

THINKING BETWEEN CULTURES PRAGMATISM, RORTY AND INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY*

Pensando entre culturas Pragmatismo, Rorty y la filosofía intercultural

LENART ŠKOF**

Univerza na Primorskem - Eslovenia

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses Rorty's critique and special relation to intercultural thinking. It looks into the history of both pragmatism and intercultural philosophy, discusses some of their possible points of convergence, and finally follows the implications of this encounter for our intercultural understanding of Rorty's version of pragmatism, especially in the context of a contemporary North-South intercultural dialogue.

Keywords: Rorty, pragmatism, intercultural philosophy, comparative philosophy, Schopenhauer.

RESUMEN

Este artículo discute la crítica de Rorty y su relación especial con el pensamiento intercultural. Se concentra en la historia tanto del pragmatismo como de la filosofía intercultural, analiza algunos de sus posibles puntos de convergencia y, finalmente, examina las implicaciones de este encuentro para nuestra comprensión intercultural de la versión rortyana del pragmatismo, especialmente en el contexto de un diálogo intercultural contemporáneo entre el norte y el sur.

Palabras clave: Rorty, pragmatismo, filosofía intercultural, filosofía comparativa, Schopenhauer.

Introduction

In June 2004, Richard Rorty delivered a lecture at the House of Artists in Tehran. Invited as he was by an Iranian philosopher Ramin Jahanbegloo, Rorty –from his neopragmatist and antifoundationalist position– spoke about the ideas of ‘post-democracy’ and ‘human rights’ culture’ (*cf.* Postel 2006; 2006b).¹ In a ‘post-

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** lenart.skof@fhs.upr.si

¹ Let me in this context also point to Ronald Dworkin's lecture on human rights in Beijing (2002). Dworkin's presentation and defence of the liberal concept of

hegemonic' era the exchanges between Western and 'non-Western' countries' academics can either be conceived of as a mode of an intellectual challenge for both sides, or lead towards intercultural dialogue between them. In this context, I find the latter possibility to be a prerequisite for any form of intellectual exchange: it is therefore my aim to address Rorty's particular relation to intercultural philosophy.

Rorty's thought can be successfully applied to many different cosmopolitan and 'intercultural' contexts (cf. Appiah 2005; 2006). Rorty's nonfoundational version of pragmatism, or simply his neopragmatism is an endeavor of a "pragmatist Wittgensteinian" to replace the metaphysical talk about experiences (Locke, Kant, Dewey) with "the uses of linguistic expressions" (Rorty 2007a 163).² As such, his neopragmatism is directly or indirectly compatible with most of contemporary thinking, including intercultural philosophy. In a short piece on Richard Rorty, his Iranian host Ramin Jahanbegloo pointed out Rorty's special relation to intercultural thinking. Let us then see some of Jahanbegloo's most interesting observations about Rorty and interculturality:

This quality of Rorty's, which made him such an attractive human being, was his positive capability to understand and to think the paradigm of interculturality as the *condition sine qua non* of the variety and variations of our world. He knew well that we are faced with an absolute need for an intercultural imperative in order to understand the cultural diversity in today's world. Therefore Rorty's search for democracy was also a quest for a plural world not in spite of our differences and divergences, but thanks to our differences and divergences. In this respect, his philosophy was a result of border-crossing and dialogue with other cultures [...]. As a pluralist, Rorty realized that there is no such thing as a single homogeneous culture that functions as an isolated horizon. In other words, he was convinced the future of our global civilization on this fragile and vulnerable earth is dependent on our ability to live together –with our diversities– if not in harmony at least with a capacity of dialogue and mutual understanding. (Jahanbegloo 2007)³

I think Jahanbegloo is suggesting that it is in Rorty's suspicions about the universal validity of his own culture that we can recognize his 'intercultural' element. In other words, Jahanbegloo is

human rights, unlike Rorty's successful lecture in Tehran, was lacking intercultural sensibility was consequently harshly criticized by Chinese philosophers (for the critique see Bell (2006)).

2 For the critique of metaphysics in Dewey's version of pragmatism see Rorty (cf. 1982 chap. 5).

3 Jahanbegloo's article is based on a series of letters ("Letters to Americans"), exchanged between him and Rorty in 2004.

convinced that this feature in the Rorty's thought opens up to the possibility of (inter)cultural dialogue. By disconnecting Rorty from the 'bourgeois ethnocentrist postmodernist' etiquette, Jahanbegloo is therefore securing a new *habitus* for the 'anti-anti-ethnocentrist' Rorty (cf. Rorty 1991 204ff). But I would still argue that if most of Jahanbegloo claims were true, then Rorty would also necessarily comply with most issues of contemporary intercultural philosophy. Despite a very positive role that Rorty's philosophy could play in various contexts of the so called global philosophy (which this paper also wishes to explore) Rorty was still not willing to grant any major relevance to contemporary intercultural philosophy. Moreover, Rorty was not even sure that there was a profitable field of inquiry called 'intercultural philosophy' (cf. Rorty 2006) although, in my opinion, his philosophy indeed shared many important characteristics with the latter. Rorty himself therefore remained extremely skeptical of any attempts to construct an intercultural philosophy as a field. He presented his specific doubts on the methods of intercultural philosophy in one of his last written papers, which has been published in the proceedings of the Ninth East West Philosophers' Conference of 2005 (cf. Rorty 2008).⁴ In his paper, Rorty raised some serious doubts whether the philosophical dialogue across cultures might improve relations between nations – which might help us understand the cultural differences that divide various countries from one another. Furthermore, Rorty would like to think of philosophy rather “as a genre of cultural politics than as the search for wisdom” (*id.* 41). Since in his paper Rorty stays within the so called East–West paradigm and referring only to European and Asian contexts, it may be, as I attempt to show in the following sections of this essay, that one of the roots of his misunderstanding of the nature of intercultural philosophy might lie in this. Besides by now already well-worn accusations leveled against Rorty that his thinking was ethnocentric and tied to his understanding of a specific model of person (i.e. a Westerner) called liberal ironist, his negative picture of intercultural philosophy is even more direct proof of his serious skepticism about this field of philosophical research.

In this essay I will argue that the roots of pragmatism as well as forms of contemporary pragmatism (including neopragmatism) and the Continental roots and developments of both comparative and intercultural philosophy are two trends of modern philosophy with many important similarities, trends that developed alongside each other and therefore always existed in a close proximity that Rorty was not willing to admit. I will also try to support a thesis, that any reevaluation of the intercultural potential in Rorty's version

4 I thank Roger Ames for giving me a final version of the Rorty's book (2008) before it went to press.

of pragmatism must be preconditioned and accompanied with the philosophical evaluation and understanding of the specific character of contemporary intercultural thought. In following this aim I will thus differentiate two traditions/paradigms of the intercultural thought (the ‘cultural’ West-East and the ‘social’ North-South, or even the South-South intercultural dialogue paradigm) and try to outline the specific relation of Rorty to both traditions. I also think that Rorty’s act of banishing of any nonlinguistic notion of ‘experience’ from his vision of pragmatism is an one-sided account of pragmatism –especially when confronted to his own insistence to be able to enlarge our selves in a way that “hunger and suffering of any human being (and even, perhaps, that of any other animal) is intensely *painful*” (Rorty 1999 79, my emphasis), and, we may add, also in the light of his important claim about the primacy of the body over the soul in modern thought.⁵ Returning to European (Schopenhauer) and American (James, Dewey) roots of bodily/somatic experience via the intercultural route, I will try to argue for a new reintegration of this part of human experience into the very horizons of Rorty’s neopragmatist thought as applied to intercultural thought. I think this will enable us to look at the more integrative understanding of our sensitive being-in-the world in the process of forming a global community of solidarity.

Examining some more interculturally promising issues related to Rorty’s thought let me then first look into the history of both pragmatism and intercultural philosophy, discuss some of their possible points of convergence, and finally follow the implications of this encounter for our intercultural understanding of Rorty’s version of pragmatism.

