THE WITHERING AWAY OF THE TRADITION

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I

Richard Rorty in two important books *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and *The Consequences of Pragmatism* has developed an iconoclastic metaphilosophy (philosopy of philosophy if you will) which has struck at the heart of the self-image of philosophy as traditionally conceived, including 'scientific analytical philosophy'. Several distinguished analytical philosophers, including Jaegwon Kim, Ian Hacking and Alvin Goldman, have tried in turn to defend the tradition. I want here to turn a critical eye on that defense and in doing so, show how deeply the tradition is in retreat.

Jaegwon Kim, in his critique of Richard Rorty, notes that "three central themes emerge as fundamental components" of the philosophical tradition that Rorty rejects and sets out to transcend.[1] Kim thinks that it is important that we isolate these three components and inspect them separately. The thing to look for, he believes, is whether they are equally vulnerable. Rorty may give us good grounds for rejecting one of them but not another and one may be more fundamental to sustain in defending the tradition than the others. The three components are: (1) the Platonic doctrine concerning *truth* and *knowledge*, (2) the Cartesian doctrine of mind, and, (3) the Kantian conception of philosophy as foundational for the rest of culture.

Kim characterizes them as follows.

(1) The Platonic doctrine is a doctrine concerning *truth* and *knowledge*, according to which truth is *correspondence* with nature, and knowledge is a matter of *possessing accurate representations*. (589)

(2) The Cartesian doctrine is the doctrine of the mind as the *private inner* stage, "the Inner Mirror," in which cognitive action takes place. The Platonic doctrine of knowledge as representation was transformed into the idea of knowledge

as *inner representation* of outer reality. The Cartesian contribution was to *mentalize* the Platonic doctrine. (589)

(3) The Kantian doctrine is a conception of philosophy according to which it is the business of philosophy to investigate the "foundations" of the sciences, the arts, culture and morality, and adjudicate the cognitive claims of these areas. Philosophy, as epistemology, must set *universal standards of rationality and objectivity* for all actual and possible claims to knowledge. (590)

Kim agrees, as does Ian Hacking, that Rorty's attack is well directed against both the Cartesian component and the Kantian component.[2] Philosophers trying to defend the tradition or trying to save something from the tradition would, Kim believes, do well to abandon these two components of the tradition as well as the *queen* of the Sciences conception that goes with these conceptions and to concentrate on (a) a defense of a more modest conception of philosophy as the *handmaiden* of Science and (b) a defense of Platonic doctrine concerning truth and knowledge.

Before I proceed with a characterization of Kim's theses there are three preliminary remarks that I think are in order. (1) Kim's remark would, I think, be echoed by a large number of philosophers who are defenders of the tradition in its contemporary analytic forms. (2) Kim's theses about the handmaiden conception should be distinguished from his defense of Platonic realism. Someone could be an anti-realist or wish to diffuse the whole realism/anti-realism controversy and still accept the handmaiden conception and someone could be a realist and reject the handmaiden conception. (3) I think that at the outset it is crucial to see both how much literally sticking to Kim's handmaiden conception would fetter philosophy and what a *scientistic* image it suggests, though it does not, I think, quite entail. It reigns in philosophy in striking ways because it not only rules out the overseer of culture function, but it also rules out things like the philosophy of politics, social philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of law, moral philosophy, philosophy of religion and it would, as well, make impossible what Alasdair MacIntyre takes to be so vital to philosophy, namely its critical role where there are flashpoints at the borders of the various disciplines.[3] Much that has traditionally been coveted by the tradition would also be lost to philosophy. This is something that Hans Reichenbach and Rudolf Carnap might welcome, but it would not be welcomed by most contemporary analytic philosophers. Many would

think that, if really taken to heart, it would incredibly, and unnecessarily, cut down the scope of philosophy, indeed more specifically cut down the scope of systematic analytic philosophy. (A good bit of the curriculum of most philosophy departments would have to be junked.)

