

- Lugones, María C. 1991. "On the Logic of Pluralist Feminism." *Feminist Ethics*. Claudia Card, ed. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Moore, G.E. 1959. "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33." *Philosophical Papers*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Nicholson, Linda. 1986. *Gender and History: The Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family*. New York: Columbia University.
- Riley, Denise. 1988. *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of "Woman" in History*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Skinner, Quentin. 1988. "Language and Social Change." *Meaning and Context*. James Tully, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Spelman, Elizabeth. 1988. *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1980. *Culture and Value*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1969. *On Certainty*. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, eds. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958a. *The Blue Book*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958. *Philosophical Investigations*. 3rd edition. G.E.M. Anscombe, ed. New York: MacMillan.
- Wittig, Monique. 1971. *Les Guérillères*. London: Owen.
- Wittig, Monique. 1992. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Zita, Jacquelyn N. 1992. "Male Lesbians and the Postmodern Body." *Hypatia* 7.4 (fall).

Richard Rorty's Post-Foundationalist, Historicist, Ethnocentrist Solidarity

Pura Sanchez Zamorano

In "Liberalism and Communitarianism," Will Kymlicka argued that, despite Rorty's misleading remarks, Rorty's disagreements with "those Kantians" are not about "where to *begin* the moral conversation ... but about where that enterprise *must end up* [For] Rorty, 'the notions of community and shared values mark the limits of practical reason,' not just its point of departure" (J. Cohen quoted in Kymlicka, 1988: 18). Kymlicka is especially distressed by Rorty's argument that "liberals need be responsible only to their own traditions, and not to the moral law as well," *because* there are no (justificatory or moral) reasons which are not internal to a historical tradition or interpretive community (Rorty, 1991). He calls these tenets a dogmatic prophecy.

Although I agree with Kymlicka, I submit that Rorty's disagreements with many of us are also about what characterizes and who were/are the parties to the (moral) conversation of liberal democracy; about who and where "we liberal democrats" really are, and what made it possible for liberal democracy to get to where it is now. For, against those who "*pretend that everybody (every 'culture') has always spoken the same language*," Rorty has done his best to show that no one (no culture) ever has. His dogmatism is also retrospective. With the "happiness" of the latecomer he praises, Rorty strengthens the Eurocentric or West-centric (ideological) "narrative" of the progression of liberal democracy's ideals from Greece, to European Christianity,

to Western Enlightenment, to America, a narrative that does not feel indebted to anything but itself. It is a narrative that alienates "East" and "South" from their contributions to humanism, and makes liberal democracy's practices, values, and goals the private property of the West. It is a narrative that antagonizes under the pretense of encouraging a "proliferation" of histories, moralities, and rationalities. This holds even when, (or *precisely* when), Rorty dissolves the "Philosophical with capital 'P'" past of "Europe" in the name of a "we," as he says, "as local and temporary as possible." I am not going to defend that Past with capital 'P' here, but the "everything else" that Rorty throws away with it.

Rorty's project is that of preserving and extending liberal democracy's ideals (Human Solidarity, Universalism, Cosmopolitanism) without their "Philosophical" grounding. How, he asks, can "we liberal democrats" still aim at "reducing human suffering worldwide" and at creating a "(global) civil society of the bourgeois democratic sort," once we have rejected the Philosopher's notions of a "human nature" or a "human rationality," and the necessitarian account of history based on them? Rorty does not succeed in this project: his prescriptions are so constrained by his obfuscation against traditional philosophy and his dichotomies (*either* the "foundations" of traditional philosophy *or* the beliefs and practices of the temporary and local "we") are so extreme that his "redescriptions" of the above-mentioned ideals amount to their betrayal (see Bernstein, 1987).¹

In his article "Solidarity," (Rorty, 1989) Rorty gives us a taste of (his) post-foundational, pragmatist, historicist version of "old-timey" Human Solidarity. More specifically, he gives us a version of the *moral obligation* to be solidary with all other human beings and be responsible as regards the interests of human persons qua persons. Along the way, he "reformulates" the notions of what it is to be moral, what it is to be human and humane and, in sum, what it is to be an enlightened universalist.

In "Solidarity", Rorty argues that:

1) People are not "naturally" or "objectively" human or inhuman; what counts as being human or not, in the sense of solidary or not, is relative to historical "circumstance" and to "transient consensuses" within specific communities about what attitudes and practices are normal as regards others.

2) When people are human and solidary with others, they are not thereby "recognizing" anything "naturally" or "objectively" common between themselves and those others, like the "common humanity" or "common rationality" of Philosophy. They are noticing or imaginatively "creating" similarities between them and those others and allowing those similarities to outweigh the dissimilarities that they also perceive. In what respect those others are similar is a matter of imaginative empathy and empathic creation. But these undertakings are, again, situated within, or must cohere with, the "circumstance" and the "transient consensus" of the interpreter/helper's community.