1. The origins of comparative and intercultural philosophy

The predecessors of contemporary intercultural philosophy proceeded along two avenues: the first was a new field of comparative philosophy. A book by Paul Masson-Oursel *La philosophie comparée*⁶ is regarded the first book in the history of philosophy to discuss world philosophies by applying a comparative method. Masson Oursel (1882–1956) was strongly influenced by August Comte. The positivist legacy in his philosophy is a fact which offers many interesting parallels to the history of pragmatism (Peirce and James). The second tradition proceeded from Arthur Schopenhauer and his main follower, the German philosopher and indologist Paul Deussen (1845-1919),

5 “The big change in the outlook of the intellectuals –as opposed to any change in human nature– that happened around 1910 was that they began to be confident that human beings had only bodies, and no souls” (Rorty 1999 168).

6 The book has been published in Paris in 1923. In citations we refer to the English version (1926).

who was also a close friend of Nietzsche. In his history of philosophy (*Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*) Deussen strove to describe the history of philosophy anew by introducing Indian, and other (Chinese, Japanese) philosophies of a non-European origin. Both Deussen and Masson-Oursel therefore enabled modern philosophy to either include non-European traditions within its historiographies, or to apply comparative (later also intercultural) methods to the very field of philosophy. We find the first usage of the term “comparative philosophy” in the work of the Bengali philosopher Brajendranath Seal (1864-1938). Seal, also a Comtian, employed the concept in his *Comparative Studies in Vaishnavism and Christianity*.⁷ Later, Masson-Oursel read another of Seal’s books, which also advocated the new comparative method, namely *The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus* (1915),⁸ and it is very feasible that he had found in this book the “source of his term and concept ‘philosophie comparée’”. Seal’s project was to develop a new model of the philosophy of history, by which Hegel’s totalizing project would be superseded by a new, ‘intercultural’ richer historico-comparative method. Then “the new, more universal Renaissance would take place on the basis and within the framework of modern European thought and culture”.⁹ In order to proceed toward some interesting similarities between early comparative philosophy and pragmatism, let me introduce briefly the key features of Masson-Oursel’s philosophy.¹⁰ Masson-Oursel was a radical Hegelian historicist and a devoted positivist thinker and as such he was strongly committed to the historically contextualized observation of concrete facts. As a historicist he took the facts of philosophy from history, and as a positivist he was convinced that there is not a single historical fact from any society or civilization that could not be comparatively interpreted in a scientifically positive way.

Therefore, much before the rise of intercultural philosophy in the second half of the 20th century, Masson-Oursel already urged for the construction of a positive and anti-ethnocentric comparative philosophy. As a mean to that end, he developed the notion of

7 About Seal’s book see an excellent book by W. Halbfass (1990).

8 This book has been published in London in 1915 and became better-known than his other book.

9 In Seal’s words:

Chinese, Hindoo, Mohametan culture-histories, therefore, require to be worked out on a general historic plan, and in obedience to a general law of progress [...] this will furnish new and comprehensive material for more correct generalizations, –for the discovery of general laws of the social organism [...]. It will bring new influences, new inspirations, new cultures to Europe. It will infuse new blood, the blood of Humanity, and bring on the greater European Renaissance of the coming century (Seal 1915 vii).

10 For a more detailed study on this topic see Škof (2007).

“radical empiricism”.¹¹ For him, any given fact should be taken from history and analyzed by using the concept of analogy. Of course, his prehermeneutical philosophy did not allow him to critically clarify the epistemological foundations of his analogical comparisons in the space of world philosophies (he referred to Europe, India, and China).¹² But even as ‘pragmatically’ committed to the world of hypotheses and scientific observations of given facts as he was, his radical empiricism bears some striking resemblances to James’s and Dewey’s philosophical projects immediate empiricism. Therefore, as a devoted Comtian, oriented towards the positivist ideal of pure scientific method of observation, he was yet unable to develop a critical method, competitive with the fully-fledged pragmatist or phenomenological approaches of his time (James and Husserl). But let me now come to our second root of contemporary intercultural thinking: the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer.

Schopenhauer’s influence in modern philosophy can be summarized by the general observation that it was rather more noticeable in the field of literary criticism than in philosophy. His potential relation to pragmatism has also been completely unnoticed. However, it is both his commitment to early comparative thought and his firm devotion to natural sciences of his time that deserve closer attention. Moreover, I think his ideas, conceptualized though contemporary interpretive tools, bear striking resemblances to James’s and Dewey’s pragmatism, and his ethics of compassion, underpinned by rich intercultural material, is in line with some of the most important features of Rorty’s solidarity ethic project. In short, I’ll argue for a new reinterpretation of his philosophy in the light of both intercultural and pragmatist philosophy. It is precisely in this context that I also see a potential for intercultural reevaluation of pragmatism and Rorty’s neopragmatism.

11 “But, on the other hand, the only absolute rule on history is that radical empiricism that conditions our knowledge by respect for facts” (Masson-Oursel 60). In his notion of radical empiricism, Masson Oursel does not refer to James. Being not contextualized in this way at all, it is unlikely that Masson-Oursel would took it from James. It is simply a ‘radical’ designation for his project of ‘empiricist’ scientific endeavor to compare different facts from the history of philosophy.

12 As a pre-Gadamerian thinker, Masson-Oursel was not able to clarify the hermeneutical rules of his analogies: according to Ram Adhar Mall, even the classical Gadamerian hermeneutics, required for this purpose, is lacking a sufficient reason for the emergence of a genuine intercultural analysis: “Every hermeneutics, therefore, has its own culturally sedimented roots and cannot claim universal and unconditional acceptance” (Mall 15).

2. The radical empiricism of James and Dewey and intercultural philosophy

Richard Shusterman pointed to many roots of pragmatism that extend to Asian thought: Emerson and James drew directly from Asian sources (Upanishads, Yoga, Buddhism, Vedanta), Dewey, during his visits to Japan and China, was fascinated and influenced by their cultures (Shusterman 16f). According to one of the leading American pragmatist philosophers Cornel West, Emerson can be held a forerunner of the entire tradition of American pragmatism. Emerson disregarded the philosophy of his time and rejected its main epistemological problems. Being a fervent (but practically oriented) 'mystic', Emerson intuitively drew from various Western and Eastern sources (the latter being predominantly Vedic/Upanishadic) in conceptualizing his worldview.¹³ Because of the nature of his eclecticism it is impossible to conclude how much of each tradition has actually entered his 'proto-pragmatist' thought, but clearly there is a link to Indian thought in his most important notions about the soul. Emerson influenced Ch. S. Peirce and W. James,¹⁴ but it is the philosophy of John Dewey that I would like to take as my starting point in this analysis.

It was Dewey who in 1951 (along with Indian philosopher S. Radhakrishnan and G. Santayana) wrote the introductory text for the first volume of *Philosophy East and West*. The title of their respective contributions was "On Philosophical Synthesis", and it was Dewey –at a time that both Europe and US did not as yet fully recognize the importance of intercultural thinking– who with his pragmatist understanding of notions of interculturality enabled the journal's first appearance on the global philosophical scene. Dewey wrote:

I think that the most important function your journal can perform in bringing about the ultimate objective of a 'substantial synthesis of East and West' is to help break down the notion that there is such a thing as a 'West' and 'East' that have to be synthesized. [...] Some of the elements in Western cultures and Eastern cultures are so closely allied that the problem of 'synthesizing' them does not exist when they are taken in isolation. But the point is that none of these elements –in the East or the West– is in isolation. They are all interwoven in a vast variety of ways in the historico-cultural process. The basic prerequisite for any

¹³ Emerson developed his Over-Soul relying on the Indian (Upanishadic) 'Over-Soul' (adhyatman), in which through inner knowledge, to put it in Emersonian fashion, the micro- and macrocosmic principles of the world, bráhma and atman, abide in identity (cf. Carpenter 1930; Christy 1932). About Emerson and Zen-Buddhism see Kahutani (1990); Ando (1970); Thottackara 1986, and Goren (1964). For a bibliographic account of 'Orient' in transcendental periodicals see Mueller (1969).

