Toward a New Foundationalism

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From Carnap to Kripke, and from Husserl to Sallis

By

Bernard Freydberg

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For Akiko, Forever.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ix

Foreword x

Prelude xiii
On the Way to Ruling Image: Rethinking two Canonical Platonic Tropes

A Note on the Unusual Tone of this Book xvi

Rudolph Carnap 1

William James 7

Willard van Orman Quine 14

Donald Davidson 28

Saul Kripke 34

Richard Rorty 41

A Surprising Measure 48

Edmund Husserl 52

Martin Heidegger 58

Maurice Merleau-Ponty 73

Jacques Derrida 80

Hans-Georg Gadamer 93

John Sallis 102

Afterword 110

Appendix 112

Bibliography 113

Index 118

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This, my tenth book, differs from my earlier ones in many respects. It advances a single and heretofore undiscovered thesis that, in my view, illuminates both sides of the current philosophical divide. It is small wonder, then, that it has evinced various responses among its early readers.

I render my deepest and most heartfelt thanks to Kevin Marren, who not only grasped its peculiar force but also insisted upon the importance of the book. Thanks also go to Michael Rudar, who provided excellent comments and formatted this text, and to the anonymous reader who praised it unequivocally. I also drew inspiration from Marina Marren, as does everyone else who knows her.

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Finally, the contributors to my philosophical vocation are too numerous to mention, and go back all the way to my undergraduate studies at the University of Rochester, where the ideas of Lewis White Beck and Jerome Stolnitz continue to live in me. At Duquesne University, I studied under John Sallis, who remains the best teacher I have ever known. He has seeded most of my scholarly work, and has been both gracious and patient when I have found myself disagreeing with him.

Above all stands my wife, Akiko Kotani, who unites goodness and truth in shining beauty.

FOREWORD

Just as each of my previous books was motivated by a perceived lack in the philosophical literature, so too is this one. However, the lack it seeks to remedy is more general. It cuts across the majority of both major Anglo-American and Continental thought. One seeks in vain for work affirming the presence of a governing foundation, a *Grund*, that pervades the whole either explicitly or implicitly.

The explanation for this lies at hand: metaphysics is out of favor. Rather, most contemporary philosophy takes it for granted that late-19th-century philosophy, continuing into the 20th century and beyond, sounded the death knell for metaphysics. The reasons for this differ dramatically between the two major strains, and even within them. The outcome, it seems to me, consists of an often overconfident and almost always false wisdom. It also seems to me that foundations are tacitly presupposed, even in the most vigorous denunciations of them. In other words, we have outsmarted ourselves and have replaced the innocence that remains so basic to philosophy with an injudicious sophistication.

I do not fault the work of those most influential thinkers that challenged the traditional authority of metaphysics. To the contrary, they have done philosophy a great service. While I believe that their specific critiques of our canonical Western thinkers are rarely as decisive as they suppose, their responsiveness to apparently countervailing developments and the individual genius of some of their cohort have both advanced the level of discourse and reshaped our relationship to the pursuit of wisdom as such.

Before following out these matters, I will defend one distinctive presentation of metaphysics that lives on to this day in some form or other. Kant's Critical Philosophy provides the best source from which we can trace the origin of contemporary developments. As is well known, for Kant metaphysics is science (*Wissenschaft*) by its very nature. In his time, "science" meant "a system of knowledge rationally ordered." He separated pure *a priori* sciences, i.e. sciences based on reason alone, from empirical sciences, i.e. sciences that rested upon an empirical component.

More than just a science, however, metaphysics is a natural disposition, a claim that might sound peculiar given its academic, esoteric quality. However, a survey of the structure of "the idea and division of a

special science under the title *Critique of Pure Reason*" (A 10, B 24) demonstrates the vitality and the rich humanity of this contention. The *Critique of Pure Reason* has two principal divisions within its Doctrine of Elements. The first division, the Transcendental Analytic, establishes the rights and the limits of reason in the realm of experience. (This division gathers into itself the prior Transcendental Aesthetic.) Reason can attain objective validity only in the realm of appearances. The second division, the Transcendental Dialectic, demonstrates how reason transgresses those limits when it ignores the restriction to appearances and so gives rise to unavoidable illusion.

Kant's influential predecessor Christian Wolff published a book of "school metaphysics," with a title so wonderful that it continues to roll off the tongue long after the decades since I first became aware of it: *Vernüftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt, der Seele des Menschen--auch allen Dingen überhaupt* (1719), or *Rational Thoughts Concerning God, the World, the Soul of Human Beings—and All Things in General*. Breaking down this title in an academic way yields the following: "All Things in General" refers to rational ontology, the rational science of being in general. "God" refers to the rational science of theology. "The World" refers to the rational science of cosmology. "The Soul of Human Beings" refers to the rational science of psychology. Ontology was called "Metaphysics of the First Part" or "General Metaphysics." The other three taken together were called "Metaphysics of the Second Part" or "Special" (in the sense of "specific") Metaphysics.

