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WHAT IS THE LEGACY
OF INSTRUMENTALISM?
RORTY'S INTERPRETATION OF DEWEY
James Gouinlock

The inheritance from John Dewey has been diverse, and the course of history will likely produce a number of different philosophies claiming direct lineage from his ideas. Such developments will testify to the fecundity of his thought. My intent in this paper is not to speculate about such possibilities, however, but to correct serious misunderstandings of Dewey by Richard Rorty. Rorty continues to call himself a pragmatist and, more specifically, a Deweyan.1 Insofar as he succeeds in appropriating Dewey's legacy, he will reject what was surely dearest to Dewey himself.

A number of scholars have already written incisively on various aspects of Rorty's 
soi-disant pragmatism. They include Brodsky, Edel, Sleeper, Campbell, Alexander, and Boisvert.2 Sleeper, Campbell, and Alexander have been especially concerned with the moral implications of Rorty's treatment of Dewey, and it is this theme that particularly interests me. My point will be to address issues to which they advert but do not examine in detail. I do not build upon their respective arguments, but start from the beginning. Accordingly, I offer just the barest statement of the views of each.

Rorty, as we know, has distinguished the "good" from the "bad," or "backsliding," Dewey.3 The good Dewey is antirealist, antimethod, and antimetaphysics, among other things. His principal metaphysical work, Experience and Nature, is an epiphany of the "bad" Dewey, and it were better that Logic: The Theory of Inquiry had never been written at all.4 Sleeper attacks these claims frontally, arguing that the Logic, more than any other work, culminates Dewey's philosophy, and the Logic is predicated on

the naturalistic metaphysics of Experience and Nature. Sleeper articulates and defends what he calls Dewey's "transactional realism," and he stresses that the great end and function of this realism is to support "the theory of intelligent behavior."5 In my judgment, Sleeper is correct in this, but he stops short of telling us much about just what this theory of intelligent behavior is. Much in the same vein, Campbell urges that Rorty neglects Dewey's uppermost concern and guiding aim as a philosopher: the commitment to a methodic social reconstruction.6 In other words, Rorty fails to recognize the central importance to Dewey of working out a view of the organically inseparable relation of theory and practice. The graveness of Alexander's polemic is much the same.7 It is not part of their respective discussions, however, to contend with Rorty specifically in respect to the role of scientific thinking in moral conduct. For his part, Rorty is not unaware of Dewey's moral commitments, but they are pronounced to be no more than "ungrounded social hope."8

1

Rorty's main thesis, which he finds conspicuous in pragmatism, is that objective knowledge is impossible. We are mistaken in supposing that we can use reality to test ideas; we are mistaken in supposing that ideas are in any direct sense about real existences. Propositions do not correspond to, represent, or picture an objective world. The world is "well lost."9 We do not compare a description to an object, but only to another description, and there is no neutral criterion for saying one description is better than another. Accordingly, we cannot make distinctions regarding cognitive validity between science, philosophy, poetry, religion, theology, and scriptural faith. All, Rorty insists, are literary genres. Hence also, we cannot distinguish between methods of inquiry as being better or worse, and we cannot speak of progress in knowledge, even in science.

At first glance, what seems to be primarily at work here is the famous thesis of the incommensurability of translation, owing principally to Quine and Kuhn. According to this theory, the meaning of observation statements in any alleged body of knowledge is determined by a theory, and any theory is incommensurable with any other. Translations between theories proceed by assumptions and principles within the theory in which a translation is constructed. Hence scientists and philosophers of science will hope in
vain that observation statements will provide a way of comparing or commensurating alternative theories. Rorty accepts this conclusion, but he does not accept the premise of incommensurability, which he acknowledges is self-refuting. Indeed, he believes he rids himself of the baggage of both incommensurability and relativism, observing that both conceptions presuppose that competing claims are relative or incommensurate according to some criterion. Inasmuch as criteria belong to epistemology, incommensurability and relativism perish with epistemology.

What is at work is the contingency of language. Language, and all systems of thought, are nothing but literalized metaphors. Metaphors, as such, are meaningless, for to have a meaning is to have a role in a language game. Hence language, or a vocabulary, is the child of the sheer contingency of metaphor. This conclusion does not mean that there are no constraints on language and inquiry. The constraints are sociological, historical, or conversational. Due to the sociological constraints imposed by any community or subculture, its members converse in the given vocabulary, and there are no theory-neutral criteria for selecting one vocabulary in preference to others. Rorty says of the supposed achievements of modern science that they are no more than the triumph of a certain rhetoric.

These are conclusions imputed to pragmatists and, above all, to Dewey. Dewey is to be honored, Rorty says, for "overcoming the tradition." The tradition that Rorty has in mind is the hoary philosophic enterprise of establishing a theory of being, a theory of knowledge, or a theory of language that will provide a rationally incontrovertible criterion in terms of which we can distinguish objectively true knowledge claims. This is the foundationalist’s enterprise, and Dewey is said to have devastated it.

What shall we say of this interpretation of Dewey’s philosophy? It seems so obviously mistaken that a scholar could refute it in a few paragraphs, as we shall see. Rorty, however, can always impune inconvenient evidence to the "bad" Dewey. This strategem implies that there are in fact two Deweys. If there are, where is the "good" Dewey? Where does Rorty find the sort of evidence that makes Dewey resemble a deconstructionist? Admittedly, Dewey never won any prizes for clarity. There are many obscure, ill-expressed, and confusing passages in his works, and a scholar might understand them in various ways. One can only guess how Rorty would take a given passage, however, for he rarely cites specific texts. His references to pragmatism are typically offhand, rather than carefully documented.

From several possible sources of misunderstanding, I shall select five that might seem particularly to lend themselves to his interpretation. The most important, which will be the last that I attend to, is Dewey’s relation to the classic tradition, and it is here that Dewey’s metaphysics is especially relevant. First, however, something must be said about the "bad" Dewey, for this, I believe, is the only Dewey, and it is here that we must eventually look for what is precious in his heritage.

II

Pre-Rortian students of Dewey’s thought will be astonished to learn that Dewey was "beyond method," and their astonishment is justified. Starting at least with Studies in Logical Theory in 1903, and consummating in Logic: The Theory of Inquiry in 1938, he was persistently concerned with the nature of scientific method and its applicability to all types of human predicaments. On various occasions he characterized the method in detail. He does so in The Quest for Certainty, for example, and in that volume he declares: "the value of any cognitive conclusion depends on the method by which it is reached, so that the perfecting of method, the perfecting of intelligence, is the thing of supreme value." He says things are "known in as far as their constituents and their forms are the result of science." There follows a chapter entitled "The Supremacy of Method."