I also spoke of Kim's conception as probably being scientistic. The word 'scientistic' is for me a term of abuse, though it is not *merely* a term of abuse, for it has a descriptive meaning as well as an illocutionary force. It uses the term 'scientistic' much as Jürgen Habermas does to mean the doctrine which says that what science — and most particularly the natural sciences — cannot tell us humankind cannot know. It is the belief that the sole mode for knowledge and understanding is science. Nothing else has or can have any genuine cognitive status. Physicists and chemists and the like know something first-order and philosophers of science, with their second-order talk about the talk of the natural sciences, know something very modest, comparable to what grammarians know about how language works, but all the rest is emotive flim-flam. Logic is a discipline of its own akin to mathematics. Only as applied logic does it have that handmaiden function. There are the logicians (including analytical philosophers of science) and then there are lotus eaters and nothing else in between. I rather doubt that Kim would, if pushed on this, really want to say anything quite so extreme but the cluster of things mentioned above is what his essay, sometimes more tightly and sometimes less, commits him to. And this, whether rightly or wrongly, does very severely indeed reign in the scope of systematic analytical philosophy.

One could, of course, extend, not far from the spirit of Kim, his handmaiden conception and do so entirely in line with current orthodoxy in the tradition. In so proceeding the handmaiden image is extended beyond its being a handmaiden of science, to being a handmaiden of the law, of the humanities and the like. Still, *pace* the Kantian overseer conception, such a conception of philosophy does not seek to change science or the law or to criticize it or rationally appraise it. There is no place anymore for saying 'I know the legal system has characteristics x, y and z but that is an irrational or, in important ways, an inadequate legal system'. At most the philosopher could point out that x, y and z form an inconsistent triad. And this, to give the handmaiden conception its due, is something that might only be apparent when it is looked at closely. Still, it could not tell us where to go from there. Which predicate do we drop or which do we alter? What are we to do? What would a more reasonable or a more humane legal system look like? There is no room for any of these questions, given the

abandonment of the Kantian component of the tradition with its cultural overseer conception, for we can have no such independent standards of rationality or coherence to which we can appeal. The handmaiden conception, no matter how much it is broadened, will not give us that. Perhaps the Kantian thing is something it is, knowing what we know now, unreasonable to expect. Yet it is also important to recognize that its loss is a considerable loss; a very fundamental promise that the tradition has held out will be seen to be a promise which cannot be kept.

When we give up the Cartesian 'mental turn' we give up the *quest for certainty*. Most of us, touched by the fallibilistic tenor of modernity, do not have any trouble with the abandonment of the 'mental turn'. We have long ago put aside a nostalgia for the Absolute. How a rational person could expect anything other than a fallibilistic view of the world seems quite mystifying to us. Even some religious people — since Soren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth — have also learned to live with fallibilism, though where people continue to quest or thirst for certainty we should expect some irrational hang-up with religion somewhere in the background. But, for most of us, the Cartesian mentalistic turn designed to give us certainty no longer grips us. Such a turn seems only to be historically interesting or to generate some quaint puzzles.

However, as I have already suggested, the Kantian component cuts closer to the bone. It is a deeply engrained flattering self-image of philosophers and it is indeed understandable that many people — and not only philosophers — would want such an Archimedian point for assessing and criticizing culture. It is surely understandable that reflective and intelligent human beings would want some standards of rationality and adequacy to assess the condition of our social life and to make judgments about social evolution (if such there be). But Rorty's narrative puts, to put it minimally, the very possibility of such a critical perspective under a cloud and Kim and Hacking — and indeed most of Rorty's analytical critics — make no attempt to defend the tradition at this key juncture. Where they do draw their defense lines, and where many other analytical philosophers would as well, is around what Kim calls the Platonic doctrine of *truth* and *knowledge*: where truth, crudely put, is correspondence with nature and knowledge is a matter of possessing accurate representations.

