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On the Superiority of the Ordinary Day over the Holy Day: Relativism, Anti-anti-relativism, and Anti-anti-ethnocentrism

"... philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*..."
(L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 37)

For some of Polish readers the title will have associations with a series of lectures by a Polish comedian, Jan Tadeusz Stanisławski, on 'applied opinionology,' and quite rightly. However, I do not intend to resurrect the discipline he invented, but only to use his phrase in reference to philosophy. Why I want to do this will become clear in due time. For now let me announce that my analysis applies to Richard Rorty and (marginally) to Clifford Geertz. In particular, I want to look at their repudiation of relativism, and their arguments against, respectively, anti-relativism and anti-ethnocentrism.

We (pragmatists) are not relativists.

Rorty refused many times to accept the term 'relativist' as a name for himself or – more broadly – for pragmatists. "Dewey was often denounced as a relativist, and so am I. But of course we pragmatists never call *ourselves* relativists. Usually, we define ourselves in negative terms. We call ourselves »anti-Platonist« or »antimetaphysicians« or »antifoundationalists«. Equally, our opponents almost never

call themselves »Platonist« or »metaphysicians« or »foundationalists«. They usually call themselves defenders of common sense, or of reason." (Rorty 1999a, xvi-xvii; also 1991, p. 42[1]) Geertz also distinguishes himself from relativism, which – for him – is "a drained term anyway, yesterday's battle cry" (Geertz 2000a, p. 42).

In my opinion, Rorty may have non-philosophical motives for separating himself and his beloved Dewey from relativism. However, since he mentioned these motives only marginally and never discussed them fully, I shall stick to his philosophical arguments and to his 'negative' anti-anti-ethnocentric affiliation. I shall do the same in reference to Geertz and his anti anti-relativism. I shall try to show some conceptual, formal difficulties in their positions of which they seem not to be aware. What must be strongly emphasized, however, is the fact that I am not going to criticize them from an opposite, viz., a non-relativist perspective. Quite the contrary. My own position develops from relativism and ethnocentrism, as well as from Kolakowski's Europocentrism, and is therefore fairly close to Rorty's and Geertz's own perspectives. To anticipate my criticism, I shall maintain that by accepting anti-anti-relativism or anti-anti-ethnocentrism they join a philosophical game 'invented' by contemporary lovers of philosophical absolutism and consign themselves to the rules of the game constituted by them, by a tradition that they want to repudiate.

When I talk about a lover of contemporary philosophical absolutism I have in mind someone who is not, by any means, a straw man. Indeed, I have encountered no small number of philosophical absolutists. Let me characterize contemporary lovers of philosophical absolutism by contrasting them with early modern philosophical absolutists, such as Descartes or Leibniz. Now, an early modern philosophical absolutist can be described as someone who views himself as a depositary of Divine knowledge, for all his knowledge was given by God. He sees his role in two ways. First, he believes that his duty is to discover within his own soul Divine knowledge, i.e., the body of clear and distinct ideas and well justified propositions. Second, he sees himself as an intellectual leader, guiding others to scientific truth, and as a teacher, enlightening innocents in wisdom. The most difficult part of the traditional absolutist's

[1] Since I refer to several papers in this collection, I do not specify them.

work is to discover foundations for knowledge, i.e., to find ideas and propositions that cannot be rejected under the threat of the thinker's annihilation. For anything that is internally contradictory (e.g., thinks and does not exist) really cannot exist. For an early modern absolutist, discovering the foundation of knowledge is encountering God, the Foundation of foundations, the ultimate objective Foundation, whose negation is utterly impossible. It is God, who guarantees certainty, necessity, truthfulness, the universal validity of fundamental knowledge, and the very act by which it is discovered. It is God, who bestows on the depositary of Divine knowledge the right to pronounce his truths as universal Truths. When an early modern absolutist succeeded in becoming a real Depositary of knowledge, he could devote his time entirely to constructing scientific knowledge about himself and the world. To do this he had to transform himself from a discoverer of Divine knowledge into a constructor of knowledge because *a priori* reasoning based on the laws of logic and mathematics was insufficient for building knowledge about the world. He had to refer to his own experience, imagination, and invention in order to present explanatory hypotheses and mechanical models of empirical phenomena.