Anyone who makes even a preliminary foray into Dewey’s educational writings, moreover, learns that the acquisition of experimental habits of inquiry is one of the foremost aims of education—perhaps the paramount aim. Dewey’s objection to religions was not primarily in their specific dogmas, but in the habits of thought that they generate and utilize: "What is not realized . . . is that the issue does not concern this and that piecemeal item of belief, but centers in the method by which any and every item of intellectual belief is to be arrived at and justified. . . . The fundamental question, I repeat, is not of this and that article of . . . belief but of intellectual habit, method and criterion." The virtue of the method is not that it attains final truth, but that it is self-corrective, progressive, just as Peirce had characterized it in his epochal article, "The Fixation of Belief." Some of its further virtues will be noted later, but for the moment we need only note that there is textual evidence beyond the point of sateity that Dewey was convinced there is a scientific
method and convinced that its universalization might well be the salvation of the human race.

[T]he outstanding problem of our civilization is set by the fact that common sense in its content, its "world" and methods, is a house divided against itself. It consists in part, and that part the most vital, of regulative meanings and procedures that antedate the rise of experimental science in its conclusions and methods. In another part, it is what it is because of the application of science. This cleavage marks every phase and aspect of modern life.

It is for this reason that it is here affirmed that the basic problem of present culture and associated living is that of effecting integration where division now exists. The problem cannot be solved apart from a unified method of attack and procedure.

And again: "The demand for reform of logic is the demand for a unified theory of inquiry through which the authentic pattern of experimental and operational inquiry of science shall become available for regulation of the habitual methods by which inquiries in the field of common sense are carried on."20

No doubt Dewey is premature in speaking of the scientific method (he was sometimes more cautious), but it is clear all the same that he did not think of himself as "beyond method." The important functions of method will be brought out in the following inquiry into how Rorty tries to make the author of such statements into a "good" pragmatist.

III

Attention to method will be the first of the five themes that might be construed in a manner favorable to Rorty's interpretation. Rorty quotes with approval from a discussion in Dewey's Human Nature and Conduct: "The elaborate systems of science are not born of reason but of impulses at first sight flickering; impulses to handle, to move about, to hunt, to uncover, to mix things separated and divide things combined, to talk and to listen. Method is their effectual organization into continuous dispositions of inquiry, development, and testing. . . . Reason, the rational attitude, is the resulting disposition."21 Rorty characterizes these statements as a move "beyond method," and a couple of pages later he quotes from the same page, where Dewey speaks of rationality as "a working harmony among diverse desires."22

Recognition of the context of Dewey's discussion suggests a different interpretation. His general subject matter is "The Place of Intelligence in Conduct," and he argues that intelligence, or reason, is not an original faculty of human nature, but is a function of behavior. The immediate context is a discussion of rationality as a trait of character: what is also called reasonableness, or in Dewey's own terms here, "the rational attitude" or "disposition."23 Rationality, Dewey insists, is not an inherent faculty, contradistinguished from the faculty of desire. It is a particular organization of desires, or—more properly—habits, which incorporate desire. It is not disembodied reason, but these habits—such as handling, mixing, moving about—that generate science. When desires function as a certain complex of habits, they are methodical, or rational. Dewey at this point says nothing about the formal properties of method, he writes at length about the dispositions that unite to make us reasonable. There is no justification for treating these passages as a treatise against scientific method or as a reduction of method to a balancing of desires. Dewey is here concerned with psychology, not logic.

Given Rorty's interpretation, however, it is no surprise to find him saying, typically, "Dewey wants the distinctions between art, science and philosophy to be rubbed out."24 If method is a myth, then, of course, there is equal cognitive worth (or worthlessness) to art and science and, presumably, to reading tea leaves as well; but Rorty has again missed the point. Dewey frequently attacked the assumption that art and science are utterly different. They share, in fact, a fundamentally important trait: they are both forms of practice—the reconstruction of materials of ordinary experience into a new order, in which the reordering is directed by a more or less explicit plan. Artistic creativity is not conceived as the exclusive work of a subjective and private faculty, and science is not conceived as addressing a realm of reality transcending events of ordinary experience. The artist, of course, aims at a reconstruction to be judged by aesthetic criteria, while the scientist intends to discover the relations of dependence between experienced phenomena under controlled conditions.25 Dewey's claim that art, science, and practical activity have significant subject matter and procedures in common is an instance of the position already documented: the perplexities of modern life require unified method. This is not the eradication of
method, but its extension to all problems of conduct. It is not a denial of disciplined intelligence, but a demand for it.

The second confusion stems from Dewey's repudiation of the correspondence theory of truth, to which Rorty adverts on several occasions. Perhaps here there is ground for concluding that Dewey believed that objects do not constrain truth claims. He repeatedly says that ideas do not correspond to, represent, refer to, or picture antecedent reality. But in the qualifier "antecedent," we find the drastic difference between Dewey's view and that of Rorty. Dewey's objections to traditional realisms consisted above all in their assumption that a full-fledged object of knowledge exists prior to inquiry. Inquiry, he says, is initiated just because the situation is problematic in some crucial way. Prior to inquiry, the status of relevant events in the environment is somehow puzzling or uncertain; otherwise, inquiry would not occur. The very process of inquiry is inseparable from manipulating and organizing overt events, and its intent is to produce the full-fledged object. Clearly, it is not reducible to conversation.

Dewey's reflections on this issue are not confined to procedures of inquiry; they have to do with the psychology of perception as well. Starting with "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" and continuing through several writings, he argued that a perception is not a virgin image, appearing in systematic articulation to the passive spectator. It is an outcome of complex interactions of the organism and the environment.26 In order to produce objects of perception (as of knowledge) suitable to the peculiarities of a problematic situation, some sort of intentional reorientation toward the troubling conditions must be undertaken. Rorty (like many of Dewey's critics) has missed this crucial and remarkably innovative constituent of Dewey's theory of knowledge.