Special Metaphysics unfolds into the three questions that, according to Kant, touch all of us: (1) What can I know? (2) What should I do? and (3) For what may I hope? However, the cost of securing our knowledge in the realm of appearances in an ontology "that must give way to the humble title of an analytic of the understanding" exacts its toll with respect to those questions that affect our humanity most deeply. That is, we have no knowledge of God, of freedom, or of immortality—whether they can be affirmed or denied at all.

The incentive for Anglo-American empiricism follows plainly from Kant's Analytic that limits human knowledge to appearances as objects given through sensation. The transcendental trappings are disposed of easily, so also are Pure Intuition, the Categories of the Understanding, the Schematism, and the Principles (*Grundsätze*) of the Pure Understanding to a significant degree. Analytic Kantians tend to find issues that concern them, but tend to have little or no commitment to the metaphysics that animated the critical philosophy.

The Hume–Kant relation may still spark controversy, but I'll simply recall a remark made by Lewis White Beck in his 1972 graduate Kant seminar that I was privileged to take. In our wrestling with the Second Analogy for some time, and with Beck offering a fine interpretation of Kant's answer to his Scottish predecessor, he concluded (in his rich southern accent): "Ain't much wrong with Hume!" Beck frequently expressed contempt for "existentialism and Buddhism and all that other nonsense," and only essays written in the analytic tradition found their way into his edited books. Nevertheless, he was a great teacher and encouraged me even though I sought a graduate degree amidst the "nonsense" he so thoroughly and eloquently rejected. In several chapters that follow this Foreword, I will examine influential analytic philosophers whose work can be traced back to a Kantian influence.

The Continental strain emerges from those elements more or less discarded from the Anglo-American tradition. German Idealism can be expressly derived from the critical philosophy. Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (Doctrine of Science) centers upon Transcendental Apperception and Transcendental Imagination (*Einbildungskraft*). In Schelling, imagination moves even more dramatically to the heart and art become prominent as philosophy's exoteric organ. Hegel discerns a purposive cunning in history, whereby reason triumphs after great toil and loss. Later in the 19th century, Nietzsche disrupts any notion of rational purpose in favor of a retrieval of the Dionysian.

The task concerning both strains consists of two distinct but related matters. First, I must show how each of the thinkers owes his philosophy to the abjured metaphysical tradition. Secondly, I shall exhibit the metaphysical foundations that nevertheless remain. As a Prelude, I shall excavate and reinterpret the central notion of a shared contemporary foundation, namely *ruling image*.

PRELUDE

ON THE WAY TO RULING IMAGE: RETHINKING TWO CANONICAL PLATONIC TROPES

The Plato work of John Sallis animates the following reinterpretation of the Divided Line of *Republic* VI and the Cave of *Republic* VII. A close reading of the actual Platonic text overturned not only my long-held approach, but also convincingly confuted the conventional wisdom. Instead of the theory of two mutually exclusive worlds, with a faithful translation of the Greek language it yields ongoing and dominant concern with *image* and with *sight*.

My first exposure to these canonical depictions came in my freshman year at the University of Rochester, which was still a militant and excellent Anglo-American philosophy environment. In Philosophy 103: History of Ancient Philosophy, I learned that Plato believed that there were two distinct worlds. The lesser world was the world of Sense, the scene of our hapless everyday strivings. This world was governed by *opinion*. By contrast, the Intellectual world, the world in which *the Forms* reigned, was governed by *truth*; there could be no admixture of the two.

How I strove to enter this higher, glorious world! I couldn't cut it in the world of Sense. I had no confidence. I had no focus, on my studies or on anything else. I was sloppy in my dress. My fellow students, the likes of whom I had never encountered before, had much greater exposure to cultural matters and so much greater sophistication. Worst of all, I had very few dates and never had a second one. But they didn't know what I knew, that they were wasting their lives in the chaotic and quotidian pursuit of futile and meaningless goals.

Hard as I tried to enter the world of the Forms with a pure mind, I never so much as approached it. What, then, to do? Look for another philosopher more congenial to my shortcomings! And I succeeded too well. I grew passionate about philosophers from many and conflicting orientations. The best sentence I read as an undergraduate (and one of the best ever) was written by Descartes in his *Discourse on Method*, where he

confesses that the result of his first-rate education bestowed by the best teachers was the discovery of his own confusion and ignorance.[1]

Much to my surprise and wonder and many years later, I happened upon John Sallis's *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*.[2] From it, I became aware that the Platonic text of the divided line presented the sensible and intelligible regions as *continuous* and not distinct at all. As one ascends from images in water, through the things of which the images are images, through the hypotheses (geometric shapes) of which the things are images, to the *eidē* of which the hypotheses are images, there occurs nothing whatsoever resembling a leap from one world to another. Rather, each segment calls one to a different *way of seeing*. "Form" is a loaded and godawful translation of *eidos*, arising from an unwarranted interpretation of a Greek word that has a crystal-clear sense. *Eidos* is the past participle of *horaō*, the verb that means "to see." Along with this crucial matter of translation, the original meaning of *nous* is not "intellect," but "perception."