A contemporary lover of philosophical absolutism does not see himself as a Depositary of Divine knowledge, which is not surprising in light of modern efforts to separate philosophy from its traditional theological background. He is a guardian of the Received View, a *priest*, who worships the only correct philosophical position based on immutable principles. In ontology the attitude of the priest shows itself in preserving the doctrine of absolute Being, the conception of the ultimate (e.g., logical) structure of reality, or the idea of the essence of things; in epistemology – in protecting "the monistic concept of cognition" and "intellectual dominion over reality with the help of a set of laws, both the highest and most elementary, which explain everything" (Kolakowski 1968, p. 29; also: Rouse 1987, p. viii). Within contemporary philosophical discourse, which is secularized and rationalized, the lover of absolutist philosophy is not necessarily seeking support in absolutes; his most urgent task is to justify the Received View, to find irrefutable reasons justifying the entire View or particular propositions that constitute the Received View. Another task, undertaken with delight

by absolutists, at least those whom I know, is to criticize relativism, to charge it, decade after decade, with internal incoherence, with the paradox of self-reference, with the necessity of self-refutation and similar lethal mistakes. “But such neat little dialectical strategies only work against lightly-sketched fictional characters.” (Rorty 1982, p. 167) Real relativists have secured themselves from those sins long time ago.

For its adherent, relativism is primarily a negative position, for its core is an *anti-absolutist stance*.[2] In ontology it consists in rejecting the absolutistic premises of traditional metaphysics, in particular those based on theology. In epistemology, of abandoning the theological assumptions of early modern theories of cognition or the absolutistic assumptions of Kantian transcendentalism. In ethics and aesthetics, in discarding the reference to absolute values. In all fields relativism means – more profoundly – a rebuffing of the entire philosophical program of justification, of grounding philosophical claims in an absolute being or in transcendental conditions. A relativist simply cannot find a use for absolutist concepts (see: Rorty 2000, p. 24). As Rorty puts it, “philosophers are called »relativists« when they do not accept the Greek distinction between the way things are in themselves and the relations which they have to other things, and in particular to human needs and interests.” (Rorty 1999a, p. xvi) Adopting an anti-absolutist stance a relativist can remain within its limits and criticize absolutism, or can go further and develop a relativist narrative. I shall return to this later.

For an absolutist, on the other hand, relativism is not simply a negative position, a criticism of the absolutist justificatory program, or of absolutism’s ultimate claims on what exists, on what are the warrants of cognitive validity, or the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of knowledge. An absolutist cannot see it otherwise than as a ’positive’, constructive view, a meta-narrative, in which his own claims are replaced by reverse claims that are equally abstract and universal.[3] According to the

[2] Epistemological anti-foundationalism, together with ethical and aesthetical anti-foundationalism, can be understood as a version of anti-absolutism, for all these specific foundationalist positions, which are criticized by them, boil down to the search for support in absolute being.

[3] John Ladd may be right in his observation that “all the common definitions of . . . relativism are framed by opponents of relativism . . . they are absolutist definitions” (Ladd 1982, p. 158; quoted

absolutist, the relativist's anti-claims put appearances in the place of Reality, fictions in the place of Truth, interrelations among things in the place of their unchangeable Nature. Therefore,"[t]he epithet »relativist« is applied to philosophers who agree with Nietzsche that »'Truth' is the will to be master of the multiplicity of sensations«. It is also applied to those who agree with William James that »the 'true' is simply the expedient in the way of believing«" (Rorty 1999a, p. xvi). Geertz gives more examples: "To suggest that »hard rock« foundations for cognitive, esthetic, or moral judgments may not, in fact, be available, or anyway that those one is being offered are dubious, is to find oneself accused of disbelieving in the existence of the physical world, thinking pushpin as good as poetry, regarding Hitler as just a fellow with unstandard tastes, or even, as I myself have recently been—God save the mark— »[having] no politics at all«." (Geertz 2000a, p. 43-44)