Following Peirce and James, Dewey says that ideas are neither summaries of what has already occurred nor intuitions of essences. Ideas are anticipations of the future. Expressed in propositions, they are hypotheses or predictions. If this is a mushroom, for example, it will display certain qualities, including its culinary and nutritive uses. If it is a toadstool, it will show some similar, but some crucially different, traits under test. Inasmuch as ideas are predictors of events, they are validated by what they entail, rather than by their antecedents or by comparison to an archetype. Neither are they validated by comparing a subjective image to an external object. To tell the difference between mushrooms and toadstools, we need no recourse to Platonic forms; we just see which ones make us violently ill. Dewey called this view the true correspondence theory.27

So much is familiar to students of Dewey's instrumentalism. What is equally familiar is the notion that the meaning of ideas is intrinsically related to action with an environment. Of necessity, as the respective properties of objects vary, our behavior with them must vary. Due to the differences between mushrooms and toadstools, our conceivable interactions with the former must differ in some ways from our conceivable interactions with the latter. Hence the full idea of the object denoted by mushroom is the sum of the conceivable behaviors that can be taken with that fungus, including all manner of experimental tests that might be conducted.

Dewey, accordingly, frequently refers to ideas as plans of action. This notion will be clearer if we speak of hypotheses rather than ideas. In a perfectly straightforward sense, hypotheses direct conduct. They specify that if certain conditions are introduced, certain consequences will follow, and the hypothesis is tested by undertaking just the actions prescribed. If you consume this little gray fungus, it will nauseate you; if you make certain observations with prescribed instruments at a prescribed place and time on a prescribed date, you will observe an eclipse of the moon. We deliberately institute certain conditions and manage them in definite ways—as prescribed by the hypothesis—in order to attain an outcome consequent upon the process, as predicted by the hypothesis. If the hypothesis is incorrect, there will be failure in activity; the objects turn out to be such that interactions with them do not occur as projected. Nature has its way in the end.

One would normally feel apologetic about reciting such routine features of instrumentalism, but Rorty's influence might be such as to convince many scholars that there is no need to study Dewey's writings at first hand, much less to investigate their implications for the conduct of life. Accordingly, I will introduce an additional feature of Dewey's philosophy that bears on his particular realism and devastates Rorty's imputation of antirealism.

I have in mind Dewey's notion of habit, as articulated especially in Human Nature and Conduct. Nothing is more fundamental in his analysis than the notion that human nature is constituted of habits. Habits are forms of action, and they are a function of the behavior of the individual and the environment together. A child manipulates objects, acts on them in various ways—beats them, chews them, squeezes and shakes them—and
the features of the resultant behavior are as much a product of the properties of the object as of the impulsive activities of the child. Hence the child learns to treat fire differently from water, cats differently from rubber balls, and so forth. Thus an appropriate repertoire of habits develops. In Dewey’s terms, to have a habit, then, is to possess the meaning of an object, to be able to act toward it appropriately. In an awkward but telling remark, he says “objects represent habits turned inside out.”

Habit formation, of course, is not just the work of children; growth is lifelong. Moreover, as indicated previously, Dewey regards experimental inquiry as a methodic, directed refinement of the same impulses that initiate habit formation.

It is hard to imagine a theory of ideas more rigorously controlled by the nature of objects than this one. A Platonic or Cartesian essence, by contrast, gives us not the first clue as to how natural events might deliberately be seized and redirected to desired outcomes. Likewise, an idea conceived as an image or a composite of sensations is equally impotent in conduct. An image, as such, has no implications. Knowledge as Dewey conceived it, is of the meanings of natural events. It is constrained by these events, and life depends on its accuracy. “The exacting conditions imposed by nature, that have to be observed in order that work be carried through to success, are the source of all noting and recording of nature’s doings. They supply the discipline that chastens exuberant fancy into respect for the operation of events, and that effects subjection of thought to a pertinent order of space and time.”

A third and closely allied issue is Dewey’s philosophy of science, and in this connection he has made many statements that might well have caught Rorty’s attention and convinced him that Dewey is a “good” philosopher. Dewey likes to make such statements as the following: “Scientific conceptions are not a revelation of prior and independent reality. They are a system of hypotheses, worked out under conditions of definite test, by means of which our intellectual and practical traffic with nature is rendered freer, more secure and more significant.” Remarks of this sort might be taken to be an allusion to what Rorty, rather darkly, calls coping—we use our ideas to “cope,” but we could not claim, presumably, that our ideas refer to an extralinguistic reality. Dewey, indeed, convinced more than one critic by such statements that he was a crypto-idealistic.

An interpretation of the passage just quoted would have to draw on the particular nature of Dewey’s correspondence theory, as outlined above, but still more should be added. What we know, in the sciences and elsewhere, are nature’s potentialities under definite conditions. The object of knowledge is the correlation between distinguishable processes of change—as pressure, for example, varies with temperature in an enclosed volume of gas. These specific changes are deliberately introduced and controlled by the inquirer, and the object of knowledge is the correlation between just these variations. Dewey was much taken by this procedure, emphasizing in particular the deliberate introduction of variations. That is, the process of inquiry does not passively observe a static reality; it is concerned with relations of change. It produces change in order to see what follows from it. This procedure does not imply that “antecedent reality” is utterly plastic. If it were, indeed, then it would be absurd to believe that anything in particular followed from variations in it. As Dewey said:

Were it not for the teachings of sad experience, it would not be necessary to add that the change in environment made by knowing is not a total or miraculous change. Transformation, readjustment, reconstruction all imply prior existences: existences which have characters and behaviors of their own which must be accepted, consulted, humored, manipulated or made light of, in all kinds of differing ways in the different contexts of different problems. Making a difference in reality does not mean making any more difference than we find can be made under the given conditions—even though we may still hope for different fortune another time under other circumstances.

Science may function teleologically. It may introduce change in order to achieve a desired result. It has massively increased our power to introduce deliberate control of natural events, and this is why Dewey was so enamored of it and wanted so much that it be adopted as a constituent part—but only a part—of all practical endeavor. It makes the difference between “arts of acceptance and arts of control.” It is precisely because the object of knowledge is the correlation between processes of change that we are able to introduce deliberate variations and novelty. We may vary the elements in a process and introduce new conditions and thereby change its outcome in a predictable manner. We could not do so if definite relationships were not discovered. Nature indeed has its “brute structure of things,” as Dewey called it. We cannot break the law of gravity; our lungs cannot extract oxygen from water; and we cannot grow vegetables in ice or on the desert.
However, with further knowledge of nature we can introduce new interactions. We can build flying machines and parachutes, submarines and aqua-lungs, greenhouses and systems of irrigation. Dewey is interminably calling for controlled experiments that will reorder natural processes in behalf of human growth and well-being. It is precisely knowledge of specific extralinguistic relations that would give us the means to convert disease into health, privation into plenty, peril into security, conflict into harmony, frustration into growth, vice into virtue.

