

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

IS RORTY A JAMESIAN? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
WILLIAM JAMES AND RICHARD RORTY ON THE PRAGMATISTS'  
CONCEPTION OF TRUTH

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil PHILOSOPHY DEGREE

JULY, 2018

**DECLARATION**

With the exception of the reference to the works of scholars which have been duly cited and acknowledged, I hereby declare that this work is the product of my own endeavour. This work contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirement for the award of any degree in any university.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative analysis of William James and Richard Rorty on the pragmatists' conception of truth. In this thesis, I argue that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's pragmatic notion of truth, contrary to the claims that it is not. Also, I argue that Rorty remains a Jamesian in respect of James's pragmatic notion of truth.

Rorty agrees with James's position that truth is the expedient in the way of our thinking. However, Rorty argues for other positions regarding truth which seem to contradict James's view about truth. Rorty appears to be selective about what he considers to be James's notion of truth. Again, Rorty argues that there is no theory of truth and that the idea of truth could be replaced with justification. James emphatically calls his position a theory of truth, and never argues explicitly for the replacement of truth with justification as Rorty does. Despite the view that Rorty's claim differs sometimes with James's position, Rorty maintains that his position is similar to James's position.

In line with Rorty's position, I argue that Rorty's denial of a theory of truth is in fact not a rejection of a theory of truth. It is to repudiate the idea of the correspondence theory of truth. In addition, I argue that Rorty's replacement of truth with justification is not only because there is no practical difference or practical consequences in doing that. It is also the case that James argues a similar issue by suggesting that truth is just a process just as health and wealth are processes and the naming of these processes are just our own labeling.

I argue that James's and Rorty's position on truth is established on practical importance, and other things are secondary. The accepted necessity, practical importance, gives a strong support to the claim that Rorty is a Jamesian and his notion of truth is similar to James' pragmatic notion of truth.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my parents, my siblings and the special one Rabiātu Abass who taught me never to quit in life.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First of all, let me express my gratitude to Almighty God for instilling in me the tenacity to hold on to the very end. My foremost appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Husein Inusah, whose impeccable supervision and act of ingenuity immensely paved the way for me to the realization of this work. It has been an honour to have worked with him from start to finish, and I register my indebtedness to him beyond measure. I remain very much indebted to my co-supervisor, Dr. Caesar Atuire, whose affable but immaculate philosophical inventiveness and constructive criticisms contributed so much to this work. I owe him so much and remain very grateful for his unadulterated contribution.

My appreciation goes to Dr. Carl Simpson for providing me with materials on Richard Rorty. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my first teachers and mentors, my parents, for teaching me steadfastness and perseverance. My siblings have been nothing but supportive every step of the way; I appreciate your love so much.

Last but not the least, my profound gratitude goes to the Department of Philosophy, University of Ghana. To faculty members, I say thank you for your nurturing and unwavering support you have given me. To Madam Becky, the hardworking administrator, I say thank you. To the industrious Deladem and Don Arthur, thank you so much, your support has been nothing but phenomenal. To my colleagues at the department I say thank you so much for your wonderful inspiration and companionship; you have been the best.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a comparative analysis of William James and Richard Rorty on the pragmatists' conception of truth. I will argue that Rorty's version of truth is similar to James's, contrary to the claim that Rorty deviates from James's conception of truth, and that Rorty remains a Jamesian.<sup>1</sup> James (1907) argues that the claim that something is true refers to what is useful in our thinking (p.222). In *Truth and progress; Philosophical papers*, Rorty claims to be advancing or upholding the traditional conception of the pragmatic truth held by James (p.3). Yet, Rorty (1998) argues that although "there is obviously a lot to be said about justification of various beliefs, there may be little to say about truth (p.19)". However, not everyone will agree with Rorty's claim of being a Jamesian. Arguing this position are Jason M. Boffetti, Scott Campbell, Hilary Putnam, Md A. Razzaque, Cheryl Misak and Abraham Edel. I will at this point review the claims of the aforementioned.

Boffetti (2004) argues that Rorty's notion of truth is a departure from James's account of truth. This is because James's has nothing to do with a difference between community and isolated truth, whereas Rorty's does (p.612). Again, it is Boffetti's view that James's account of truth portrays his radical empiricism, whereas Rorty's assertion of a notion of truth is devoid of radical empiricism (p.608). Radical empiricism is James's epistemological doctrine which expands on the traditional conception of empiricism.<sup>2</sup> In furthering his notion of radical

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<sup>1</sup> Jamesian refers to one who subscribes to James's philosophical views. For example, Boffetti in his paper, "Rorty's Nietzschean Pragmatism: A Jamesian Response," discusses William James's views on truth, religion and politics. He calls himself a Jamesian. However the word Jamesian in this thesis is limited to a person who agrees with James's pragmatic notion of truth.

<sup>2</sup> Traditional empiricism here refers to the kind of empiricism espoused especially by the three British empiricist; John Lock, George Berkeley and David Hume. Lockean empiricism boils down to the idea of sensation and reflection whereas the Berkeleyan empiricism centers on perception and ideas, and Humean empiricism talks about impressions and ideas.

empiricism, James (1904) argues that “... *the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as 'real' as anything else in the system*” (p.534) (italics by James). Also, Misak (2011) claims that James’s radical empiricism is the notion that all inquiry commence with and advances on experience (p.866). James’s radical empiricism is grounded in his pragmatic conception of truth and the principle of pure experience.<sup>3</sup> In James’s view, the idea of experience goes beyond what traditional empiricism articulates as experience. Also, James claims that his pragmatic notion of truth is a step towards the buildup of his radical empiricism. Boffetti regards Rorty’s conception of truth as non-empiricists philosophy. To argue this point Boffetti claims:

For James, as a radical empiricist, truth is something that is “found” in the given structure of reality as an attribute of all true things and is accessible by all thinking beings because we all have access to the ground of “pure experience”, even if we encounter it in various ways. It is in this way that James remains an empiricist, and for this reason, it is impossible to see James's philosophical project as the same radical transition that Rorty has in mind (2004; 609).

Boffetti criticizes Rorty for only picking on some things about truth advanced by James, in order to put forward his own conception of truth. For Boffetti, Rorty accepts only what serves his purpose; he does not accept James’s notion of truth holistically. In Boffetti’s view, it will not be out of place to make the claim that Rorty’s notion of truth is not a representation of James’s conception of truth. Again, Boffetti (2004) argues that Rorty agrees only with the articulation of

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<sup>3</sup> James’s (1904) appreciation of pure experience takes into consideration other conceptions of experience which the rationalist and the empiricist fail to account for. James does not separate conjunctive and disjunctive relation between things. Instead, James (1904) expresses the view that “...experience as a whole wears the form of a process in time, whereby innumerable particular terms lapse and are superseded by others that follow upon them by transitions which, whether disjunctive or conjunctive in content, are themselves experiences, and must in general be accounted at least as real as the terms which they relate” (p.541-542).

James that truth is what works (612). Furthering his position on the non-holistic representation of Rorty's view, Boffetti argues that Rorty makes a distinction between two categories of James's theory of truth:

Rorty approves of what he calls James's "first theory of truth" – truth is what works – which Rorty considers James's chief contribution to contemporary philosophy. But Rorty dispenses with what he calls James's "second theory of truth," which teaches us that "ideas (which are themselves but parts of our experience) become true just insofar as they help us get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience" (2004; 612).

Boffetti articulates two representations of Rorty's view; he criticizes Rorty's position on James's second theory of truth. For Boffetti, the rejection of the second theory of truth by Rorty implicitly leads to the rejection of empiricist epistemology. It will not be out of place at this point to indicate that James's epistemological claim about empiricism differs from empiricist epistemology. Yet, Boffetti silences the differences in terms of conceptualization of empiricism between James and others.<sup>4</sup> Rorty (1979), on the other hand, puts much importance on discourse; in fact, he replaces experience with discourse and sees it as a better way of doing philosophy. The view that Rorty deliberately ignores the second "theory of truth," as Boffetti claims, will be analyzed in chapter five. Again, one issue worth mentioning in the above quotation is the use of the phrase 'theory of truth'. Rorty has no theory of truth whereas James articulates his position as a theory of truth. It is an important point that I will discuss later in my analysis.

In addition to the above, Boffetti adds that there is the impression that Rorty misread James's theory of truth. As a result, Boffetti claims that Rorty's misreading of James may have been as a result of limiting James's theory of truth to just a constructivist theory of truth. To

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<sup>4</sup> Others here refer to the views about empiricism that do not share in his radical empiricism.

make his position clear, Boffetti refers to Putnam's elucidation of James's notion of truth as a combination of four distinct theories which Rorty fails to see. Boffetti argues:

While Rorty is certainly correct that there exists in James's writing, as many of his contemporary critics pointed out, what might be called a "constructivist" theory of truth, it is not reflective of James's philosophy, taken as whole. Hilary Putnam in the Cambridge Companion to William James points out that there are 'four distinct theories of truth in James's writings', but Rorty is one of those "careless readers," according to Putnam, who "ignored what James wrote about truth elsewhere"... (2004; 613).

Finally, Boffetti (2004) separates James's notion of truth from Rorty's by arguing that Jamesian pragmatism offers solutions to problems, whereas Rorty's virtual-James only serves Rorty's interest (p.611). In other words, what Rorty argues about truth is just a quasi-James and not a total representation of James's conception of truth. These are some of Boffetti's arguments that the notion of truth Rorty promotes is not similar to James's version of truth. However, the idea of truth as what works, constitute the bigger corpus of James's notion of truth. Rorty articulates truth as what works, but in the minimalist sense. I will briefly discuss Rorty's minimalist approach to truth in Chapter three.

