary than in the former. Objects are not "more objectively" described in any vocabulary than in any other. Vocabularies are useful or useless, good or bad, helpful or misleading, sensitive or coarse, and so on; but they are not "more objective" or "less objective" nor more or less "scientific."

IV. Ungrounded Hope: Dewey vs. Foucault

The burden of my argument so far has been that if we get rid of traditional notions of "objectivity" and "scientific method" we shall be able to see the social sciences as continuous with literature—as interpreting other people to us, and thus enlarging and deepening our sense of community. We shall see the anthropologists and historians as having made it possible for us—educated, leisured policy-makers of the West—to see any exotic specimen of humanity as also "one of us." We shall see the sociologists as having done the same for the poor (and various other sorts of nearby outsiders), and the psychologists as having done the same for the eccentric and the insane. This is not all that the social sciences have done, but it is perhaps the most important thing. If we emphasize this side of their achievement, then we shall not object to their sharing a narrative and anecdotal style with the novelist and the journalist. We shall not worry about how this style is related to the "Galilean" style which "quantified behavioral science" has tried to emulate. We shall not think either style particularly appropriate or inappropriate to the study of man. For we shall not think that "the study of man" or "the human sciences" have a nature, any more than we think that man does. When the notion of knowledge as representation goes, then the notion of inquiry as split into discrete sectors with discrete subject matters goes. The lines between novels, newspaper articles, and sociological research get blurred. The lines between subject matters are drawn by reference to current practical concerns, rather than putative ontological status.

Once this pragmatist line is adopted, however, there are still two ways to go. One can emphasize, as Dewey did, the moral importance of the social sciences—their role in widening and deepening our sense of community and of the possibilities open to this community. Or one can emphasize, as Michel Foucault does, the way in which the social sciences have served as instruments of "the disciplinary society," the connection between knowledge and power rather than that between knowledge and human solidarity. Much present-day concern about the status and the role of the social sciences comes out of the realization that in addition to broadening the sympathies of the educated classes, the social sciences have also helped them manipulate all the other classes (not to mention, so to speak, helping them manipulate themselves). Foucault's is the best account of this dark side of the social sciences. Admirers of Habermas and of Foucault join in thinking of the "interpretive turn" in the social sciences as a turn against their use as "instruments of domination," as tools for what Dewey called "social engineering." This has resulted in a confusing quasi-politicization of what was already a factitious "methodological" issue. In this final section, I want to argue that one should not attribute undue importance to the "Galilean-vs.-hermeneutic" or "explanation-vs.-understanding" contrasts by seeing them as parallel with the contrast between "domination" and "emancipation." We should see Dewey and Foucault as differing not over a theoretical issue, but over what we may hope.

Dewey and Foucault make exactly the same criticism of the tradition. They agree, right down the line, about the need to abandon traditional notions of rationality, objectivity, method, and truth. They are both, so to speak, "beyond method." They agree that rationality is what history and society make it—that there is no overarching ahistorical structure (the Nature of Man, the laws of human behavior, the Moral Law, the Nature of Society) to be discovered. They share the Whewellian and Kuhnian notion of Galilean Science—as exemplifying the power of new vocabularies rather than offering the secret of scientific success. But Dewey emphasizes that this move "beyond method" gives mankind an opportunity to grow up, to be free to make itself, rather than seeking direction from some imagined outside source (one of the ahistorical structures mentioned above). His experimentalism asks us to see knowledge-claims as proposals about what actions to try out next:

The elaborate systems of science are born not of reason but of impulses at first slight and flickering; impulses to handle, to move about, to hunt, to uncover, to mix things separated and divide things combined, to talk and to listen. Method is their effectual organization into continuous dispositions of inquiry, development, and testing. . . . Reason, the rational attitude, is the resulting disposition. . . .⁶

Foucault also moves beyond the traditional ideals of method and rationality as antecedent constraints upon inquiry, but he views this move as the Nietzschean realization that all knowledge-claims are moves in a power-game. "We are subject to the production of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."⁷