A fourth possible source of misunderstanding is Dewey’s philosophy of language. Although Rorty offers no systematic study of Dewey’s views on this subject, one suspects that this might be a crucial issue. Perhaps something closely akin to Rorty’s language-game theory can be found in Dewey’s writings. Like Dewey, Rorty speaks of language as a tool, but he assimilates the notion of language as tool to the language-game notion. “The Deweyan notion of language as tool rather than picture is right as far as it goes. But we must be careful not to phrase this analogy so as to suggest that one can separate the tool, Language, from its users and inquire as to its ‘adequacy’ to achieve our purposes. The latter suggestion presupposes that there is some way of breaking out of language in order to compare it with something else.”

Dewey himself, Rorty believes, did not hold the errant presupposition. He says that if we understood Dewey, “we would be receptive to notions like Derrida’s—that language is not a device for representing reality, but a reality in which we live and move.”

Dewey says: “Language . . . is the cherishing mother of all significance.” Events would be all but meaningless without language, and, in fact, we would be mindless without it, in Dewey’s conviction. At the same time, he is fond of reiterating that language is a function of social action and is saturated with cultural bias: the meaning of words for a person in any society is determined by the beliefs and behavior of its members. This seems indistinguishable from Rorty’s view that vocabulary reduces to sociology.

The similarity is misleading. Dewey’s claim is that language is a function of shared activity, again, with an environment. Features of our surroundings—trees, rivers, fish, animals, friends, enemies, the earth, implements of all kinds, and so on, without limit—enter into shared life in a multitude of crucial ways. Language, Dewey argues, is whatever succeeds in creating concerted activity with just such things. The properties of these things are conditions of meaningful discourse, depending on how they are incorporated into conduct in a particular culture. A long, cylindrical piece of wood, for example, has various uses. It is a spear, a fishing pole, something to propel a raft with, something to hang your clothes on, a scepter, a quarterstaff, a shepherd’s staff, a combustible, and so on. In every case, real properties of the object are registered in language. Were it not so, shared conduct with the object in the expected way could not succeed.

Dewey is surely not flirting with the language-game theory. His view is instrumentalist in the most pregnant sense: it is conceived as inseparable from properties of real existences. Language is a tool, and any tool, Dewey says, “is a thing in which a connection, a sequential bond with nature is embodied. It possesses an objective relation as its own defining property . . . . A tool denotes a perception and acknowledgment of sequential bonds in nature.” That is, language is a bond with nature, not an intervening obstacle. Its function attests to real connections. It connects, at any rate, if the tool is not defective; but frequently it is. The meanings of language are typically localized and limited, and they are often mistaken: scepter means “possessing divine power”; black cat means “ill fortune”; woman means “can’t do anything but clean house and bear children”; chicken soup means “will heal just about anything”; and so on. We identify these meanings as deficient when their implied consequences do not in fact occur, and we remedy deficient meanings with responsible inquiry. Endorsing the cognitive primacy of scientific discourse, Dewey says it pursues a certain ideal: “the maximum convertibility of every object of thought into any and every other.” There are many similar marks, and he has repeated praise for scientific abstractions, for they avoid the parochial and culture-laden biases of ordinary language, and they allow us to state the correlations of change between phenomena that are qualitatively diverse.

Even after inquiry, our experience is mediated by language, but mediation is not distortion, much less is it concealment—at least not necessarily so. To be sure, the hunter experiences the shaft as a spear, as a meaning acquired by communication and shared activity in his community. But this mediation is not distortion; it is selectivity. After all, the shaft can be hurled through the air and can penetrate the hide of the prey. The statement “This is a spear” is not tested by comparing the object in question to a prelinguistic thing-in-itself or to the perfect essence of spearhood. Neither is it tested by seeing whether the utterance is consistent with the language.
in use. No, it is done by using the object denoted as a spear—by throwing it. What more objective reality could one want?

The statement "This is a spear" is conspicuously theory laden, meaning laden, but the meaning does not conceal some underlying true being. Quite to the contrary. For experience to be meaning-laden is an indispensable asset. So long as we get them right, meanings help us to function effectively as participants in natural events.

Just as an object is not a tool except in relation to natural processes, a vocal sound cannot be an instrument of conduct except as it testifies to relations between objective events. In the jargon of their collaborative work, *Knowing and the Known*, Dewey and Bentley declare: "We reject the 'no man's land' of words imagined to lie between the organism and its environmental objects... and require, instead, definite locations for all naming behaviors as organic-environmental transactions."41

Rorty can find little comfort in Dewey's philosophy of language, but perhaps the nerve of the issue regarding the nature of Dewey's pragmatism has to do with the meaning of the classic tradition and what it means to overcome it. This is the fifth and last of my candidates for locating Rorty's "good" Dewey somewhere in Dewey's own writings. Rorty sees the classic tradition as a series of attempts to provide universal commensuration between vocabularies and to provide a vocabulary-neutral criterion of truth. If this is what the tradition is reduced to, and if the tradition is overcome, then of course there is not much for philosophers to do. One must give up on knowledge, method, progress, and intellectual authority. Because Dewey declared himself against the tradition, assaulting it repeatedly and undermining its claims, then it must be true that, in effect, he embraced Rorty's thesis that "nothing grounds our practices, nothing legitimizes them, nothing shows them to be in touch with the way things really are."42 Thus also, Rorty is puzzled and disappointed by Dewey's recurrent backsliding, by his various forays into a metaphysics of his own, which Rorty describes as an attempt to provide "a permanent neutral matrix for future inquiry."43

Dewey had a much more complex appraisal of the tradition than Rorty suspects. He did reject the tradition's quest for certainty; he rejected the notion of philosophy as a superscience and a foundational discipline. Its masquerade as superscience, however, was not the only feature of the tradition that drew Dewey's attention. He was particularly concerned with its specific knowledge claims, whose effects he judged to be unwholesome in the extreme. I will review just a few of these claims—even neglecting one of Dewey's favorite targets, Cartesian dualism.