Apart from Boffetti, Edel's criticism of Rorty's conception of truth is in relation to the correspondence theory of truth. Truth is traditionally explained as correspondence to reality. Truth as correspondence to reality is discussed in, and quite difficult to segregate from, James's notion of truth. James's (1907) view maintains the view that truth as correspondence to reality is problematic (p.98). In Edel's (1985) opinion "the contribution of pragmatism that Rorty chiefly invokes is James's account of truth as what is better in the way of belief. He insists that this is not a theory of truth but simply shelving the question of correspondence" (p. 21-22). This is to say

that Rorty explains James's notion of truth not as an account of truth, but as a means of abandoning the question of correspondence. Clearly there is an insinuation by Edel towards Rorty's interpretation of James's notion of truth. What is at issue here is the relation between a theory of truth and correspondence.<sup>5</sup> I will discuss James's and Rorty's explanation of the correspondence theory of truth in chapters two and three respectively.

Furthermore, Razzaque (2000) refers to himself as a Jamesian, and argues that his "paper endeavours to substantiate William James' theory of truth, which is an application of his pragmatic method..." (p.475). Trying to preserve a Jamesian connection, Razzaque (2000) argues that Rorty's pragmatic notion of truth differs from James's simply because Rorty argues that truth is nothing but mere futility (p.488). This, according to Razzaque is a far cry from what James's notion of truth is. If truth, for Rorty, is nothing but mere futility, then it could mean that Rorty might call on philosophers to abandon the pursuit of truth. This will contradict James's position. Again, Razzaque (2000) adds the view that James's position has never been about abandoning truth because it yields nothing (p.479). But, Rorty's enunciation about the futility of truth could be subjected to many interpretations. However, Rorty denies the claim against him that he said there is no truth, and for that matter Razzaque could be wrong to assume Rorty's position to be anti-Jamesian. In his own words, Razzaque claims that:

...Rorty considers the search of truth as futile and would like philosophers to abandon the pursuit of truth, because in his view those theorizing do not have any essence. He expatiates this point with reference to James' definition of truth: what is good in the way of belief. Rorty conceives this definition as Deflationary which, he believes, is not really meant to be a definition at all, rather it serves as a warning against all definitions of truth (2000;489).

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<sup>5</sup> Correspondence in this respect is in relation to the correspondence theory of truth.

If that is Rorty's claim, maybe there could be some divergence between Rorty's and James's notion of truth. In much the same way, Razzaque's view could as well be a misread of Rorty in this regard. I disagree with Razzaque's position. I will discuss the claim of a misread and the view that truth is nothing but futility on the part of Rorty in chapter three.

Again, Razzaque discusses Rorty's notion of truth as a pointless creation of an epistemology around truth. Razzaque argues:

It is pointless, Rorty holds, to try to establish a theory of knowledge or of truth. Hence no definition of truth would be possible. Furthermore, for Rorty, "there is no... epistemological way to direct or criticize, or underwrite" our experiences, "... it is the vocabulary of practice rather than of theory, of action rather than contemplation, in which one can say something about truth," (2000; 488).

According to Razzaque, Rorty deflates James's pragmatic truth. There is a segment of the deflationist view which Rorty accepts. For example, Rorty discusses the minimalist and the disquotationalist approach. There may be some concern about this position of Rorty. Could it be right to refer to James's notion of truth as a deflationist view? Or is Rorty coming up with an interpretation of James to suit his radical notion of truth? I will briefly discuss the deflationary view on truth amidst some other conceptions of truth in chapter two. Razzaque (2000) claims that Rorty attacks truth (including James's notion of truth) on one hand and uses James's pragmatic conception of truth to establish his epistemological notion of truth on the other hand. He accuses Rorty of a double standard. Perhaps it may be fair at this point to say that Rorty had issues with the way epistemology is carried out. I will briefly highlight Rorty's issue with the way epistemology (including the notion of truth) has been carried out in my analysis in chapter five.

Besides, Misak (2013) argues that Rorty claims to be advancing Jamesian pragmatism, and that Rorty's 'Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature' appears to be reviving the fortunes of Jamesian pragmatism (p.378). Regarding Jamesian pragmatism, Misak (2013) is quick to add the view that Peirce would have distanced himself from Rorty just as he did towards James's pragmatism (p.378). Misak claims that Rorty is more of a Jamesian but with some limitations. For Putnam, Rorty's enunciation about James's notion of truth is not a representation of what James claims to be advancing. Of course, others like Boffetti agree with Putnam's position on this.

Apart from Putnam's claim, Campbell criticizes Rorty for conflating James's and Friedrich Nietzsche's<sup>6</sup> view of truth. For Campbell (2008), there is no variance flanked by James's claim that what is true is true in the way of belief and Rorty's view that truth gets us what we want (p.35). Again, Campbell (2008) argues that Rorty recognizes the similarities between his views of the merits of textualism and James's theory of truth, and based on that Rorty presents himself and James as like-minded originators of the view that objects and texts have no properties other than what we, as pragmatist, read into them (p.35-36). However, Campbell berates Rorty for misapplication of James's view. Campbell argues his position in the following:

Rorty's use of James is a misapplication....The first way to evaluate Rorty's reading of James is by considering whether truth in the textualist sense can abide by the stream of thought....the problem merits greater scrutiny; at issue, specifically, is whether Rorty's

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<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche (2005) discusses the notion of truth. He says "What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins" (p.17). His conception of truth goes contrary to both the correspondence and coherence theory of truth. Nietzsche's complete denunciation of the idea of an objective truth is similar to James's and Rorty's denial of the notion of an objective truth.

conflation of James with Nietzsche as co-conspirators in the fictionalization and relativization of all truth can withstand a close analysis of truth within the Jamesian corpus (2008; 36).

Campbell was charitable enough in giving credit to some explanations Rorty makes about James's notion of truth. However, he thinks that it is unfair on the part of Rorty to conflate 'James and Nietzsche'<sup>7</sup> in order to argue his notion of truth. Campbell claims that this kind of conflating leads to a philosophical problem when discussing truth within the Jamesian corpus. I think that by introducing the Jamesian corpus here, Campbell refers to the different ways in which James presents his notion of truth. Although James and Nietzsche tried to revolutionize the philosophical conception about truth, there still remain some differences in their articulations. Rorty (1998) calls himself a Jamesian and Nietzschean as well (p.3). Perhaps the conflating of James and Nietzsche by Rorty has to do with how both reject the idea of correspondence theory of truth and reality.

A recap of the claims against Rorty:

1. Absence of radical empiricism in Rorty's pragmatism
2. Incomplete representation of James's notion of truth
3. A misread of James's notion of truth
4. Shelving the question of correspondence
5. Truth is nothing but mere futility
6. Conflating James and Nietzsche

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<sup>7</sup> At least what James did which is similar to Nietzsche is the idea of coming up with a normative notion of truth. José Medina & David Wood alluded to this view in *Truth Engagements across Philosophical Traditions*.

Truth<sup>8</sup> is one of the most debatable topics in philosophy and it is unavoidable. There have been attempts by classical and contemporary scholars to explain truth from different perspectives. Unfortunately, some of the attempts have led to other philosophical concerns.<sup>9</sup> Does it mean then that pursuing truth leads to nowhere? There has been argument that truth has been pursued over a protracted period of time, and yet what constitutes it still remains a mystery. The normative turn in the discussion of truth has been made more open than has ever been. The effort in trying to put the idea of truth in perspective more often than not generates the idea of relativism. Richard Campbell (2011) claims that “this consciousness of how diverse are human ways of thinking has led many to relativize truth itself” (p.9). It goes without saying that truth is inextricably linked to some of the fundamental questions in philosophy. But, could it be said that abandoning the notion of truth would indirectly mean discarding epistemological concepts like belief, reality and knowledge. Michael Lynch (2001) claims that it is not just difficult to do without the notion of truth, but the idea of truth muddies our philosophical issues (p.2). The issue in this thesis is not about the numerous conception of truth. However, as long as epistemology retains its repository capacity to house issues of belief, knowledge, and reality, truth will remain intricately linked to these issues.

The problem to be addressed in this thesis is the claim that Rorty’s notion of truth is not similar to James’s. In a response to his critics, Rorty (1998) articulates the following; ““there is no truth,” What could that mean? Why should anybody say it? Actually, almost nobody (except

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<sup>8</sup> Medina & Wood (2005) are of the view that truth remains the more central topic in philosophy, and that the historical trajectory of philosophy captures ‘truth’ as the most fundamental philosophical notion, and the deliberation of that notion continues to occupy a special place (p.1). Medina & Wood (2005) continue to argue that “But the philosophical debate on truth has taken a new and distinctive turn in contemporary philosophy: a normative turn... What unifies these conversations and the different philosophical issues discussed in them is the normativity of truth. The question of the normative power of truth was brought to center-stage of philosophical debates on truth by philosophers such as Nietzsche and James who asked radical questions about the value of truth as a norm that guides our practices” (p.1)

<sup>9</sup> The other philosophical concerns here refer to the unsatisfactory responses given in an attempt by philosophers like Bertrand Russell, William P. Alston, Terence Horgan etc. to explain truth from different perspectives.