¹⁴ About James and intercultural philosophy see Škof (2007; 2008).

fruitful development of inter-cultural relations –of which philosophy is simply one constituent part– is an understanding and appreciation of the complexities, differences, and ramifying interrelationships both within any given country and among the countries, East and West, whether taken separately or together. (cf. 1952 3; 1991 35)

Dewey's understanding of the range and importance of inter-cultural thinking is striking. Compared to his contemporaries, Dewey's unprecedented positive understanding of interculturality was clearly underpinned by his own knowledge of Asian thought.¹⁵ Given Dewey's lectures in China between 1919 and 1921, his positive evaluation of intercultural thought is therefore not surprising. Dewey's earlier influence in China is also a well-known documented fact, with a substantive comparative philosophical account of his visit to China included (cf. Clopton 1973; Hall & Ames 1999; Grange 2004). But how was it possible for Dewey to recognize the importance of new ways of thinking that were emerging in the early second half of the 20th century? Would his visit to China have sufficed for this breakthrough at the very beginning of the new era of interculturality? I believe a link to contemporary intercultural and comparative thought was already implicitly embedded in his philosophy –i.e. in the experiential form of evolutionary naturalism or his version of pragmatism. When stating that “[s]ome of the elements in Western cultures and Eastern cultures are so closely allied that the problem of ‘synthesizing’ them does not exist when they are taken in isolation”, Dewey already understood the ‘universal’ (the latter term taken in a weak, i.e. intercultural sense)¹⁶ validity of the new methods in philosophy. To support my thesis, I again draw on Schopenhauer's philosophical project and connect it to James's and Dewey's forms of empiricism.

Schopenhauer was the first among Western philosophers seriously to polemicizing with the classical epistemological thesis. He replaced the subject-object relation with new, scientifically underpinned analyses of the body. In this endeavor he was closer to Peirce, James and Dewey than to Kant, Hegel, or even Nietzsche. The soul being replaced by the brain, and the body being the new *arché* of a philosophical method, is what enabled Schopenhauer to

15 The sole exception being Sartre who wrote an important introduction (having an important impact within the early stage of African philosophy) to the edited collection of African poetry (Orphée Noir) in 1948.

16 See Jahanbegloo's notion of “soft universalism”. When seeking a way out of the dilemma between the “cultural” [also linguistic!] rootedness and a the sense of belonging, on the one hand, and “the idea of shared, cross-cultural, universal values” on the other, Jahanbegloo proposed a notion of soft universalism as a key to an intercultural exchange between cultures (cf. Postel 2006b).

develop his famous thesis: the body (and not some ‘external’ object) is in fact our first empirical representation. And it is in the brain that our ‘intellect’ constructs the ideas in the process of our experience.¹⁷ Schopenhauer, with an intention to overcome both subjective idealism and empirical materialism and to introduce new ways of thinking, was a predecessor of the first radical empiricists (James and Dewey). Although later in his writings (I am thinking of the third and fourth book of his *World as Will and Representation*) Schopenhauer returned to the metaphysically supported claims on aesthetical and ethical experience, the first two parts of his major work (i.e. “The World as Representation” and “The World as Will”) testify that his philosophical project was an attempt to overcome the metaphysical tradition (with comparative or intercultural aspects included) and to replace it with new insights taken from natural sciences. In his study “Radical Empiricism and the Philosophic Tradition” (1913), H. M. Kallen argued that it is already as far back as in Kant (in his *Verbindung*; we might also add Hume and his *connection*) that we confront the segregation of “the data of immediate experience” from philosophy (cf. Kallen 152). It was James who first argued for the new philosophical understanding of the experience:

Hence he pointed out to the rationalist the coordinate presence in experience of so much more than reason: he called the monist’s attention to the world’s diversity, the pluralist’s to its unity. He said to the materialist: you shall take cognizance also of the non-spiritual. He was a rationalist without unreason, an empiricist without prejudice. His empiricism was radical [...]. (Cf. Kallen 155)¹⁸

Hallen thought of Schopenhauer as going deep, but, in his opinion, Schopenhauer “was perhaps the last, till William James, to have been troubled about the origins of metaphysics” (cf. Kallen 158). This might be true in relation to his metaphysics of the will from the third and fourth books of his major work, but it is also true that Jamesian insistence to approach the world of pure experience has its first forerunner in Schopenhauer, and his attempts to overcome the old subject-object duality in the first two books of his work. But why is this so important for the pragmatist relation to comparative and intercultural thinking? In Schopenhauer, the insistence to overcome traditional philosophical dichotomies resulted in his close affinities to Indian philosophy. A year before his death (1859), Schopenhauer became acquainted with the Buddhist doctrine of ‘*prajñāpāramitā*’ and included a new footnote on this into his last edition of his major work. In this important footnote, he contended that this Buddhist

17 For problems understanding the brain as intellect and the problem of the latter as being created by the intellect (i.e. being a *causa sui*) see White (cf. 1999 74ff).

18 For James’s radical empiricism, see James (1976).

doctrine (as found in the various texts of *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*) is “the point where subject and object no longer exist” (Schopenhauer 412n).¹⁹ The basis of this doctrine is a modus ‘*pratītya-samutpāda*’ (‘dependent origination’ or ‘dependent co-arising’). With this final observation, Schopenhauer was far ahead of his contemporaries and followers, except for his main successor Paul Deussen and his early attempt of comparative philosophy, and later Scheler and his ideal of the coming era of adjustment between philosophical traditions of Europe and Asia (*cf.* Scheler).

It is no coincidence that in the monograph *Religion and Radical Empiricism*, Nancy Frankenberry dedicated a chapter to this important Buddhist doctrine. By arguing for the importance of an intercultural “conversation between religious traditions” (Frankenberry 156). I think she strongly supports the thesis of the importance of linking pragmatism (or, American naturalistic empiricism) and intercultural philosophy, keeping in mind both the American religious empiricists (particularly the Whiteheadian process philosophy, as selectively examined under its radically empirical side) and the Indian philosophical and religious thinkers.

Whitehead drew heavily on the insights of James and Dewey. For Frankenberry, this is a well-known Buddhist critique of substantialism (with the Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness, i.e. *śūnyatā*) that reaches the most “complete abolition of the notion of *svabhāva* or ‘own being’” (*id.* 174) and thus also metaphysics. The Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness of all forms and of all existence (the existence-in-flux being therefore not differentiated form *nirvāna*) is thus compared to the Whitehead’s expression: “[t]he reality is the process” (*id.* 176). Schopenhauer’s early intuitions have proved to be true in this regard. I am inclined to say, that this line of interpretation also rehabilitates Dewey’s notion of experience and distances it from Rorty’s well-known critical accounts on his “naturalistic metaphysics” (Rorty 1982 85).