An absolutist's definition of cognitive relativism can be stretched so far that it takes relativism to be "a view that every belief on a certain topic, or perhaps about *any* topic, is as good as every other" (Rorty, 1882b, p. 166). Hence, instead of saying that, for instance, the community of scientists is better in getting at truth than the community of laymen, a relativist says – according to an absolutist – that any community is as good at that as any other (see: Rorty 1991, p. 202). However, as Rorty rightly adds, "No one holds this view." (Rorty, 1882b, p. 166) Moreover, "[t]he view that every tradition is as rational or as moral as every other could be held only by a god" (Rorty 1991, p. 202).

Theoretically, any relativist, who has thought through a relativist position, can tell an absolutist that this picture of the relativist narration is dead wrong. It exists only in the absolutist's nightmare. However, the absolutist's way of philosophizing is so dominant that even philosophers who are anti-absolutists or anti-essentialists (like Rorty) are unable to free themselves from the absolutist's characterization of relativism and from the absolutist's accusation that relativism is self-refuting (Rorty 1991, p. 202). Consequentially, they do not want to be perceived as relativists and they

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after Geertz 2000a, p. 43).

do not affiliate with relativism.

From anti-absolutism to ethnocentrism? No, to anti-anti-ethnocentrism.

There is one sense in which going relativistic seems unavoidable for any anti-absolutist. This is to accept cultural-socio-historical contextualization. This statement needs clarification without which an absolutist would not understand it correctly. This sort of contextualization is not done abstractly and is not executed in an universalistic way. It is a **factual relativization**. It situates phenomena, facts, beliefs we have, their truth, rules and standards of action, etc. in particular historical-socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, this form of contextualization applies to facts or things encountered by someone and not to 'things-in-themselves'; to phenomena experienced by us or other people; to beliefs held by someone; to propositions uttered, written, or thought and objectified in another way, and not to propositions in the logical sense (if they exist at all, and this is not presupposed by a relativist). [4] Nor does this form of contextualization relativize real facts to abstract worlds, or propositions to abstract systems (logically possible conceptual schemes, unspecified cognitive systems, abstractly defined language games, etc.). It situates them in actually existing contexts, in the world of a certain community, in a historical epoch, in a socio-historical practice of some sort, etc. It does not consider the truth 'as such' of propositions 'in themselves' but applies to propositions' truth as it is understood or established in certain real communities. In other words, this sort of factual relativization cannot be stated for instance in the following way: 'a mental representation of the world is always relativized to one of many cognitive systems none of which is *a priori* in a privileged position' and 'there are no algorithms allowing the comparison of results achieved within different cognitive systems' (see: Leszczyńska 2005, p. 102-103). Relativism, formulated in such a way, is simply the reverse of the absolutist views I have mentioned above, and it is equally abstract. In other words, **it is turned into**

[4] Of course, cultural-social-historical contextualism can be applied to logic as a historical and social practice.

another form of absolutism.

Cultural-socio-historical relativism cannot be formulated in such an universalistic way. That a phenomenon or a belief is relativized to a particular context must be **shown** and not deduced from an universal law. As a result -- contrary to what an absolutist exponent of relativism claims (see: Leszczyńska 2005, p. 104-105) -- the incommensurability thesis is not an element of cultural relativism. It is true that we do not have external, objective standards and measures of comparison, presupposed by opponents of the incommensurability thesis. There is, however, no reason why we cannot interpret beliefs formulated within one cognitive system from within another (our) cognitive system. After all, this is exactly what Gadamerian hermeneutics tells us to do when we engage in a dialogue with a historical text. By analogy, we can interpret foreign rules and standards of action, and we can apply our meta-rules or meta-standards to them and thereby make them comparable. It also is true that, as Arthur Fine rightly argues (2007, p. 57), relative standards or relative truths cannot guide us when we alter the context (practice), to which they are relative, or when we move to another context. However, since they are particulars situated in particular contexts, we may always refer to other standards, rules, or truths for guidance.