3) To have a moral obligation to be solidary with all others is a matter of "we intentions" ("We Americans agree that ..." or "We Canadians decide that ..."), not a matter of "we human beings intentions." And the object of the obligation are others as "one of us"; others as "human beings" does not have the same sort of solidary force and efficacy. This time "human beings" ("others, human beings") is to be taken in its non-Philosophical usage.

4) The best way to be solidary — responsive to the needs and interests of all others qua persons — is through the tenets of liberal democracy:² holding "traditional" differences (of religion, race, gender, and so on) as unimportant, and the similarity as regards suffering and pain as overriding. *But* the ability and progress of liberal democracy in this respect is due to ironist narrative, not to philosophical theory. The ability to notice and be moved by the "similarity in pain" of others is different from the ability to be moved by the "similarity in humanity" ("humanity" in its non-Philosophical usage) of others; the latter ends up with a series of platitudes that are easy to disregard (they need food, shelter, communication ...). The former requires

an acquaintance with the final vocabularies, the community ways of those others, within which "their" pain becomes patent. Ironist narrators or "agents of love" (the anthropologist, the journalist, the novelist) do that: they give us detailed, thick, descriptions of others *in those others' terms*. Those descriptions allow us to understand that "people wildly different from ourselves" also suffer. It is that suffering, not the terms that those others use, that the "agents of procedural justice" must take into account. That suffering is very difficult to forget and disregard.

5) Liberal democracy has become Ironist; through familiarization with many other final vocabularies, it has come to the realization that its own final vocabulary is no closer to "reality" or a higher "power" than those of others (Rorty, 1989: 73). In order to preserve and expand its ideals and avoid "wet" relativism, liberal democracy must become "Ethnocentric": it must come to the realization that its final vocabulary, though a "creation", is still "worth dying for." Ethnocentric Ironism, says Rorty, leaves untouched the liberal democrat's first order commitments to human solidarity and to anti-ethnocentric, inclusive, behaviors, though it substitutes a post-foundationalist *pride* in the final "procedures" of one's own culture and tradition.³

Rorty sees no danger in having *all* peoples following the advice he gives liberal democrats: to "unflinchingly stand up" for their beliefs and practices, to only be responsible to their traditions. And he sees no danger of post-foundationalist pride in one's own procedures degenerating into ethnocentrism tout court.⁴

According to Rorty, Christian and Kantian Universalisms assumed that there was a "natural" cut in the spectrum of similarities and differences that explain the difference between human and non-human beings, and the similarities existed among all humans. (Objective) similarity would mark the sphere of rational/ moral obligation: it is not because someone is a fellow American that we should feel an obligation towards her, but because she (like we) is a rational/moral being. Non-foundational Universalism, on the

other hand, must maintain that moral obligation arises from pre-existing "feelings" of solidarity in a community, and that the "expansion" of such solidarity hinges on *making*, rather than assuming, "others" similar. In Rorty's words,

Sellars...lets us view solidarity as made rather than found, produced in the course of history rather than recognized as an ahistorical fact. He identifies "obligation" with "intersubjective validity" but lets the range of subjects among whom such validity obtains be smaller than the human race.... We can have obligations by virtue of our sense of solidarity with any...(smaller-than-the-human-race) groups. For we can have we-intentions, intentions which we express in sentences of the form "*We* all want....," intentions which contrast with those expressed by sentences beginning "*I* want..." by virtue of ... membership. Sellars's basic idea is that the difference between moral obligation and benevolence is the difference between actual or potential intersubjective agreement among a group of interlocutors, and idiosyncratic (individual or group) emotion. Such agreement does not have (*pace* Habermas) any ahistorical conditions of possibility, but is simply a fortunate product of certain historical circumstances.

... The right way to take the slogan "We have obligations to human beings simply as such" is as a means of reminding ourselves to keep trying to expand our sense of "us" as far as we can If one reads that slogan the right way, one will give "we" as concrete and historically specific a sense as possible... like "we twentieth-century liberals"

... *We* have to start from where *we* are -- that is part of the force of Sellars's claim that we are under no obligations other than the "we-intentions" of the communities with which we identify. What takes the curse off this ethnocentrism is not that the largest such group (with which we identify) is "humanity" or "all rational beings"-- no one, I have been claiming, *can* make *that* identification -- but, rather, that it is the ethnocentrism of a "we" ("we liberals") which is dedicated to enlarging itself, to creating an even larger and more variegated *ethnos* (Rorty, 1989: 194-196, 198).

"Impossible" Dichotomies

Let me make some preliminary clarifications of Rorty's argument and underline some "impossible" dichotomies that I detect in them.