Let me now return to Dewey. For Dewey, “knowledge does not derive from some asomatic ‘reason’ but from embodied ‘intelligence’”. For him, the lived experience is a fully human mode of living, both reacting to and interacting with our surroundings. Therefore, in this anti-Kantian, embodied mode of *being-in-the-world*, Dewey follows as much as enlarges James’s (and, as it were, Schopenhauer’s) radical empiricist’s deconstruction of ‘consciousness’. Early in this paper, I suggested that his approval of the methods of intercultural philosophy is

19 Of course, Schopenhauer familiarized himself with Buddhism early in his life (*i.e.* from 1813 on) but it was only a year before he died in 1860 that he read about this conception in one of I.J. Schmidt’s articles. About Schopenhauer’s knowledge of Buddhism see App (1998). About Schopenhauer and Indian philosophies and religions see Škof (2006).

linked with this character of his thought. The same holds for Rorty, as I will argue in the next section: I think his unwillingness to grant intercultural philosophy a greater role is based on his firm conviction that radical empiricism and pragmatism are two quite different things. For him as a Wittgensteinian pragmatist, the ‘essence’ of pragmatism lies exclusively in the realm of linguistic affairs. Rorty insisted on always taking into account “the linguistic practices of the community”, and thus he agreed also with Sellars and Brandom that “all awareness is a linguistic affair” (Rorty 2002 56). There is nothing wrong with this type of philosophizing, of course. But it is the exclusivity of some of his statements on the very nature of pragmatism that, in my opinion, closes the door on rich nonlinguistic and prereflective ‘facts’ as endorsed by radical empiricism. His critique of radical empiricism as useless for his pragmatism also bears significant consequences for the possible affinities of his version of pragmatism for intercultural thought. Jamesian and Deweyan pragmatism, on the other hand, is ‘naturally’ compatible with Indian philosophical outlook. In the words of Indian philosopher Krishna Roy:

Truth has to be attained not by discursive intellect, at least not primarily, but through many-sided life experience. Such integral attitude towards life and man, together with a disavowal of intellectual exclusiveness’ discloses the basic cast of the Indian mind. It shows how the Indian thinkers in those days could anticipate the contemporary existential-hermeneutic trend of viewing man in its complexity [...]. Knowing and experiencing are not two separate compartments of human life [...]. Philosophy is the reaction of the whole of man to the whole of reality. Man is a spirit, an integral whole, consisting of his body, mind, intellect, passion and will [...]. (Roy 1992 299)

If within the American tradition (the radical empiricism including Whiteheadian process philosophy) we indeed can detect the willingness “to risk metaphysical generalization” (Frankenberry 156), then, this tradition certainly bears close affinities with Indian ‘practical’ philosophy as understood by Roy. Rorty’s critical claims about James’s radical empiricism and Dewey’s metaphysics have to be taken seriously, but it is my task to show also the weakness of such a critique, especially as related to intercultural thought.

3. Two currents of Rorty and intercultural thought:

Part 1 – West meets East

In her *Religion and Radical Empiricism*, Nancy Frankenberry has shown how both American religious empiricism and Buddhist religious philosophies offer striking resistance to the seductive efforts by Oakeshottians and Rortyians to reduce ‘the conversation of mankind’ to the dimensions of ‘our’ bourgeois liberal European values in the West.

What is implied in her statement concerns two different things which have to be examined in our attempt to discuss intercultural possibilities in Rorty's philosophy: first, the very nature of philosophical research (the nature of pragmatism), and second its intercultural capabilities. Along Rorty's well-known notions of cultural (and linguistic) bias as approaches to our liberal democratic 'community' (among the most criticized formulations in his philosophy, besides his notions of contingency and liberal irony, is his "we liberals") and his criticism of anti-ethnocentrism, it is also important to note his more implicit claims that bear consequences positively and negatively significant to the intercultural thought (*cf.* Rorty 1991).

In his above-mentioned paper ("Philosophy and the Hybridization of Culture"), Rorty is skeptical about the possibility of intercultural thought to "facilitate international cooperation", stating that the notion of cultural difference might soon "be obsolete" (Rorty 2008 41). One way of interpreting this claim is to bring up here Rorty's conviction on the very nature of philosophy as a cultured biased academic discipline that rather prevents than encourages intercultural dialogue. In his typical fashion, Rorty substituted the talk on essentialist traits of human nature and culture(s) with the talk on things more closely and concretely connected to our lives. Alongside this claim, Rorty argues for the *philosophy* to be a genre of cultural politics rather than a search for wisdom. Therefore, the other way of understanding Rorty's skeptical diagnosis about intercultural thought is considering him to still be giving some attention to the (critique of the) classical East-West paradigm, with the notion of (transcended) cultural difference included.²⁰ Within the contemporary genre of intercultural philosophy, this dichotomy has already become obsolete, being replaced with socially and politically (the latter not in the sense of Rorty's idea of cultural politics) invested issues of the North-South 'axis'. This issues are devoid of any search for wisdom, since the topos of its activities is primarily concerned with a broad range of socio- and politico-ethical issues, or issues Dussel designated as 'philosophy of liberation'. Considering Rorty's

²⁰It was Max Scheler in his 1927 lecture (*cf.* Scheler) with his thesis on adjustment (Ausgleich) between Europe (West) and India, China and Japan (East) that already inaugurated the intercultural horizon for the East-West thinking, thinking within the horizons of an echo of a well-known spiritual agenda, as presented in a Welcome Address of Swami Vivekananda at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 –*i.e.* on a substantial distinction between Eastern and Western traditions. But since the beginnings of African and Latin-American philosophies, and since the new critical, *i.e.* postcolonial interpretations of contemporary Asian (Indian) thinking, the old distinction between East and West has become obsolete as a fundamental intercultural dichotomy and thus being recently replaced by the much more ethico-political and radical-critical projects of North-South (and South-South) dialogues.

paper on hybridization of cultures, his dialogues with the comparative philosopher Anindita N. Balslev and Wei Zhang's book on Heidegger, Rorty and the Eastern thinkers are mainly a part of the first ('cultural') paradigm (*cf.* Rorty 2008 42), while-both the Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel's critique of Rorty's and Rorty's own philosophy of solidarity or justice as larger loyalty and his philosophy of religion already lead to the second, 'social' paradigm of intercultural thought.²¹

But let us now look closely to Rorty's thesis about the cultural difference from his paper "Philosophy and the Hybridization of Cultures": if West and East are really "in the process of creating a hybrid culture" (Rorty is clearly meaning 'East' as referred to its highly developed regions of Japan, Thailand, Korea and the emerging powers of China and India), then the future of a globalized world with its future cosmopolitan variants will be dominated by the same Westernized and culturally underpinned conceptions of a political and social development. Since in today's socio-political world we can indeed speak about the new forms of *neocolonialism* –for Africa, the poorer parts of Asia and Latin America are already overpowered by the unjust 'globalized' world order–, then this hybridization will only add a new dimension to this unjust movement. One tragic dimension of such hybridization (being a speculation or not) has been described by Rorty as follows:

I do not see any point in mourning the likely disappearance of many distinctive local cultures and languages any more than in deploring the loss of those that have already vanished. "Multiculturalism" makes sense as a political slogan when used by persecuted and oppressed minority groups; cultural traditions are good rallying points for protests against victimization. But the use of this slogan in the course of these protests should not mislead us into thinking that cultures –all cultures– are intrinsically valuable. Cultures are human contrivances, invented to serve human needs. When those needs change, new contrivances must be found. (2008 44)

I do not see any problem with Rorty's skepticism about multicultural or even some of the intercultural slogans. But when in his debate he embarks against the important features of intercultural

²¹ See Anindita Niyogi Balslev, *Cultural Otherness: Correspondence with Richard Rorty* (1991); this book has been thoroughly analyzed in Wei Zhang, *Heidegger, Rorty and the Eastern Thinkers* (2006); Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor and the Philosophy of Liberation* (1996); Raul Fornet-Betancourt (ed.), *Neue Formen der Solidarität zwischen Nord und Süd: Gerechtigkeit universalisieren [Nuevas Formas de Solidaridad entre el Norte y el Sur: Universalizar la Justicia]* (2006); Rorty, "Justice as Larger Loyalty" (2007b). Škof, *Solidarity and Interculturality* (2006b).

philosophy, I do see a problem. Apart from being beyond the essentialist thinking about cultures, the principal aim of intercultural philosophy can be designated by *care* (as an expression of an intercultural ethos) for different cultural environments. In Mall's words, taken from his *Intercultural Philosophy*,

[C]ulture in complementary polarity to nature stands for all sorts of performances, achievements, and products of the human mind [...]. Philosophy is undoubtedly born in particular cultures and thus is local in character, but is not exhausted in any one of its manifold local manifestations [...]. [T]he extremes of both a radical relativism and an exclusive essentialism must be abandoned [...]. There is no denying that the phenomenon of interculturality shows itself in nearly all walks of life. The result is three main types of reaction. First, individuals stick to their own culture more and more when confronted with foreign cultures [...]. Second, one neglects the foreign culture and becomes fully indifferent [...]. Third, individuals try to view the whole matter impartially, pleading for the theory and the practice of a pluralistic norm of live and let live, read and let read, and believe and let believe. The third reaction, which is really the philosophical attitude, defines the spirit of intercultural philosophy. (Mall 4)

Of course it is absurd to judge Rorty solely by those criteria as it is also clear that Mall's notion of impartiality has been used in a weak sense (i.e. it hermeneutically incorporates and simultaneously presupposes criticism of a given cultural bias). But given that cultures are either human contrivances (Rorty) or performances (Mall), there emerges the question about who will be able to intervene when confronted with the fact that "needs change, [and] new contrivances must be found" (Rorty). Moreover, if we do not adhere anymore to some 'essentialist'²² definition of culture, what/who (economic globalization or cultural hybridization, etc.) will then be able to define the sufficient cause for the need that a given culture should still exist and thrive? From my personal point of view –i.e. being a member of a (highly developed) national and linguistic community of a 2 million people (Slovenia)– this is a vital question.

