Reply to Richard Rorty

Kai Nielsen

I

Ludwig Wittgenstein and philosophers as different from each other as Gilles Granges and Stanley Cavell contend there is no metaphilosophy. Philosophy about itself is itself philosophy. It is, they say, not metaphilosophy. But nothing of substance is at issue there. Philosophizing about what philosophy "really" is, was, will become, can become, should become is as old as philosophy is and has sometimes been pursued obsessively by some philosophers, including Wittgenstein himself. Being about philosophy itself, it is not here *meta* to philosophy, but it is all about the things I just said it was and it is not a nonphilosophical, strictly neutral historical, sociological, or psychological description of what philosophy has been or is or might predictably become. What has come to be called *metaphilosophy* is itself philosophy (philosophy about philosophy). It is normative, and standardly controversial. Many of us want to know what we are doing, why we are doing it, what we can reasonably do and indeed should do when we do philosophy, and what the point (if any) of doing it is. It can be a philosophical reflection when we ask if we should do philosophy at all. There is no self-referential paradox here.

Such activities have come to be called *metaphilosophy* and it seems to me a useful label for all the things mentioned above. It is not something that many philosophers engage in. I'm inclined to think that they fail to engage in it more out of anxiety than anything else. They don't want to be put out of a job or view themselves as marginal. (If this is ad hominem, then so be it.) But I think, going against the current, it is something we should do, and I have, throughout my philosophical life, persistently in one way or another tried to do it.

If I were to try to put what I am trying to do in and say about philosophy in a nutshell, while remaining mindful of Hilary Putnam's quip that any philosophy that can be put in a nutshell belongs there, I would say: (1) In metaphilosophy I am a roughly a Wittgensteinian therapist. (2) In what Richard Rorty, and Burton Dreben as well, call "big-*p* *P*hilosophy"—*P*hilosophy asking questions about the *nature* of certain normative notions such as "truth," "justice," "rationality," and "goodness" in the hope thereby of better acting in accordance with such norms—I take a Wittgensteinian therapeutic turn. By now, though not in the earlier periods of my philosophical life, my metaphilosophy has led me to try *not* to do *P*hilosophy in that sense at all, but instead (3) to do *p*hilosophy in a much less problematical sense of "philosophy," which Rorty has called the little-*p* sense, in which "philosophy" comes to mean simply what Wilfrid Sellars called "an attempt to see how things, in the broadest possible sense of the term, hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term."[1] I try to philosophize, roughly after the fashion of John Dewey and John Rawls in their own distinctive ways, carrying as little baggage from *P*hilosophy—as little metaphysical, epistemological, metaphilosophical, or metaethical baggage—as possible. (4) Finally, I try to do philosophy as social theory and social critique, including what has been called ideology-critique after the fashion (broadly speaking) of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and the analytical Marxists. There is considerable overlap between (3) and (4). Still, I hardly think of (4) as philosophy at all but as social theory misleadingly called "the philosophy of Karl Marx" or "the philosophy of Antonio Gramsci," though perhaps sometimes so calling it doesn't do any harm. Moreover, while through most of my life I was preoccupied with the "demarcation problem" (see the, with Jocelyne Couture, introduction to *Métaphilosophie*), I have come by now to think, like W. V. O. Quine (though somewhat more ambivalently), that what gets classified as philosophy and whatnot should be of more interest to librarians than philosophers. But for good or for ill I have tried to do those four things which it might be useful to classify in that way. Obsession with the demarcation problem would be a (5)—something I hope I have shaken off.

II

I turn now to Richard Rorty on me. As Rorty gets bad press in some philosophical circles so I, and for much the same reasons, should get bad press (to the extent I get any press at all) as Wittgenstein once got bad press. My views are closer to Rorty's than any other philosopher I know. We are both deeply influenced by Wittgenstein and by Dewey, though I have also been influenced by Marx in a way he hasn't, and he has been influenced by Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger in a way I have not been. Even here this makes us seem more different than we are, for unlike Rorty and Lezek Kolakowski, I do not regard Marx as a philosopher in any way that he has been canonically characterized

as philosophy, but as a critical intellectual, social theorist, economic historian, and revolutionary. Marx here is much more important to me than to Rorty, though certainly not as a god to be uncritically followed. But, as we shall see subsequently, that makes a difference between Rorty and myself.