As one reads on, the blinders continue to recede. At the end of *Republic* VI, Socrates and Glaucon seem to agree that as one moves up the divided line, one moves toward greater clarity and truth. However, the first words of *Republic* VII startle: "*Meta tauta dē, eipon, apeikason*" ("After this, I said, *make an image*…") (*Republic*, 514a—emphasis mine). If one interprets the image of the cave that follows as an account or allegory of everyday life as ruled by opinion, as opposed to the true life that exists beyond the grave, one has committed a blunder so egregious that it outrages basic reading comprehension. After the depiction of the chained prisoners' world of shadows projected on the cave's wall, Glaucon observes that this image is strange (*atopon*), as are the shadow-bound prisoners. Socrates's response is telling: "*Homoios hēmin*" ("They're like us…") (*Republic*, 515a).

We are bound to shadows, to images. Search as thoroughly as you can, but you will not find a single instance in which Socrates or anyone else claims to behold a disembodied *eidos*. The *Republic* goes no further than to point out only that the human being who ascends out of the cave is able to see that *the images are images*, and that their "originals" are not *eidē* but either other things of sense or abstractions from them. In the *Phaedo*, the statuses of the *eidē* find their most precise delineation. After claiming that nothing is beautiful except by virtue of its participation in the

[1] René Descartes, *Discours de la Methode*, bilingual edition (Milton Keynes: Jiahu Books, 2015), 11.
[2] John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

eidos beauty, with the same pattern holding for the other *eidē* of which he regularly speaks, Socrates says the following:

> I first posited (*hupothemenos*) a *logos* that seemed to me to be the strongest (*errōmenestaton*), then I set down as true whatever seemed to agree (*sumphōnein*) with it, and that which disagreed I regarded as untrue. (*Phaedo*, 100a3-8)

The strongest (or healthiest) *logoi* turn out to be "the beautiful, the good, the great, and the like," each of which he frequently speaks. Nothing is beautiful except insofar as it participates in beauty, etc. In the only reference to a *methodos* in the entire Platonic corpus, Socrates calls his method *eikē phurō* (random mixing) (*Phaedo*, 97b). Such a procedure could hardly be farther from "intellection."

The *eidē* rule as the strongest *logoi*. But our access to them takes place as a result of the intellect's peculiar way of seeing. Just as it sees the *eidos* "triangle" such that what it sees is neither equilateral, isosceles, or scalene, the intellect sees the *eidē* in a manner that is never apprehended as having separate existence, but always as gathering what occurs under their sway as participating in them. They are images of the preeminent kind. They are *ruling images*.

I reinterpret this notion of ruling images for the sake of comprehending what I see as a blind spot on both sides of the philosophical divide, and as a way of removing these blinders as well. "Ruling image" becomes a *foundation* for philosophy that has assimilated its major developments but that requires rethinking of its roots.

A Note on the Unusual Tone of this Book

Though this book has a more or less traditional philosophical goal, namely the advancement of a general thesis, its tone shall depart from that found in most customary practice and in all of my previous books. One obvious departure consists of my unabashed declaration of my opinions regarding the philosophers treated. In some quarters and even in mine for the most part, it is considered bad form, at the least, to offer opinions while offering scant or no evidence for them. However, a somewhat sizeable portion of the reflections contained within will have this somewhat undesirable feature. This circumstance belongs to the book's design.

Regarding the latter, my intention is to differentiate strictly between my own assessment of the philosopher and of the power of the philosopher's thought, together with that power's source. The first of the two, the assessment, requires no agreement from the reader except for the following general one: I defy anyone to claim that a single philosophical idea has ever escaped uncontested. Also, if anyone should claim that a philosophical reader comes to any work without any preexisting points of view that he or she interposes in the act of reading, then I say: Produce that person if you can, and I will reward you handsomely by handing you my credit card that has the greatest dollar limit. Please enjoy a shopping trip, travel, a cruise, whatever the heart desires. As I lead a parsimonious life, I would not make such an offer if there were any danger of my needing to honor it.

This book offers not only a new foundation, but also a new way of exposition. My individual treatments of the thinkers are by and large at least acceptable, but the interpositions of my sometimes idiosyncratic views are virtually certain to displease, if not enrage, most readers at some point. I regard these views primarily as attenuated accounts of their thought, discussed with the sort of conversational relaxation one finds in a bar or a lounge. That is to say, they have some philosophical value and some entertainment value if this latter term might be stretched.

However, quite by accident I stumbled upon what may be a way to bring the two opposed factions, Analytic and Continental, together and

even into a kind of harmony. In the past, I have written several papers proving that such a rapprochement could not occur. My premise, which shall also make an appearance in what follows, was that no common conception of language obtained between the orientations that would allow for a shared ground of any kind. I realize fully that women and men with far more talent than I possess have been unable to bridge this gap. That one side sees language as predominantly guided by *logic* and its formal variants, and the other sees it as *showing*, i.e. as bringing to appearance, turns out not to be the decisive barrier between them.