1) First of all, Human Solidarity and moral Universalism, though very central to liberal democracy, are ideals based on practices and notions older than liberal democracy. These notions and practices often belonged to traditions that are not considered (and Rorty does not consider) "Western."⁵ Perhaps one should not credit liberal democracy's tradition to only the doings and "contingencies" of the from-Plato-to-Nato ancestors of the "rich North Atlantic democracies" as happily as Rorty does. Perhaps one should consider the possibility that other communities and other traditions, throughout history and at present, can be more-or-less humanist and are more-or-less capable of solidarity ..., etc., and that they often interpenetrate each other, not lie asunder the Rortyan "cut" between the non-liberal (period) and the liberal "ethnoses." This assumption does not require a foundation the same way that imitating, importing, cross-culturally influencing and sharing do not. This assumption is perfectly coherent with historicism, though not necessarily with the Rortyan historicism of a "we" as concrete and contingently specific as possible, and does not confuse historicism and ethnocentrism.⁶

2) What counts as "being human" in the sense of feeling solidarity or not, is *not* usually relative to contingent "circumstance" and the "transient consensuses" of "specific" communities. "Language" and communities have behind them long traditions interpenetrated by many other traditions. These "transient consensuses" of its critics are also outside the specific community. This is why people like the Nazis and the behaviors of many "Enlightened European" governments during W.W.II were and are condemned, as are people like the Serbians today. Surely, "language" and tradition can be the site of much racism and little solidarity

but they also provide, in their pluralism and heterogeneity, the way out.

3) When people show solidarity with others, they usually grant those others the help and the rights they themselves would like to have (or assume anybody else would grant them) had they been in the same predicament as others. *Pace* Rorty, the language-game of human solidarity is not exhausted by a commitment to lessen suffering (humaneness). The commitment to "treat human persons as having intrinsic (and *equal*) worth" and rights (humanity) is likewise essential (see Nielson, 1989). Taking care of the basic structures that undermine equal respect for equal worth and rights is no mean ingredient of being solidary (Rawls, 1971: 105-106).

Rorty is right in arguing that "what" is granted, and what counts as envisaging a "similar predicament" *partially* depends on the standards and practices of the helper's community. But this is not the *only* case. We also have examples of solidary and moral universalistic motivation in communities that otherwise do not seem solidary or universalistic. Beyond that, whether people "recognize" or "create" when they are solidary, that can be left to them. For some people, the notion that "the other" has a human shape and is in trouble is a sufficient "similar predicament," for others, it is not.

It is true that, as Rorty says, the term "human" can refer to paradigmatic humans (non-females, non-childlike people, etc.) and, arguably, the Serbians of today might not consider themselves to be violating "human" rights because the Muslims fall outside their "human" paradigm (Rorty, 1993). Yet, it is also true that "Americans like us" or "Serbians like us" are betrayed every day and do not preclude the "paradigmatic" danger, either.

4) To have a moral obligation is not only or not mostly a matter of "we intentions," much less is it a matter of "temporary and local" we intentions. "We Nazis order ..." was immoral, and "The Iranian Constitution is discriminatory and should be changed" in the mouth of an Iranian woman spells out an obligation: "We Iranians" might

not recognize it, but "we citizens of the international community" have to.

The concept of "others" or human beings as the object of obligation has *all* the solidary force needed *precisely* in those situations where friendship, trust, familiarity ..., etc. vis-à-vis the other is impossible, or not granted, or insufficient, or betrayed. Surely, friendship, trust, and familiarity are beautiful, and important part of our — very plural — moral vocabulary, including obligation.

5) To sum up, Rorty should avoid the following dichotomies:

a) *Either* one assumes that it is in the "nature" of every "human", "rational" being to "seek a decrease in human pain," to be solidary, *or* one concludes that such an aim is the recent, parochial commitment of specific communities: "us, liberal democrats" par excellence.

Incidentally, Rorty confesses that, although "Sellars' own interest is *not* in affirming the fact that "we" may refer to some subset of the class of human or rational beings (e.g. one's tribe)...but in naturalism," his own interest is independent of who the "we" happens to be (Rorty, 1989: 195 fn. 7). So, quite apart from the fact that Sellarsian "we-intentions", that is, group agreements that Rorty rephrases as group feeling and *fellowship*, might not explain (at the least the whole of) morality, Rortyan "smaller-than-the-human-race-we-intentions" explain it even less. Rorty wants, with Sellars, to substitute the distinction between intersubjective, sharable "feelings" and "idiosyncratic," unsharable "feelings" for the Kantian reason/feeling distinction. But he also wants, beyond Sellars, to (supposedly) respect tradition diversity and tradition's solidary force by ex-ante limiting the range of intersubjectivity. As I pointed out above, this is what Kymlicka calls Rorty's (prospective) "dogma" about the limits of practical reason, even leaving aside his Humean group emotivism.

b) This is Rorty's second, and indeed contrived, dichotomy: *either* one frames, in the "local and temporary" present, detailed, thick, "fellowship-inspiring descriptions" under which others can fall and through which "we" can

empathize with "their" suffering, *or* one is assuming, rather than concluding, something really suspect in Humean emotivism: the thin humanity of "others."