In his critique of me Rorty concentrates, not unnaturally, on my 1991 book *After the Demise of the Tradition*. In many ways, as he points out, this is the right thing to do, for he thereby concentrates on our respective metaphilosophies: where we agree and where we disagree and why, concerning what philosophy might look like after we have put aside metaphysics and epistemology, including the ontology and epistemology of morals—in very similar ways we both seek to transform philosophy. (See also my *On Transforming Philosophy* [Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995].)

We agree on the nay-saying here, but not entirely on the yea-saying. But before I turn to that I want briefly to turn to a way my views here have changed since *After the Demise of the Tradition*. I have become more like Rorty and less like Jürgen Habermas. I have become more firmly historicist and contextualist than I was then. I am increasingly skeptical concerning whether we can gain anything with any considerable substance—have any knowledge or understanding—that transcends a historicist perspective. Like Rorty, I do not think this implies a general skepticism, nihilism, or relativism, though it might imply something like David Hume's "mitigated skepticism." But it does imply that we are not going to gain a context-transcending understanding of anything substantial. We cannot, that is, overleap history. We can gain no Archimedean point or skyhook—no moment of transcendence—to appraise our practices. We have no understanding of how to think outside or beyond our practices, though we can repair the ship at sea and we can make idealizations of our practices that can sometimes lead to an improvement of them. The pragmatists, including Quine, are right: fallibilism rather than a thorough skepticism or relativism, is the name of the game. Moreover, I think Michael Williams is right in thinking that fallibilism and Hume's *mitigated* skepticism come to much the same thing.

So, broadly speaking, I agree with Rorty against Habermas, Thomas McCarthy, and Christine Korsgaard in rejecting unconditionality, namely the belief that there are some beliefs or arguments that are unconditionally valid, that must just be accepted by anyone who would be rational regardless of context. There is nothing substantive that must just be accepted at any time and place, whatever one's beliefs, interests, desires, stances, or the social practices. We will never get anything like that, or at least nonplatitudinously like it. We may get a few Peircean acritical beliefs (e.g., fire burns, people die, water is wet, things change) but that is all. Justification is time, place, and context dependent.

It is unclear in *After the Demise of the Tradition* that I held such strong historicist and fallibilist views. Indeed I was not clear about it then. But by the time of *Naturalism without Foundations*, *Naturalism and Religion*, and *Globalization and Justice*, it is clear that I did. Moreover, I made it clear in *Naturalism*

without Foundations that I turned against *Habermasian* critical theory.[2] If to espouse critical theory is to accept unconditionality, universal validity (as anything other than a purely formal device), transcendental arguments, quasi-transcendental arguments, or context-independent arguments, then I am no critical theorist. By now Rorty and I are at one over critical theory *so construed.* And it is Rorty who helped me take this turn.

"Enlightenment rationalism" is not pleonastic. I am not an "Enlightenment rationalist" or any other kind of rationalist. But I think the Enlightenment is not a dead artifact of an earlier time. In the way that Dewey was an Enlightenment figure, I am an Enlightenment figure. I believe a better world is possible and that we need not and should not live in the hell we live in now. I not only believe there is a lot of unnecessary suffering, unhappiness, and alienation now, but that in many respects the world we live in now—our social orders—can and should (pace Rorty) without mythology or obfuscation be characterized not only as bad but as irrational. I believe in the possibility of moral progress and the possibility of economic progress.[3] I believe in the irrationality of religion and I believe that with more education and more social wealth we could well come to do without religion. And I believe that some social orders are more reasonable and more productive of happiness than others. In short, I believe in the various beliefs of the Enlightenment, but I see no need—or indeed any desirability—of tying it into the usual rationalistic framework beliefs that typically go with it, or indeed into any rationalistic beliefs. So far, some perhaps contentious or misleading unessential phraseology aside about my willingness to ascribe irrationality to some societies, Rorty and I are one.