As the previous section of the Foreword indicates, I seek to show how the notion of ruling image provides a foundation for philosophy that once was the province of reason and/or experience (in the empiricist sense). Examination of the several major thinkers that I treat here leads me to conclude that each and every one of them relies on the foundation of a ruling image whether they are aware of this or not. More ambitiously, I hope to add this notion to the contemporary philosophical conversation as such. Although I am fully persuaded that the notion of ruling image answers every major concern that occupies current philosophy, I am only too well aware that a claim such as that one angers the gods, and that nemesis has a way of following on the heels of such hubris.

Instead, I placate them by offering patently breezy critiques of every one of the twelve philosophers included for their entertainment and, far from least, for yours, Dear Reader. A career devoted to scholarship on any one of the twelve would constitute a good life indeed. I do not necessarily expect your concurrence on any portion of these energetically brisk accounts of their general positions and orientations. However, I do request that you take note of my underlying aim, namely to separate the issue of anyone's opinion of the twelve thinkers, mine especially and yours also, from the basic matters of the power that each has undeniably exercised, and the ruling image that provides that power. The way to what passes for unity travels through the multipolar perspectives provided by their ruling images.

RUDOLPH CARNAP

Rudolf Carnap belonged to the Vienna Circle, a group that evolved during the 1920s and 1930s. It was headed by Moritz Schlick in its most prominent iteration during 1924–28. The philosophy that served as its rallying cry was, and is, called Logical Empiricism. A manifesto of its program, written by Neurath, Hahn, and Carnap in 1929, was dedicated to Schlick by its authors. Nearly a century after the fact of its publication, one reads this key proclamation with amazement:

> The Scientific World Conception
>
> The scientific world conception is characterized not so much by theses of its own, but rather by its basic attitude, its points of view and direction of research. The goal ahead is unified science...[F]rom this springs the search for a neutral system of formulae, for a symbolism freed from the slag of historical languages; and also the search for a total system of concepts. Neatness and clarity are striven for, and dark distances and unfathomable depths rejected. In science there are no "depths"; there is surface everywhere: all experience forms a complex network, which cannot always be surveyed and can often be grasped only in parts. Everything is accessible to man; and man is the measure of all things…The scientific world-conception knows no unsolvable riddle. Clarification of the traditional philosophical problems leads us partly to unmask them as pseudo-problems, and partly to transform them into empirical problems and thereby subject them to the judgment of experimental science. The task of philosophical work lies in this clarification of problems and assertions, not in the propounding of special "philosophical" pronouncements.[3]

This mixture of grand ambition, of naiveté, of hubris, and finally of lasting power despite the other qualities may well be unique in philosophy's long history. I dare say that no one today subscribes to its outrageous claims. Of its co-authors, Carnap has had the most influence.

[3] I had difficulty locating the sure origin of this manifesto, which was issued at a Vienna Circle Conference as discussed above. Other sources ascribe it to Ernst Mach a bit earlier.

His obviously flawed program has set the task for much of the analytic philosophy that followed.

Before I partially outgrew my philosophical adolescence, I regarded Rudolf Carnap as the worst prominent philosopher ever. The slovenliness of his reasoning stood in direct proportion to his arrogance. Even his committed analytic heirs repudiated his scorched-earth criticism of Heidegger. However, there can be no doubt that Anglo-American philosophy has consciously developed from Carnap's crude beginnings. His 1932 essay titled "*Überwindung der Metaphysik durch Logische Analyse der Sprache*"[4] (translated by Arthur Pap as "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language") presents as unambiguous a view that anyone could wish.

Even a philosophical novice, if given definitions of the key terms, would be able to grasp its sense. When I first read this essay in my Philosophy 101 class with Jerome Stolnitz, it produced plenteous joy in me. I no longer had to wrestle with and lose to those big books full of fearsome vocabulary and taxing arguments. This great teacher's meticulous lectures for this course consisted of him devoting one class to presenting the philosopher in question in the most positive light possible, followed with the next class in which he tore down the edifice praised in its predecessor brick by brick. A third class found Stolnitz commenting on what might be worth saving from his subject's contribution. His critique seemed so thoroughly devastating to me that I have no recall of the third Carnap lecture.

My opinion has changed. After decades of hearing mealy-mouthed papers and reading books with that same quality (written even by influential philosophers), I have come to admire Carnap's straightforwardness, and to acknowledge, if somewhat grudgingly, the quality of his contribution. His position grows out of the inarguable advance of the empirical sciences, with physics providing considerable ballast. The relativity of space and time as joined into "spacetime" seemed to supersede Euclidean geometry, once considered a bedrock foundation of natural science. Although the fifth postulate, that parallel lines never meet, was regarded as intuitively obvious, no one could prove how it could be derived from the first four postulates.

While they were not without precursors who gestured toward its development, Lobachevski and Bolyai arrived at non-Euclidean geometries. Lobachevski did so by negating Euclid's parallel postulate. Bolyai's formulation allowed for both Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometries

[4] Rudolf Carnap, "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache," *Erkenntnis 2* (1931): 219-241.