22 I understand 'essentialist' element of the given culture in a weak intercultural sense of Mall (cf. 51). Similar thoughts have been expounded by R. Jahangbegloo, when stating that "I have been tempted to [...] seek a way out of this dilemma by finding a balance between the values of cultural rootedness and a sense of belonging, on the one hand, and the idea of shared, cross-cultural, universal values" (Postel 2006b). The same dilemma has recently been expounded and analyzed in the view of the "broad commonality of our shared humanity" by Amartya Sen (2006). In my opinion, it is precisely from the realm of our shared bodily sensitivities that we could make a transition from any form of cultural (or identity) politics to the proposed (ethico-political) vision of commonality.

And this is an even more vital issue for many other national, ethnic or tribal communities situated along the South-South world axis that are far worse off than many countries of the prosperous North. I therefore think that Rorty's important comments on a future hybrid global culture, when taken from the intercultural point of view, need to be critically confronted. I find a possibility for this in the return to the reevaluation of his possible links to earlier forms of pragmatism.

I return now to my thesis about radical empiricism and Rorty: for Rorty cultural politics covers "arguments about what words to use" (Rorty 2002 53). In an ideal world of unobscured discursive and communicative practices (with their wishful consequences), this could be a winning formula. Even when, in Brandom's words, in the everyday language game "the content of a sentence is in constant flux" and "inferential properties are not build into the structure of the language, but are always up for grabs as individuals and communities go about revising their patterns of behavior, linguistic and non-linguistic" (Rorty 2007c 123), this is still unsatisfactory when confronted with the situation as described by Rorty. Therefore, in a world of rapid culturo-economic hybridization, the dangers of such a conception are much greater than its gains –even in the case of believing in the Gadamerian fusion of horizons, as Rorty does. In his attempt to offer a new vision of comparative philosophy, underpinned by Timothy Garton Ash's visions of a 'Free World', Rorty writes:

Adopting Ash's "free world" as the horizon within which we read history, and being insouciant about the question of whether the values or rights are grounded in something universally human, means that comparative philosophy blends into comparative sociopolitical history. (2008 47)²³

With the ideal of Western 'negative liberty' (Berlin) at work, Rorty would like to replace the talk on Confucius's, Plato's, Heidegger's and Radhakrishnan's contributions of the type "How close did they come to the essential truth about the human condition?", for the question "How they can be used as tools to free people from unnecessary social and political restraints?" (Rorty 2008 47). Of course in the 'postphilosophical' era of immense global injustices, nobody would ask a comparative philosopher to talk about the issues as 'human condition', 'human nature' etc. But I also think that the comparative/intercultural philosophy should not only be regarded as a 'comparative sociopolitical history', or be exclusively subsumed under the project of the Western liberal utopia as Ash

²³ Rorty refers to Timothy Garton Ash's book *Free World: America, Europe and the Surprising Future of the West* (2004).

and Rorty would likely propose. I fully agree with Ash (and Rorty) when arguing that instead of talking about the Western, European, American, or even Asian (we may also add African) values, it would be much more useful for us simply to start from the perspective of our shared hopes and ideals (as expressed in the conception of a 'negative liberty'). But in my opinion Rorty's ideals are still better understood when linked to Dewey's pragmatist mode of our communal democratic being, i.e., an ideal more closely related to the notion of the so-called 'positive liberty'. It is here that lies the task of intercultural philosophy: it resides in (secular) eschatological hopes (such as a common faith of Dewey), and therefore comprises not only Western romantic (utopian yet liberal) visions of our future's moral hopes, but also leads towards yet unimagined socio-eschatological ideal of a Deweyan 'Great Community'.²⁴ This secular eschatological dimension disconnects the new intercultural thought *qua* 'comparative sociopolitical history' from the deposits of its inherent ethnocentric character and also opens up the perspective for the Rortyan own secular eschatological project: "But Christianity has taught the West to look forward to a world [...] in which all men and women are brothers and sisters" (Rorty 1999 81ff).

In this endeavor, intercultural philosophy is therefore closely related to pragmatism's own project of our future moral hopes. I think Dewey's social philosophy is more suitable for a contemporary intercultural dialogue since it is much less gravitating towards the exclusivity of a Western liberal utopia and much more represents the intercultural *Geist* of a universally (albeit not metaphysically) shared social sensibilities. In my concluding section I would first like to point to the second aspect of contemporary intercultural philosophy –namely the North-South dialogue issue, then follow the *bodily* dimension in Rorty and his predecessors, and finally try to capture in both aspects the relevance of Rorty's thought for the intercultural philosophy.

24For a 'communal' idea of democracy in Dewey and related intercultural contexts (Latin America, Africa and Asia), see my "Pragmatism and Social Ethics: An Intercultural and Phenomenological Approach" (forthcoming). In this paper, I am following Dewey as "the chief American spokesman for communitarian democracy" (Grange 15), and arguing for a way toward new hopes for a betterment of democratic societies, especially those still subjected to various forms of poverty and unfreedom (freedom taken in the Deweyan, i.e. positive sense; in reference to different social and political contexts of Latin America, Africa and Asia – e.g. India). As Dewey put it in his major work on political thought, *Public and Its Problems*, democracy is the idea of a communal life itself; it is not the rationality of a set of rational procedures but consists of (culturally conditioned) emotions and habits that underpin the attitudes of a given group and its individuals on their way toward a Great Community (Dewey 1975). For Dewey, the idea of democracy "is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself" (*id.* 328).

4. Two currents of Rorty and intercultural thought:

Part 2 – North meets South

In the previous section, I referred to the various contexts of the so-called West-East paradigm. Wei Zhang's book *Heidegger, Rorty, and the Eastern Thinkers* is a contribution to this particular aspect of comparative philosophy.²⁵ In this context, and also to return briefly to Balslev-Rorty controversy – I am strongly inclined to support the nominalist and pragmatist Rorty, telling us that the project of “exploring the ‘otherness’” is better thought of on pragmatic grounds and in terms of a “practical need of the members of an interdependent global society to get in touch with each other” (Baslev 1991 40). I would also prefer Deweyan pragmatist visions against those of Heidegger, as somehow naively exemplified by Balslev in her positive remarks on a “new beginning” in Heidegger's thought “beyond Orient and Occident” (Rorty 1999 45; Baslev 1991 40).²⁶

Now I would like to introduce the Argentinian-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel and turn to the second part of my argument. In his important book *The Underside of Modernity*, alongside Apel, Ricoeur and Taylor, Dussel directly confronted also some of the most problematic aspects of Rorty's thought. Unlike the former three philosophers, Rorty did not reply to Dussel (the replies of the former are included in the book). The philosopher of liberation, a Levinasian (and Marxian), and an intercultural philosopher Dussel follows Rorty in many important aspects of his thought, but

²⁵ For Balslev-Rorty controversy see parts I and II of Wei Zhang's book (2006). In the first part, Zhang is addressing the very question of legitimacy of comparative philosophy as implied from Rorty's lecture at the Sixth East-West Comparative Philosophy Conference (University of Hawaii) and related critical texts of him on this issue (cf. Zhang 13ff.). I would only note an important observation of Zhang here, namely that “Rorty did not seem to realize how his linguistic solutions to problems of the Other contradicted his previous position on the exclusive nature of philosophy [...]. Given the alleged transparent relation between language, consciousness, and perceived reality that has been challenged by various disciplinary studies since the time of Nietzsche, it is not unproblematic now for anyone to claim the correspondence between these three categories” (*id.* 39). I also fully support Zhang's claim that Balslev's insistence on the other should be more concretely exemplified in its practical aspects (“the Other as women, the poor and weak, or the foreign and exotic”), or, that she should “at least translate it into some concrete social categories” (*id.* 39f).