Wallace Stevens) does say it. But philosophers like me are often said to say it” (p.1). In the above excerpt, Rorty denies the claim made against him that he said there is no truth. For Rorty, truth could be appreciated in the context of expressing one’s solidarity to a view. James (1907) argues that “the truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea.” (p.201). Nonetheless, the likes of Campbell, Boffetti, Edel, Putnam and Razzaque as delineated above argued that Rorty’s notion of truth is not similar to James’s. Rorty’s critics<sup>10</sup> believe that Rorty’s rendition of the notion of truth does not support his claim to being a Jamesian. In a nutshell, critics of Rorty argue that his notion of truth is a digression from the pragmatic notion of truth popularized by James, and even in some instances a denial of epistemology. On the other hand, Rorty maintains the position that his notion of truth is consistent with the pragmatist conception of truth expressed by James. Is Rorty right that he promotes the traditional conception of truth, the type advanced by James or does he promote something different? This is the problem the study is set to investigate.

Basically, the purpose of this thesis is to make a comparative analysis of James’s and Rorty’s notions of truth, and then argue that Rorty’s notion of truth is similar to James’s.

The specific objectives of this study include:

- a. A survey of James’s conception of truth
- b. A survey of Rorty’s notion of truth
- c. Similarities and differences between James’s and Rorty’s conception of truth
- d. A comparative analysis of James’s and Rorty’s conception of truth
- e. The claim that Rorty’s notion of truth is not a deviation from James’s conception of truth

I intend to use a comparative method in discussing James’s and Rorty’s notion of truth.

This will mean bringing out the similarities and differences between James’s and Rorty’s notion

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<sup>10</sup> Critics here specifically refer to Boffetti, Campbell, Edel, Putnam and Razzaque.

of truth. The method will also include content analysis of the criticisms leveled against Rorty's conception of truth. Although there are some differences among the 'pragmatists' theory of truth, the scope of this thesis will center predominantly on James and Rorty. However, I will touch on the views of Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, Putnam and others as I discuss James's and Rorty's notions of truth. Let me reiterate that this thesis is not going to justify neither James's nor Rorty's pragmatic conception of truth but to argue a similarity.

Chapter two of this thesis will be a discussion about the claims in James's pragmatic notion of truth. I will begin the chapter with a brief explanation of pragmatism. I will briefly point out the difference between James's notion of pragmatism as a method and a theory of truth. This will be followed by a brief discussion on truth as a concept, and some difficulties with the explanations of truth. Then, I will delve into James's pragmatic notion of truth, the main issue in the chapter. James refers to Peirce as the originator of pragmatism, and for that matter, I will briefly discuss the explanations of truth vis-à-vis James's and Peirce's conceptions; For instance, Peirce (1878) has not been against objective truth. Peirce is of the view that objective truth could serve as the first reference point to other truths, as well as the starting point of an inquiry. James (1907) argues that holding on to objective truth inevitably creates a dogmatic and a rationalistic impression, which does not auger well for practical advancement of truth. In conclusion, I will recapitulate James's views about the pragmatic notion of truth.

In chapter three I will discuss Rorty's conception of truth. To begin with, I will look at how the deep-thinking impetus of Nietzsche, Dewey, Donald Davidson, Michael Dummett and Charles Darwin influenced Rorty's philosophical thought. It is to create a niche between the influences and Rorty's notion of truth. This will be followed by an account of Rorty's notion of truth. Rorty's views on truth are openly placed in the analysis he makes regarding 'some

philosophers' views'<sup>11</sup> on truth. Rorty's notion of truth will be categorized into two parts. The first part will constitute his view about reducing objectivity to solidarity. The second part will constitute what I call Rorty's four proclamations; a call for re-description, refutation of the correspondence theory of truth, the minimalist approach to truth and replacing truth with justification. I will conclude this chapter by way of a recap of Rorty's main points.

Chapter four will basically be a comparison between Rorty's and James's conception of truth. The approach will be to bring out the similarities and differences in James's and Rorty's notion of truth. I will conclude the chapter by reiterating the main points of similarities and differences.

Chapter five will center on a comparative analysis of the similarities and the differences between James's and Rorty's conception of truth. After the analysis, I will put forward arguments to support the view that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's, and that he is a Jamesian. Also, I will put forward possible philosophical issues that might pop up in this thesis for future consideration. I will conclude with a recap of the whole thesis, and a reaffirmation of the claim that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's pragmatic notion of truth.

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<sup>11</sup> Among these philosophers are the likes of Davidson, Nietzsche and Dewey.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A SURVEY OF WILLIAM JAMES'S PRAGMATIC CONCEPTION OF TRUTH

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss William James's pragmatic notion of truth. The goal is to clearly make a survey of James's account of truth. According to James, pragmatism is not just a method,<sup>12</sup> but also a theory of truth. In other words, pragmatism is a theory of meaning (more about Peirce's initiative) and a theory of truth. Susan Haack (1976) argues that most of the criticism against the pragmatist is in relation to James's pragmatic notion of truth (p.232). Haack (1976) maintains that a careful look renders the criticisms baseless (p.232). It is not the goal of the chapter to discuss the merit or demerit of Haack's claim. Neither is it to argue that James's conception of truth is without some difficulties. Attempts made at discussing truth more often than not lead to other issues of truth. It might be in perspective to say that no theory of truth is culprit-free in this respect. James's theory of truth is no exception. James's theory of truth operates within the scope of pragmatism. It will be prudent to explain very briefly pragmatism in relation to the notion of truth from the perspective of the classical pragmatists.<sup>13</sup> After that, I will try to give the context in which I intend to articulate James's notion of truth before delving into it. I will conclude the survey with a reiteration of what constitutes James's pragmatic notion of truth.

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<sup>12</sup> According to James (1907) "no particular result then, so far, but only an attitude of orientation, is what pragmatic method means (p.54)."

<sup>13</sup> Peirce, together with James, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller and Dewey are the classical pragmatists I refer to in this thesis. Their works on pragmatism became reference points for later pragmatists like Rorty, Putnam, Misak, Susan Haack etc. However my reference to classical pragmatism in this sense would be limited to Peirce and James.

## 2.2 Pragmatism and the notion of truth

Peirce's initial publications of November 1877 and January 1878 represent the zest for the scientific method of investigation and an imperceptible concept of pragmatism. Peirce (1877) argues that, "the irritation of doubt causes a struggle to attain a state of belief....with the doubt, therefore, the struggle begins, and with the cessation of doubt it ends. Hence, the sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion" (p.5). Peirce discusses four methods (tenacity, authority, scientific and the a priori method)<sup>14</sup> which are considerations in dealing with actions and beliefs. The scientific method is the most preferred method.<sup>15</sup> Peirce implicitly explains the principle of pragmatism, but explicitly expresses the notion of truth as an end in inquiry. James (1907) gives the etymology of the word pragmatism to be a Greek word which means action. According to James (1907), practice and practical are derivatives of the Greek word action (p.46). There is an agreement<sup>16</sup> on the view that the idea of pragmatism remains Peirce's own initiative, except Hamlyn<sup>17</sup> who argues otherwise. The dualistic explanation of pragmatism (as a method and a theory of truth) by James made Peirce to distance his conception of pragmatism from James's and others who share in James's conception as well. Peirce gives a responds to those who

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<sup>14</sup> Peirce explains his four methods in the following manner: (a) the method of tenacity is the kind of method whereby a person holds on to his belief without wavering with the conviction that what he holds on to will be entirely satisfactory, (b) the method of authority is the method that the will of the state acts; it is basically the means of safeguarding political, theological and social norms, (c) the a priori method in essence is for one to think as he or she is supposed to think, (d) method of scientific investigation, according to Peirce, may have to do with situation whereby the known and observed fact is started with, leading to the unknown.

<sup>15</sup> Peirce strongly prefers the method of science which in his view far outweighs the other methods in distinguishing a right way from a wrong way. Peirce's idea of the scientific method is shrouded in some kind of uncertainty; it is difficult to tell exactly, based on his explanation, what the scientific method really is. What he refers to as the method of science is what he uses in articulating how inquiry (scientific inquiry) should be used in the settlement of opinion. He discusses his idea of the scientific method more explicitly in his paper, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear". Philosophically, it is difficult to define exactly what science is. Ladyman (2002) says, "we may not yet know how to define science or how to tell whether certain contentious activities or beliefs count as scientific or not, but we certainly have lots of examples of sciences (p.4)."

<sup>16</sup> James acknowledges Peirce to be the originator of the idea of pragmatism. James (1907) unequivocally claims that his special application of Peirce's principle of pragmatism to religion moves it from an unnoticed position to that of an openly placed one (p.47).

<sup>17</sup> Haack (1976) claims that Hamlyn holds the view that the whole idea of pragmatism did not emanate from Peirce; rather James remains the originator of it (p.231). Haack vehemently articulates her disagreement with Hamlyn in this regard, in her paper "The Pragmatists' Theory".

subjected pragmatism to ridicule; he proposes a replacement for pragmatism. Peirce's replacement is pragmaticism<sup>18</sup>. In recent times, quite a number of philosophers and non-philosophers have tenaciously put to use pragmatism in diverse ways, from religious matters to philosophical issues, from scientific explications to political matters and ideological persuasions.