I do not wish to diminish the force of narratives like Uncle Tom's Cabin and of images like those of television reports "from Bosnia" (Rorty, 1993: 126). I do not wish to disregard the suggestion that others suffer an amazing amount. I only wish to assert that my ignorance or unfamiliarity with respect to their lifeworlds might prevent me from knowing how much and might prompt me into saying that their suffering is different. I want to notice the happiness of *this* human, the humiliation of *that* other in their details, when I pronounce the "liberal democratic," solidary words "human," "suffering." But I also want to preserve the words "human" and "suffering" in their non-philosophical, pedestrian, less detailed, cross-cultural, more-or-less shared meanings.

The "Pithy" Illustration

Imagine someone like Rorty praising the beauties of temporary and local, ethnocentric ironism giving a retrospective account of the rescue of Jews by different European populations — say, Danes and Italians versus Belgians — during the time of the deportations. And try to imagine the benefits in terms of diminution of human suffering that would have resulted, had those Belgians been more "ironic," re-describing, inventive. The liberal ironist, says Rorty, would not save the Jews because there is "something" within her — a core humanity — "which resonates in the presence of this same thing" in those Jews. She is a historicist and a nominalist, and the notion of a "core self" makes no sense to her. The notion of contingent but "worth dying for/fellowship-inspiring" description or invention however does.

Supposedly, the Danes and the Italians save many Jews because "this particular Jew was a fellow Milanese, or a fellow Jutlander, or a fellow bocce player, or a fellow parent

of small children." "Because this Jew is one of us human beings" does not have the same sort of force of solidarity, though, as Rorty says, "perhaps sometimes" Jews were helped simply because they were fellow humans (Rorty, 1989: 190). The Belgians are not as enthusiastic about rescuing Jews. They lack, according to Rorty, similar "fellowship-inspiring" descriptions and the thought that "he is a Jew" often outweighs the notion that "(he is a Jew and) like me a fellow parent." There are, says Rorty, historicosociological explanations for this lack (unfortunately, he does not elaborate), but the conclusion "Belgians are inhuman" in the sense of "Belgians lack a sense of human solidarity" is not such an explanation.

The "moral" of this Rortyan short story is the following: calling some people "inhuman" or "less human," and so on, does not explain or change anything. The most educational and politically effective explanation of the Danes and Italians' rescuing behavior vis-à-vis Belgian relative apathy is in terms of the existence (or absence) of contingent and local descriptions or redescriptions that include "others." There were "fortunate," "public," and "inclusive" Danish and Italian descriptions under which the Jews fell. There were not Belgian ones or, alternatively, not enough "privatization" of Belgian idiosyncratic descriptions ("Yeah! We are Catholics from Liege") or, better yet, there was insufficient Belgian "ironist creativity" ("Jewish refugees love, like us, Flemish pre-Renaissance art"!?). Both facts, the Danes and the Italians' having and the Belgians' lacking those descriptions, are "contingencies" or hinge on "contingencies." Perhaps one should praise the (less "fortunate"?) deeds and efforts of the Belgians, over those of the Italians and the Danes?

Alternative Sociohistorical and Moral Explanations

As regards Rorty's "facts," I am afraid he has some of them wrong. As regards Rorty's "evaluation," I am afraid it is amoral.

Some facts:

Historians of the Shoah distinguish between "selective" rescuers and those motivated by "humanitarian obligation" (see Hilberg, 1993: 213). It is true, as Rorty says, that some rescuers helped the Jews because of a sense of fellowship with them: those Jews were friends, or relatives, or associates in businesses or professions. Those Jews had an expectation of assistance because of those bonds, and the "selective" rescuers behaved *morally* when helping them.

Yet it is the "humanitarian" rescuers that deserve some attention. The repeated declarations of those rescuers themselves, as well as empirical analyses of their behavior (Monroe et al., 1990) show the limitations of a "we-intentions" morality and of its "expansion" along the lines of "detailed" similarities regarding the pain of "others." Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe, then, range from members of tight-knit groups to cosmopolitans to loners. Some rescuers knew Jews well before occupation, others had never had any contact with Jews and assisted any of them although they were total strangers.

I wonder what the group ties, the "ethnocentric" senses of "us" are in loners, who often acted against the "transient consensus" of fellow citizens and the advice of neighbors, friends, and relatives. I wonder how Humean, detail-driven empathy works vis-à-vis perfect strangers. I wonder what the influence of the "recent, parochial" Western "invention" of ironist liberal democracy must have been when the "political" standards of fairness, justice, respect, and equality were equally important to rescuers, and, also empirically studied, bystanders, *though those standards are systematically discounted by the rescuers as rationales for*

their altruism. Mostly, I wonder what Rorty has to say regarding the oft-repeated "reason" offered, when pressed, by rescuers as "justification" of their behavior: "You help because you are human," "One helps because one is human" (meaning: not especially fair, not especially progressive), "One does what anyone else would have done," "You help whoever when you see that there is a need," "They were at the door; they stay, I say." Was there any time to create and conclude, rather than assume, the other's Humanity?