(depending upon a parameter). With admirable foresight, Bolyai claimed that mathematics alone could render no decision on the structure of the universe, but left this task to physical science. Riemann advanced the scope of non-Euclidean geometry by its treatment of curved surfaces. Although it can be viewed as a theoretical construct (and much work in this area remains entirely theoretical), Riemannian geometry formed a necessary component of Einstein's theory of general relativity and plays a significant role in astronomy and cosmology.

On one hand, against this background, only the most churlish among us would berate Carnap and his Vienna Circle colleagues for their uncritically militant empiricism. On the other hand, they surely had to be aware that Einstein, with whom they studied, controverted this empiricism vigorously. The "Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language" is so thoroughly a piece of its time that one finds it almost poignant that it had once exercised such widespread influence. However, a cursory glance across the analytic landscape reveals that much of its substance remains in force.

With characteristic certainty (not to mention a considerable measure of truculence), Carnap writes the following:

> In the domain of metaphysics, including all philosophy of value and normative theory, logical analysis yields the negative result that the alleged statements in this realm are entirely meaningless. Therewith a radical elimination of metaphysics is attained which was not yet possible from the earlier antimetaphysical standpoints.[5]

Having the benefit of retrospection, finding flaws in this so-called "logical analysis" requires scarcely more difficulty than the proverbial shooting of fish in a barrel. The most glaring of many gaffes consists of his contention that the meaning of words depends entirely upon their empirical application.

To our eyes, this is a howler in light of what the author sets out to prove; a perfect specimen of circular reasoning. Still worse, his further elaboration that the meaning of a sentence consists in its truth condition is itself a sentence that has no truth condition. Like the earlier assertion, the latter is no more than an arbitrary stipulation. However, my business here is not to run riot over some regrettable blundering. Rather, my business is to bear witness to its philosophical power.

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[5] Carnap, "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache," 220.

Confronted with the gradual but shocking denigration of Euclidean geometry to merely one of several possibilities with no special priority, and with astronomer Arthur Eddington's 1919 confirmation of the theory of general relativity by means of his earlier specific prediction that starlight will bend around massive objects, Riemannian geometry "won out" over its Euclidean ancestor, just as the once separate phenomenon of gravity becomes an epiphenomenon of spacetime.

Recall that for centuries the major dispute concerning the nature of space and time involved the Newtonian view (and its variants) versus the Leibnizian view (and its variants). According to both views, space and time are distinct. For Newton, space and time were both infinitely extended and absolute. He designated them "divine sensoria." Leibniz regarded both as relative and relational. In his Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant rejects both as stated in achieving his goal of presenting an *a priori* sensibility. However, he brought aspects of each to his own division of transcendental ideality of space and time (thereby incorporating the Newtonian perspective) and their empirical reality (doing the same for the Leibnizian perspective), calling them forms of human intuition as well as the more controversial "pure intuition."[6] Either formulation rests upon what Kant famously called "synthetic *a priori*," which is not only a transcendental/logical demarcation but the necessary condition for saving the philosophical treasure from the endless disputes to which it had been subject: "the battlefield of these endless controversies is what we call 'metaphysics.'"[7]

What need remains for Kant's pure intuition in light of relativity physics? "None" seems to be the most plausible answer. This development in physics obliged human beings to reconsider their entire conception of the universe, as we know it. Small wonder, then, that so many philosophers signed on to some version of Carnap's verificationism. In light of this profound breakthrough, it is more than merely charitable to reconsider his view on the meaning of words that I earlier called a mere stipulation. Question: To what, exactly, does "*a priori* sensibility" refer? In light of the necessary reconception of three-dimensional space and linear time as the measure of all motion, "*a priori* sensibility" refers to nothing, i.e. one can

[6] Since Kant called all human intuition empirical and defined "pure" as "free of empirical content," the notion of pure intuition may seem internally contradictory. But Kant never abandoned the latter term. It is best thought, in my view, as the pure element in every human intuition. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996) (A50/B74), 106.

[7] Ibid., (A viii) 6.

locate no object that it picks out. In defense of Carnap, it seems not only far from arbitrary but also quite reasonable, if not even obvious, that words that cannot point to an object have no meaning. Thus, with this single decisive stroke, centuries of illusion have been overcome.

The internal problem with Carnap's pronouncement in this paper soon came to much attention. Even his Vienna Circle colleagues quickly criticized his verification principle, according to which any sentence to be cognitively meaningful must express a statement that is either analytically or empirically determinable to be true or false. Soon thereafter, he pared this principle down somewhat to mere confirmability and at least partial testability. I will not recount these intermural squabbles, which I find not only tedious but beside the point. It became clear to many of Carnap's sympathetic colleagues that universal statements were *eo ipso* non-confirmable, but their devotion to the new empiricism led them to seek many kinds of contrivances to avoid that empiricism's demise.

But in whatever way the logical empiricist principle of meaning presented itself, that philosophical love that dares not speak its name cannot remain suppressed: metaphysics. If one accepts either formulation of Carnap's principle of meaning, this conclusion cannot be avoided. Both must be regarded as *synthetic a priori principles* in a strict Kantian sense. In the first, the connection between meaningfulness and verification is neither analytic, nor empirically verifiable. If, therefore, it does provide the measure of meaning, the principle synthesizes (i.e. brings together) the two notions, and it must be regarded as apart from (i.e. in advance of) its ruling process. This sort of thing occurs when an admirable philosophical passion overreaches the new rationality that it wishes to establish.