Cultural-social-historical relativization is – first of all – a self-obligation of an anti-absolutist. An anti-absolutist, aware of not being a god, has to place his/her own philosophical activity, within a historically local, contingent, and socio-cultural context. “What we cannot do is to rise above all human communities, actual and possible.” (Rorty 1991, p. 38). Rorty is, thus, perfectly aware of the unavoidability of cultural relativization or contextualization. Therefore, he should be equally aware that it leads us to ethnocentrism. *Ethnocentrism,* as a self-idenfication with a certain community, seems to be the next step for a consistent anti-absolutist. If consistent anti-absolutism means the rejection of the possibility of occupying a cognitive position that is beyond or above all times, communities, and cultures, if it requires accepting cultural-social-historical contextualization, it leads directly to an ethnocentric self-identification. And Rorty knows that. “Either we attach a special privilege to our own community, or we pretend an impossible tolerance for every other group.” (Rorty 1991, p. 29) It seems to

him that now, when "both the Age of Faith and the Enlightenment seem beyond recovery" (Rorty 1982, p. 175), a sort of contextualism or ethnocentrism is a natural and obvious perspective for a philosopher aware of the fact that to philosophize is simply to grasp one's time in thought, as Rorty says after Hegel (Rorty 1982, p. 175). The pragmatist knows that thinking is always done from a specific perspective and acting is performed within a particular culture. "Typically, the terms we fall back on are self-consciously ethnocentric . . . In adopting these self-characterizations we announce to our audience »where we are coming from«, our contingent spatio-temporal affiliations."(Rorty 1991, p. 208) Moreover, ethnocentrism seems unavoidable to the pragmatist both as "an inescapable condition – roughly synonymous with »human finitude«" and as "a reference to a particular *ethnos*" (Rorty 1991, 15). In the second sense it is "what makes certain options live, or momentous, or forced, while leaving others dead, or trivial, or optional," and it results from acculturation (Rorty 1991, p. 13). Rorty's own self-characterization is always ethnocentric. Moreover, in his reply to Geertz's criticism of ethnocentrism, Rorty seems to accept ethnocentrism since he says "an antirepresentationalist view of inquiry leaves one without a skyhook with which to escape from the ethnocentrism produced by acculturation" (Rorty 1991, p. 2). And yet, he sets ethnocentrism against relativism, and talks about a dilemma between them, though he admits that the pragmatist facing this dilemma should grasp its ethnocentric horn (Rorty 1991, p. 29). In fact, however, he does not affiliate himself with ethnocentrism, nor does Geertz, who associates himself neither with relativism nor with ethnocentrism. In the end, Rorty describes his own philosophical position as anti-anti-ethnocentrism, and Geertz describes his position as anti anti-relativism.

A possible reason for Rorty's move from anti-absolutism to anti-anti-ethnocentrism may be the acceptance of the absolutist's reading of the concept of ethnocentrism. It can be understood as narrowly as relativism. it seems, then, to presuppose a view of communities as – to use a phrase coined by Geertz – "semantic monads, nearly windowless," closed within their own cultures, and indifferent to other communities. This is how Geertz portrays ethnocentrism in his exposition of anti anti-relativism and in his polemics with Rorty, who adopts this view of ethnocentrism.