Here we have two philosophers saying the same thing but putting a different spin on it. The same phenomenon is found in their respective predecessors. James and Nietzsche (as Arthur Danto has pointed out⁸) developed the same criticisms of traditional notions of truth, and the same "pragmatic" (or "perspectivalist") alternative. James jovially says that "ideas become true just insofar as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience,"⁹ and Dewey follows this up when he says that "rationality is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires."¹⁰ Nietzsche says that "the criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power"¹¹ and that [the] mistake of philosophy is that, instead of seeing logic and the categories of reasons as means for fixing up the world for utilitarian ends . . . one thinks that they give one a criterion of truth about *reality*.¹²

Foucault follows this up by saying that "we should not imagine that the world presents us with a legible face . . . [we] must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things."¹³ The arguments which James and Dewey on the one hand, and Nietzsche and Foucault on the other, present for these identical views are as similar as the tone of each is different. Neither pair has any arguments except the usual "idealist" ones, familiar since Kant, against the notion of knowledge as correspondence to nonrepresentations (rather than coherence among representations). These are the arguments in whose direction I gestured in the first section of this paper, when I said that all attempts to cash Galileo's metaphor of Nature's Own Language had failed. Since the cash-value of a philosophical conclusion is the pattern of argument around it, I do not think that we are going to find any *theoretical* differences which divide these two pairs of philosophers from each other.

Is the difference then *merely* one of tone—an ingenuous Anglo-Saxon pose as opposed to a self-dramatizing Continental one? The difference could be better put in terms of something like "moral outlook." One is reminded of the famous passage in Wittgenstein:

If good or bad willing changes the world, it can only change the limits of the world, not the facts; not the things that can be expressed in language. In brief, the world must thereby become quite another. It must so to speak wax or wane as a whole. The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy.¹⁴

But again, "good and bad willing," "happy and unhappy" are not right for the opposition we are trying to describe. "Hopeful" and "hopeless" are a bit better. Ian Hacking winds up a discussion of Foucault by saying:

"What is man?" asked Kant. "Nothing," says Foucault. "For what then may we hope?" asks Kant. Does Foucault give the same *nothing* in reply? To think so is to misunderstand Foucault's reply to the question about Man. Foucault said that the concept Man is a fraud, not that you and I are as nothing. Likewise the concept Hope is all wrong. The hopes attributed to Marx and Rousseau are perhaps part of that very concept Man, and they are a sorry basis for optimism. Optimism, pessimism, nihilism and the like are all concepts that make sense only within the idea of a transcendental or enduring subject. Foucault is not in the least incoherent about all this. If we're not satisfied, it should not be because he is pessimistic. It is because he has given no surrogate for whatever it is that springs eternal in the human breast.¹⁵

What Foucault doesn't give us is what Dewey wanted to give us—a kind of hope which doesn't *need* reinforcement from "the idea of a transcendental or enduring subject." Dewey offered ways of using words like "truth," "rationality," "progress," "freedom," "democracy," "culture," "art," and the like which presupposed neither the ability to use the familiar vocabulary of what Foucault calls "the classic age," nor that of the nineteenth-century French intellectuals (the vocabulary of "man and his doubles").

Foucault sees no middle ground, in thinking about the social sciences, between the "classic" Galilean conception of "behavioral sciences" and the French notion of "*sciences de l'homme*." It was just such a middle ground that Dewey proposed, and which inspired the

social sciences in America before the failure of nerve which turned them "behavioral." More generally, the recent reaction in favor of hermeneutical social sciences which I discussed earlier has taken for granted that if we don't want something like Parsons, we have to take something like Foucault; i.e., that overcoming the deficiencies of Weberian *Zweckrationalitat* requires going all the way, repudiating the "will to truth." What Dewey suggested was that we keep the will to truth and the optimism that goes with it, but free them from the behaviorist notion that Behaviorese is Nature's Own Language *and* from the notion of man as "transcendental or enduring subject." For, in Dewey's hands, the will to truth is not die urge to dominate but the urge to create, to "attain working harmony among diverse desires."