There are other things that we both agree about: We believe that (1) some arguments are not *intrinsically* better than others, but rather justification is always to a reasonably determinate audience for a reasonably determinate purpose, and is always time and place dependent; (2) there is no *natural order of reasons*; (3) there is nothing more immutable about our present ways of doing and viewing things than our past ways; (4) truth is not the goal of inquiry or the goal of anything else; (5) there are no interest-free and context-free criteria of unity, coherence, and completeness; and (6) the source of our moral obligations are our historically conditioned social practices.

Contrasting my views and his views of what "philosophers might do after they give up on metaphysics and epistemology," Rorty has it, his idea about "what comes after the demise of the tradition" is roughly "historical narrative and utopian proposals, [while mine is] roughly critical theory." That is quite right provided two things are kept in mind: (1) that my way of doing critical theory not be conceived as a Kantian-Habermasian enterprise, that is, it not be conceived as the search for the unconditional via a search for universal validity or in any other way; and (2) that philosophy can be a narrative philosophy doing cultural history *and* a critical theory which is both a narrative philosophy and a problem-solving philosophy integrally melded. Problems are

solved in the context of a cultural and intellectual history clearly displayed and argued for. In this way problem solving has a context and keeps narrative philosophy from just being storytelling—setting out what some anthropologists call "just-so stories"; in simple terms, my type of critical theory seeks to give narratives with historical and empirical constraints. We should remember Dewey's slogan that philosophy recovers itself when the problems of philosophers become the problems of human beings. Rorty actually so practices philosophy himself. Any adequate narrative *philosophy* must be a narrative philosophy *and* a problem-solving philosophy.

But how does this add up—or does it add up—to philosophy as critical theory? A narrative philosophy need not be a critical theory, and Rorty would think a critical theory is *too theoretical to be useful*. But the way I conceive of critical theory out of the Marxian tradition, this does not seem to me to be so. I should put some flesh on these bones.

As narrative philosophy is, as Rorty puts it, a "meld of moral philosophy into social and intellectual history," so critical theory should involve critical intellectuals—those who would speak truth to power—practicing their vocation, namely, engaging in a meld of social criticism and ideology critique, social and economic theory and history, and political and moral theory after roughly the fashion of John Rawls, Thomas Scanlon, and Norman Daniels. It would utilize social philosophy as characterized by Rorty, but in using the various forms of narrative critique just mentioned it would provide a critical edge that purely narrative philosophy lacks. It would not only show us what our cultural history has been, is now, and perhaps is going to be, but teach us to look at these narratives with a critical eye: to try to weed out the just so stories. It would help us take note of mystifications and to spot trends that can have very harmful effects and trends that have liberating effects. There are a lot of narratives around. Practicing what I call "critical theory" would help us to pick out narratives that are more plausible—have greater warranted assertability—than others. It would indeed not give us the one true or solely adequate description of the world. There is no such thing. It would not give us a narrative that was universally valid and unassailably true. Again, there is no such thing. But it perhaps could, if we work very hard at seeking clarity, accuracy, and sincerity, yield some sorting out of narratives giving us ones we could reflectively and knowledgeably endorse as for the time the most adequate.[4]

The wider and more diverse the groups of people in conversation with each other, probing each other's views and convictions, the more likely we are to get, for a time, a more adequate view of things. We never get anything that is final—the "last word"—but we can, with luck, get something that for a time is reasonable to believe and do. Critical theory melded with narrative accounts is more adequate than narrative accounts alone. Moreover, in practice critical theories have been narrative accounts though accounts carrying too much Kantian transcendental baggage with them.