Carnap attempted to answer his critics on this matter some years later by introducing a distinction between theoretical and observational statements. Theoretical statements are derived inductively from empirical matters and the framework according to which the particular discipline may operate. Their external counterparts consist of specific rules that apply to the actual operation within the framework. Although Carnap claimed that theoretical statements belonged to the same language as the observational external statements, it became clear even to his sympathizers that such a distinction could not be sustained. Carnap declared that one could take issue with some external sentences since these might not produce confirmations, but one could not do so with internal sentences. In my view, he once again showed his hand by offering an *ad hoc* proviso, i.e. another stipulation. In other words, he had shown himself to be a closeted but unconsciously committed metaphysician.

Although many analytic philosophers once held the outrageous conceit that their approach had solved all philosophical problems except for those pertaining to counterfactual conditionals, the field has been properly humbled. American Philosophical Association programs are fairly glutted with papers of all sorts of issues that were supposed to have been settled long ago, as well as new disputes that are no more likely to be settled than those of their predecessors. The issues raised by the early influential theories, like Carnap's internal/external distinction, can still stir up controversies, although discussion of them might remain dormant for some time.

Carnap's unacknowledged metaphysics was no mere accidental byproduct of his efforts to purge philosophy of "pseudo-problems," but served as the foundation of his thought. In light of its strength and its justification due to advances in physics, this cannot be the last word. I propose that we commingle these only apparently discordant elements: (1) the unacknowledged metaphysical principle that is epistemologically distinct from the empirical matters it governs, and (2) those same empirical matters. Those of us who, like myself, can discern the history of philosophy as not only implicitly present but also alive in the most determined efforts to surpass it are able to uncover illuminating resources unavailable to the intrepid but misguided would-be heralds of the new era.

Carnap's metaphysical foundation must be reformulated—as an *image*. However, such an image cannot be understood as a mixture of being and becoming, i.e. of being and non-being. Rather, this foundation must be apprehended as an image *without an intelligible original* that would determine it. Logical empiricism is a ruling image, because this image governs the region over which it holds sway. Two centuries of philosophical criticism, from both sides of the divide, have eliminated the possibility of a single ruling rational principle. However, I insist that this criticism allows for a foundationalism along different, perspectival lines. Accordingly, many such ruling images are possible, as this book will demonstrate. The ruling occurs in terms of its *power* rather than in terms of any presupposition.

WILLIAM JAMES

The significance of William James's contribution to the course of 20th-century philosophy and beyond cannot be denied. Not only his championing of pragmatism, but also his propensity to deflate philosophical terminology in a manner that unites clarity and playfulness introduced a new spirit to American philosophy. The most famous example consists of his judging the success of theories by their "cash value," i.e. how much they can produce in advancing useful human knowledge. He has diverse heirs, and even those who do not primarily call themselves pragmatists incorporate pragmatic elements into their work.

That said, full disclosure requires me to reveal that pragmatism of the James (and Rorty) variety annoys me like no other philosophy. While I may believe that Carnap falls short in regard to many, if not most, important matters, he risks taking firm positions, responds to criticisms vigorously and thoughtfully, and as a result his logical empiricism still inspires thought and merits respect for these reasons. By contrast, James's pragmatism commits to nothing and, still further, celebrates this lack of commitment as a virtue. He is a person of considerable wit, and his prose features frequent clever ripostes to his philosophical opponents. These opponents consist virtually one and all of "rationalists" and the overlapping "intellectualists."

Further, I well understand why many analytic philosophers find Heidegger's arrogance off-putting. Many times, I join them. However, in this characteristic he is positively gracious in comparison with James, who most often is regarded with at least some warmth. I frequently find James's writings insufferable. One of his many annoying habits is the blatant mischaracterization of positions he finds wanting, often offering trenchant dismissals of positions that nobody ever held. His primary means of philosophizing does not consist of argument but rather of ridicule for positions he opposes and praise for his own and of others of his ilk.

In his first lecture in *Pragmatism*,[8] he reduces philosophy to the temperament of particular philosophers. On one side are the "tender-

[8] William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995) (hereafter cited in text as *Pr*).

minded" who are abstraction-loving rationalists. On the other are the "tough-minded" empiricists like him (though he allows himself occasional "holidays"), who attend to facts in the world. I will take a non-Jamesian holiday (see below) and indulge in a practice I would ordinarily find abhorrent, namely return wretched *ad hominem* for wretched *ad hominem*. "Rationalist" Descartes fought in wars, despite his privileged background. Spinoza stood his philosophical ground, only to be anathematized by the Jewish religion of his time and so banished from contact with those of his fellow faith. Also, this has to be the one and only instance where Kant would be placed among the tender-minded. By contrast, James was born into a very wealthy home and experienced no financial or academic challenges. He is tough-minded in the way I am tough-minded when I gesture with my fists toward the boxers on the television screen.