Perhaps the self-perception of the rescuers *as part of a common Humanity*,⁷ as mere "humans" vis-à-vis other "humans," hinges on a "language" and a knowledge belonging to a tradition older than liberal democracy: a long and multiculturally fed tradition — why did the Turks rescue the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal in 1492 or why did the Muslims of the Middle Ages show greater humaneness and humanity towards their minorities than the Christians much later on? It is a tradition of practices which often precisely oppose, rather than being based upon, "what is done by us, now, around here." Nothing in historicism precludes this view, unless it is Rorty's anti-Philosophy-driven, postmodernist historicism. For the fact that one learns the language game of morality and obligation vis-à-vis contemporary "fellows," does not mean that the language of morality belongs exclusively to contemporaries and fellows. Nor does it mean that it is as transient as those fellows' agreements, nor does it mean "We fellows..." nor does it mean that its *exclusive* reference or scope is (emotive) fellowship.

An evaluation:

Consider Rorty's assertion that the Belgians of the 1940s lacked fellowship-inspiring descriptions under which the Jews could have fallen. How is this possible, one may ask, when the Jews had been settling in Belgian cities since the sixteenth century (exiles from the expulsions in Spain and Portugal). The Jews had established a sizable community in Antwerp by the seventeenth century and had been granted

equal rights by the end of the eighteenth century (Gutman, 1990: 160).

The implication in my question is somewhat different from that in Rorty's assertion. Rorty is saying that, due to "contingent circumstances," the Belgian vocabulary did not include many descriptions *of the sort* "This Jew is a fellow Fleming, or a fellow Walloon, or a fellow cello player," and so on. I am saying that, due to centuries-long "contact" between the Belgians and the Jews, let alone the fact that Belgium was in the 1940s a liberal democracy, the Belgian community could not but be well-acquainted with descriptions of the sort "Jews are human beings," "Jews are part of Humankind," "Jews are persons," and so on. Such "descriptions," pace Rorty, are only apparently thin and trivial,⁸ and need not refer to anything deeply "metaphysical" like a "Kantian self." The idea that "Jews are fellow human beings" includes causal assumptions such as: Jews need food and shelter, they enjoy friendship and communication, they do not enjoy isolation and discrimination, they work and perform any other basic social role, they are capable of suffering and death, etc. Similar assumptions, and their presumptive universality as regards any person, have long been and still are *inescapable* in behaviors of mutual care and aid *that disregard* more detailed "fellowships." (As it is proven by the actions of many "altruistic" rescuers, long "contact," empathic or even physical, need not be there). One need not say that such causal assumptions spring from "built-in features of the mind." No doubt, new behaviors and new practices *affect*, either by strengthening or weakening, the nets of notions among which those assumptions figure prominently. Yet, it seems, behaviors of mutual aid across "fellowship" lines, even against existing "fellowships," are very much enmeshed in some such assumptions; and those behaviors have long been and still are "rock bottom" in morality, *integral* to the concepts of moral solidarity and universalism.⁹

What does Rorty mean then by those "contingent circumstances" due to which the Jews could not be perceived as "fellows" by the Belgians? Let me suggest some of them:

In the 1930s-40s there was a "language war" going on between the Walloons and the Flemings, a war in which the Catholic, Walloon, French-speaking population was getting the upper hand. The Jews, from the 1920s on, tended to adopt French as their language. And this, possibly, was perceived as a "threat" by the Flemings. However, exactly *that* did not procure a great help for the Jews from the Catholic hierarchy when they began needing it: they did not say "They are Jews *and* like us speak French too."

More to the point: at the time of the deportations, most of the Jews in Belgium, as many as 60,000 of them, were recent immigrants from Russia, the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Nazi Germany. Before the 1920s, and excepting the small Jewish communities in Brussels, Antwerp, and Liege, Belgium was more of a "transit station" than a destination for Jewish refugees. But from the 1920s on, it became a destination (Gutman, 1990: 164, 161, 160). This contingency, the fact that the Belgians had to help many thousands of Jews, mostly foreigners, and the Danes (though not the Italians) a few thousands, is certainly very relevant in the moral evaluation of the behaviors of both populations.

Now, it seems to me that the emphasis here should be placed on the sheer enormity of the number, and on factors like the situation of the Belgian administration under occupation, relatively more difficult than that of the Danish administration, not only on the Jews' status as "recent" refugees to which, I think, Rorty is referring: they weren't fellow Walloons, or fellow Flemings..., etc. And if one wishes to emphasize the latter contingency, one's moral evaluation does not usually stop at asserting it, one needs also to analyze what *was intended and done* by the Belgians vis-à-vis "unfamiliar" others. Part of "being human/e" and "being moral," let alone being a "liberal democrat", is the assumption that, at least some "contingencies" can be affected through human agency, in particular the contingency

of having to help thin, non-descript human refugees. There were contingencies and there were more long-lasting, less transient "ideals." Yet, unfortunately for the Jews, some Belgians "merely" appealed to the given contingencies, when trying to help:

On the eve of the Nazi invasion, Belgium had a Jewish population of 66,000 ... but only 10 percent of the Jews were Belgian citizens ... (At the time of the deportations), a wide gulf opened between the Jews who had Belgian nationality and were protected, and all the other Jews" (Gutman, 1990: 160, 166).