Rorty argues that there is not much that philosophy more traditionally

conceived can do here. Perhaps, as I would conjecture, some of the social sciences, including history and social geography, can do something useful, but not philosophy. (Presumably here Rorty means *P*hilosophy.) Appealing to grand philosophical categories either metaphysical (ontological) or epistemological will not much help us to understand how society is developing, what fundamental social structures there are and what they are like, or what our fundamental political options are and which are the more attractive. As Rorty puts it, "Discussion in such areas as epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of science is not easily made relevant to spotting sociopolitical trends, nor to the construction of safeguards against the dangers such trends foretell."[5]

III

We philosophers are likely to think that we are specialists in the elucidation of rationality. But even *if* we are, that won't help much in setting forth a critical theory. The same is true of other regulative ideals such as truth, completeness, coherent unity, or coherence taken apart from particular contexts. These philosophical categories yield nothing thick enough to serve as criteria for social critique. Rorty remarks that "Gadamer seems to me quite right in saying that one context's domination is another context's liberation. And that the ideas of complete freedom from domination and complete independence of context are empty."[6] And Rorty adds that "Foucault seems to me quite right in suggesting that history will always reveal domination hiding behind Enlightenment."[7] Neither philosophers of the genteel tradition, nor analytic philosophers, nor nonanalytic continental philosophers command special techniques that enable them to function as critics of culture. They have no superconcepts that enable them to clarify or critique ordinary concepts. They have a very limited role in critical theory, limited to things like cleaning the Augean stable, making suggestions about broad outlooks, and (perhaps) clarifying contested concepts in critical theory. But I could and indeed do accept such a critique of *P*hilosophy and still, in articulating critical theory, as I conceive of it, I was not saying that it was another *P*hilosophy but a *successor* subject to *P*hilosophy that could do some critical and emancipatory work after the demise of the tradition. What I think critical theory can do, without getting (as Habermas does) in the old *P*hilosophical stew, in spite of his talk of postmetaphysical philosophy, is to articulate a critical account of society that is empirically, historically, and sociologically based and that yields some measure of objectivity (if you will, so as to not reify objectivity, the intersubjectivity of wide reflective equilibrium).

Rorty would retort that critical theory, with its utilization of sociology, yields no new such objectivity. We still have *overtheoretization* along with the naive scientistic belief that social science can save us. Perhaps nothing can save us, but certainly no discipline can. If we think critical theory can, we are just spitting in

the wind. What we need is not more theory but more openness, more conversation with different people with different slants or takes on things, more democracy, more freedom to broaden our horizons, and the like. We should be more like Foucault and less like Habermas and kick the theory fetish.

Certainly we should have that openness, and I think Rorty's distrust of theory is a very salutary thing.[8] We should particularly be skeptical of grand theory in the social studies. Perhaps there is no such thing as a *science of society*. Yet we can learn a lot from Karl Marx, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, and John Maynard Keynes. Rorty, for example, applauds Marx for his prophecy and his inspirational value. In this he throws him in with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. But their values are very different. Moreover, Adolf Hitler prophesied and inspired as well. Many a "big mouth'" has prophesied and inspired. Even George W. Bush, to my incredulity and dismay, has done so. It isn't his inspirational and prophetic side that makes Marx valuable, or Weber, Durkheim, or Keynes. And it is not *just* that Marx (as well as Habermas and Foucault) "are imaginative and well-read trend-spotters," though that is valuable. "Marx," Rorty remarks, "warned us against such trends as the tendency of the modern state to become the executive committees of the bourgeoisie, and the increasing ability of capitalism to immiserate the proletariat by maintaining a reserve army of the unemployed."[9] Similarly, Habermas was a trend spotter when he spoke of the "colonization of the life-world," as was Foucault when he spoke of the "medicalization of the sexual life." But these trend-spotting remarks, unless they are to function only as inspirational propaganda, must be backed up, as they are, by Marx, Habermas, and Foucault, with reliable empirical accounts including theory-rooted observations and argument-rooted theoretical elaboration entwined in narratives. Foucault's trend-spotting account is less theory elaborated than Marx's or Habermas's, but it isn't a theoretically innocent characterization without argument either. And Marx's and Habermas's trend-spotting remarks are comprehensively theoretically elaborated. *Perhaps*, indeed very likely perhaps, some of this theory can and should be excised. But not all of it should be. It is not irrelevant that we sometimes have good reason to believe that what is claimed to be trend spotting, is not *just* trend spotting, but actually captures something that is the case; that gives us some insight into how societies work. This requires confirmation and information and something like coherently putting the pieces together, utilizing something like wide reflective equilibrium, critically attending to alternative accounts, and intelligently and thoughtfully attending to objections. This is what it is for an account to have intellectual force. Nothing here, of course, will be the last word. But this is just to acknowledge fallibilism. And some accounts (Marx's, Habermas's, and Foucault's) are so fallibilistically backed up. They are not giving us just so stories or making prophesies. Or at the very least they are not just doing that.