²⁶ Balslev cites Indian philosopher J. L. Mehta: “It is this perverse ‘triumph’ of the West and in consequence the spiritual situation of not merely Western man but of men of all cultures and traditions today that forms the basic challenge to Heidegger's thinking, prompting him to attend a new beginning of thought, and to seek a way of thinking that is no longer parochial, moving within the charmed circle of concepts originating in the Western tradition, but planetary, as he calls it, beyond Orient and Occident, and for the first time truly world-historical”.

confronts him precisely from the position of a North-South case of domination. i.e. in his “liberal Northamericanism of eurocentric character” (Dussel 1996 105; Mendieta 1105). For Dussel, mediation (through the analysis of a text, etc.) is of secondary importance, it is *a posteriori* or even absent (in the case of the illiterate): it is the oppressed in their corporeality and their suffering that stand in front of us; for him, a process of ethical recognition of the oppressed Other as a person *precedes all discourse*.²⁷ In Dussel’s words:

Reflection departs from the poor or oppressed, who in her suffering, needing corporeality, works: where there is a priority of developing an economics from the oppressed, from the suffering which is felt as misery (*Elend*, Marx would say) of the dominated (this is the ethical moment). This setting out from a “we” lies “beyond” (in an exteriority) the dominating, ruling, hegemonic, central (i.e. center-periphery), “we intentions” of “liberal irony”. (1996 105)²⁸

With these words, Dussel throws down the gauntlet to the entire tradition of Western academic philosophizing, including many comparative philosophers. With the notion of corporeality, in my opinion, Dussel is also in line with Schopenhauer here, and his thought bears important consequences for our understanding of Dewey’s philosophy, and, of course, for a reinterpretation of Rorty’s thought in the light of intercultural philosophy. For our discussion, it is also very important to bring to the fore Dussel’s understanding of the intercultural philosophy. I think it encapsulates the most relevant criticism of the concept of hybridization of cultures and the liberal agenda of the free world, as both have also been expounded by Rorty. It can be summarized as follows: if intercultural dialogue is possible at all, then we shall imagine a moment of (an idealized) multicultural symmetry in which communication will take its place. For Dussel, Rorty did not adopt this position and “demonstrated the complete incommensurability of an impossible communication, or at least its extreme difficulty” (Dussel 2006 20). Dussel refers to the failure to recognize the asymmetrical situatedness of cultures and their positions in the ‘colonial’ system. How, then, is possible to imagine a more symmetrical dialogue between the participants?²⁹ For achieving a new,

27 “A reason that precedes the beginning, that precedes the present, because my responsibility for the Other imposes itself before any decision, before any deliberation (before all argument or discourse)” (Mendieta 72).

28 Rorty read his lecture on 4 July 1991 at the Institute of Philosophy (UNAM, Mexico).

Later it has been published as “The Intellectuals at the End of Socialism” (Rorty 1992).

29 One consequence of this asymmetrical ‘dialogue’ is also a fact that English can already be regarded as “the only remaining classical language, imposed upon humanity which, under such a weight, will forget their own traditions” (Dussel 2006 22). This

more symmetrical perspective, Dussel proposes a new term –i.e. a ‘transmodernity.’ Transmodernity allows us to think of previously excluded (economically, culturally, politically, technologically, scientifically, etc.) cultures from the ‘core’ of Modernity (as represented by the European and North American culture) as the cultures, that are simultaneously pre-modern, contemporary to Modern and, most importantly, *trans*-modern (via the new intercultural view). The latter concept indicates “the radical novelty of the irruption –as if from nothing– from the transformative exteriority of that which is always distinct” (Dussel 2006 24).³⁰ In a way toward the new pluriversal utopia, the peripheral world itself (like Latin America, Africa, or India) would impose a series of novel answers to the challenges of the globalized world, including the demands for a *just justice* and democracy (cf. Gordon). Concerning democracy, let me also note, that according to Amartya Sen, “[w]hile modern institutional forms of democracy are relatively new everywhere, the history in the form of public participation and reasoning is spread across the world” (Sen 55).³¹ Analogously, the same holds for our next task –namely, Dussel’s presentation of Rorty’s understanding of a historical and political change in Eastern Europe in 1989, which also implies some intercultural paradoxes. Rorty wrote a paper “Social Hope and History as Comic Frame”, which he read in Mexico in 1991. As “an apology against Marxism” (Dussel 1996 115), this was a paper on Vaclav Havel and the end of Marxism in Eastern Europe for which he did not find an echo with his Mexican colleagues. For Dussel, firstly, Rorty’s experience and struggle within the philosophy (linguistic turn) is “very North American, intra-university”; –existentially, Rorty departs (Dussel refers to Rawlsian ‘original position’ here) “from a North American academic and university

observation of Dussel’s also leads to my previous concerns about the unhappy prospects in the light of disappearing “of many distinctive local cultures and languages” (Rorty 2008 44).

³⁰ It is from the perspective of critical delineation of the term ‘Modernity’ that Dussel would argue for a new trans-modern perspective: (cf. Dussel 2006 22ff). For Dussel, the ‘Modernity’ is a term, that has been nondiscriminately used for many phenomena –from Europe’s short ascendancy to the central position of the world (between 1789–1989) to the stable Western illusion of being a hegemonic power being able profoundly to transform “the ethico-political nucleus” of a non-Western cultures (colonialism, economic domination, military power etc. (cf. id. 23f)).

³¹ Note also the following observation of Sen: “The championing of political liberty and of religious tolerance, in their full contemporary forms, is not an old historical feature of any country or civilization in the world” (Sen 50). This is another proof for Dussel’s working hypothesis on a transmodernity, paving the way towards the new ethico-political space beyond Western postmodernity (still representing the final moment of modernity as a “first world-system” (Dussel 2006 23)).

medium” (*id.* 103), and the main objection of Dussel’s is that in his notion of solidarity his Other is the abstract Other, as opposed to the “concrete praxis, in engagement and solidarity with the oppressed” (*id.* 105). Rorty was convinced that the events that commenced in Eastern Europe in 1989 were a testimony for the final disappearance of Marxism from his vocabulary. But Dussel thinks that “Marx has still a lot to tell” (*id.* 116),³² especially in the socio-ethical contexts of the Southern hemisphere. For Rorty the symbol of the post-Marxist era was Vaclav Havel. The problem occurred with his visit to Mexico in 1991: like Rorty, when talking about the end of Marxism, Havel was regarded as naive when speaking about his admiration for the United States in front of a Mexican audience. To sum up, the main argument of Dussel against Rorty is clearly about his incapability to understand the category of being an African, Asian or Latin American in a world of ‘our’ (Western, or Northern) liberal democratic order. For Dussel, Rorty’s care for women, homosexuals and black people does not really extend to the world of the oppressed, living on the world’s margins. Liberation philosophy can applaud the many of Rorty’s notions (in particular to his notion of solidarity), but generally it believes that Rorty’s pragmatism cannot answer the questions *Why do you suffer?* and *How can I help?* and is therefore unqualified to take a part in this debate. Unlike Apel and his