### 2.2.1 The notion of truth

Lynch (2001) claims that, “the most venerable realist view is certainly the *correspondence theory of truth*, the view that a proposition is true just when it agrees or corresponds to reality” (p.9) (italics by James). James's (1907) issue with the correspondence theory<sup>19</sup> has to do with the understanding of terms agreement<sup>20</sup> and reality<sup>21</sup> (p.198). For instance, Russell<sup>22</sup> (2001) argues that “a belief is true when there is a corresponding fact, and is false when there is no corresponding fact” (p.24). Besides Russell, there are other perspectives<sup>23</sup> of the correspondence

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<sup>18</sup> Peirce expresses his dissatisfaction at the way the word pragmatism has been used by other which opens it up to ridicule. Peirce (1905) asserts that “...the word begins to be met with occasionally in the literary journals, where it gets abused in the merciless way that words have to expect when they fall into literary clutches. Sometimes the matters of the British have effloresced in scolding at the word as ill – chosen, ill – chosen, that is, to express some meaning that it was rather designed to exclude” (p.165). In furthering his new stance, Peirce adds that “... the writer, finding his battling “pragmatism” so promoted, feels that it is time to kiss his child good-by and relinquish it to its higher destiny; while to serve the precise purpose of expressing the original definition, he begs to announce the birth of the word “pragmaticism,” which is ugly enough to be safe from kidnapers” (p. 165-166).

<sup>19</sup> Correspondence theory of truth basically refers to the idea that a claim or statement is true when they correspond to reality.

<sup>20</sup> James's conception of agreement is different from that of the correspondence theory of truth. I discussed James notion of agreement on page 21.

<sup>21</sup> James's pragmatist conception of reality is a composition of three different ideas. I discussed James's notion of reality on pages 19 and 20.

<sup>22</sup> In addition, Russell (2001) asserts three points to necessitate the nature of truth. The theory of truth must firstly admit its opposite, falsehood. Secondly the theory of truth must be based on the existence of a belief. Finally, the theory of truth should have something external to the belief. Russell's Correspondence theory is the agreement between parts of belief and fact.

<sup>23</sup> Other perspectives in this thesis refer to J.L. Austin's version of correspondence theory in his paper entitled “Truth”, likewise William P. Alston in “A Realist Conception of Truth,” as well as Terence Horgan with “Contextual Semantics and Metaphysical Realism: Truth as Indirect Correspondence”. Austin (2001) takes correspondence to be a correlation between a complete statement and full fact. He argues against Russell's idea of correspondence being structural (p. 25-40). (2) Contrary to Austin's understanding of correspondence, Alston (2001) argues the separation of the meaning of a thing from the property of the thing (p.41-66). (3) Seeing the issues with Austin's and Alston's position, Horgan (2001) argues in favour of a traditional view of truth. Horgan calls his notion

theory of truth. Apart from the correspondence theory, the coherence theory<sup>24</sup> is no exception to the problems associated with the idea of truth. Lynch (2001) argues that for a coherent theorist like Brand Blanshard,<sup>25</sup> a judgment is true when and only when it is a member of an ideally coherent system of judgments (p.99). There are other versions<sup>26</sup> of coherence theory. The deflationary<sup>27</sup> view is another way of expressing the notion of truth. It entails the deflation of truth, and as a matter of fact the deflationary approach has different versions<sup>28</sup>. The deflationists have it that truth is a less important concept. Rorty agrees with this position. This view of the deflationist runs through Rorty's attempt in addressing his notion of truth, together with his Davidsonian view<sup>29</sup>.

### 2.3 Clarification of terminology

James uses the phrase 'we pragmatists' within a context. I will explain how I intend to use it in relation to his notion of truth. James's pragmatism, and by extension his notion of truth, is swamped with a generalization of the phrase 'we pragmatists'. For instance, James creates a

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'contextual semantics'; Truth for Horgan is about semantic being correct within a world setting. This makes Horgan's view non-epistemic (p.67-96). This shows the variations in the correspondence theory of truth.

<sup>24</sup> Coherence ultimately aims at creating a set of beliefs that all cohere with all the other beliefs.

<sup>25</sup> Generally speaking Blanshard sees the traditional conception of truth, the correspondence theory, to be problematic. As a coherentist, Blanshard focuses on the correlation between thought and reality; truth happens when thought is not at variance with its object (103-122).

<sup>26</sup> The other versions of coherence theory in this case refer to Ralph C.S. Walker's paper "The Coherence theory" in which Walker asserts truth to be the coherence of beliefs and not abstract propositions (p.123-158). Also Linda Martin Alcoff makes a case for the coherence theory of truth in "The Case for Coherence" where she argues that truth is not entirely subjective nor absolutely objective but in agreement with what is out there than to itself. Alcoff calls her notion '*immanent realism*' (p.159-182).

<sup>27</sup> Lynch (2001) asserts that the correspondence and the coherence theories look at the inner nature of truth, whereas deflationists believe in the non-existing nature of truth. The corpus of the deflationist theory of truth, according to Lynch (2001), is premised on two points; truth has no nature nor semantic.

<sup>28</sup> The different versions of the deflationary approach here refer to include: (1) Frank Ramsey's "classical redundancy theory" which asserts that truth ascriptions connote nothing. Basically they are superfluous additions. Truth ascriptions add nothing to propositions (p.433-446): (2). Strawson's performative theory argues that truth ascriptions are simply command statement (p.447-472): (3). Disquotationalism basically refers to a view by Quine that states that truth abandons quotation marks (p. 473-482): (4). The Fourth is Horwich's minimalist theory; this view of the deflations maintains truth to be reducible to propositional content (p. 559-579).

<sup>29</sup> Davidsonian view is the proclamation of Donald Davidson's notion of truth that truth is less an important concept, and it is this articulation that suggests his issue with some conceptions of the pragmatist notion of truth.

contrast between pragmatists and intellectualists<sup>30</sup>, and sometimes between pragmatists and rationalists. James's use of the phrase 'we pragmatists' poses a problem in relation to his notion of truth. It is difficult to tell whether James's use of the phrase 'we pragmatists' refers to himself and pragmatists of his time, or is applicable to future pragmatists as a whole. At the same time, it is equally difficult to tell whether James is referring to himself, as well as Peirce and Dewey<sup>31</sup>, his peers. There are differences among pragmatists regarding truth, especially between James and Peirce. The use of 'we pragmatist' by James has to be examined. Granted that his use of the phrase 'we pragmatists' refers to himself and Peirce, it cannot be argued that the phrase 'we pragmatists' would be accepted by Peirce. Peirce argues that James's conception of pragmatism is a bit absurd because of his notion of truth. The explanation used by James, in relation to 'we pragmatists,' is somewhat confusing. To be charitable to James, it could be argued that James's use of the phrase 'we pragmatists' refers to himself and pragmatists like Dewey and Ferdinand C. S. Schiller who in his view share his conception of truth. That might be a good point to hold on to because James sees himself sharing tremendous views about truth with Dewey. However, It is important to state that Dewey has his own reservation about some of James's views about truth. Dewey (1908) expresses dissatisfaction with James's claim about him saying that truth is what gives satisfaction. Again, I will refer to James's notion of truth as having the idea of pluralism. What I mean by the notion of pluralism, or being pluralistic, is that James's explanation of truth is diverse. In light of this difficulty, I will assume that the phrase 'we pragmatists' refers to James and those who share in his conception of truth. This will be my working definition of the phrase 'we pragmatists' in James's notion of truth.

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<sup>30</sup>Generally speaking, James used the term intellectualists to refer to non-pragmatist philosophers. By extension, rationalist are also a part of James's qualification of Intellectualists.

<sup>31</sup>Although Dewey is seen as one of the earliest pragmatist, he aligns himself more to James's conception of truth but with some modifications as well.

## 2.4 Dilemma with Traditional conception of truth

Let me begin by discussing how James expresses the traditional conception of truth. Truth as correspondence to or agreement with reality is a theory that has been used both in the traditional<sup>32</sup> and post<sup>33</sup> traditional circle. There has not been clarity on ‘the version of the correspondence theory of truth’<sup>34</sup> James uses. James is just very particular about the phrase ‘corresponds to reality’. James (1907) articulates that, “Truth, as any dictionary will tell you, is a property of certain of our ideas. It means their ‘agreement,’ as falsity means their disagreement, with ‘reality’ ” (p.198). For James, the definition of truth from the dictionary could be accepted by the pragmatist and the intellectualist. Yet, James foresees a problem arising from what agreement and reality<sup>35</sup> could mean. Amidst this problem, James makes an effort to go beyond the frontier of a dictionary definition of truth, or what is traditionally referred to as the correspondence theory of truth. I will return to James’s discussion on reality and agreement later in this chapter. But for now, I have a couple of things to discuss.

Primarily, the correspondence theory of truth is anchored on the view that truth is the agreement with reality. Agreement here means to copy. James (1907) argues that “the popular

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<sup>32</sup> Traditional here basically refers to Aristotle’s conception of truth; his conception is predicated on the view that truth correspondence to reality. There is the view that Aristotle never called his idea of truth the correspondence theory of truth. In fact, Paolo Crivelli thinks otherwise; Crivelli (2004) argues that “...there is a case for doubting that Aristotle ever addressed the problem of what items are bearers of truth or falsehood. However, even if Aristotle never addressed this problem, it is still worthwhile considering what the items are which Aristotle does in fact speak of as true or false” (p.45).

<sup>33</sup> Traditional here basically refers to Aristotle’s conception of truth; his conception is predicated on the view that truth correspondence to reality. There is the view that Aristotle never called his idea of truth the correspondence theory of truth. In fact, Paolo Crivelli thinks otherwise; Crivelli (2004) argues that “...there is a case for doubting that Aristotle ever addressed the problem of what items are bearers of truth or falsehood. However, even if Aristotle never addressed this problem, it is still worthwhile considering what the items are which Aristotle does in fact speak of as true or false” (p.45).

<sup>34</sup> It is difficult to tell whether James sticks exactly to what is arguably referred to as an understanding drawn from the Aristotelian notion of truth, or the Kantian version of the correspondence theory of truth.