The Belgian Jews were protected — their deportation was postponed — by different and very parochialist Belgian elements: the Catholic church, whose hierarchy kept busy making distinctions between Belgian Jews, Jewish converts or partners of mixed marriages, and the rest. And the Belgian administrators, protecting "Belgian-hood" in a war of semi-nationalist, semi-bureaucratic resistance against the imposed German administration, engaged in turn in a power struggle against the SS and the Berlin Foreign Ministry. Yet, this appeal to the given contingencies is also unfortunate for Rorty's argument :

Restricting protection to Belgian nationals, however, implied that the rest of the Jews (meaning most of the Jewish population of Belgium) could be abandoned. Critics of the administration and the Catholic hierarchy have claimed that by abstaining from a general protest and confining intervention to certain groups of Jews, (they) actually facilitated the deportation of the rest of the Jews (Gutman, 1990: 165, 161).

That is, *pace* Rorty, some (and indeed very powerful) Belgians of the 1940s did not lack parochial, others-as-one-of-us descriptions under which Jews could fall. Only that those descriptions, supposedly fellowship-inspiring and ultimately human solidarity-fostering, like "She is like me a Belgian" proved fatal with respect to the diminution of others-as-humans (Jews') suffering. And other "more

idiosyncratic" descriptions, arguably open to "ironist" privatization, like "She is like me a Catholic" (for she has converted, or is married to a Catholic, or is a friend of Catholics, or a Catholic sympathizer ...) proved pervasive and plainly *immoral*. I say "some" Belgians, and not "those Belgians," for Rorty has to explain why and how, despite the "contingent circumstances," *ordinary* Belgians managed to hide and save 37 per cent of all the Jews staying in the country in the summer of 1942, not just the Belgian 10 per cent (thus, a majority of "strangers"); and that is leaving aside the many other Jews they helped escape to France and Switzerland from 1942 on.

As regards "those Danes," they, *pace* Rorty (again), appeal to local and present "fellowships" when saving the Jews. When Danish policy on refugees during the 1930s began distinguishing between "political" (social democrats and communists) and "other kinds" of Jewish refugees, and between Scandinavian refugees and the rest, the policy was resisted by the liberal and democratic groups in Parliament, and the general public. The churches and church-goers did not accept the enticing German proposal of "excusing" the Jewish Christians only if they, the Danes, refrained from publicizing and supporting a protest against the deportation of the Jewish community, there and outside Denmark. And when, at the end of 1943, the Jews began needing help (the main cause of the deterioration in the relations between the Germans and their "Germanic kinspeople" was precisely those kinspeople's unflinching solidarity vis-à-vis "thinly" human Jews), the Danish rescue operation was general: it mostly involved ordinary people including helpful fishermen of no affiliation, and all the groups of the Danish population, almost without exceptions; and it did not distinguish between the Danish Jews and the Non-Danish Jews among them. It is this "generality" that deserves "profound admiration" (Gutman, 1990: 363-365; Hilberg, 1993 : 209, 263). It is the same generality that partly encouraged Sweden, a country little familiarized with *detailed* descriptions of Jews in general, to get itself involved in Hungary and the predicament of Central European Jews.

The case of the Italian rescuers speaks even more loudly against Rorty: though allies of the Germans until September, 1943, the Italian military and diplomatic personnel helped Jews regardless of their nationality. The Italians helped Jews take refuge in the Italian-occupied areas of Dalmatia-Croatia, southern France, Greece and the Greek Islands. More than 40,000 Jews, who were not Italian nationals, and with most of whom the rescuers only had a brief physical contact, were thus saved and many more thousands from Yugoslavia infiltrated into Italy itself. After Italian surrender to the Allies and German invasion of its northern part, the Italian population saved more than 80% of *all* the Jews staying in the country, again, whether Italian or alien. Historians speak of the "universalistic" nature of Italian nationalism, more defined in public/political than cultural/"racial" terms, and add that such an admirable rescue operation was carried out by a people which had traditionally showed "a curious blend of respect for individual Jews and disregard for Judaism as a religion and ethical system" (Gutman, 1990: 729, 722).

I am not endorsing such disregard; I agree with Rorty that respect for persons as Jewish persons and respect for suffering as Jewish suffering, and not *despite* that character, is one of the ways to go. Anti-semitism, like sexism or racism, might revolve around a "language" that says "human" or "person" meaning "non-Jew" or "necessarily assimilated Jew" or "non-female" or "male-identified female," and so on. "Language" and long-lasting concepts and related practices need the fertilization of "difference." I am just wondering whether the "similarity in pain" of *all* human beings of which Rorty speaks, can really work for solidarity and cosmopolitan purposes along the lines he suggests above. I don't think it can. Thick descriptions of others in those others' terms and "our" familiarization with their lifeworlds should not help us to rationalize the neglect or the trivialization of anybody else's human suffering. As regards our own "final" terms, the fact that they are ours in the trivial sense that we, now, appeal and assent to them should not help us to rationalize a retrospective narrative that

excludes others and a prospective collection of we-now-intentions clubs.