II

We have now seen how much is given up by drawing the defense lines

there. Still, that notwithstanding, something of importance remains so let us see how Kim defends that part of the tradition. He sees clearly that rejecting the Cartesian component — the mental turn — "is wholly consistent with continued allegiance to the Platonic doctrine of realism." (591) And it is also his conviction — a conviction I do not share for reasons given above — "that rejection of Platonic realism is a much more radical departure than a rejection of...the Kantian conception of philosophy..." (591) It is true, of course, that Platonic realism need not carry in its train *epistemological* foundationalism or privileged representations of analyticity and necessity.

What, Kim claims, is rock bottom in Rorty's critique of the tradition of Platonic realism is Rorty's claim that the notion of correspondence in the correspondence theory of truth is hopelessly metaphysical and without content.[4] (592) Kim believes, however, that Rorty, in his deconstruction of realism, is caught in a self-referential paradox. Rorty, in a way reminiscent of Kierkegaard, wants to keep edifying philosophy from being itself a view about the having of views and thus being the kind of system — the very having of a view — that it decries. He does not want to get trapped into offering another system whose aim is to show the untenability of all systems.

Rorty's attempted way out of that paradox is to deny, as he does in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, that "when we say something we must necessarily be expressing a view about something."[5] But for this to be possible, we must come to understand that speech is "not only...not externalizing inner representations...it is *not a representation at all*. We have to drop the notion of correspondence for sentences as well as for thoughts, and see sentences as connected with other sentences rather than with the world."[6]

Kim takes this to be a *reductio* — a ridiculously high price to pay for "the possibility of edifying philosophy, or the impossibility of systematic philosophy." (596) To make language, and with it, edifying philosophy, free from all representation, and to make his 'keeping the conversation going' not itself a view (one view among others), Rorty has to try to deprive language, Kim claims, of any *cognitive content*. No assertions can be made in that language and thus nothing can be denied in it. And, it is also the case that no questions can be framed or wishes or hopes expressed or exclamations conveyed. All these speech acts presuppose the *assertorial function*. Without it language, communication, conversation and thought itself is not possible. It is evident that the assertorial function is rock-bottom. But, Kim's claim is, the assertorial function is not possible unless language has in some way

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representational functions. Without representational functions and thus without an assertorial function, we would have no language at all. But Rorty takes the very idea of nuanced conversation to be at the heart of his hermeneutical or edifying way of doing philosophy and this, of course, requires language, but a language incapable of making any representations at all is not, and cannot be, a language for it would not have what is at the basis of all speech, namely an assertorial function. (596) So Rorty's conception self-destructs. Or so Kim claims.

Moreover, Kim goes on to add, rather redundantly, if the assertorial function of language goes, it is not just all kinds of philosophical talk that go, but, making Rorty's thesis an incredible *reductio*, all discourse.

> The rejection of Platonic realism has wider implications. It makes not only philosophical discourse but all discourses, including scientific discourse, nonassertoric and nonrepresentational. Language in general, not just philosophical language, becomes nonrepresentative. Truth and knowledge in science, too, are matters of social practice and approval, not representation. Science, too, must cease to be inquiry and become conversation. (597)

If Rorty's rejection of Platonic realism and his conception of language as non-representational actually committed him to denying that science is inquiry or investigation, that any cognitive activities can be carried out by the use of language and the language has any assertorial function at all, then I would readily agree that the account was both absurd and self-refuting. It would, indeed, if that is so, self-destruct. What I am unconvinced of is that Rorty's view entails these absurdities. I suppose the core of Kim's claim is that if you take, as Rorty does, speech as not being representational at all, then you must deny that it has any assertorial function and that we can make any assertions or denials at all. Rorty plainly doesn't want to accept such a conclusion and he does not, for a moment, deny what is plainly true, namely, that we make assertions and denials all the time. Communication would be impossible if we could not do so. Kim's claim is that this absurdity is what Rorty's account of speech as non-representational actually commits him to. Does it?