<sup>35</sup> In this case, according to James, reality is taken generally as a thing or an object that our ideas agree with. This is similar to the deductions he made from the lexicon definition of truth.

notion is that a true idea must copy its reality” (p.199). This popular notion has been, for the most part, James’s problem with the correspondence theory of truth. James’s view is that the notion of agreement or copy, and the idea of reality of the correspondence theory are inadequate. The notion that true ideas must copy their ‘reality’ is one that James has come to hardly accept, especially the idea of copying non-sensible things. Certainly, James (1907) argues the view that “our true ideas of sensible things do indeed copy them” (p.199). Again, it is James’s position that the idea of producing a copy of a sensible thing like a yonder clock on a wall is easy to do when we shut our eyes and then think of the clock. James’s difficulty is with how to present a copy of the idea of a non-sensible thing, like a spring’s elasticity in the clock (p.199). If what defines the correspondence theory of truth is the idea of agreement with reality, then James’s qualification of an idea of a spring’s elasticity should be a problem for the correspondence theorist as well. For James, this is a challenge to the widespread notion that true ideas do copy reality. James claims that the idea of copying is limited to only sensible things: it has no room for non-sensible things. The other perspectives of the correspondence theory, I alluded to on page 15, face similar problems in explaining correspondence to or agreeing with reality. Rorty does not just criticize, but also debunks the correspondence theory. Although not mentioned emphatically in James’s pragmatic conception of truth, James’s attitude towards the traditional view, the view that a true idea must copy its reality, suggests a problem of inadequacy with the correspondence theory. The question to ask here is did James call for the replacement of the correspondence conception of truth? I think that James did not explicitly call for the replacement of the correspondence theory. What James did, I think, is to show the inadequacy with the correspondence theory of truth. Will that amount to a call for a replacement? I think it does because James gives his own pragmatist conception of agreement and reality, which differs from the correspondence theory.

## **2.5 James's Explanation of Truth**

### *2.5.1 James's notion of reality*

Going beyond the notion of the correspondence theory, James explains how terms like reality and agreement are to be understood. Of course, James did not condemn the correspondence theory out rightly just as Rorty did, but in the same breath he did not take all that comes with the correspondence theory of truth hook, line and sinker. James's idea of truth is a broader notion, more of an affair of leading to than just accepting that true ideas copy their reality. Reality, according to James, should not be limited to just matters of fact, whereby a true idea will only copy its reality; it also revolves around relation between ideas. In order to distance his conception of reality from that of the correspondence theory of truth, James (1907) proclaims three epistemic possibilities of reality. James (1907) asserts that 'reality' could mean either of the three things: concrete facts or abstract things, relations perceived intuitively between them, and thirdly as things that our new ideas must no less take account of, the whole body of other truths already in our possession (p.204). Likewise, James (1907) argues that the beliefs verified concretely by a person form the super structure. For Rorty, when reality is taken to mean the abstract and a relation between them, it becomes difficult to understand how to copy or perceive them based on the understanding of the correspondence theory. But for James, relations among purely mental ideas are another sphere where true and false beliefs obtain. Definitions like 3 and 4 make 7 are mental objects. These kinds of relations need no sense verification, their perception is obvious, says James. Furthering this view, James (1907) argues that these ideas, like the hidden workings of a clock, dates and distance are predominantly the truths we live by; they form a chunk of truth we hold on to (p.206-207). James maintains that these kinds of ideas work perfectly well, and cannot be captured by the correspondence theory of truth. These kinds of

ideas cannot have a copy, but they work in James's corpus of truth, his pluralistic truth. The idea of James's reality is not a single entity; it is diverse. Again, to correspond or to agree with a thing has a different connotation in James's corpus of truth. How does James conceptualize agreement?

### *2.5.2 James's conception of agreement*

James (1907) argues that "To 'agree' in the widest sense with a reality *can only mean to be guided either straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed*"(p.212) (italics by James). James (1907) argues that as long as nothing contradictory on the part of reality comes to interfere, then we are more likely to be guided to it (p.213). Therefore, to agree with reality or an object is to be guided to it. It entails the affair of being guided. Thus, agreement with reality goes beyond just the idea of copying. At some point, copying might suffice, but the necessary thing here has to do with the guided process.

James (1907) maintains that "to copy a 'reality' is, indeed, one very important way of agreeing with it, but it is far from being essential. The essential thing is the process of being guided" (p.213). There is no limitation to what agreement is, be it practical or intellectual. What stands for James is the guidance in the process, provided it does not lead to frustration. The process of being guided is quite ambiguous and it poses a philosophical difficulty. It could entail something in the making being guided. If there is a process being guided, then something has to do the guiding to a point. What does the guiding must also be guided at a point, which brings in an infinite regress.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Infinite regress is a kind of wrong thinking in which a claim presupposes another claim and that presupposes another claim and so on.

### 2.5.3 *Difference in the appreciation of reality*

Although both James and Peirce explain the importance of the practical implication of reality; it is obvious that their practical understanding of reality is not the same. Whereas James gives three scenarios<sup>37</sup> as instances where reality could obtain practically, Peirce's account of reality points solely at the end of an inquiry; this is what reality is for Peirce. Peirce (1878) says, "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by truth, and the object represented in the real" (p.15). The idea of looking at reality and agreement in the wider sense is to indicate the pluralistic nature of truth which the correspondence theory may not have entertained. James's notion of truth is pluralistic, whereas that cannot be said about Peirce's. James's notion of truth is an advocacy of pluralism of truth. The idea of truth in the plural sense is seen in James's (1907) articulation that "our account of truth is an account of truths in plural, of processes of leading, realized *in rebus*, and having only this quality in common, that they *pay*" (p.218). I have attempted to elucidate how James articulates the idea of an 'agreement' and 'reality'. Now let me discuss the components of James's notion of truth.

### 2.5.4 *James's constituents of Truth*

Could there be a better replacement for the notion that truth means an agreement with reality or object whereby our ideas must copy their object. After expressing his dissatisfaction about the correspondence theory of truth, James attempts to clarify the issue of truth. The limitation that comes with the idea that truth is correspondence to reality makes James argue that the idea of copying alone would not suffice. We must go beyond the idea of just copying. How could the pragmatists express their views of truth then? Moore (1907-1908) claims that James was anxious to point to three things as the representation of his truth; connection between truth and

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<sup>37</sup> Refer to page 20

verification or utility, objection to ‘static’ or ‘immutability’ of truth and truth being man-made (p.33). James (1907) argues that the pragmatist puts forward the following articulation: “ ‘Grant an idea or belief to be true,’ it says, ‘what concrete difference will its being true make in any one’s actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experience will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth’s cash-value’ in experiential terms?” (p.200). For James, this is how truth could be explained. It is about the practical significance. However, James was quick to add the view that reality as non-concrete terms make it prudent to express truth in terms of relations between notions which are not concrete. There are philosophical deliberations about the possibility to make distinct what is concrete from what is abstract. Presumably, what is abstract connotes a metaphysical claim, whereas the concrete is of the physical. The idea of putting together the concrete and the non-concrete concepts could be one worrying aspect of James’s explanation of truth. It is a kind of dualism at work. It is, however not to get into the nitty-gritty of the discussions on what is concrete as opposed to what is abstract. The discussion of the concrete and the abstract is a discussion on its own. For now I will assume for the sake of argument that James was right in his articulation of concrete or empirical and the abstract or the non-material.

James presents his notion of truth in a pluralistic manner. James (1907) articulates that “*true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are the ones that we cannot.* That is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that, therefore, is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known-as” (p.201) (italics by James). It has nothing to do with the correspondence of an object or something outside our world. It is not the view of James that truth is an inert static relation that is independent of our world. Instead, what James embarks on in his attempt to postulate a theory of truth is to reject the idea that truth

is independent of our world of experience. Regarding truth and the world of experience, James (1908) discusses two forms of truth; existential truth and essential truth. Essential truth presupposes the idea of an essence of truth. The idea of an essence makes truth an intrinsic property. This for James is against the pragmatist account of truth. Existential truth is devoid of essence; it talks about a subjective effort by man to make meaning of things in the world. I will discuss the essentialist and the existential truth in my analysis in chapter five.

James (1907) explains that the thesis he has to defend is that “the truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it” (p.201). For James, (1907) “truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes true*, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its *verifi-cation*. Its validity is the process of its *valid-ation*” (p.201) (italics by James). Again, James (1907) maintains that truth is an affair of leading and that “the function of agreeable leading is what we mean by an idea’s verification” (p. 202). It is an affair of leading because possessing truth is not an end in itself. It is a step towards other importance fulfillments. James expresses the view that there are situations that could be termed indirect or potentially verified processes and full verification-processes and all this could be termed true. Elsewhere James (1907) maintains that, “truth for us is simply a collective name for verification processes, just as health, wealth, strength, etc., are names for other processes connected with life, and also pursued because it pays to pursue them” (p.218).