One of the most recurring ideas in the classic tradition is that the true nature of things is inherently systematic and changeless. Change represents an inferior realm of being—mere appearance or mere subjectivity. According to this scheme, the really real is the object of rational knowledge, in the Platonic or Cartesian sense; so all the traits of things exclusive of such knowledge are somehow unreal, not properties of true being. The traits of ordinary life-experience are expelled from full ontological standing. The absorbing and varying qualities that give value to experience are banished; likewise the contingent, the plural, the ongoing sorts of things on which mortal life depends.

If being is changeless and eternal, the fundamental cognitive act is the direct intellectual intuition of the supremely real. Specific events are known—insofar as they can be known at all—according to their classification in conformity to the antecedent scheme. By this conception, the good is conformity to a static order. One must cognize the antecedently real and simply conform to it. Particular acts are judged by classifying them according to this order. In various guises, this view is found in Plato, theological and natural-law theories, Kant, classical liberalism, and idealism.

If change is an intrinsic trait of all existences, however, the demand for conformity represents simply a requirement to comply at any cost with the biases of a given culture, handily exempted from analysis and criticism. For an experimental logic, the good is and can only be a certain kind of activity, a unifying process of change—what Dewey called growth and elaborated at length and, I think, brilliantly. Likewise, the cognitive act must be the experimental determination of the relationships between changing events such that situations of disorder and distress might be transformed into unified activity.

The monism of the classic tradition consists in the assumption that all things are systematically interconnected, as in the Absolute of philosophical idealism—a special target for Dewey, as it had been for James. In an obvious and crucial sense, Dewey observes, all things are not interconnected. The birth of a child in Georgia has no bearing on the failure of the rice harvest in China. Humanly significant yet independent events are among the most striking and momentous features of natural existence. Yet no process...
remains encapsulated. When events intersect, there is disruption, perplexity, failure in ongoing activity. We are always contending with the uncertain, unknown, unexpected, and unmanageable. Droughts, earthquakes, flat tires, uninvited visitors, illness, criminal assaults, train wrecks, and an inheritance from an unknown relative are sampling of the unnumberless occasions great and small that we must somehow deal with every day. Yet in a reductively monistic philosophy they are not part of the real order of being. The contingencies of life are dismissed as an inferior level of existence. The remedy for the problems of this lower order is somehow to gain access to the higher order and conform to it, whereupon one will presumably recognize the unreality of one’s confusions and torments.

In accordance with Dewey’s conception of the nature of things, on the other hand, the generic task of intelligence is to reconstruct and direct processes of change that have been made problematic by the intrusion of the new and unexpected. This view is momentously different from that of the extremes of the classic tradition: The latter had a coherent view of being, the good, and reason; but the view was mistaken, and as such it was a bar to enriched, fulfilling conduct. In redefining the nature and tasks of intelligence, Dewey made a massive contribution to our self-understanding and to our powers of action.

Dewey’s metaphysics, found principally in Experience and Nature, is the attempt to provide a generic characterization of the human involvement with the nature of things. The characterization of nature must give a full and proper account not only of order, but of change, plurality, the contingent, the qualitative, the values of life-experience, and experimental knowing. Dewey’s metaphysics is emphatically not an attempt to provide “a permanent neutral matrix for future inquiry.” It is an attempt to articulate a conception of reality such that our actual experience is made intelligible, such that we can identify our resources and limitations, our opportunities and liabilities in a changing precarious world—yet a world that is answerable to inquiry and intelligence, a world that can yield profoundly fulfilling experience. In brief, Dewey’s metaphysics is an attempt to characterize the inclusive context of human existence in such a way that we might learn how to function in it as effectively as possible.

My own judgment is that he did so exceedingly well, but in an obvious sense his success or failure is immaterial. If knowledge of the salient characteristics and instrumentalities of existence is possible at all, it is eminently worthwhile to strive for it. Yet Rorty says there is nothing of that sort that can be gained, and he apparently feels no loss at our alleged impotence.

Dewey could hardly be sympathetic to Rorty’s conclusion. In denying knowledge of nature, it is the sort of philosophy he struggled against throughout his career. He had a richly orchestrated vision of human life in its fullest setting. At the heart of that vision was a conception of the intimate and organic continuities of man with the plural, ever-changing processes of nature. The orchestration included a formulation of the powers, constraints, and consummations that these continuities might provide. This vision is unrecognizable in Rorty’s rendition, where nature is and must be a meaningless cipher. He seems to believe that our only intelligible engagement with nature is of the sort that would be, to use his own expression, “underwritten” by the foundationalist enterprise. Dewey, by contrast, identified and articulated the many ways, obvious or subtle, that we may enter into finely discriminated relations with the natural world. Unwittingly but inexorably, Rorty threatens to undo Dewey’s work, rather than carry it forward.

IV

I remarked earlier that I would attend to the bearing of Rorty’s interpretation of pragmatism on Dewey’s legacy to our culture. Rorty has at best obscured this legacy, at worst denied it. I will conclude by trying to bring further clarity to Dewey’s heritage.

Every commentator but Rorty has observed Dewey’s passion for scientific method, and Dewey seemed to be persuaded that its increasing use could work a miracle. I noted in my résumé of Dewey’s critique of the classic tradition that an intelligible account of how science can be used in conduct presupposes a new set of assumptions about the nature of nature, which were systematized in Dewey’s metaphysics. In providing that alone, Dewey earned his place in history.

When moving from the generic to the particular universe of discourse, Dewey sometimes gives the impression that all one need do in a problematic situation is determine the facts of the case and then contrive a plan of action that will bring about restored and reunified activity. This is using scientific method, to be sure, but it seems simplistic to suppose that such a procedure will reconcile disagreements about what ends ought to be pur-
sued. Taken as it stands, it is simplistic, but it is only one element in Dewey's position.

To pursue this issue further, it will be helpful to shift attention to another idea intimately associated with Dewey's name: that of democracy. Dewey always spoke of democracy as a way of life—as a manner of conducting all phases of associated living. Democracy as a way of life, then, is the preferred mode of addressing moral problems. We do not have the democratic life on the one hand and the moral life on the other. Democracy is the moral life. Or rather, Dewey urgently recommends it to us as the moral life. He repeatedly elaborates democracy as both moral ideal and moral method.