I doubt it. In the very passage Kim quotes, Rorty, immediately after saying that speech is not representational at all, goes on to gloss that remark as the denial that sentences correspond to some state of affairs free from linguistic encoding; rather, what is the case, according to

Rorty, is that sentences are linked with other sentences. What we do not and cannot do is to break out of the web of language and have some *brute-state-of-affairs which is non-linguistically specifiable* for the sentence to correspond to. Rorty is making the familiar point — the point made familiar to us by Quine, Davidson, Goodman, Winch, and Hanson (if not Kant) — "that scientists do not bring a naked eye to nature, that the propositions of science are not simple transcriptions of what is present to the senses."[7]

To the response that this claim is far weaker than the claim that speech is not representational at all, we need, if an adequate response can be made to that, a further reading of the claim that speech is not representational. Rorty, in saying that speech is not representational at all, is making the undeniable linguistic point that any specification of a referent is going to be in some vocabulary and that thus one can only be comparing two descriptions of a thing rather than a description with the thing itself. There is no possible comparison of the description of the thing with the thing itself for any specification of the thing is going to be in some vocabulary. There are many descriptions that we can and sometimes do give of 'the same state of affairs', but there is no privileged description that can 'just give us the state of affairs as it is in itself'. We cannot get, as Rorty puts it, to nature's own language.

When Rorty says that speech is not representational at all I take him to be denying that a word-world relation can take place which relates the world to the word in any other way then that portrayed above, but this does not even suggest, let alone entail, that we cannot make assertions. Language-games are complex social practices with many different kinds of speech-acts. There are, quite uncontroversially, the speech-acts of asserting, exclaiming, questioning, proclaiming, expressing one's hopes and fears and the like. There is no need to invoke Platonic realism to explain the assertorial function of language or to trot out some mysterious conception of representation about how words match up with the world. Words are not pictures or anything like pictures. When I assert 'It's getting dark', I, in normal circumstances, surely think it is getting dark. But I either specify getting dark in terms of the linguistic expression 'getting dark' or I specify it in some other English terms or the terms of some other language. Nature does not have its own language; we can never escape a set of conventions here; language never functions so that something in it points as if it were an arrow or points (if that is the right word here) as if it were a picture to something which is just there before us conceptualized naked to our gaze. When I make an assertion, say, that it is getting dark, I get further

word-world relations all of which are embedded in social practices. And where else would these practices be but in the world? Nothing else is even intelligible. Still, there is no word-world relationship in my assertion (or present to my assertion) in which there is a just a getting dark that is just there requiring a certain linguistic representation. Common sense realism is one thing. Platonic realism or metaphysical realism another. The latter doctrines, if not just pedantic ways of stating common sense realism, are very contentious doctrines indeed. The denial of the former, if not unintelligible, is insane.

III

I want now to turn to another very fundamental defense of the tradition against Rorty's meta-philosophical moves. Let me go at it indirectly. In reflecting on Kim's and Hacking's responses to Rorty, it is important not to lose sight of the depth of their agreement with Rorty on two very fundamental issues. Both Kim and Hacking agree with Rorty that foundationalism is dead and that it is an impossible dream to try to carry out the Kantian project or (if you will) the research programme of attaining a rational Archimedian point for assessing belief-systems, i.e. whole domains such as science or ethics as well as social practices and institutions. No one, they agree with Rorty in maintaining, can attain such an Archimedean point. They continue, however, predictably, to dislike and reject hermeneutical conceptions of a philosopher's task and Rorty's conception of philosophy as dialogue and conversation. Philosophy, Hacking would have it, involves not initiation but apprenticeship, not conversation but investigation. It is a discipline that can give us knowledge and provide us with crucial clarification of knowledge claims in certain domains and perhaps, as well, it can justify certain determinate beliefs. However, this is not as straightforward as it may appear and that this is so can be seen from Rorty's response.[8]

Rorty responds that such inquiries into conceptual foundations have not been helpful. It is a research programme that has not panned out. At best it has been the owl of Minerva and it usually has been a block to creative thought. In a verbal exchange during an APA symposium on Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty pressed Hacking and Kim to give an example where some philosophical inquiry into the conceptual foundations of x provided any furtherance of our understanding of x or anything else. Hacking didn't take up the challenge but Kim gave as an example the work done in the conceptual foundations of mathematics by Frege and Cantor. Even if we take this

response at face value, it is very interesting that the only example that was given was from mathematics — something which from the start is very conceptual. But to get anything that would look like a convincing example we would need to break out of the charmed circle of purely conceptual investigations and get examples from philosophy, history, politics, the natural sciences or the social sciences, but no such example or examples were proferred. That I think is revealing. But even if we stick with Kim's example we have what in effect is John Rawls's worry about it.[9] What we need to recognize is that only after fundamental work in mathematics was actually carried out did we progress in meta-mathematics. Again we see the truth of the claim that the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk.