Geertz refers to Claude Lévi-Strauss's defense of ethnocentrism[5] and follows his diagnosis that ethnocentrism is a vanishing phenomenon. "In the past, when so-called primitive cultures were only very marginally involved with one another—referring to themselves as »The True Ones,« »The Good Ones,« or just »The Human Beings,« and dismissing those across the river or over the ridge as »earth monkeys« or »louse eggs,« that is, not, or not fully, human—cultural integrity was readily maintained." (Geertz 2000b, p. 71) Due to indifference and integrity communities could "exist in their own manner and on their own terms" (Lévi-Strauss 1985, p. 7). Now however – Geertz claims – "when such a situation clearly no longer obtains, and everyone, increasingly crowded on a small planet, is deeply interested in everyone else, and in everyone else's business, the possibility of the loss of such integrity, because of the loss of such indifference, looms. Ethnocentrism can perhaps never entirely disappear, being »consubstantial with our species,« but it can grow dangerously weak, leaving us prey to a sort of moral entropy" (Geertz 2000b, p. 71). For Geertz ethnocentrism is the choice of those "philosophers, historians, and social scientists," who are "[u]nable to embrace either relativism or absolutism—the first because it disables judgment, the second because it removes it from history" (Geertz 2000b, p. 72). He sees them as gladly accepting their imprisonment in their own cultural tradition (Geertz 2000b, p. 72). He admits that "If our values cannot be disentangled from our history and our institutions and nobody else's can be disentangled from theirs, then there would seem

[5] „The perception that meaning, in the form of interpretable signs—sounds, images, feelings, artifacts, gestures—comes to exist only within language games, communities of discourse, intersubjective systems of reference, and ways of worldmaking; that it arises within the frame of concrete social interaction in which something is something for you or for me, and not in some secret grotto in the head; and that it is through and through historical, hammered out in the flow of events, read to imply (as, in my opinion, neither Malinowski nor Wittgenstein—nor for that matter Kuhn or Foucault—meant it to imply) that human communities are, or should be, semantic monads, nearly windowless. We are, says Lévi-Strauss, passengers in the trains which are our cultures, each moving on its own track, at its own speed, and in its own direction. The trains rolling alongside, going in similar directions and at speeds not too different from our own are at least reasonably visible to us as we look out from our compartments. But trains on an oblique or parallel track which are going in an opposed direction are not." (Geertz 2000b, p. 76-77)

to be nothing for it but to follow Emerson and stand on our own feet and speak with our own voice." (Geertz 2000b, p. 73) However, he rejects ethnocentrism because „[t]he trouble with ethnocentrism is not that it commits us to our own commitments. We are, by definition, so committed, as we are to having our own headaches. The trouble with ethnocentrism is that it impedes us from discovering at what sort of angle . . . we stand to the world" (Geertz 2000b, p. 75). What can help us to see the "angle we stand to the world" are narratives and scenarios delivered by ethnography, the arts and history, which can „refocus our attention; not, however, ones that render us acceptable to ourselves by representing others as gathered into worlds we don't want and can't arrive at, but ones which make us visible to ourselves by representing us and everyone else as cast into the midst of a world full of irremovable strangenesses we can't keep clear of" (Geertz 2000b, p. 84). Such narratives are not, however, the laws or principles beloved by the absolutist. They remain local and contingent stories.

For Geertz, therefore, the options that remain are absolutism and relativism. By setting up this opposition -- either absolutism, or relativism -- he involves himself in an indirect defense of relativism. He himself does not want to accept or defend relativism directly, he wants rather "to attack anti-relativism," which seems to him "broadly on the rise" (Geertz 2000a, p. 42). He believes that the dread of cultural relativism is unfounded. „It is unfounded because the moral and intellectual consequences that are commonly supposed to flow from relativism— subjectivism, nihilism, incoherence, Machiavellianism, ethical idiocy, esthetic blindness, and so on—do not in fact do so and the promised rewards of escaping its clutches, mostly having to do with pasteurized knowledge, are illusory." (Geertz 2000a, p. 42) He claims that being anti anti-relativism does not simply reduce to relativism because – as he emphasizes – „the double negative simply doesn't work in the usual way; and therein lies its rhetorical attractions. It enables one to reject something without thereby committing oneself to what it rejects." (Geertz 2000a, s. 43)

Unlike Geertz, Rorty seems to believe that an ethnocentric position is not unavoidable because "the liberal culture of recent times has found a strategy for avoiding the disadvantage of ethnocentrism" (Rorty 1991, p. 2). This strategy is "to be

open to encounters with other actual or possible cultures and to make this openness central to its self-image." (Rorty 1991, p. 2) The way to avoid ethnocentrism is „to have only the most tenuous and cursory formulations of criteria for changing our beliefs, only the loosest and most flexible standards." (Rorty 1991, p. 43) The liberal culture is not a windowless "semantic monad," and people are not imprisoned in it (Rorty 1991, p. 204). It is "an *ethnos* which prides itself on its suspicion of ethnocentrism – on its ability to increase the freedom and openness of encounters, rather than on its possession of truth" (Rorty 1991, p. 2).