Are there two distinct methods, then—that of science and that of democracy? No, there is one. Or, more precisely: the norms of science are incorporated into those of democracy. In Dewey's ideal, experimental inquiry and democratic behavior become fused. The nature of their combination can perhaps best be suggested by thinking of them as a union of certain moral and intellectual virtues—with the distinction between moral and intellectual less fixed than it seemed to be for Aristotle. The virtues include a willingness to question, investigate, and learn; a determination to search for clarity in discourse and evidence in argument. There is also a readiness to hear and respect the views of others, to consider alternatives thoroughly and impartially, and to communicate in a like manner in return. One is not irrevocably committed to antecedent convictions but is ready to qualify or change his views as a consequence of inquiry and communication. There is an urgency to persist in shared discourse in the direction of agreement. These virtues embrace novelty, innovation, growth, regard for the concerns of others, and scientific discipline. They reject the blind following of custom, authority, and impulse. They preclude not only dogmatism and absolutism, but deliberately hurtful conduct as well.

These might be viewed as the virtues of the experimental inquirer, but they are also virtues in the process of collective moral deliberation. What makes democratic behavior more than free speech and counting votes is that the participants use scientific intelligence in determining the nature of their situation and in formulating plans of action, and they are not stuck on foregone conclusions. Moreover, the scientific mentality is leavened by a respect for persons and a moral impartiality that would convert adversary situations into a search for cooperative and inclusive solutions. All these virtues are both powers and constraints: powers in being instrumentalities for shared and fulfilling conduct, constraints in being limitations on ignorant and prejudicial conduct. Knowledge, too, is both power and constraint. It provides powers by converting brute relationships into consummations. It is a constraint in that our intentions for action are always chastened by an awareness of nature's real possibilities and limitations.44

Dewey does not conceive democracy as a squabble over antecedently fixed goods. In a world intrinsically marked by change, the constant and inevitable task of intelligence is to mediate between past and future, to mediate change by introducing experimental proposals for reconstructions of present disturbances and conflicts in the direction of novel unifications.

Without scientific intelligence, this entire process is disabled. The idea of a democratic method and aim as mere conversation was, in effect, vigorously opposed by Dewey in such works as The Public and Its Problems and Liberalism and Social Action. The classical liberals, he wrote, "did not recognize the place in experiment of comprehensive social ideas as working hypotheses in direction of action."45 He continues: "The instruments of analysis, of criticism, of dissolution, that were employed were effective for the work of release. But when it came to the problem of organizing the new forces and the new individuals ... into a coherent social organization possessed of intellectual and moral directive power, liberalism was well-nigh impotent."46

Dewey did not suppose that the experimental democratic method would solve moral problems after the fashion of traditional absolutisms.47 It would be liberating, self-corrective to an extent, and always challenged. He did not think it would or could bring moral unanimity. But given his understanding of our shared condition, he regarded democratic intelligence as the best method so far conceived for contending with our common and evolving tasks. His extensive writings on education are centered especially on the responsibilities of schools to provide an environment in which scientific-democratic virtues will be acquired as an organic part of the learning process.

Are Dewey's democratic commitments no more than "ungrounded social hope"? Dewey himself did not think so. His moral recommendations were not issued from on high, but were a deeply reflective response to what he took to be the pervasively problematic situations of modern life. This philosophy of social intelligence is a response to existent needs—needs to bring order and even abundance to societies plagued by strife and unce
tainty. The appropriate test of Dewey's moral philosophy consists only in its capacities to meet the real demands of life experience. But that is test enough.

I have not given a full account of the resources of social intelligence as Dewey elaborated them. It should be clear, nevertheless, that there are far more assets there than Rorty has identified. For his part, of course, Rorty might well dismiss them as products of "bad" philosophy and have done with Dewey. That in itself would be a gain, for scholars might then evaluate Dewey's philosophy in its own terms.

No doubt Dewey failed to canvass all our resources as natural and social beings, but I do not know of any philosopher who has accomplished as much in this regard. It might well be that he expected too much from the utilization of the instruments he recognized or conceived, but that is hardly reason to discard them. They might be the best that we could contrive. In any case, we owe it to ourselves to study them and try to develop them further. They are a precious asset, and they are our principal inheritance from Dewey. It would be a great tragedy if they were obscured. It would be a tragic irony if they were obscured in his name.

RESPONSE TO JAMES GOUINLOCK

I am not sure that Gouinlock and I disagree about as much as he thinks we do. For example, when he says that I am "not unaware of Dewey's moral commitments" but regard them as "no more than 'ungrounded social hope,'" or when he contrasts "democratic method" and "mere conversation," only the terms "no more than" and "mere" seem to divide us.

I think that an ungrounded social hope, the sort that Jefferson, Whitman, and Dewey had for the America of their various days, is the best sort of moral commitment to have. For to regard such hope as "ungrounded" is simply to recognize, as these men did, that nothing is on the side of this hope except the energies and intelligence that those who share it devote to it. I cannot see what further sort of grounding a Deweyan like Gouinlock might think that moral commitments could have.

Sidney Hook seems to me to have been right when, in "Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life," he insisted that pragmatists were as aware as existentialists that our commitments to, for example, democratic practices cannot be grounded in the way the philosophical tradition hoped to ground them. The tradition wanted some sort of guarantee from outside of the human enterprise that that enterprise was moving in the right direction. I think that Plato was right that such a guarantee would be available only if there is something like an Absolute Good. Hook's essay invokes Dewey's doctrine that every evil is a lesser good to make clear why any non-Platonist must live in what Hook calls "a world of inescapable tragedy—a tragedy which flows from the conflict of moral ideals." That is the conflict which
Plato thought would cease to exist once we had reached the top of the divided line.

It may be, however, that Gouinlock is contrasting “ungrounded hope” with “commitment arrived at by the scientific method.” So it may be that our only disagreement is about the utility of the notion of “method.” I do, indeed, find this notion pretty useless. Thus when Hook says that we can use “the method of critical intelligence” to “make it possible live with the tragic conflict of goods and rights and duties.” I do not see what is be lost if we erase “the method of.” If we do, we shall be saying what no non-Platonist disputes: that in a tragic world we muddle through as best we can. “Critical intelligence” is as good a name as any for being experimental, nondogmatic, inventive, and imaginative, and for ceasing to expect, or try for, certainty. But nobody should expect to be taught a methodical way of being inventive and imaginative.

As I see it, the main reason Dewey constantly attached the term “method of” to “critical intelligence” was to provide a contrast to “the a priori, deductive method”—the method supposedly followed by intellectuals in the bad old days before the New Science came along. But no such method was in fact followed. Nobody who ever actually made a difficult moral or political decision followed the demonstrative procedure sketched in Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics,* a method Aristotle himself held to be inapplicable to such decision making. Critical intelligence has been alive and well since the dawn of history.