It has been said in response that Rorty's point about philosophical inquiries into conceptual foundations being unhelpful is overblown, the paucity of examples from Kim and Hacking notwithstanding.[10] There are in reality, it is contended, plenty of examples. Galileo on motion is one and Einstein on simultaneity is another. Bohm, Bohr and Schrodinger on the conceptual foundations of quantum theory is a third. Moreover, in politics Hobbes and Locke did similar things.

I do not want even to suggest a denial of what is anyway evident, namely, that in enquiries, such as science, and activities, such as politics, there is a conceptual side. Of course there is, but it is hardly autonomous with respect to the structured empirical side of these inquiries. Moreover, it is not such that we could just sit back and examine the conceptual foundations of quantum theory or capitalism without in detail and empirically examining quantum theory and capitalism itself. It is also striking that in the natural science cases it is scientists fully engaged in science itself who in the course of doing science sometimes make remarks which have a conceptual side. But these remarks were remarks made in the process of constructing a theory — an empirical scientific theory — and not just in giving 'conceptual foundations' (whatever that is) of any already worked out theory. The philosopher does not rush in as the overseer here or even as the underlaborer who, by conceptual analysis, clarifies what was unclear to the scientists. There is not something extra, distinctive or autonomous which philosophers do which is of great help here. Where conceptual clarifications were of value it was something done by scientists themselves in the course of constructing or advancing their scientific theories.

In politics, looking at the examples of Hobbes and Locke, it is important to remember that they wrote before philosophy had got

partitioned off from science or politics as an autonomous discipline. Their work concerning politics is not different in kind from Weber's or Durkheim's. It would, in short, qualify today as a social science, though, like Weber's and Durkheim's work, it also has a conceptual side, though there is nothing isolable there to be called 'conceptual foundations'. In that way the natural science and the social science cases run parallel. And it continues to be the case that Rorty's challenge remains unmet.

Someone might respond that philosophical investigations into the conceptual foundations of morality have been valuable in clarifying the moral life and helping us to come to grips with genuine moral problems that without question are deeply a part of our lives. But, it seems to me, as it seems to Rorty as well, that it is precisely here where there is the least likelihood that 'examining or setting out conceptual foundations' is going to be of much use. First, it is far from clear in the domain of morality that there is anything very useful or perhaps even intelligible that counts as its 'conceptual foundations'. We, of course, can make second-order remarks about the use of 'moral' and the logical status of moral utterances. We may even be able to give a characterization of something called the structure of practical reasoning. But it is anything but evident that such talk, such elucidations, even if well done, will yield anything like 'the conceptual foundations of morality'. Moreover, if epistemological foundationalism is broken-backed then it is very doubtful if moral foundationalism will be successful. Certainly the history of such endeavors has not been encouraging. There is, of course, something called meta-ethics (an activity that flourished in Anglo-American philosophical circles during the first half of this century) but the interminable and inconclusive discussions of and disputes between ethical naturalism, intuitionism and non-cognitivism during that period and the largely useless and again inconclusive discussions of the is/ought problem give us little reason to think that philosophical work in the foundations of ethics clarifies the moral life or gives us rational guidance in the solving of moral problems. Rawls, Dworkin, Cohen, Daniels and Walzer have, among others, said some very perceptive and important things about morality and have provided abstract accounts of morality that help guide moral practice, but these accounts relied on no claims or made no claims about the conceptual foundations of morality or of philosophy and they deployed no distinctively philosophical conceptual tools that revealed or presupposed a distinctive philosophical expertise. Rather they are persons who, knowing the history of moral and social philosophy very well indeed, have reflected carefully on it and they are

as well persons who think clearly and probingly about moral matters. But there is no appeal to a distinctive philosophical expertise or a philosophical *fach* in their work. They could just as well be, and indeed two actually are, lawyers, political scientists, economists, sociologists, or historians as philosophers. There is nothing distinctive that philosophy gives us here and nothing like conceptual foundations hove into sight.