32 Let me add from my personal experience (as a member of a relatively successful postsocialist country – Slovenia) that for citizens of new European member states from the Eastern Europe, the final independence from various forms of totalitarian regimes after 1989 was perceived as a definite path towards freedom and socio-economic progress in their societies. But the same path of transition from oppression toward freedom of speech, etc. opened a series of new questions in terms of the radical distancing from the basic communal values these societies were utopically hoping for within their older (Communist) regimes under the different totalitarian rules (keep in mind that Slovenia, as a part of an anti-Stalinist Yugoslavia, was a member of the Non-Alignment movement, *i.e.* the totalitarian forms and levels of unfreedom in the communist/socialist Slovenia were different of those of the ex-Soviet Union): new questions arise in today’s Europe, such as how it will be possible to conceive of a new intra- and intergenerational consensus, how to approach towards stronger social cohesion also under new democratic (neo)liberal order, and how to search the new platform for consensus on solidarity with the poor, those that are worse off? European workers, and migrants in Europe, or those, excluded from any legal civilizational environments such as sex workers, Roma population, immigrant workers without papers, etc.? The main question is how this is to be achieved without annihilating the most valuable norms of European liberal political tradition. Given that today everywhere in the world an experience of exhaustion “in the formulation of credible alternatives to the neoliberal program” is taking place (Unger 3), I would propose to take seriously both Dussel’s and Unger’s criticisms (being valid for the Southern as well as for the Northern hemisphere).

response, the dialogue between Dussel and Rorty did not take place in Dussel's book (cf. Dussel 1996 163-204).³³

But to evaluate Rorty's possible contribution to intercultural thought, in particularly to its socio- and politico-ethical aspects, it is in my opinion necessary to approach the naturalistic and intercultural elements in Schopenhauer's philosophy and in radical/immediate empiricism, and to discuss pragmatism's own potentials to confront the burning issues of contemporary world (poverty, extreme economic inequality, injustice). Rorty's philosophical preferences have in recent years shifted also towards religious issues. I think that in *The Future of Religion*, Rorty even diverged from his previous arguments. It is perhaps even possible to refer to a specific turn in his philosophy. For Rorty, "one's highest hope [was always] the creation of the liberal utopia sketched by Mill" (Rorty 1999 272). Moreover, his philosophical preferences were succinctly outlined in his essay "Failed Prophecies, Glorious Hopes" (Rorty 1999 201-209), where he posited his pragmatist views between the failed prophecies of both *New Testament* and the *Communist Manifesto* while, at the same time, he was still cherishing the ideal value they possessed for our future inspirations. For Rorty, it is intolerable to live in a global environment, where we who sit behind desks and punch keyboards are paid ten times as much as people who get their hands dirty cleaning our toilets, and a hundred times as much as those who fabricate our keyboards in the Third World (Rorty 1999 203).

Despite Rorty's strong and intimate commitment to the issues of poverty and inequality, we saw in our analysis of Dussel's arguments against Rorty that his philosophy proved insufficiently 'radical' for the demand for justice in the Third World. He strongly supported reading of both documents (the *New Testament* and the *Communist Manifesto*), but at the same time he urged "to ignore prophets who claim to be the authorized interpreters of one or the other text" (Rorty 1999 205). Of course Dussel represents one of those 'prophets' and their visions of Marxism remained incommensurable; but when deciding which text might open richer possibilities for social hope, Rorty still preferred the *Manifesto*. In my opinion, in his negative views of the *New Testament* ("we shall always have the poor with us" (*id.* 208)), Rorty has also unjustly set aside the rich tradition of the pragmatist philosophy of religion. It is precisely within this tradition that he has finally allowed the Christian

33 After his first dialogue with Dussel, Apel redefined his earlier notions and incorporated Dussel's proposals into his philosophy (cf. Apel 1996). The same did not happen with Ricoeur, who first referred to different experiences of liberation and extended the notion to European contexts also (Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece) and who later in his text explicitly declared that he had no shame of Europe (cf. Dussel 1996 206).

prophetic tone to enter his philosophy and gave his thought a new spirit of hope. I believe it is here that Rorty can also speak for the interculturally shared visions of social hope.

In *The Future of Religion* Rorty himself contends that, in his pragmatism, there is a mysterious sense of the holy, “bound with the hope that someday, any millennium now, [our] remote descendants will live in a global civilization in which love is pretty much the only law” (Zabala 40). This statement would not significantly differ from what he wrote before, had he not referred to his *sense of the holy*. One cannot ignore the difference that occurred with his opinion about the *mysterious* nature of the future of social hope, which was not so far from the supposed ‘metaphysical’ levels of Christian (or Deweyan) vocabularies which he strictly evaded: “[t]his mystery, like that of the Incarnation, concerns the coming of existence of a love that is kind, patient, and endures all things” (*ibid.*).

Of course, the ‘metaphysics’ I have mentioned should not be taken in the traditional sense: it is precisely this new, by our shared bodily sensitivities underpinned *spirit of love* that carries the old metaphysico-eschatological ideals far over their destructive ideological (and practical) consequences, as Rorty has feared in his “Failed Prophecies, Glorious Hopes”. By recalling his critique of Dewey (‘naturalistic metaphysics’) we are now facing a decisive moment in the possible reevaluation of Rorty’s pragmatism. Of course, Rorty would have argued whether the notion of experience as represented by religious naturalism³⁴ or radical/immediate empiricism in philosophy can be a solid grounding for any (including intercultural) ethics at all. But I am still inclined to posit the same question –is this naturalistic (being within the primacy of the pre- or noncognitive, i.e. corporeal and bodily aspect over the cognitive and mental, including the linguistic aspect) vision of experience applicable to Rorty’s version of pragmatism? If there is a trace of ‘metaphysics’ in this thought, then it is one of a ‘phenomenological’ kind, when the body is conceived as a *locus* of our ethical sensitivities as well as of the immediately present *corporeality* of the suffering other in front of us. I would argue that the new orientation of Rorty’s is applicable to the rich tradition of American religious naturalism and Dewey’s radical empiricism including the consequences of Dewey’s thought for his vision of democracy. Further, I also think, that it is possible to think of Schopenhauer as a European predecessor of this line of thought and relate it to the American tradition. Finally, I would argue this encounter bears important intercultural consequences for pragmatism and in particular, for Rorty’s thought.

34 I refer here to the tradition of American religious empiricism (for example, the Chicago School of theology, the empirical wing of process theology, Dean, Frankenberry and others) (*cf.* Dean 1986 49).

I already mentioned Nancy Frankeberry and her analysis of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*). Besides arguing for the importance of an intercultural conversation between different religious traditions (i.e. the American religious empiricists – in particular Whiteheadian process philosophy on the one hand, and Indian philosophical and religious ‘process’ thinkers on the other), we found her statements also supportive for our understanding of Schopenhauer’s relevance for modern thought. When Rorty wrote about the primacy of the body over the old metaphysical notions of the soul (in his essay “Religion As Conversation-stopper”, he declared “the big change in the outlook of intellectuals,” namely that we “began to be confident that human beings had only bodies, and no souls” (Rorty 1999 168 n10)) it became clear that he is talking about *bodily* sensitivities and solidarity stemming from our bodies, not souls, in his words:

[T]he ability to shudder with shame and indignation at the unnecessary death of a child – a child with whom we have no connection of family, tribe or class – is the highest form of emotion that humanity has attained while evolving modern social and political institutions. (Rorty 1986 147)

I would argue that social solidarity in Rorty is nourished by our most common and natural bodily sensitivities, opening up the way for, and accompanying other sensational and sentential (cognitive and linguistic) moments of the lifeworld. Sensitivity is our ability to *take in* our (prereflective and cognitive/linguistic) experiences; it is *feeling, seeing, understanding* the lives of others, from our closest kin to ever broader contexts, nondiscriminately including also other non-human sentient beings. Only in this sense it is possible to take seriously enough Rorty’s crucial claim about the primacy of the body over the soul in modern thought. Besides relativizing his firm Wittgensteinian insistence on an exclusively linguistic character of our being-in-the world, this insight also brings us a very useful link of his philosophy and the neglected (by Rorty) traditions of radical empiricism, American religious naturalism and phenomenology (for instance, Merleau-Ponty).³⁵ It is also important to note, that for Rorty emotions always played a significant role in the moral life of an individual. According to Ricoeur, it is precisely the fear of the so called affectivity or “description of feelings” (Ricoeur 192) that has been the major reason for historical distrust of compassion or sympathetic sentiments in