The only other reason I can think of why Dewey, early and late, insisted on using the vacuous notion of “method” is that he wanted philosophy to stop offering a body of knowledge, while still offering something. “Method” was the name he chose for what he thought it might still provide. But it was not a fortunate choice. It promised more than it could ever offer—something positive, rather than the merely negative admonition not to get trapped in the past.

If there is an exegetical question at issue between Gouinlock and myself it is whether one can isolate, in Dewey’s work, something both wide enough to be “extended to all problems of conduct” and also narrow enough to have “formal properties”—something which is both generic enough to be, as Gouinlock says it is, the method of democracy as well as of science, and yet specific enough to be contrasted with other methods that people have actually employed. I do not think one can. I think that “scientific method” is a name for an unfindable middle ground between a set of virtuous habits (the ones which Gouinlock says make up “rationality”) and a set of concrete, teachable techniques.

As I said in my introduction to volume 8 of *The Later Works,* Dewey’s description of “reflective thought” as opposed to reliance on “tradition, instruction, imitation” did not seem to mark off anything except the willingness to challenge accepted beliefs. Nobody except some people with whom not even my worst enemies confuse me—Burkeans conservatives and religious fundamentalists—doubts the value of challenging such beliefs. But unless we can contrast “scientific method” with something beside what Peirce called the methods of tenacity and authority, then “scientific method” will remain too noncontroversial to make a fuss about.

The third of the methods with which Peirce contrasted “the scientific method” is what he called “the method of finding what is most agreeable to reason.” But the only difference I can see between that method and what Peirce called “the scientific method” is, once again, that the former discourages, and the latter encourages, bold and imaginative speculation. This is the difference between attempting to make everything you presently believe coherent and actively attempting to go out and get some new beliefs (for example, by making new observations or performing new experiments, hunting up anomalies and counterexamples, lending an ear to seemingly outrageous suggestions, or redescribing your data in unfamiliar terms). If you do the latter, you have a constantly enlarging and shifting body of belief to make coherent. But you do not employ a method for making it coherent that is different from the one you would have used if you had stuck with your old beliefs.

Peirce, to be sure, tried to distinguish scientific method from the three alternative methods he listed and rejected by saying that it tests beliefs against “some external permanency . . . something upon which our thinking has no effect,” and went on to say that the “fundamental hypothesis” of “the method of science” was that “there are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them.” But that way of characterizing scientific method is of no help to Dewey or to Gouinlock, who rightly says that “Dewey’s objections to traditional realisms consisted above all in their assumption that a full-fledged object of knowledge exists prior to inquiry,” and notes that this led people to think Dewey a “crypto-idealist” (78, 80).
Gouinlock says that Dewey "characterized the [scientific] method in detail in The Quest for Certainty," but I confess that I do not find such a detailed characterization in that book. All one gets in the chapter called "The Supremacy of Method" is his standard, endlessly repeated, polemic against epistemological and metaphysical dualisms—dualisms which interrupt the continuity between mind and the object of inquiry, theory and practice, humanity and nature, and so on. The only positive advice we get is to be reflective but determined, open yet disciplined, tolerant but discriminating, bold but not too bold, imaginative yet not wild. Is it really disrespect to Dewey's memory to admit that, when he gets started on method, he sounds a lot like Polonius?

What I meant by saying that Dewey moved "beyond method" was that he gave up on the idea, favored by nineteenth-century positivists and resuscitated by Carnap and Reichenbach, that you could skim off some rules from what natural scientists were doing, and, by applying those rules, transform other areas of culture. Dewey's attitude toward nineteenth-century positivism seems to me epitomized in his puckish remark that "Hegel is the quintessence of the scientific spirit." Nothing to Dewey's purpose came of the later resuscitation of positivism, as can be seen by asking how one could hope to extend the latest contributions to the post-Carnapian literature on the logic of confirmation to "all problems of conduct." So I conclude that when it comes to what Gouinlock calls "rationality as a trait of character" we shall never have anything remotely like a set of algorithms, but only some epistemic analogue of Aristotelian phronesis. People who want science to be a rule-governed procedure, it seems to me (and, I think, seemed to Dewey), are asking for more precision than the subject matter admits. They ask for rules when only imagination will do.

Granted that Dewey never stopped talking about "scientific method," I submit that he never had anything very useful to say about it. Those who think I am overstating my case here should, I think, tell us what this thing called "method"—which is neither a set of rules nor a character trait nor a collection of techniques—is supposed to be. Unless some reasonably definite third element can be specified, and chapter and verse cited from Dewey showing that this is what he had in mind, I shall stick by my claim that Dewey could have said everything he needed to say if he dropped the term "scientific method." He could have gotten just as much leverage out of saying that we needed, in all areas of conduct, more of the courage and imagination which Bacon and Galileo shared (despite their radically different conceptions of the nature of science), as well as more willingness to toss old ideas that have not panned out.

Still, what about Gouinlock's charges that I am unable to "distinguish between methods of inquiry as being better or worse" or to "speak of progress in knowledge, even in science" (73)? If these charges were correct, then I would indeed be a long way from Dewey. But the second charge, at least, is not. I follow Kuhn in describing the progress of knowledge in science as increased ability to get what we want out of science. One of the things we want—in an addition to the ability to predict and control our environment more efficiently—is an ability to explain why past science got right what it got right and got wrong what it got wrong. This is the sort of ability which we take to the mark of a progressive discipline and which helps us differentiate between microbiology and interior decorating. If Gouinlock would not count what Kuhn calls scientific progress as progress of knowledge, then he has to show that what Kuhn means by problem solving is different from what Dewey meant. I do not think he could do that. Kuhn and Dewey seem to me at one in arguing that the positivists' hope of substituting rules for phronesis was hopeless.

There is, however, a sense in which Gouinlock's first charge—that I cannot distinguish between "methods of inquiry" as better or worse—is correct. This is because I have trouble finding a principle of individuation for "methods." The term method is ambiguous between something as general as Peirce's four "methods of fixing belief" and something as specific as using magnetometers rather than dowsing rods. So I should prefer to drop the term, and to call the sort of thing Peirce described a social practice and to call the skilled use of magnetometers a technique. The social practices which determined what it took to count as "rational" and "irrational" were different in primitive tribes, medieval schoolrooms, and nineteenth-century scientific laboratories. But none of these three practices is reducible to rules, and none of them seems happily described as a "method."