It seems, therefore, that if we accept their analyses we must admit that neither relativism nor ethnocentrism can be adopted by an anti-absolutist. It seems that Rorty and Geertz are right and that the only option is to be anti anti- . . . At this point an important question is whether such a position is better than those they reject. Alas, it seems not.

What is wrong with the strategies of anti-anti-relativism and anti-anti-ethnocentrism?

Both Geertz and Rorty claim they are engaged in an argument against some philosophical dogmas. Geertz undertakes "an effort to counter a view rather than to defend the view it claims to be counter to" (Geertz 2000a, p. 42). Rorty, while rejecting the possibility of calling himself a relativist, emphasizes: „We so-called »relativists« refuse, predictably, to admit that we are enemies of reason and common sense. We say that we are only criticizing some antiquated, specifically philosophical, dogmas." (Rorty 1999a, p. xvii). Their strategy raises, however, some serious objections.

If I understand him correctly, Geertz wants to argue against two contemporary "anti-relativists movements: naturalist and rationalist, restoring, reinstating the culture-free human nature or the human mind" (Geertz 2000a, p. 50-1). In reinstating these sorts of concepts both movements must be absolutist even though they are diversified. "Attempts to banish the specter of relativism whether by sliding down The Great Chain of Being or edging up it—the dog beneath the skin, a mind for all

cultures—do not comprise a single enterprise, massive and coordinate, but a loose and immiscible crowd of them, each pressing its own cause and in its own direction. The sin may be one, but the salvations are many." (Geertz 2000a, p. 50-1)

To illuminate his position Geertz invokes anti anti-communist and anti anti-abortionist as cases analogous to being anti anti-relativist, emphasizing strongly that his analogy is "a logical one ... not in any way a substantive" (Geertz 2000a, p. 43). His analogy, however, is deeply defective in a very important sense – a formal one. The first element (communism, abortion) of the two cases, which he uses as analogous to anti anti-relativism, is a social phenomenon, filled with people's actions, institutions, legal regulations, relations of power, values, and – of course – beliefs. Neither of the two phenomena can be reduced to beliefs. The second element (anti-communism and anti-abortion movement) is also a complex social phenomenon. Only when it is seen from the perspective of a third element (anti anti-communism and anti anti-abortionist) is it reducible to beliefs. And finally, the third element (anti-anti-communism or anti-anti-abortionist) can also be reduced to beliefs. In Geertz's own case, on the other hand, all three elements, i.e., relativism, anti-relativism, and anti-anti-relativism are sets of beliefs. What he says about the way the double negative works is correct in reference to the first two cases: someone who argues against anti-communist ideology does not become a communist simply by uttering his arguments; likewise someone who argues against the arguments of the anti-abortionists does not turn into an abortion or a person performing an abortion. In both cases the 'relation of negation' is also a social phenomenon. Anti-communists not only argue against communism, they persecute communists, sometimes imprisoning or killing them. These are 'factual negations' of communism as a social movement. Those who are anti anti-communists not only criticize anti-communist claims. They sign petitions, demonstrate, participate in marches, help families of persecuted communists, etc. It is likewise in the case of the anti-abortionist and anti-anti-abortionist 'double negation'. It is very different in the case of relativism, anti-relativism, and anti anti-relativism, in particular, if we consider their formal aspect. Here the 'relation of negation' is simply a logical relation: we negate a statement by accepting its logical opposition. Of course,