This may sound too pat, too good to be true. I suggest that the reason we find it so is that we are convinced that liberalism requires the notion of a common human nature, or a common set of moral principles which binds us all, or some other descendent of the Christian notion of the Brotherhood of Man. So we have come to see liberal social hope—such as Dewey's—as inherently self-deceptive and philosophically naive. We think that, once we have freed ourselves from the various illusions which Nietzsche diagnosed, we *must* find ourselves all alone, without the sense of community which liberalism requires. Perhaps, as Hacking says, Nietzsche and Foucault are not saying that you and I are as nothing, but they do seem to hint that you and I together, as *we*, aren't much—that human solidarity goes when God and his doubles go. Man as Hegel thought of him, as the Incarnation of the Idea, doubtless does have to go. The proletariat as the Redeemed Form of Man has to go, too. But there seems no particular reason why, after dumping Marx, we have to keep on repeating all the nasty things about bourgeois liberalism which he taught us to say. There is no inferential connection between the disappearance of the transcendental subject—of "man" as something having a nature which society can repress or understand—and the disappearance of human solidarity. Bourgeois liberalism seems to me the best example of this solidarity we have yet achieved, and Deweyan pragmatism the best articulation of it.¹⁶

The burden of my argument here is that we should see Dewey as having already gone the route Foucault is traveling, and as having arrived at the point Foucault is still trying to reach—the point at which we can make philosophical and historical ("genealogical") reflection useful to those, in Foucault's phrase, "whose fight is located in the fine meshes of the webs of power."¹⁷ Dewey spent his life trying to lend a hand in these little fights, and in the course of doing so he worked out the vocabulary and rhetoric of American "pluralism." This rhetoric made the first generation of American social scientists think of themselves as apostles of a new form of social life. Foucault does not, as far as I can see, do more than update Dewey by warning that the social scientists have often been, and are always likely to be, co-opted by the bad guys. Reading Foucault reinforces the disillusion which American intellectuals have suffered during the last few decades of watching the "behavioralized" social sciences team up with the state.

The reason why it may appear that Foucault has something new and distinctive to add to Dewey is that he is riding the crest of a powerful but vaguely-defined movement which I have elsewhere¹ described as "textualism"—the movement which suggests, as Foucault puts it at the end of *The Order of Things*, that "Man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter upon our horizon."¹⁸ Another reason is that Foucault is attempting to transform political discourse by seeing "power" as not intrinsically repressive—because, roughly, there is no naturally good self to repress. But Dewey, it seems to me, had already grasped both points. Foucault's vision of discourse as a network of power-relations isn't very different from Dewey's vision of it as instrumental, as one element in the arsenal of tools people use for gratifying, synthesizing, and harmonizing their desires. Dewey had learned from Hegel what Foucault learns from Nietzsche—that there is nothing much to "man" except one more animal, until culture, the meshes of power, begin to shape him into something else. For Dewey too there is nothing Rousseauian to be "repressed"; "repression" and "liberation" are just names for the sides of the structures of power we like and the sides we don't like. Once "power" is freed from its connotation of "repression," then Foucault's "structures of power" will not seem much different from Dewey's "structures of culture." "Power" and "culture" are equipollent indications of the social forces which make us more

than animals—and which, when the bad guys take over, can turn us into something worse and more miserable than animals.

These remarks are not meant to downgrade Foucault—who seems to me one of the most interesting philosophers alive—but just to insist that we go slow about assuming that the discovery of things like "discourse," "textuality," "speech-acts," and the like have radically changed the philosophical scene. The current vogue of "hermeneutics" is going to end soon, and badly, if we advertise these new notions as more than they are—namely, one more jargon which tries to get out from under some of the mistakes of the past. Dewey had his own jargon—popular at the time, but now a bit musty—for the same purpose. But the difference in jargon should not obscure the common aim. This is the attempt to free mankind from Nietzsche's "longest lie," the notion that outside the haphazard and perilous experiments we perform there lies something (God, Science, Knowledge, Rationality, or Truth) which will, if only we perform the correct rituals, step in to save us. Although Foucault and Dewey are trying to do the same thing, Dewey seems to me to have done it better, simply because his vocabulary allows room for unjustifiable hope, and an unground-able but vital sense of human solidarity.