IV

I think Rorty and I will continue to disagree in part about the importance of theory in sociopolitical matters. I say "in part" because I am usually on Rorty's side in the discussion of such matters both with standard analytical political philosophers, with Habermasian critical theorists, and with some of my Marxian comrades. This is particularly true of those Jon Elster has dubbed as Marxist fundamentalists. I think, to put it crudely, that philosophers and many other intellectuals tend to greatly overemphasize the importance of theory. I'm not enthusiastic about postmodernism, or even very informed about it, but I agree with Rorty that many philosophers, even good philosophers (e.g., Daniel Dennett and Akeel Bilgrami), get too Colonel Blimpish about postmodernism. That notwithstanding, I have tried to do a little something here to convince Rorty that figures like Marx, Keynes, Weber, Polanyi, and Durkheim have been—and continue to be—of considerable importance to us, and not principally as prophets and inspirers, and that something called critical theory is an important successor to Philosophy. But I suspect that Rorty will continue to resist theory in our social life and social understanding.

To translate this continued disagreement between us into the concrete, let me discuss where we disagree politically. Rorty rightly says, "Nielsen and I share the same political theory for the achievement of most goals." We both want an egalitarian, classless, nonracist, genderless, nonhomophobic, non-status-ridden world—a world, as George Orwell put it, where there is no bowing and scraping. Still, we importantly differ. *Rorty is a social democrat, believing that the advancement of socialism is not possible, while I am a socialist believing that socialism is both possible and desirable.* Neither of us believes socialism is inevitable, and I am even skeptical enough to think (on my more depressed days) that it may not even probably, however it is labeled, get on the historical agenda again. Still, I hope and think it is possible and should be struggled for. We need to take our chances in our rough-and-tumble world. Rorty contrariwise thinks that that is a spitting into the wind. What we should hope for, he has it, is a capitalist society with a human face, the most egalitarian, classless, nonracist, nonhomophobic, nonsexist, non-status-ridden society that we can attain compatible with (what, so he believes, we cannot avoid anyway without doing even more damage) a capitalist ordering of our social life and economy. He might be for socialism if he thought it were possible without tyranny, stultifying bureaucracy, and inefficiency—and I might reluctantly acquiesce in the kind of capitalism that he wants if it were the closest that we could get to egalitarianism, classlessness, nonstatusism, nonracism, nonsexism, nonhomophobia, and to put it generally, more people coming to have more control over their own lives. And *if* I came to believe that with what can come to pass for socialism we will get none of these things, and added to it an inefficient tyranny and a stultifying bureaucracy, then I would acquiesce in the ideal of a Rorty-style capitalism. If Rorty is right, and we get these terrible things with socialism, then I would, of

course, abandon my socialism. There would be nothing else to decently do if, as Rorty thinks, we would get the world of Joseph Stalin or his lesser tyrannical followers rather than that of Rosa Luxemburg. I don't take Rorty's road because I believe that we would get none of these bad things if socialism came into existence in a society that could sustain it (e.g., a society of considerable wealth, such as in our own rich capitalist democracies, and a society with a secure liberal democratic tradition) and that we would get good things that capitalism even with a human face could not provide. I think such a socialist society, and eventually such a world, can come to be and that *only* such a society could be classless (if any society could), thoroughly democratic (with both economic [workplace] democracy and extensive political democracy), and thoroughly egalitarian. That is why I am a socialist and why I think that Rorty, believing that anything like that is impossible, remains a social democrat. I have argued against Rorty on that, arguing that such a socialist world is possible (briefly) in my "Taking Rorty Seriously" and more extensively in chapter 5 of my *Globalization and Justice*.