Pratt criticizes James’s identification of truth with verification and verifiability. Pratt (1907) argues that James’s verification is about verifying verification (p.321). However, James calls it a process of leading. Could Pratt’s position mean that James confuses a process of leading with verification? Or could Pratt’s be another way of showing James’s corpus of truth? Rorty, on the other hand, asserts some views in relation to James’s idea of verification. There is a

difference between assimilating an idea and verifying an idea. Perhaps James's idea of assimilating and corroborating could be captured in his indirect verification process. The indirect verification process has to do with what we cannot verify straight away, but can rely on other truths that people have, to be able to ascertain the truth of a claim. For James, truth is made, and it would be wrong to say it obtains absolutely. The idea of an absolute objective truth has no place in James's conception of truth. However, James (1907) argues that truth can go into cold-storage, and can be brought back when needed (p.203-204). For James, it does not mean stored truths are absolute in the sense that they are objective. But come to think of it, the idea that truth can go into cold storage and remains there until it is needed can't be brushed away like that. It means truth cannot be destroyed. If it cannot be destroyed, then it could as well be objective to be able to go into some kind of storage. There is an issue here with this articulation of James. Peirce takes quite a comfortable position regarding objective truth. In Peirce's view, if objective truth exists, it does help start the beginning of an inquiry. The idea of an affair of leading, the idea of creating truth, is the common trait in James's (1907) various explications of truth. Of course, James's (1907) view of truth being an affair of agreeable leading, which happens to an idea, is what James attributes to pragmatists.

Finally, James summarizes his notion of truth as follows: (a) the expedient in our way of thinking, (b) as what works, (c) as what is good and (d) as what gives satisfaction. These expressions by James are ways of expressing the idea of an agreeable lead. James's truth is not an enclosed system; such that an idea is made true. James (1907) puts forward the assertion that *“the true, to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as ‘the right’ is only the expedient in the way of our behaving”* (p. 222). Expedient could mean helpful or useful. I think ‘expedient’ is quite a loose word because of how James expresses it. However,

there is the possibility of it being subjected to various interpretations. One could argue that ‘expedient’ in this sense connotes an affair of leading; an underlining trait that suggests practical significance of his notion of truth. James’s idea of expedient, whether understood to mean helpful or useful, will never accommodate the idea of an objective truth. But James did not stop at that; he (1907) claims, “expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course...” (p.222). This could mean that truth is what is helpful or useful in almost all fashion. Russell (1910[1966]), criticizes James’s view that truth is the expedient in the way of our thinking. However, Putnam (1992) disagrees with Russell; he calls Russell’s view a misread of James just like how an equal misread of Wittgenstein was done (p.20). In addition, Putnam claims that “Russell ignored James’s ‘to put it very briefly’ and ‘in almost any fashion’ – obvious indication that what we have is a thematic statement, not an attempt to formulate a definition of ‘true’” (p.20). Again, Putnam (1992) claims that “Russell also substituted his own notion of what "expedient" is for James's, and ended up saying that James proposed the theory that "true" means "has good effects"-at which point all possibility of understanding what James was actually saying vanishes”(p.20).

For Schiller, truth is what works whereas Dewey says that truth is what gives satisfaction, according to James (p.234). What does James mean by truth is what works and what gives satisfaction? First of all, James (1907) sees the respective positions of Schiller and Dewey to be similar to his idea truth. However, Dewey (1908) disagrees with James’s representation of his view that truth is what gives satisfaction. Dewey (1908) argues, “...I may remark (apart from the fact that I do not think I ever said that truth is what gives satisfaction) that I have identified any satisfaction with the truth of an idea, save that satisfaction which arises when the idea as working hypothesis or tentative method is applied to prior existence in such a way as to fulfill

what it intends” (p.94). This may have been misinformation on the side of James. Nonetheless, what gives satisfaction would imply the idea of agreeable leading according to James. If the idea leads to a sort of satisfaction then that becomes true: truth is the ascription to the process that leads to satisfaction. According to James (1907), it is not the satisfaction that is true, but the process of agreeable leading to the satisfaction is what is referred to as truth. So consequently, it is the leading that brings about the ascription of truth to an idea.

In another breath and as part of his pluralistic account of truth James argues that truth is what is good. James (1907) attributes truth to one species of good (p.75). The issue here is whether the word truth is to be replaced with good, or whether James is creating a similarity between truth and good. Still, James (1907) insists that “*the true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons*” (p.76) (italics by James). For James (1907), the idea that truth is what is good entails the presupposition that true ideas are good in themselves (p.79). In other words, James is saying that an idea is true because it is good in the first place. Does it mean that the notion good is inherent in true ideas? Although this view by James forms part of his broader composition of truth, he has been criticized strongly on this point.

Similarly, truth as what works within James’s conception of truth necessitates the idea of an agreeable leading. Still within the Jamesian corpus of truth, if there is an agreeable leading to a conclusion without any interruption, then that would constitute what works for James. James explicitly articulates his notion of truth; he expresses his notion in a pluralistic manner. It is worth mentioning that the pluralistic explication of James’s notion of truth is characterized by practical importance. Practical importance is so much attached to James’s pragmatism as a theory of meaning and theory of truth. The idea of practical difference which James talks so

much about in his explanation of pragmatism is inextricably linked to the idea of practical importance. A difference must make a difference so that practical importance is achieved. The idea of practical importance is entertained by pragmatists. Just as James expresses what constitutes his notion of truth he articulates what is not his notion of truth in order to redress some criticisms against his positions of truth. Now, let me briefly articulate some of James's positions on what does not constitute his notion of truth.

#### *2.5.5 What is not James's notion of truth*

In responding to his critics, James (1908) claims that “the answer which pragmatism offers is intended to cover the most complete truth that can be conceived of, ‘absolute’ truth, if you like, as well as truth of the most relative and imperfect description” (p.2). The above quote is confusing considering the fact that James (1908) talks about absolute truth. But a careful look at the quote above suggest what James (1908) refers to as absolute truth; that is truth arrived at, and not necessarily putting forward a position in defense of absolute truth.

James asserts that pragmatism, and for that matter the pragmatic theory of truth, is not the rephrasing of positivism as his critics suggest. The likes of Cheryl Misak argued differently. According to Misak (2013), the notion that pragmatism and logical empiricism battled each other, resulting in the unfair treatment of pragmatism, is not a correct account of what transpired (p.373). Misak (2013) adds that right from the inception pragmatism positioned itself within the scope of logical positivism. However, Rorty will not agree with Misak's position on logical positivism and analytic philosophy in general. In fact Misak (2013) asserts that “Rorty was not just against analytic philosophy, but against philosophy in general...Rorty reconnects Dewey's linkage of pragmatism with culture and politics and tries to unhook pragmatism from

epistemology” (p.379). Misak may have reasons to believe that pragmatism and analytic philosophy do share some things, but James and Rorty do not think so.

Another refutation by James is that the fact that truth is what gives satisfaction does not mean truth becomes some kind of messy satisfaction. James (1908) claims that the idea of truth as what gives satisfaction is basically a process of agreeable lead. James (1908) says “the pragmatist calls satisfactions indispensable for truth-building, but expressly calls them insufficient unless reality be also incidentally led to” (p.8). Again, James finds very unfortunate against the pragmatist view that what pragmatists do is to provide ‘how’ we can arrive at truth and not what constitutes truth. However, James (1908) claims his conception of truth tells us both the what and the how in the sense that the how to arrive at truth tacitly involves what is truth (p.10). For James knowing how to arrive at something presupposes the idea of what that thing is. In terms of James’s notion of truth, the what and the how are inseparably linked.

James objects to the view that pragmatists ignore theoretical interest and only stick to ‘practical’. However, he admits that the pragmatists’ use of the term practical<sup>38</sup> which connotes an opposition to the theoretical is as a result of a sluggish expression of the meaning of practical. In respect of this, James (1908) asserts that “...our language evidently was too careless, for by ‘practical’ we were almost unanimously held to mean opposed to theoretical or genuinely cognitive...” (p.13). James admits the insufficient explanation of practical may have given problem to the symbiotic relation between truth and reality, and ultimately the disdaining of the pragmatic notion of truth. James pays attention to this problem and accounts for it. James

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<sup>38</sup> James argues that not only is the term ‘practical associated with an opposition to theoretical; there are two views associated with it as well. The first view according to James (1908) is that for ideas to be practical “their objects should be really there...” (p.13). The second view is what James (1908) argues to be Schillers’s and Dewey’s emphasis that “... unless it be germane to the ‘practical’ situation,— meaning by this the quite particular perplexity,— it is no good to urge it” (p.14). These views are part of the objections to the view that the pragmatists ignore the theoretical interest.

articulates two positions of truth in relation to what constitutes practical. Since practical difference is one of the similarities between James's and Rorty's conception of truth, I will do a discussion of what is 'practical' in my analysis in chapter five.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter starts with a very brief historical account of pragmatism from Peirce and James. This is to put into focus the leading figures in the historical trajectory of pragmatism. There is unanimity in accepting Peirce as the founder of pragmatism, whereas James is noted to have given a twist to the notion of truth and subsequently causing a lot of problems for pragmatism. James's notion of truth is a conceptual build up for his radical empiricism. Later he separates the concept of radical empiricism from pragmatism. Unfortunately, Rorty does not discuss radical empiricism in the writings of Rorty. Radical empiricism is one of the differences between Rorty and James. In discussing the pragmatic notion of truth, the correspondence theory was broadly discussed. The coherence theory and the deflationary views were briefly mentioned, alongside the reiteration of the position that all theories of truth have their own conceptual limitations.