Notes

1. I expand on these points in "A Reply to Dreyfus and Taylor," *Review of Metaphysics*, XXIV (1980): 19-46, and in the ensuing discussion, pp. 47-55.
2. Cf. Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 64(1).
3. Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, "The Interpreting Turn: Emergence of an Approach" in *Interpretive Social Science*, ed. Rabinow and Sullivan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 5.
4. See the discussion of Searle's "Minds, Brains and Programs," in *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3 (1980): 417-457, esp. my "Searle and the Secret Powers of the Brain" at pp. 445-446 and Searle's "Intrinsic Intentionality" at pp. 450-456.
5. See the material cited in n. 1, above.
6. John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Modern Library, 1930), p. 196.
7. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester Books, 1980), p. 93.
8. Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), chap. 3.
9. William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Longmans Green, 1947), p. 58.
10. Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 196.
11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 290.
12. Nietzsche, *Werke*. ed. Schlechta, III, p. 318.
13. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 229.
14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 6.42.
15. Ian Hacking, review of Foucault's *Power/Knowledge*, in *New York Review of Books*, April 1981.
16. Dewey seems to me the twentieth-century counterpart of John Stuart Mill, whose attempt to synthesize Coleridge with Bentham is paralleled by Dewey's attempt to synthesize Hegel with Mill himself. In a brilliant critique of liberalism, John Dunn describe* Mill a attempting to combine the "two possible radical intellectual strategies open to those who aspire to rescue liberalism as a coherent political option":
One is to shrink liberalism to a more or less pragmatic and sociological doctrine about the relations between types of political and social order and the enjoyment of political liberties. The version of liberalism which embraces this option is usually today termed "pluralism," a conception . . . which is still in effect the official intellectual ideology of American society. The second possible radical strategy is simply to repudiate the claims of sociology, to take an epistemological position of such stark skepticism that the somewhat over-rated causal status of sociology can safely be viewed with limited scorn. (*Western Political Values in the Face of the Future* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], pp. 47-48)

Dunn thinks Mill's attempt to "integrate intellectual traditions so deeply and explicitly inimical to one another" failed, and that modern pluralism fails also:

Modern pluralism is thus at least sufficiently sociologically self-aware not to blanch from the insight that a liberal polity is the political form of bourgeois capitalist society. But the price which it has paid, so far pretty willingly, for this self-awareness, is the surrender of any plausible overall intellectual frame, uniting epistemology, psychology and political theory, which explains and celebrates the force of such political commitment. (*Ibid.*, p. 49).

My view is that such an overall intellectual frame was exactly what Dewey gave us, and that h* did so precisely by carrying out Mill's combination of strategies. (For some links between Rawls [who is Dunn's favorite example of modern pluralism] and Dewey, see Rawls's Dewey Lectures, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory," *Journal of Philosophy* LXXVII (1980): 515-572. Note esp. p. 542, on a conception of justice which swings free of religious, philosophical or moral doctrines," and *Weltanschauungen* generally. See also p. 519 for Rawls's repudiation of an "epistemological problem," and his doctrine of "moral facts" as "constructed.") Dunn seems to me right in saying that liberalism has little useful to say about contemporary global politics, but wrong in pinning the blame for this on its lack of a philosophical synthesis of the old, Kantian, unpragmatic sort. On my view, we should be more willing than we are to celebrate bourgeois capitalist society as the best polity actualized so far, while regretting that it is irrelevant to most of the problems of most of the population of the planet.

17. See Essay 9, above.

18. Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 386.