I shall return to only that part of my argument that contests Rorty's claim that *theoretical considerations* are of scant importance here, being wheels that turn no machinery even where we are trying to decide whether we, if we are egalitarians and want (as Rorty does) a classless society, should go for socialism or social democracy. I do not claim that theoretical issues are decisive; indeed I think nothing concerning anything substantive is going to be decisive and particularly nothing is going to be decisive over such issues that are so important to our lives. But I do not think all intellectual considerations are idle wheels here turning no machinery.

Socialists, and most particularly Marxists, Rorty tells us, put too much trust in theory and particularly in grand social theory: a theory that would make plain the underlying structure and necessary (factually necessary) development of society. There is, he plausibly claims, no such "science of society." Belief in one leads us into metaphysical nonsense or at least to confusion, to dogmatism, and to arbitrariness. There is nothing like so-called scientific socialism. There is nothing here that is actually scientific in any straightforward sense of the term.

The intellectual Left generally, and Marxists in particular, are, as Rorty puts it, "dominated by the notion that we need a theoretical understanding of our historical situation, a social theory which reveals the key to future development, and a strategy which integrates everything with everything."[10] The Soviet experiment has, Rorty claims, abundantly shown us that in a modern dynamic economy answering to people's needs, a socialism without markets will not work. It is inefficient and features a stifling bureaucracy. It cannot obtain goods and services when they are needed and where they are needed. It cannot be innovative and produce things that people want. People in such a world will not adequately get either what they need or what they want.

Rorty also stresses that there is a strong tendency for a socialist society

either to not be democratic at all or to be minimally, insecurely democratic. Worse still, what has been taken to be the Marxist tradition by some people is a tradition, Rorty remarks, "that is covered with filth because of the governments that have called themselves Marxist."[11] Think of Romania and North Korea, for example. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Rosa Luxemburg had good intentions all right, but they assumed too easily and naively that after such a class-based revolution, with the struggle, discipline, and control required, and with a workers' victory—no doubt in the beginning an insecure victory—democracy would still rather easily come into being and be sustained. They thought that, victorious in a class-based civil war, they could and would move from a socialist society with little in the way of democratic traditions to a fully democratic socialist society: a society with both an economic democracy and a political democracy. But that was very unrealistic and it did not happen.

V

Rorty concludes from such considerations that an efficient and democratic socialist society, let alone such a world, is not in the cards. I have argued that he has not made his case. But here I want to argue that whether or not he has made his case, both he and his opponents appeal to theoretical considerations, and that we cannot reasonably argue for or argue against socialism without them. Having good moral intuitions, having careful descriptions, having strong commitments, and being on the side of the good guys and against the bad guys is not enough. We can and should do without grand philosophical narratives, including philosophical metanarratives. Going for these grand philosophical narratives we have G. W. F. Hegel and Leo Strauss, but not analytical Marxists or some other Marxists (Gramsci, for example) or people like Weber, Keynes, and Durkheim. Analytical Marxists (whom Rorty utterly ignores) avoid such grand a priori and teleological roads; instead they construct accounts of historical materialism that are empirically testable, which give us a causal account of epochal social change, have clearly articulated concepts of class, and show us both that and why we have class and strata in our societies and how and why capitalist societies, no matter how human their faces come to be with social democracy, will remain class societies. These accounts are nonteleological and consist of testable theories.

Furthermore (pace classical Marxists, but with minimal changes in Marxist theory) they—think of the work of Alex Nove, David Schweickart, and John Roemer—have carefully articulated models of market socialism that could feasibly be a matter of social experiment in societies evolving from the rich capitalist democracies. As in modern capitalist societies, a market socialist society would have in its economic life *both* market and plan working together. A market socialism could even have—indeed *would* have—central planning. But

what it cannot have, and be even minimally efficient in complex societies, is a command/ administrative allocation system (which should not be confused with central planning). That does not work for modern industrial societies. But central planning in an economic regime that has markets is another matter. Central planning exists in our contemporary capitalist societies—it goes very well with globalization—and it could, and would, exist in socialist societies as well, including market socialist societies.