35 I discuss the relation of Rorty to radical empiricism, American religious naturalism and phenomenology in my paper “Between Pragmatism and Neopragmatism: Some Remarks on American Religious Naturalism” (forthcoming). We should keep in mind, that when talking on pragmatism, Rorty also claimed that it is “very hard to find any affiliation between it and phenomenology” (Rorty 2006, e-mail to Lenart Škof).

moral philosophy right up to our own day. Both, Schopenhauer at the beginning, and Rorty, at the end of this story, contributed a lot to the rehabilitation of emotions in philosophy. One current of this new line of thought is visible in *Moral Prejudices*, where Annette C. Baier argues for a critical re-examination of the status of ethics in the light of Humean and feminist issues in moral philosophy. She has primarily been concerned with the entirely natural character of interpersonal relations (as opposed to the contract theory of morality with its concept of justice based on rational forms of consensus) in which people are tied by the sentiment of *care*, or, in terms of Hume or Schopenhauer (or Rorty), by innate and intrinsic human sympathy (Baier 1995). For Schopenhauer, the pain we feel when confronted by the pain in the other is related to hidden, intuitive knowledge or realization that the human being whom I have wronged, or whom I saw suffer, is, as a ‘phenomenon’, different from me, but as a being as such (*i.e.*, as a manifestation of a one and indivisible Will) is identical to me. Clearly, this was first linked to his well-known and much criticized metaphysics of Will, but –as I have argued in my section on Schopenhauer– when looked up as an early attempt of overcoming the mind-body dichotomy and transposed to the vocabulary of empiricism and pre-cognitive experience(s), it discloses to us the natural/empirical potential of this metaphysics, and, as it were, its evaporation. It is the *pain* and ‘bodily’ knowledge from which ethics of compassion proceeds, for compassion is precisely the pre-ontological realization (the “secret presentiment”, *geheime Ahndung*), that our ethical self resides in everything that lives. Therefore, compassion as conceived by Schopenhauer, does not have only –what seemed to be– a *metaphysical* content but, more importantly, an original and inherent *metaphysical* dimension, which can be thus understood pre-ontologically.³⁶ Now, this secret and mysterious pre-metaphysical connection of beings, I think, is what Rorty understands as “the self envisaged by Christian and Buddhist accounts of sainthood –an ideal self to whom the hunger and suffering of *any* human being (and even, perhaps, that of any other animal) is intensely painful” (Rorty 1999 79), and in Rorty’s view it is to the credit of Christianity that it “has taught the West to look forward to a world in which there are no such people, a world in which all men and women are brothers and sisters. In such a world, there would never be any occasion to speak of ‘obligation’” (*ibid.*).

Alongside American religious naturalism, I am inclined to think that it is in this realm of ethics that Rorty’s visions of social hope are most applicable to contemporary contexts of an unjust

36 For Schopenhauer’s ethics of compassion see Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* (*cf.* §55-§65). See also my paper “Metaphysical Ethics Reconsidered: Schopenhauer, Compassion and World Religions” (Škof 2006a).

global order. When tied to his sense and understanding of holy, the imagination for this solidaristic “coming into existence of a love” (Zabala 40), and for the opening in ourselves for an ethical sense of (a global) community is nourished by our most natural bodily sensitivities, preceding other sensational, cognitive and linguistic moments of our life world. It is in this that Rorty (unintentionally) meets Dewey’s experiential (‘metaphysical’) pragmatism and American religious empiricism, a traditions that were “willing to risk the metaphysical generalization” (Frankenberry 156) –two phenomena he was so strongly opposing during his lifetime.

Conclusion

I have been assuming that it is in Rorty’s turn to his greater and more positive appreciation of religion (since the “Religion as a Conversation-stopper” essay) that we can uncover a possibility for a reevaluation of his philosophy and social ethics in the light of intercultural philosophy. As such, Dusselian concrete corporeality can reveal itself in two ways: it can either lead to a post-Marxian (and Levinasian-Dusselian) philosophy of liberation –in Dussel’s words– towards a politics of liberation; or, it can reveal itself within the pragmatist philosophical and theological empiricism. In this aspect, Rorty’s pragmatism reveals its strong intercultural potential. In his polemical paper on fraternity and solidarity, Dussel argues for a feeling of solidarity, based on a “critical emotivity upset at the suffering exteriority of the victim”. For him, this solidarity is “neither the compassion of Schopenhauer, nor paternalistic commiseration, or superficial pity. It is the metaphysical desire for the Other as other” (Dussel 2007 90 n43). Dussel’s insistence on metaphysics is striking here. But the ‘exteriority’ in Dussel’s argument has to be taken phenomenologically: it is the relation of solidarity with the other, the *experience* of one being “cordial with the miserable (miseri-cordia, compassion)”. In this it is a “metaphysical or ethical solidarity [...] prior to the deployment of the (ontological) world as a horizon wherein one ‘decides’ to help the Other or not”. This argument is based on a Levinasian notion of a *pre-ontological responsibility* and a *priori pre-ontological solidarity* stemming from it (cf. *id.* 3). It is therefore a pre-metaphysical trait of our being. I find it to be analogous to Schopenhauer’s intrinsic bodily feeling, *i.e.* a secret presentiment from which compassion arises, and I think it is also analogous to the views of the Buddhist ‘process philosophy’, *i.e.* the ‘*pratitya-samutpāda*’ doctrine from the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and the American religious empiricism.³⁷ Within the latter, as W. Dean argues, our experience,

37 With the American religious empiricist’s tradition we think of Edwards, James, Dewey, the Chicago School of theology, the empirical wing of process theology and, recently, W. Dean and N. Frankenberry (cf. Dean 1986 49).

which is “vague, unknowable, unabstracted, inchoate” (Dean 1990 87), is primarily rooted within our bodily sensitivities. Although Rorty was not willing to grant any greater role to Dewey and the religious notion of continuity, his understanding of religion and social ethics nonetheless links him to this conception of a phenomenologico-metaphysical order. As argued, both Rorty’s typical ethnocentric notions of cultural bias, and his visions of a private irony and liberal hope, proved to be an insufficient case for the emergence of the East-West intercultural dialogue. His notorious rejection of comparative thought accompanied his skeptical claims about the role of cultural difference in today’s world. On the other hand, unless pressed to admit the greater role of the post-Marxian thought,³⁸ he was also very skeptical about the very foundations of the proposed North-South intercultural dialogue. But in a world of even greater social and economic differences, we indeed need new prophetic voices. Antifoundationalist Rorty denied that the insistence on any notion of ‘human nature’ (or any other essence) would be of any help in his utopian pragmatist project of a coming about a just society, a global civilization, “where love is a pretty much the only love” (Zabala 40). But though he also supposed to be an atheist (later, he declared himself to be only an anticlericalist), he was willing to admit that at the bottom of hope for a better future lies a mystery, which, in my opinion, is pragmatically to be understood as a metaphor for the primeval, pre-ontological experiential (i.e. being nourished by our natural bodily sensitivities) and phenomenologico-metaphysical (theological) gathering of persons in a global (spiritual) community (as earlier indicated by Royce as ‘Beloved Community’ or by Dewey as ‘Great Community’). Apart from Dussel’s liberation philosophy and his insistence on a predominance of a *material* category in this process (cf. Dussel 2007 73), the exteriority of the Other also reveals itself in a pragmatist Deweyan and Rortian idea of our shared visions of social hope.

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³⁸ Rorty was asked by Dussel which language would be more useful for a pragmatist when confronted with someone in extreme misery or in absolute poverty, having five children and so forth. Rorty had to answer that in this case Marx’s language would be more useful for him (cf. Dussel 1996 127 n110).

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