Notes

¹ According to Bernstein, liberal democracy is reduced by Rorty to the beliefs, practices, and institutions that "liberal democrats" share, to liberal democrats' "ethnocentric" consensus.

² See, however, Rebecca Comay for an analysis of Rorty's "happy" transitions from "liberal democracy" to "we, (present day) liberal democrats" to "we, Western liberal democrats" to "we, the inhabitants of the rich, North Atlantic democracies" to "we, American liberals" to "we, liberal-ironist intellectuals" and so on (Comay, 1987).

³ In this article we find the contentious Rortyan tenets that, though the "trickling-down effects" of Ironism, i.e. "familiarization" with the lifeworlds of others, have proven beneficial, they might also prove "weakening," might lead us to a relativist tolerance placing others' lifeworlds and final vocabularies at the same level with ours. But, according to Rorty, once the distinction "nature" or "reality"/"culture" is done away with, the way to go is not relativism, but ethnocentrism: a first-order commitment to keep doing what we are doing (being solidary, being anti-ethnocentric), but higher-level commitment to value those doings simply because they are *ours*. That is, Rorty defends an ethnocentrist allegiance to anti-ethnocentrism, the valuing of anti-ethnocentrism as the practice of a particular (our) "ethnos" or community.

⁴ If my remarks in 4) and 5) sound contrived it is because *they are* contrived in Rorty. See, though, "Antirepresentationalism, Ethnocentrism, Liberalism," in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Rorty, 1991: 2, 13-14), and "Solidarity or Objectivity?", (Rorty, 1991: 23, 26, and 30). There Rorty operates some other "happy," quick "transitions": post-foundationalism means recognition of our (unavoidable) ethnocentric predicament, our unavoidable privileging of our institutionalized beliefs and practices in justification (a mislabelling of the holistic, internalist approach to justification). "Liberal democracy" (a "culture" that is an "ethnos," Rorty claims) has "found" the strategy of ironist openness to avoid the disadvantages of ethnocentrism; to avoid the disadvantages of *relativism*, one should

realize that there's nothing to be said about truth, rationality (and, of course, morality) apart from *our* procedures of justification in one or another area of inquiry. Reweaving always sends us back to (more of) *our* institutionalized practices and beliefs — "to be ethnocentric is to divide the human race into ... one's ethnos, the people to whom one must justify one's beliefs, and the others." In my opinion, the dogmatic prophecy that Kymlicka denounces — that *because* there are no reasons which aren't internal to a tradition and community, one needs be *only* responsible to one's tradition — hinges on Rorty's philistine use of the word "internal" as much as on his confusion between coherentism and ethnocentrism. Not only, as Kymlicka says, does one have to wait until "the end of the day" to see whether there are reasons and standards which aren't tied to a *particular* (our) tradition, and thus to whom one needs be responsible; one, I think, should also search the past to see whether what we call "internal" was not ours then and is not only ours now. In order *not* to divide the human race into "ethnoses," one should perhaps engage in serious, interdisciplinary history of the past and the present, rather than in mere criticism of the history of *Philosophy*; one should not completely confuse the *practical* and often cross-cultural past of notions like "being human" and "being universalistically moral" and the archaeology of the philosopher's notions. One should, above all, avoid the narcissism of the "local and temporary" and not replace "necessitarian" history by equally necessitarian "narratives" of here-now points culminating in the bolt-like, flashy present. I clarify these remarks in what follows.

⁵ Take, for instance, the Egyptian notions of the "immortal soul" and of "individual rewards and punishments" (no matter what the specific religion of the addressee) as founding a universal morality and opening the way for humanist universalism, much before the Greeks do so, as Samir Amin tells us in *Eurocentrism* (Monthly Review Press, 1989). Or take the practice of Islamic rulers and peoples of granting equal rights to Christian and Jewish subjects in Al-Andalus, before the Christians took over and shamelessly persecuted and expelled the Islamic and Jewish "infidels."

⁶ Rorty's division of the human race into "ethnoses" and his crediting liberal democracy with the only or best way to overcome ethnocentrism are suspect. Post-foundationalism is compatible with the "more-or-less-solidary, more-or-less liberal" perspective, regarding both historically and geographically diverse communities, I pointed out above. After all, the ideals and practices of morality and politics are related to many other, quite cross-culturally pervasive and necessary, practices and challenges: producing means of subsistence and distributin

reproducing the next generation, producing and reproducing culture, dealing with the natural and the social environments including outsiders, coordinating social tasks..., etc. See Frank Cunningham, *Democratic Theory and Socialism* (1987: 226) for a "thin" non-foundational theory of history. This does not mean that cultures have always ("really") been solidary and liberal, nor that they are ("really") equally solidary and liberal today.