William James advocates a notion of truth which seeks to bring out a practical difference, a difference which is not dogmatic, but pluralistic. James expresses the limitation that comes with the correspondence theory of truth. In addition, James articulates reality to be a composition of three things, and agreement going beyond the conception of copying. James argues the view that agreement with reality is better appreciated when expressed as an agreeable lead. James stresses that truth is not an inert property but that truth it is created. An idea is made true. Truth is what works and it gives satisfaction. Broadly speaking, truth is an affair of agreeable lead and the expedient in our way of thinking. James's notion of truth pays attention to utility. James's truth is pluralistic. Thus, James's truth is a corpus of truths. It could be argued that relativism can hardly

be distanced from James's notion of truth. If truth is what works, then what works could be relative to time and space. I will look at relativism in chapter four as I discuss the similarities and differences between James and Rorty.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A SURVEY OF RICHARD RORTY'S PRAGMATIC CONCEPTION OF TRUTH

#### 3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to articulate Rorty's position on truth. I will start by presenting some historical influences on Rorty. This is to help bring to bear the historical antecedent of Rorty's philosophical ideas about truth. I will discuss Rorty's conception of truth by articulating two major issues. In the first part, I will discuss the historical context (influences and the idea of a human community) which Rorty claims to be grounded in solidarity. The claim about solidarity will be discussed with respect to a very brief consideration of the pragmatist ideas of Peirce and James. The purpose is to show how these classical perspectives shaped Rorty's pragmatic notion of truth. This will also prepare the ground for articulating Rorty's view against James's view when I begin to look at their similarities and differences in chapter four. The second part constitutes what I call Rorty's four proclamations; (a) a call for re-description, (b) refutation of the correspondence theory of truth, (c) the minimalist approach to truth, and (d) replacing truth with justification. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by reiterating Rorty's main position on truth.

#### 3.2 Philosophers who influenced Rorty's writing

In his early writings on truth, Nietzsche (2005) claims there is no truth, and that truth is just an illusion (pp.14-20). This Nietzschean claim is an attack on the traditional correspondence theory of truth. Being influenced by Nietzsche, Heidegger opines this Nietzschean perspective as well. Heidegger (2001) rejects the idea of correspondence truth because of our inability to comprehend what correspondence means (pp.299-300). Again, Heidegger argues that truth is the disclosure of beings which leads to an openness. The first part of Heidegger's claim is accepted by Rorty, but

the second has no place in Rorty's conception of truth. In "Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth," Dewey offers his idea of truth as 'warranted assertibility'<sup>39</sup>. For Dewey, the notion of warranted assertibility is in accordance with the idea that only true beliefs are knowledge. Articulating his position regarding the notion of truth, Davidson (1996) states that although philosophers like Moore, Russell, Frege and Tarski maintained truth as an indefinable concept, we can undoubtedly say something about it in relation to other concepts. There is nothing mysterious about truth (p.265). In the same manner, Davidson claims that there is not much to say about truth, and that truth has more of a disquotational<sup>40</sup> use. This is one of the acceptable positions for Rorty. In fact, Rorty frequently articulates the view there is not much to say about truth. Furthermore, Davidson puts forward the idea that all that is entailed in 'a theory of truth' is an expression of truth conditions of sentence. For Davidson, truth is a 'nonepistemic' concept. Also, Dummett (2001) argues that realism makes the conception of truth quite mysterious. Rorty shares Dummett's antirealist sentiment. In addition, Quine (2001) expresses the view that truth is disquotational. Rorty (1991) agrees with the disquotational use of truth against an explanatory use of truth in offering a useful pragmatic notion of truth (p.127).

Rorty acknowledges the philosophical views of James and Nietzsche regarding truth. In fact, Rorty claims to be a Jamesian and a Nietzschean.<sup>41</sup> In showing his connection, Rorty (1998) expresses the view that "... we have learned from (Nietzsche and James, among others) to be suspicious of the 'appearance-reality distinction'" (p.1). Again, Rorty (1998) maintains that followers of James and Nietzsche (including himself) deny that truth is correspondence to reality

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<sup>39</sup>Dewey suggests a replacement for concepts like truth, belief and knowledge. Dewey (1941) asserts the following, "As I wrote in my *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, "what has been said helps explain why the term "warranted assertibility" is preferred to the terms belief and knowledge. It is free from the ambiguity of the latter terms" (p.169).

<sup>40</sup>Disquotationalism is one of the deflationist views about truth.

<sup>41</sup> Rorty's claim about being a Nietzschean is in respect of Nietzsche's notion of truth.

(p.3). Davidson, like James and Nietzsche, influences Rorty's philosophical views about the nature of truth. Rorty (1998) shows his intellectual indebtedness to Davidson, after realizing from him that the nature of truth cannot be specified (p.3). Just as Darwinism influenced the revolutionary thinking of James which reflects his notion of truth, Rorty shares in the evolutionary thinking of Darwin as well. That is to say that Rorty (1999) accepts Darwin's claim that language is the most important tool to man which encourages discourse rather than truth seeking (p.64).

### **3.3 Reducing objectivity to solidarity**

Now I will be discussing two points. The first will be to present Rorty's views on the historical context of understanding the human community in relation to the thriving of human knowledge. The second point will look at Rorty's views on the classical pragmatist position. It is expected that Rorty's views on the classical pragmatist approach to truth will place him closer to two of his predecessors (James and Dewey) in relation to truth.

Rorty (1991) argues that the human community is the only community with a reflective capability structure, and the will to make informed choices (p. 21). The informed choices are what Rorty calls the human solidarity. It is a kind of solidarity that is rooted in ethnocentrism according to Rorty. Rorty argues that his ethnocentric view is far away from relativism; it is not relativistic. Aside Rorty's (1989) understanding of human solidarity, there is what Rorty calls the traditional philosophical understanding of human solidarity, and this according to him refers to something within the human being called essential humanity (p.189). The traditional philosophical conception of human solidarity in Rorty's (1989) view entails ideas like essence, nature and foundation, and these do not represent his conception of human solidarity (p.189).

Rorty is of the view that foundationalism and the issues of essence are not instrumental in human narratives. How does Rorty explain his notion of human solidarity?

In his *Objectivity, relativism, and truth: philosophical papers (Vol.1)*, Rorty explains two primary ways in which human beings try to give sense to their lives in a larger context (p.21). Firstly, they tell stories of their contribution to a community, and secondly, they see themselves having a relation to a nonhuman reality. Rorty (1991) argues that stories of their contribution to their community epitomize desire for solidarity, whereas conceptualizing a relation between themselves and a nonhuman reality indicates the desire for objectivity. Solidarity, in Rorty's (1991) view, has to do with unity in beliefs; it brings about bonds of affection (p.22). On the contrary, 'the desire for objectivity'<sup>42</sup> in Rorty's view necessitates the eagerness of wanting to go beyond the immediate surroundings and the need for an attachment to something far greater, something greater than the human narrative and outside the community's accepted practices. Rorty (1991) describes this craving for objectivity as the attempt to find sense in one's existence by turning away from solidarity to objectivity (p.22).

In addition, Rorty argues that the idea of putting objectivity over solidarity culminates into the search for truth; in other words, there is an objective truth out there which is independent of us. Rorty thinks that this way of thinking has been a tradition in western culture.<sup>43</sup> Again, Rorty (1991) argues that what has been for the most part a central focus in western tradition has been the idea of truth as a thing to be pursued for its own sake (p.21). Truth becomes an end in itself and not a means to an end. Rorty's persistent reduction of objectivity to solidarity is to give

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<sup>42</sup> The desire for objectivity, as Rorty expresses it, means that our concepts, ideas and beliefs are to be seen vis-à-vis some kind of transcendental notion or belief. It could also mean that objective notion or belief must be common and must run through to all human communities. Rorty (1991) observes that desire for objectivity "centers on around the assumption that we must step outside our community long enough to examine it in the light of something which transcends it, that which it has in common with every other actual and possible human community.

<sup>43</sup> Western culture here refers to, as Rorty (1991) seems to claim, the way to get beyond skepticism by way of envisaging a common goal of humanity. This western tradition brought into existence the idea of creating a distinction between, in Rorty's (1991) view, knowledge and opinion, and appearance and reality.

an impetus to the refutation of the correspondence theory of truth. Of course, the likes of Nietzsche and James argue the emptiness of the correspondence theory of truth, but Rorty unequivocally presents his rejection in a rigid manner.

Rorty (1991) refers to those who wish to ground solidarity in objectivity as realists, and these realists conceptualize truth to be correspondence to reality. This suggests a metaphysical relation between beliefs and objects in order to differentiate true from false beliefs (p.22). Rorty argues that those who ground solidarity in objectivity stick to the justification that a belief does not necessarily depend on solidarity among members of a group, rather it depends on a natural source, a metaphysical reality that is independent of us. Rorty (1991) asserts that those who argue for the reduction of objectivity to solidarity belong to the group of people called pragmatists (p.22). The pragmatists, Rorty (1991) argue, do not require metaphysics or an epistemology. The pragmatists open themselves up to changing circumstances (p.22). Rorty associates himself to those who see objectivity to be reducible to solidarity, so he is a pragmatist for that matter. Rorty (1999) makes an interesting observation in relation to a kind of classification between the classical pragmatists like Peirce, James and Dewey, and neopragmatist<sup>44</sup> like Putnam and Davidson (p.35). The difference or what set them apart, in Rorty's view, is the so-called linguistic turn<sup>45</sup>. The separation between the classical and the neoclassical pragmatist was a result of a revolutionary change, whereby the point about perceptual experience<sup>46</sup> was put aside, and attention was given to language.

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<sup>44</sup> I referred to Putnam and Davidson as neopragmatist. Rorty does not consider himself a neopragmatist.

<sup>45</sup> 'Linguistic turn' as used by Rorty refers to the shift from the classical empiricist empiricism to that of the logical positivist.

<sup>46</sup> Rorty used the word 'experience' to qualify the experiential conception of classical empiricists like Locke, Berkeley and Hume. The Lockean experience is made up of two things; sensation and reflection, whereas the Humean experience constitute impression and ideas.