as not all claims of an anti-relativist are simple negations of claims of a relativist, so claims of someone who is anti anti-relativist are not simply negations of negations. However, putting aside their content, can the arguments of an anti anti-relativist not be relativist? or – at least – ethnocentric? They can, of course, be absolutist but that -- I assume -- is not what Geertz is looking for. He wants to argue against naturalist and rationalist anti-relativists with the help -- I believe -- of historical narratives, not meta-narratives, or -- to use Rorty's phrase – by referring to anecdotes and not to absolutist principles. Moreover, Geertz's arguments must be either relativist or absolutist, for in his analyses he does not show a 'third way,' which would enable him to form 'external, objective' arguments against anti-relativism and would be the position neither of a god nor of a critic of absolutism who affiliates himself with a particular culture. I am afraid that in the realm of belief a double negation 'simply does work in the usual way' – if one rejects certain beliefs, which are critical of other believes, one commits himself to the latter beliefs.

In the case of Rorty, the situation is somewhat different. It is not obvious that ethnocentrism is just a bunch of beliefs; therefore arguments against anti-ethnocentrism do not necessarily sink into ethnocentrism itself. However, Rorty makes other doubtful moves.

He states that "anti-anti-ethnocentrism should be seen as a protest against the persistence of Enlightenment rhetoric in an era which our connoisseurship of diversity has made this rhetoric seem self-deceptive and sterile" (Rorty 1991, p. 208). Should we read this as a claim that Enlightenment rhetoric is the content of anti-ethnocentrism? Certainly it was not designed in the eighteen century as an argument against ethnocentrism. So, it is used nowadays only as a means against ethnocentrism (like the contemporary concepts of culture-free human nature or human mind, pointed out by Geertz). But then, what 'unmasks' its usage as "self-deceptive and sterile" is the anti-absolutist "connoisseurship of diversity." In other words, the unmasking takes place during the process by which an amateur of diversity develops her connoisseurship. Accordingly, why is there need for a special anti-anti-ethnocentric argumentation? Should not we just do what we want to do, i.e., master our "connoisseurship of

diversity" and "take care of freedom," without engaging in empty polemics with anti-ethnocentrism, specially if we do not want to be ethnocentric?

It seems that in his criticism Rorty follows unwillingly the paths of argumentation worked out by so-called metaphysicians or foundationalists. He gives arguments against arguments instead of simply allowing the practice of liberal intellectuals to take care of absolutistic arguments.

In the midst of the strategies of argumentation worked out by absolutists Rorty seems unable to clarify his own position. Sometimes anti-anti-ethnocentrism is not ethnocentrism at all; sometimes it is a wet, soft, or corrected version of ethnocentrism, which is "a necessary and proper condition of selfhood" (Rorty 1991, p. 210).

Another example of the distorting influence of absolutists' form of argumentation is this: Rorty jumps from internal philosophical distinctions to concepts that are not philosophical 'in themselves,' but rather serve to describe how philosophy is done. The former constitute internal metaphysical oppositions, such as "reality" versus "appearance," "the way things are by themselves" versus "the way things are by relations to other things" (Rorty 1999a, p. xix, xvi), or epistemological oppositions, such as "truth as correspondence to the intrinsic nature of reality" versus "truth as merely convenient fictions" (Rorty 1999a, p. xvii). The latter concepts, for instance discovering versus inventing concepts, facts, problems, or theories, refer to our conceptual activities, to philosophizing as a certain cultural activity, both individual and social. Therefore, he is right in stating that: „We must repudiate the vocabulary our opponents use, and not let them impose it upon us." (Rorty 1999a, p. xviii) But the act of repudiation should be carefully worked out. Instead of rejecting distinctions „between finding and making, discovery and invention, objective and subjective" (Rorty 1999a, p. xviii), together with other oppositions or categories used by "metaphysicians" or "foundationalists," he should make a careful analysis of what it means – for him, a pragmatist – to discover and to invent a concept, a problem, or a theory. He states that "[t]he distinction between the found and the made is a version of that between the absolute and the relative" (Rorty 1999a, p. xviii). This statement,