In fine, in defending the tradition against Rorty, Hacking and Kim have not succeeded in showing how a philosophical examination of the 'conceptual foundations' of anything can give us anything of worth. 'Scientific analytical philosophy', if it is to come to much, must make good the claim that philosophy has some determinate expertise, that it possesses some analytical tools to provide us a knowledge of the conceptual foundations of science, morality, law and the like which will in turn enlighten those practices. Rorty, following Witgenstein, maintains that these claims of the tradition are hollow. As things stand that challenge is unmet.

IV

Let me come at Rorty's challenge to systematic analytic philosophy from another direction. From Descartes through Kant, philosophy took an epistemological turn and, in a change that is more apparent than real, theories of meaning and reference have replaced theories of knowledge as the *ground* of philosophy, with both the founding fathers of analytical philosophy — figures such as Russell and Carnap — and again with third-generation anti-Quinean, anti-Wittgensteinian philosophers such as Saul Kripke, returning to something like the atomism of the founding fathers. But, through all these traditionalist shifts,the underlying intent remained much the same: it is the intent to do foundational work, to treat philosophy (*pace* Kim and Hacking) as foundational to the rest of culture. Put in the older epistemological idiom, the heart of philosophy — the principal task of philosophy — is to ascertain how we can assess knowledge claims. The very core of philosophy, on that conception, is epistemology. The underlying rationale for this is evident enough. A sound epistemology — meeting an underlying foundational rationale of philosophy — would enable philosophy to set itself up as an arbiter of culture. On that self-image philosophy is to determine just where in art, morality, religion, the sciences (both natural and social) and in politics genuine knowledge claims are made and what they are worth. On this Cartesian-Kantian

view, implicitly shared by positivists with their claims to having a criterion of cognitive significance, philosophy is "foundational in respect to the rest of culture because culture is the assemblage of claims to knowledge, and philosophy adjudicates such claims."[11]

This "presumptuous self-image," as Charles Taylor calls it, has been repudiated by most of the analytical philosophers who have examined with any care Richard Rorty's claims.[12] They, as we have seen Kim and Hacking doing, agree with Rorty that such a self-conception can no longer be sustained, though some of them qualify this — hedging their bets — by saying 'at least for now'.[13] And some add, forgetting a lot of the public relations rhetoric in which analytical philosophers engage, that it was never part of the analytic philosophy to make such a claim. Others say that what is needed is a more modest foundationalism.[14] Rorty shows, such critics say, that *strong* foundationalism rests on a mistake. There is indeed no way of providing an *indubitable* foundation for knowledge. Indeed, they agree, there can be no such foundations. The work of the second generation of analytical philosophers, particularly Quine, Sellars, Goodman and Davidson, has established that. But why must epistemology, they ask, take such a strong form? Why must it ask for indubitable foundations? There can, they counter, be modest forms of foundationalism that (a) do not claim certainty — there are no basic propositions that are self-certifying or in any way certain — and (b) the basic propositions are about physical objects rather than being about inner states or sense data. We need not, the claim goes, be Cartesian or Kantian foundationalists to be foundationalists. I will return to this modest foundationalism in a moment.

Other critics of Rorty, among them Ian Hacking, are not even modest foundationalists.[15] They agree with Rorty "that a project of finding foundations for knowledge-in-general is not appropriate right now."[16] But that, Hacking adds, should not signal the end of epistemology. Philosophers, at least in the Western tradition, right back to the Ionians, have had a fascination with knowledge: "thinking about knowledge has been integral to philosophy."[17] We should give up the will o'the wisp of finding foundations for knowledge-in-general and let 'epistemology' denote "an attempt to understand the possibility and nature of various kinds of knowledge and styles of reasoning."[18] Noam Chomsky's investigation of the knowledge of grammar possessed by every human being is an example of the direction in which epistemology should go.