⁷ The perception of self as part of a common humanity — as opposed to more specific personalistic ties to family, local interests, or even country — most aptly captures the systematic and consistent differences in cognitive view between traditional rational actors and ('altruistic') rescuers. Our rescuers are what can best be characterized as John Donne's people ('*No man is an island, Intire of itself ; every man is a peece of the Continent, A part of the Maine ...*'). They need not send to know for whom the bell tolls. They know. And this perception of themselves as one with all humankind is such an intrinsic part of their cognitive orientation, that they need not stop to make a conscious decision when someone knocks at the door asking for help. All of our rescuers explained their actions using phrases such as the following: '... You help people because you are human and you see that there is a need ... There are things in this life you have to do and you do it' ... They did what anyone else would have done, ... 'every other person is basically you' ... The fact that none of our rescuers mentioned a specific moral, political ... standard (the fact that those standards were similar, not different, to those of mere bystanders) suggests that identity is primary ... Identity, which is formed so early in life, becomes central. We recognize that this is not the same thing as *definitively disentangling the relationship between personal identity and adherence to (public) moral values in any scientific manner*. Nonetheless, we could argue that if one conceives of oneself as a certain kind of individual, then decisions become less choices between alternatives and more a recognition, perhaps an inner realization, ... of who one is at the most fundamental level of self-awareness ... (Decisions) serve more as self-affirmations ... This self-recognition (self-affirmation) involves an acceptance that only certain options are available to one (to help) because of this perception of self,' (Monroe et al., 1990: 117-118 and 122).

⁸ Even the Nazis were confirming the (non-privatizable) power of the word "human" and its normative implications when they tried to erase the words "corpse" or "body" from everybody's vocabulary:

"The Germans even forbade us to use the words 'corpse' or 'victim.' The dead were blocks of wood, shit, with absolutely no importance.

Anyone who said 'corpse' or 'victim' was beaten. The Germans made us refer to the bodies as Figuren, that is, puppets, dolls, or as Schmattes, which means 'rags.' " (Survivor of Sobibor, in C. Lanzmann, 1985).

⁹ Rorty has a tendency to consider such assumptions "platitudes," if shared, overpowered by transient practices and notions, thus "trivial," of little force or *importance* vis-à-vis "fellowship" morality. At times, he mockingly wonders about the "contrasting" force of "human." Rorty would be well-advised to browse any contemporary introductory manual to human rights law: they protect individuals and groups' claims against violations, most often at the hands of their own governments and fellows. They ("human" rights) have their historical antecedents in doctrines and institutions such as humanitarian intervention, state responsibility for injuries to aliens, protection of minorities, and international humanitarian law. In all those institutions, the contrasting force of "human" is not vis-à-vis "non-human" or "animal" but vis-à-vis the "domestic" and the "parochial" and also the presently, positively enforceable.

Works Cited

- Amin, Samir. 1989. *Eurocentrism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Bernstein, Richard. 1987. "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward. Richard Rorty on Liberal Democracy and Philosophy." *Political Theory* 15. 4.
- Comay, Rebecca. 1987. "Interrupting the Conversation: Notes on Rorty." *Telos* 69.
- Cunningham, Frank. 1987. *Democratic Theory and Socialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gutman, Israel, ed. 1990. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*. New York: MacMillan.
- Hilberg, Raul. 1993. *Perpetrators, Victims, and Bystanders*. New York: Harper-Perennial.

- Kymlicka, Will. 1988. "Liberalism and Communitarianism." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 18.
- Lanzmann, C. 1985. *Shoah*. Video recording. Toronto: Astral-Bellevue; New York: Pantheon Books.
- Monroe, Kristen R., Michael C. Barton, and Ute Klingemann. 1990. "Altruism and the Theory of Rational Action: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe." *Ethics* 101.
- Nielson, Kai. 1989. *Why Be Moral?* Buffalo: Prometheus Books.
- Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Rorty, Richard. 1989. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, Richard. 1991. *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, Richard. 1993. *On Human Rights/ The Oxford Amnesty Lectures*. New York: Basic Books.

The Context(s) of Class¹

Rohit Lekhi

How should we think about class? Indeed, *why* should we think about class? Why should anyone engaged in an emancipatory project constituted around non-class identities consider class to be important? In a period marked by classes having lost their visible identity and those laying claim to class struggles appearing to have less and less purchase on the complexities of the social world, the assertion that class remains central to our understanding of gender, racial or sexual oppression becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. Gender, sexuality and "race"/ethnicity (to take only a few examples) seem equally as, if not more, convincing criteria upon which to base the potentialities of political struggle.

In this paper I want to argue that the importance of class to a politics constituted along non-class axes, can only be comprehended if we are able to come to terms with the essential historicity of class. This, I will contend, requires us to accept that class can only be understood, both politically *and* epistemologically, as a *process* that is, by necessity, only ever evolving and never fully constituted.

I will begin by outlining, albeit crudely, what I perceive to be the core problems of a traditional approach to class and then go on to develop what I think is a more constructive way forward.

The problem with class

The charge of "class reductionism" is one often leveled at Marx, usually in indiscriminate fashion.² Marx, it is suggested, has only a class-eye view of the world, everything for him can be reduced to (and explained in