If we count Peirce's "methods of tenacity and authority" as "methods of inquiry," then I shall condemn them on the same pragmatic grounds as everybody else—namely, that in the ages when these social practices were more prevalent, life was not as good as it has become since our society adopted different practices and, therefore, a different notion of what counts as being rational. But if we forget about these methods of straw—con-
structed by Peirce to serve as butts—then we have to ask what the criterion of individuation of a “method” is. I doubt that we shall find any such criterion before we get down to the level of specific techniques. Choosing between dowsing rods and magnetometers is not, however, a matter on which philosophers have much to say.

Many contemporary philosophers of science—Philip Kitcher, for example—continue to speak of choosing among “methods” in order to discover which have had most success in producing true beliefs. But, in addition to my holoist doubts about whether we can use “true belief” as an independent check on practice, I do not think Kitcher and his colleagues have done nearly enough to explain what counts as a break between one method and another. I can see how to individuate, roughly but sufficiently, techniques (magnetometers versus dowsing rods, asking the populace versus asking the Pope, computerized stylometry versus Schachgesühl, and the like) but methods? Assessment of how well techniques have worked, like devising new ones, is the province of the scientist in the trenches, not of the philosopher of science or the historian of inquiry.

To sum up: the reason I think that Feyerabend was justified in being “against method,” and in suspecting that philosophy of science may be a subject “with a great past,” is not that I think that Feyerabend was right about voodoo, but that I think he was right that there is nothing more philosophically profound or interesting to be said against voodoo (or astrology, or asking the Pope) than that these techniques do not seem to get us what we hoped for. After we have drawn the rather thin analogy between abandoning astrology for astronomy and abandoning feudalism for democracy, I do not think we can make further use of the suggestion that we look more closely at what scientists do in order to figure out what the rest of culture should do.

I turn now from the topic of method to the question of whether I have “missed” what Gouinlock calls “a crucial and remarkably innovative constituent of Dewey’s theory of knowledge”—namely, that “in order to produce objects of perception (as of knowledge) suitable to the peculiarities of a problematic situation, some sort of intentional reorientation toward the troubling conditions must be undertaken” (78). I agree with Allen Hance that Dewey got this point from Hegel’s Phenomenology, and that the point was restated nicely (with appropriate acknowledgments to both Hegel and Dewey) in Sellars’s polemic against “the Myth of the Given.” Sellars’s target was the idea that a perception is, to use Gouinlock’s words, “a virgin image, appearing in systematic articulation to the passive spectator” (78). But since I have been borrowing heavily from this essay of Sellars’s since I started publishing, I cannot believe that I have missed the point.

In various papers (including “Dewey between Hegel and Darwin,” chapter 1 of this volume) I have tried to enlarge on Sellars’s criticism of empiricism by arguing that if you understand the causal relations between the acquisition of beliefs and the environment of the believer you do not also need to ask about representational relations. It seems to me that a causal, nonrepresentational account of intentional states—an account along Davidsonian lines—gives you every reason in the world to say that “real properties of the object are registered in language” (83; Gouinlock’s words; my italics), even after you have denied that they are represented in language. They are registered in the sense that if the objects did not have those properties you would probably not be saying what you say, or believing what you believe.

Yet Gouinlock doubts that I am able to join him in saying this. It is true that I do not think that intrinsic properties of the object are so registered, but that is because of doubts about the notion of intrinsicality. It is true that I do not think that we should interpret “register” as “represent,” but that is because I share Dewey’s contempt for the Cartesian skeptic who asks “Why do you think that success in solving your problems means that you have accurate representations of the real?” I think that the most efficient way to dismiss such questions is to interpret “registration of real properties of the object” as “caused by real properties of the object, and capable of causing changes in those properties”—thereby exchanging a representational account of belief for a causal one. I should say of Davidson what Gouinlock says of Dewey: “It is hard to imagine a theory of ideas more rigorously controlled by the nature of objects than this one” (80). But, thanks to the substitution of linguistic behavior for “experience,” Davidson’s theory seems to me superior to Dewey’s in being able to provide “definite locations for all naming behaviors as organic-environmental transactions.”

One reason I think that Davidson’s way of doing things is superior to Dewey’s is that it makes it unnecessary to worry about whether “a fullfledged object of knowledge exists prior to inquiry.” I can accept Gouinlock’s claim that Dewey’s denial that such an object exists was central
to his objection to traditional realism, but that seems to me just the reason why his objection was found so baffling, so hard to understand, so reminiscent of idealism. As I said in “Dewey’s Metaphysics”, Dewey’s way of splitting the difference between realism and idealism just didn’t work—in the sense that his philosophical colleagues found it impossible to figure out what he meant by saying that objects of knowledge change in the course of inquiry. Sometimes Dewey seemed to mean, uncontroversially, that the beliefs which inquirers invoke to explain what they are talking about change—that the intentional object changed. But at other times he seemed to mean more than that. The moral to be drawn from Dewey’s ill success, it seems to me, is that we should drop the notion of “object of inquiry.”

This is facilitated by taking the linguistic turn and talking semantics rather than metaphysics. But I take it Gouinlock would condemn this move, for he is suspicious of what he calls “the language-game theory.” His description of this theory, however, gives me pause. He says it is a theory which denies that “language is a function of shared activity, again, with an environment” (82). I cannot think of any philosopher of language who has ever denied this. Does Gouinlock really think that Wittgenstein, the philosopher who put the term “language-game” in circulation, believed that a person could speak an unshared language, or speak one without interacting with an environment?

Perhaps, however, we can pass over what Gouinlock says about language-games in favor of his discussion of whether truth is correspondence—for this topic suggests a clearer opposition between what each of us gets out of Dewey. Gouinlock interprets me as “concluding that Dewey believed that objects do not constrain truth claims” (78). I would not dream of denying that. What I want to deny is that truth claims do not represent objects, and are not “made true” by objects. These denials amount to making the holist point that there is no way to pair off sentences or beliefs with things in the world in order to answer questions like Which objects make that sentence true? or Which objects does that sentence accurately represent? This is because there is no way to divide language from world in such a way as to resolve the question at issue between correspondence and coherenists: is it the world itself, or other beliefs, which is the truth-maker? Nor is there any way to answer the question Is it the object in itself, or the object under a description, which is represented? Davidsonians, who reject the scheme-content distinction, reject both ques-