His second lecture, titled "What Pragmatism Means," begins with what must be an apocryphal remembrance of a camping trip that involved "a ferocious metaphysical dispute." This dispute involved a very fast squirrel, a much slower man, and a tree. The man runs in his attempt to catch a glimpse of the squirrel as it goes round the tree, but the squirrel—running in the opposite direction—proves to be much too fast to allow this glimpse. James writes: "The resultant metaphysical problem now is this: Does the man go round the squirrel or not?" (*Pr*, 17).

As James tells it, there were two quite animated groups each taking one side of the issue. When James, after a walk, returned to this protracted intellectual melee, he was asked for his view. With the admirable sobriety of a sage amidst fools, he explained to the group that the solution rests upon what one practically means by "round." If "round" means moving clockwise from north to east to south to west to north and repeating the process, then the man goes round the squirrel. But if "round' means being first in front of the squirrel, then on its right, then behind it, then on its left, and then in front of it again, he does not. This, to James, provides a fine—or I should rather say "useful"—introduction to the pragmatic method.

He calls this dispute "a trivial example," but both its force and its charm derive from its analogy in James's mind with more esoteric metaphysical disputes. What would they be? The matter with which this famous lecture began resembles nothing I have ever read, not only in Kant but also in the entire German Idealist tradition that Kant inspired. The thinkers of that period wrote in language that stands in virtually incalculable inverse proportion to the language of trees and squirrels. Early in his philosophical life, Carnap studied Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* intensely. While he rejected most, if not all, of Kant's conclusions

in his later work, he regarded the analytic/synthetic distinction of sufficient importance but broke from Kant and brought considerable attention to bear upon it. Not so for James.

In his third lecture, titled "Some Metaphysical Problems Pragmatically Conceived," James briskly treats the notions of "substance/matter," "free will," and "God." If anyone thinks that these subjects require close and persevering attention, they will be saddened to learn that in a mere 16 pages of easily understood English, they are neatly disposed of. Consider "matter vs. spirit" as contenders for the ultimate source of the world. James bestows well-deserved praise upon Berkeley, whose arguments decisively do away with the notion of material substance. His praise extends as well to Hume, another of his empiricist forebears, whose thought did away with the corresponding notion of spiritual substance. The final score, metaphysically speaking, is zero to zero. Neither notion gets us any nearer to the ultimate nature of our world's actuating principle, nor can any other. Neither metaphysical notion has any pragmatic use.

But each has a pragmatic use: the notion of God provides a way to conceive of an eternal moral order. The belief in matter provides a way to conceive the negative side, namely, that all things are finite and will not endure beyond their natural time. In other words, these notions together provide a practical way to interpret the world free of "rationalist" nonsense. The problem with this analysis, as I see it, is that it makes a mockery of James's famous claim that one should "go round" Kant because there is no need to "go through" him, for the most important feature of the Kantian antinomies is their denial of real significance to those very notions that transcend actual experience. In the case of the mathematical antinomies, both thesis (rationalist) and antithesis (empiricist) totalizing concepts are false—so James is correct to set them aside, but he was 200 years late to claim this accolade as his own.

There are, of course, differences as well as similarities between James and Kant, although the differences are far less significant. While both thinkers ascribe practical significance to these respective notions, James considers their roles as providing promise toward a more perfect future (God) and as providing the denial of a more perfect future (materialism). In this way, both inform human hopes and doubts regarding the unknown future that belongs to all of us.

Free will versus determinism in James just as surely recalls the dynamical antinomies of Kant, in particular here the third. For the so-called and mistakenly called rationalist Kant, the possibility of freedom hangs by the thinnest of threads. The most that can be claimed is that the

coexistence of freedom with natural necessity (i.e. determinism) means that the two need not contradict one another. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the reality of freedom is *asserted*, never proven. The source of freedom and the laws associated with it remain entirely and radically incomprehensible.

Both accounts provide pragmatic meaning to freedom. While Kant's rests upon moral matters, James's rests upon the hope that things at least *can* get better. Unlike Kant, he regards free will as a religious matter, a way to bring relief to the troubled state to which humans often find themselves given over. However, the pragmatic difference between them seems small, if not infinitesimal.

His fourth lecture, titled "The One and The Many," picks up from the third after a fashion. The vastly inflated treatment here is the notion of an ultimate unity, of the oneness of the world taken in some sense. James insists that experience teaches that there can be no single source, or system, or being, from which and under which everything can be derived or understood. Instead, he celebrates the *variety* that all sensible people, i.e. all empiricists of his ilk, easily recognize. His telling insight is: "This leaves us with the common-sense world, in which we find things partly joined and partly disjoined" (*Pr*, 62). To those who have wrestled with philosophy's canonical texts and wondered whether the wool was being pulled over their eyes, James offers them welcome reassurance. Only an uncouth jester would point out that his *bête noire* Kant spoke repeatedly of the manifold of sensible intuitions, and that the pure categories were mere functions of unity that make the experience of this manyness possible.