however, is a superficial simplification. It is true that on the basis of the opposition between the absolute (a god) and the relative (a finite entity) one can form an opposition between inventing and discovering: a finite entity can only discover because only the god is entitled to invent and create. These terms still have relative, non-absolutist meanings. They become visible in a careful analysis of the opposition invented versus discovered that refers, in particular, to the individual and the social dimensions of discovering and inventing. In the context of the communal process of inventing concepts, facts, or theories an individual can be seen – quite reasonably and consistently – as discovering them for herself. And vice versa. From the perspective of a psychological act of inventing a theory, for instance, a scientific community can be perceived as discovering a theory invented by an individual. In other words, a relativist need not repudiate all (philosophical) concepts but must give them a meaning appropriate to her own position.

Moreover, Rorty seems to believe that by getting rid of all classical philosophical oppositions we will free our vocabulary from unnecessary terms and concepts, from words used during a holy day, which are superfluous during an ordinary day; words used by priests in shrines and not by people in bazaars, greengrocers, or city halls (Rorty 1991, p. 209); words employed in our ordinary dialogue concerning what we can do and how we can do it. Pointing to the possibility and, in fact, necessity of rejecting metaphysical and epistemological oppositions has a therapeutic aim, and "therapy is better than system-building" (Rorty 1991, p. 128). "The therapy is directed against the compulsion to take sides in an endless and fruitless metaphysical debate between those who define truth as correspondence to reality and those who define it in terms of either idealist metaphysics or sociology." (Stout 2007, p. 10)

Rorty's conviction that we can and should shrug off all such oppositions is so strong that he says: "If we have to describe ourselves, perhaps it would be best for us to call ourselves anti-dualists" (Rorty 1999a, xix), not anti-absolutists, who reject absolutist categories, but anti-dualists, who reject entire oppositions.[6] Abandoned

[6] It is true, however, that he uses "antidualism" interchangeably with "antifoundationalism" (see: Rorty 1999a, p. xxxii).

oppositions must, however, be replaced with something, namely new concepts and other binary oppositions, specially if we believe – in contrast to some absolutists – that it is impossible to have concepts without limits, without their counter-concepts. And Rorty is well aware of that (Rorty 1999b, p. 47)

Lets consider the concept of belief as a replacement for the opposition 'knowledge versus opinion'. What are the features of beliefs? If they are uncertain, contingent, fragile, surrounded by alternative beliefs, changeable, and so on, as the connoisseur of diversity should understand them, they are just opinions according to traditional opposition. So, when we refuse "to talk the Platonic way," we do not eliminate the entire opposition, we reject its absolutist horn and stretch the other to cover all beliefs. Having done that, we will have to introduce new partitions into our set of beliefs that are now identified with opinions and, of course, that can be done in a pragmatist way. I do not recall Rorty doing this, except him remarking that certain moral principles should be called "prejudices" rather than „insights," or that we should be able to distinguish between less and more useful descriptions of the world (Rorty 1999a, p. xxx; 1999b, p.48). In other words, the language of an anti-absolutist is in a sense limited. It no longer contains absolutist categories in any form because they cannot be rewoven into contingent, contextualized concepts. Rorty is right, its vocabulary is an ordinary day's list of words, very useful for everyday life and for plain philosophy, which asks questions referring to ourselves and to the world as it is for us. No need to add that this vocabulary is useless for a holy day and for doing Philosophy. I believe that the reduction of a philosophical vocabulary to an ordinary day vocabulary, freed from Big Words, does not entail the end of philosophy, though it may mean the end of Philosophy. Unlike Wittgenstein, I believe that philosophical problems remain with us even when language does not go on holiday. Alas, there is no space to develop this issue here.

Still, there is one opposition, in the case of which we contextualists must agree with Rorty. It is the opposition between the absolute and the relative. This should be repudiated as a whole. The adjective 'relative' makes sense only when contrasted with 'absolute.' That is, only if certain beings, features, states, phenomena, etc. are relative

and others absolute. If, however, everything is relative, the term 'relative' loses its discriminatory power. In other words, it does no work in the language of contextualism, and it is superfluous within the vocabulary of the ordinary day.

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