VI

In his discussion of socialism, Rorty contents himself with saying socialism didn't work in the past, so why should we expect it to work now? But this simply ignores the above theoretical considerations and ignores the classical Marxist claim that socialism piggybacks on capitalism. Socialism, the claim is, is only stably possible in a world with societies turned secularist that are wealthy industrial societies and are also societies that have a firmly established tradition of liberal democracy. Socialism could not work in the third world unless the first world was socialist or clearly on the way to becoming socialist. As Rosa Luxemburg recognized, the Russian Revolution was doomed when it did not extend to the West and, as G. A. Cohen has well argued, if the Soviet Union had not collapsed historical materialism would have been refuted or at least infirmed, not confirmed. Without extensive capitalist development we will not get socialism. We *may* not get it anyway, but we will not get it without a developed capitalism being transformed (probably by revolution) into socialism. A second world country *might* ignite socialism, but unless it rapidly takes root in the first world as well—the wealthy and powerful capitalist countries—it will burn out or be repressed. I wish it were otherwise, but I agree here with Rosa Luxemburg.

Rorty may think the strong and wealthy capitalist countries—particularly the present-day kingpin, the United States—do not have a chance of turning in such a direction. But down the road a decade or so he and I, on our perches in heaven, *may* be in for some surprises.

There is nothing inevitable here. We may have to settle at best for a worldwide Sweden, though I think a genuinely socialist transformation and not just a social democratic one is more likely. Even with capitalism we may never have anything like a worldwide Sweden. Such rich countries may depend for their economic viability on some other societies being poor. But be that as it may, these are empirical-*theoretical* issues. Theory has its place here, though—whichever direction the wind blows—what direction social change will take surely will not be settled by empirical and theoretical investigations *alone*. There is the need for determined and intelligent action.

Both Rorty and I agree that the Left is the party of *hope*. I think that a worldwide Sweden (if it could come to be) would not, to understate it, be such

a horror. At least it would be far better than the world of Bush or even, for that matter, of Prodi and Clinton. I hope I am not being too *parti-pris* in arguing and hoping that a genuine socialist alternative is possible and not just a social democratic compromise. But whether or not this is pie in the sky will not be decided independently of theoretical considerations and social experiments. Here Rorty engages in theoretical arguments as much as his socialist opponents do. What Rorty is right about—or so I think—is that Philosophy won't be of much help here, particularly grand Philosophy setting forth grand philosophical narratives or metanarratives. But, thank God, there are straight, or relatively straight, empirical-theoretical theories of varying degrees of "grandness" with both empirical and narrative impact. Testing here, as Elliot Sober has well argued, is crucial. The utilization of such theories has not been shown to be so much love's labor lost, as Rorty believes.

NOTES

1. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xiv.

2. Kai Nielsen, *Naturalism without Foundations* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996).

3. See Chandra Kumar, "Progress, Freedom, Human Nature, and Critical Theory," *Imprints* 7, no. 2 (2003): 106–30.

4. Rorty with his antirepresentationalism (something I share with him) will *perhaps* not be happy with talk of accuracy here. It looks like it commits one to representationalism. But I think it can be (and should be) demythologized away from representationalist epistemology into something that travels philosophically light.

5. Richard Rorty, "The Ambiguity of 'Rationality,'" in *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory*, ed. William Rehg and James Bohman (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 52.

6. Ibid., p. 49.

7. Ibid., pp. 49–50.

8. See my "Pragmatism as Atheoreticism: Richard Rorty," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 2, no. 1 (2005): 1–33.

9. Rorty, "The Ambiguity of 'Rationalty,'" p. 51.

10. Richard Rorty, *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies: A Conversation with Richard Rorty* (Charlottesville, VA: Prickly Pear Pamphlets, 1998), p. 45.

11. Ibid., p. 21.