Lecture five presents James's account of the history of human insight. I reproduce it (1) to illustrate its difference from both analytic histories that find the philosophy of the past lacking in scientific rigor and (2) to give the garland to those philosophers who embrace recent natural science, like Carnap and Reichenbach:

> *My thesis is now this, that our fundamental ways of thinking about things are discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves throughout the experience of all subsequent time*. They form one great stage of equilibrium in the stage of human development, the stage of common sense. (em[phasis in original) (*Pr*, 65)

One cannot be certain whether James is claiming that the developments in the *modern* era were mere minor accretions to what was already available. In any case, he gives the canonical philosophers little or no credit, while the ancient scientists and their modern and contemporary

epigones are permitted a bow. However, the bow is not bestowed to their theories regarding "sights unseen," but for the practical applications devolving from their insights. Thus, "accurate clocks and accurate artillery practice" stand at the heart of Galileo's legacy, medicines stand in the same way to the work of chemists, and the genius of Ampere and Faraday? They provided…"the New York Subway and Marconi telegrams" (*Pr*, 89).

Once again, this brusque critique does nothing to mitigate the power of James's pragmatism, not to mention its enormous influence. His thought provides a more open alternative than does Carnap's to the ascendancy of the empirical sciences. Like Carnap's, it serves a restraining function, or a check. James's thought limits the scope of philosophical theories to include only those that pass the test of usefulness to human aims. While there can be no doubt that empiricism finds overwhelming favor, no theory is ruled out *a priori*. This last feature provided an outlet for some further substantive considerations.

However, James seems to complicate his own notion of truth as he speaks of three types of thought concerning our world, and writes that there is no reason to claim that "at any stage as yet in sight [one] is absolutely more true than any other." The three are (1) common sense, the most "consolidated," (2) "august science," and (3) what can only be termed as the more "abstract" entities of dubious reality but somehow useful to science (*Pr*, 72-73). To complicate matters further, at the close of his fifth lecture he enjoins his audience to be suspicious of common sense despite its more or less obvious merit as a guide to life. In a manner that recalls no philosopher as much as it does Descartes, he allows that it may be the case that some of the hypotheses upon which it has been built may yet be open to question.

Finally, the fact that these three ways of thought do not intersect suggests that none of them has a purchase on truth, but that each is *useful* in a certain setting. This is posited as a further recommendation for the pragmatistic view that all theories are instrumental, are mental modes of adaptation to reality. Pragmatism, then, becomes something of a theory of theories, a view that saves itself from circularity because it accounts for itself in the very deed of proclaiming its nature.

Lecture six provides a further elaboration of the pragmatist conception of truth, and of the wit of this lecturer. He likens the life of truth to a "credit system" similar to bank notes that serve for exchange so long as they are not refused. This account of truth is, in both the initial and the final analyses, an account of the plurality of truths. Their sole unity consists of the practical one, or in James's words, if they *pay*. Once again,

rationalism and intellectualism function as a red herring, as mere airheadedness in comparison with the down-to-earth wisdom he propounds.

He does offer the requirement, almost in passing, that truths "pay by guiding us toward some part of a system that dips at numerous points into sense-percepts." Once again, every philosophy from Plato's divided line, through Aristotle's *Physics*, and through the rationalists that serve as the butt of his ridicule address the matter of sense perception in a thoroughgoing manner. What a welcome waiver James provides to those who look to avoid the work of studying these difficult texts!

The remaining three lectures concentrate on the human contribution to all of the above, even with respect to the oft-debated and always controversial matter of religion. In his final entry, he allows that religion can belong to pragmatism so long as it is either "pluralistic or merely melioristic." Pluralism of religion must refer to the many forms that religion can take, e.g. Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, etc. The term "melioristic" serves to rule out insight or even belief into a disembodied afterlife, but rather restricts the adept to the possibility of earthbound change for the better. Once again, one can marvel at the mix of profundity and modesty of James's discovery, or one can recall that such meliorism is precisely the position of Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason* and other writings.

Contemporary pragmatists, such as the late Richard Rorty, found value in philosophers whose work had no apparent connection to pragmatism, such as Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty distinguishes between two kinds of philosophers: the systematic ones who work within the academic tradition and those edifying ones whose work provide stimulation to the entire field. As we will soon see, Rorty's characterization of philosophy as gadfly to contemporary concerns consciously echoes its Socratic legacy.[9]

But I digress. What is the epistemological status of *usefulness* as it resides in the principle of pragmatism? In James's own thinking, it cannot be a theoretical concept that transcends human life and experience. Nor can it be listed among those problems that pragmatism is designed to solve. Although Kant's logical nomenclature does not figure in James's thought, the principle of pragmatism as stated is synthetic *a priori*. In light of the Prelude, however, usefulness must be categorized as an *image*.

Like Carnap's verification *cum* confirmation, usefulness functions as a ruling image. Of what is usefulness an image? Once again, it is an image *without an original*. As such a ruling image, it governs the activities that are determined to occur within its region. Its success, much like that

[9] See Rorty chapter below.