It seems to me that, even if all this is accepted, it is a very weak

response to Rorty's argued rejection that philosophy, through its epistemological turn, can provide foundations for knowledge claims in the whole of culture so that philosophy could show (for example) that there is no moral knowledge or alternatively that there is or (to take another example) that it could show that social anthropology, as distinct from chemistry, can make no genuine knowledge claims. Philosophy — the illusion goes — can so sit in judgement because philosophy knows what genuine knowledge claims look like and anthropological claims, to continue with my example, no matter how central to that discipline, do not fit the bill.

With the Hacking-turn, or even the modest foundationalist turn, no such cultural overseer role can be maintained or indeed even coherently attempted. Philosophy cannot be the arbiter of culture. It cannot tell us which of the various claims extant in the culture are really genuine bits of knowledge. With the Hacking-turn we, instead, take various activities, not only science, but art, morality, literature, law, politics, religion, and investigate what knowledge in those domains comes to and the styles of reasoning involved in those practices. This means we can no longer ask 'Is there religious knowledge? Is there knowledge of God? Is such a thing even possible?' Nor can we ask 'Is there moral knowledge?' or 'Do moral claims make genuine truth claims?' On such a dispensation, all we can do, after the question has been settled somehow — but not by philosophers — that there is religious knowledge or moral knowledge, is to characterize, hopefully perspicuously, what that knowledge looks like. We cannot say what is or is not knowledge or what it makes sense to say. All we can do, if we are skillful and lucky, is to give a perspicuous representation of what has already been certified as knowledge or as being coherent in some particular domain.

Epistemology set out to be normative but this activity is purely descriptive. We can, if we are good at that sort of thing, clearly display what mathematical knowledge and styles of reasoning look like and what archaeological knowledge and styles of reasoning look like and what moral knowledge and styles of reasoning look like and how they are alike or different. But we can never justifiably make a reductionist or critical move and claim that in some of these domains there are no genuine or no justified knowledge claims or, for that matter, warranted beliefs. We will, if we are interested in that sort of thing, try to command a clear view of how knowledge of God is possible. But there is no room, on such a dispensation, to ask 'Is there actually such knowledge?', let alone to ask 'Is it even possible that there could be such knowledge?'. But this is an eviscerated epistemology or better still it is no epistemology at all.

If we try to naturalize epistemology and take work in cognitive psychology or Chomsky's complicated investigations into the kind of knowledge that native speakers have of their own grammar as paradigmatic of what epistemology should be, we have rather drastically changed the subject-matter of epistemology. Moreover, and more importantly, we have given naturalized epistemology the *kudos* that properly belongs, to speak pleonastically, to empirical science. We have taken some complicated highly theoretical empirical investigations into knowledge — investigations giving us some new knowledge — and we have called that epistemology. The philosopher has, like an uninvited guest, crashed the party and associated himself, quite gratuitously, with the genuine investigations of science, investigations which show us that we have a certain kind of knowledge that we were unaware of and which show us something of what that knowledge is like. But it doesn't give us, or even try to give us, criteria for knowledge, even in a particular domain, let alone criteria for knowledge in general, so that we could have a modest foundational discipline which could still be the arbiter of culture.

If, alternatively, we espouse a modest foundationalism without certainty in which the basic propositions are about physical objects, we still need to know how to decide which propositions are basic. (If no propositions are basic we do not have a foundationalist account.) To take a certain cluster of propositions as basic cannot be done without being reductionistic and it is just this that in various ways the second generation of analytic philosophers (Quine, Sellars, Goodman) have shown, against the first generation, to be a very fundamental mistake. To avoid the reductionist turn, we must say 'We can only speak, if we want to speak that way at all, of certain propositions as being basic to a certain domain'. But this returns us to most of the difficulties I discussed in criticizing the Hacking-turn. Moreover, we can also ask how does the philosopher get off telling the physicist, geologist or social anthropologist which propositions are basic to her discipline and how, anyway, does the philosopher, or for that matter the scientist in question, decide which propositions are basic to her discipline and, even if they can, is there any point in doing so? Even if all these questions can be answered and the difficulties I found in the Hacking-turn answered or shown to be not applicable here, it is still the case, and this is the most crucial thing in this context, that, if our modest foundationalism is domain-relative, then such a modest foundationalism cannot be an overseer of culture. In this context, Alvin Goldman sees what is going on in Rorty's account very accurately when he remarks:

On Rorty's view, Kantianism led philosophy to set itself up as the arbiter of all culture, as the underwriter or debunker of all claims to knowledge by science morality, art or religion. It can be "foundational" with respect to all of culture because it studies man-as-knower, or the "activity or representation" that makes knowledge possible. Rorty sees analytic philosophy as a variant of Kantianism, in which analysis of language rather than transcendental critique provides the foundations for judgment. Part of his animus is against this broader conception of philosophical foundationalism.[19]

Yet Goldman — a defender of modest foundationalism — like Hacking and like Jaegwon Kim, and indeed, like many — perhaps most — analytic philosophers, does not seem at least to have the slightest sense of what has been given up when this Kantian-Positivist dream is given up and how little is left if we take the more modest foundationalist, the coherentist or the domain-relative epistemological turns. By contrast, Charles Taylor, who like Rorty is a renegade from the analytic tradition, sees the *hubris* here of the Kantian and the positivist (Reichenbach is paradigmatic), but he also is keenly aware of how much is lost when we give up this Kantian-Positivist dream.[20] Such a hope was a deep hope for philosophy, a hope that gave philosophy a clear reason for being. For it to be dashed is no trivial matter allowing us, once it is recognized, to go on with business as usual. This retreat is so considerable that it is better thought of as a demise. If philosophy or its successor subject is going to come to anything it must take a different turning.

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NOTES

[1] Jaegwon Kim, "Rorty on the Possibility of Philosophy," in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 10 (October 1980), pp. 588–597. All reference to Kim's article will be given in the text.

[2] Ian Hacking, "Is the End in Sight for Epistemology?" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 10 (October 1980), pp. 579–588.

[3] Alisdair MacIntyre, "Philosophy, the 'Other' Disciplines, and Their Histories," in *Soundings*, Vol. LXV, No. 2 (Summer 1982), pp. 127–145.

4   Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 311.
5   Ibid., p. 317.
6   Ibid., pp. 317–322.
7   Richard Rorty, *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 142.
8   I refer to his remarks at the symposium held in Boston on December 30, 1980 at the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association.
9   John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 51–52.
10 John Cooper, in correspondence with me, has argued that.
11 Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1979), p. 45.
12 Charles Taylor, "Minerva Through the Looking-glass," *Times Literary Supplement* (December 26, 1980), pp. 1466–1467.
13 Ian Hacking, "Is the End in Sight for Epistemology?" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXXII, No. 10 (October 1980), pp. 579–588; Jaegwon Kim, "Rorty on the Possibility of Philosophy," in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 10 (October 1980), pp. 588–597; Isaac Levi, "Escape from Boredom: Edification According to Rorty," in *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XI, No. 4 (December 1981), pp. 589–601; Alvin I. Goldman, "Review of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*" in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. XC, No. 3 (July 1981), pp. 424–429; Robert Schwartz, "Review of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXXX, No. 1 (January 1983), pp. 51–67; and Bruce Hunter, "Critical Notice of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*" in *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (September 1982), pp. 621–645. It is Hacking (page 586) who makes the qualification 'at least for now'. This response seems to me incredible, as if some day the situation might be better.
14 See here Goldman, op. cit., and Hunter, op. cit.
15 Hacking, op. cit. See also Levi, op. cit.
16 Hacking, op. cit., p. 586.
17 Ibid., p. 585.
18 Ibid., p. 586.
19 Goldman, op. cit., p. 427.
20 Taylor, op. cit.