### **3.4 Rorty's four proclamations**

Regarding his conception of truth, Rorty does four things. Firstly, in order to address the misconceptions and misrepresentation in philosophy, Rorty proposes the idea of re-description in the way philosophy is done; a process which captures the human narrative. Secondly, Rorty rejects the correspondence theory of truth, and tacitly does the same to the coherence theory of truth. Thirdly, Rorty presents a deflationary view of truth in a cautionary way in which he introduces the idea of a vocabulary of use. In other words, truth could be appreciated in a minimalist and disquotational sense. The reason is that truth is just an expression and has no nature of its own; it is just a vocabulary to be used in differentiating between more useful and less useful beliefs. Finally, Rorty expresses the idea of justification as a better replacement for truth. The four claims are what I will discuss in relation to Rorty's notion of truth.

#### *3.4.1 A call for re-description*

In *Contingency, irony and solidarity*, Rorty discusses a paradigm shift over some two hundred years. The shift is marked by a development regarding human imagination which captures the notion that truth is rather made, and not found (p.3). The above historical account is the precedent on which Rorty builds his idea of re-description. In elucidating the paradigm shift, Rorty (1989) articulates how the French revolution was characterized by the substitution of vocabulary of social relation together with that of social institution (p.3). In the same breath and within the same scope of time, according to Rorty (1989), there was a revolutionary thinking of going beyond the limitation put on art (idea of copying what is there) (p.3). The revolution allowed the romantic poets to represent their creative imagination of things as they felt about it (p.3). Rorty (1989) thinks that was an achievement of a cultural hegemony in Europe, fashioned by the French revolution and the romantic poets' creative imagination (p.3). By presenting the

above, Rorty tries to present a picture of how the human narrative has not been a stagnated episode in search for truth, but rather an organic one. Truth being an organic concept nurtures the idea of practical importance. With the idea of practical importance comes the notion of what is more useful and less useful.

Rorty categorizes the activities of science into two positions. On one hand, Rorty (1989) repudiates the kind of science that seeks to arrive at reality (p.4). On the other hand, he agrees with the kind of scientific view that sees science as part of human activity through inventing human descriptions of the world which are quite expedient for the purposes of forecasting and adjusting what happen in our world (p.4). For Rorty (1989), the world is out there but we cannot say truth is out there (p.4). The reason being that the proclamation of truth is done by the use of sentences; sentences are human creations (p.4). Rorty argues that little has been done about demystification of truth. According to Rorty (1989), both Hegel and Kant have not done much in advancing the view that truth is not out there for human beings to go searching for; instead truths are the creations of human beings (p.4). Rorty argues that much can be learnt from the cultural hegemony that once happened to change history in Europe. It is on this basis that Rorty thinks that re-description of things will go a long way to disentangling the whole idea of truth as correspondence to reality. Also, Rorty thinks that re-description will be in harmony with changes in the human narrative which is organic. Rorty uses his argument for re-description of things to debunk the whole conception of the correspondence theory of truth. Not everyone will agree to Rorty's claim about re-description of things. According to Rorty & Engel (2007), Engel thinks that some kinds of re-description may lead to views that may have different implications of values (p.51). I will discuss this in my analysis in chapter five. Why does Rorty reject the correspondence theory?

### *3.4.2 Rejection of the correspondence theory of truth*

The rejection of correspondence theory of truth did not start with Rorty. Philosophers like Nietzsche, James and Davidson have as well expressed their views regarding the correspondence theory of truth. The idea that truth is correspondence to reality and truth as a coherence theory presents a challenge in the whole discussion of truth. I alluded to this view in chapter two when I briefly discussed some theories of truth. It is quite understandable for Rorty to see the correspondence and the coherence theories of truth as having issues. However, what is quite problematic, in Rorty's (1991) view, is the idea that correspondence entails the reality-appearance distinction, upon which the correspondence theory is built (p.22).

Thus, correspondence presupposes the notion of what is real and what appears to be real out there. The understanding here is that reality becomes an end in itself, objective and independent. In Rorty's (1991) view, the dichotomization of what is real and what appears to be real, thus the justification of the correspondence theory is not fruitful philosophically. It leads to nothing important philosophically. Correspondence theory requires that our beliefs and knowledge must correspond to a reality which is outside the world of the human narrative. Rorty (1991) did not just reject, but also debunked the notion of correspondence more vehemently than his predecessors (p.21). Rorty (1991) argues two positions in respect of James's claims; a criticisms of the correspondence theory by James, and an endeavor by James to constructively utter something about truth. However, Rorty ignores the constructivist aspect of James's truth and rather pays attention to the dissolution of what he refers to as James's negative point; the articulation against the notion of correspondence (p.127). Stressing James's negative point, Rorty maintains that the word true has no explanatory use, but an endorsing use, a cautionary use and a disquotational use. Now, what is truth and what is the use of truth according to Rorty?

### 3.4.3 *The minimalist approach to truth*

Rorty (1998) argues that some contemporary pragmatists tend to say that the word truth is indefinable, nonetheless we know how to use it, and we don't have to define it. Truth is not relative to anything and for that matter there is not much to be said about it. Again, Rorty (1998) argues that Truth with capital (T) is like God and there is not much we can say about it. In Rorty's (1998) view, what gives the primary idea of pragmatism is the Nietzschean view that no description, interpretation or copy is closer to reality than any other description or interpretation. However, some descriptions or interpretations are more useful than others. Rorty present the minimalist and the disquotational approach as a better alternative in dealing with the word true rather than relying on an explanatory use of the word. The minimalist and disquotational approaches fall under the bigger umbrella of deflationary views of truth (Lynch, 2001). These deflationary views suggest the depreciation of truth held by the traditional views (correspondence and coherence theorist). Minimalism, as Horwich (2001) suggests, is the view that truth boils down to the content of a proposition. Thus, truth depends on what a proposition entails. Minimalist do not talk about the nature of truth; all they care for is what the content contains. Quine's (2001) deflationist view is disquotational, and he argues that "...the truth predicate is superfluous when ascribed to a given sentence; you could just utter the sentence" (p.475).

According to Rorty & Engel (2007), Engel argues that truth may be considered from two perspectives: truth is one thing and a desire for truth is another thing completely (p.26). In addition, Engel argues for a tripartite form of truth claim which is inextricably linked; the 'conceptual thesis',<sup>47</sup> 'the ethical thesis',<sup>48</sup> and 'the epistemological thesis',<sup>49</sup> (p.25-26). Rorty will

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<sup>47</sup> The conceptual thesis, as Engel (2007) explains, is the proposition that "truth is a constitutive norm within the belief-assertion-truth triangle" (p.25). The idea of a belief-assertion-truth triangle was introduced by Engel.

not accept the ethical and the epistemological thesis, but certainly will accept the conceptual thesis with some reservations. However, Rorty maintains the position that truth is a vocabulary of use. Thus, any word that adds practical benefit to our narrative becomes a vocabulary worthy of use. Truth for Rorty (1998) should be seen from the point of usefulness, and that is all. If an idea is useful then it becomes true, otherwise it remains an irrelevant word. If a belief works for a person, according to Rorty (1991), that belief becomes true. This is similar to James's claim that truth is what works. The idea of what works could steep deep into relativism. It could be argued that what works now, even within a group, might not work some other time, and relativism might catch up with pragmatism. Against this background, Rorty (1991) maintains that relativism is the traditional epithet which realists attribute to pragmatism. This is one of the criticisms against Rorty's notion of truth. In addition, Rorty expresses the view that pragmatism does not fall prey to relativism. Let me reiterate what I mentioned in chapter two, that I shall touch on the issue of relativism in relation to truth in chapter four and in chapter five subsequently. Yet, let me at this point say that pragmatists try to make a distinction between pragmatism and relativism, although it is quite difficult to clearly see that. Certainly, my claim at this point will be quite unsubstantiated and shallow, but let me just leave it at that and reiterate Rorty's assertion;

The pragmatist does not have a theory of truth, much less a relativistic one. As a partisan of solidarity, his account of the value of cooperative human inquiry has only an ethical base, not an epistemological or metaphysical one. Not having any epistemology, a fortiori he does not have a relativistic one (1991; 24).

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According to Rorty & Engel (2007), Engel was trying to show a limitation with one of the deflationist positions (p.13). Engel argues that there is a "conceptual relation between belief, assertion and truth" (p.13); what he refers to as a triangle.

<sup>48</sup> The ethical thesis, according to Rorty & Engel (2007), as Engel argues "is an intrinsic value" (p.25). This intrinsic value issue makes truth an end in itself.

<sup>49</sup> The idea of truth as an epistemological thesis, as Engel sees it, is the view that truth is the goal of inquiry. Rorty disagrees with Engel regarding truth as a goal of inquiry.

In chapter one I gave an account of the criticisms against Rorty. For these critics, it is difficult to accept the similarities between James's and Rorty's conception of truth, simply because Rorty argues that there is no truth. On the contrary, Rorty denies saying that there is no truth in his *Truth and Progress*. He proposes what he calls a 'cautionary' use, and at the same time repudiates the idea that truth has a nature. For Rorty (1998), terms like, good, right, true, false, way to go and watch it, etc. could be used to commend or caution; we do not need to deliberate on them because they are understood from how they are being used. That is how we should comprehend truth (p.22). Although Rorty (1991) claims to be a Jamesian he denies the idea of a theory of truth. This position of Rorty's raises the question about his notion of truth. The implication of Rorty's position could be that his denial of the idea of a theory of truth could mean the denial of a pragmatic theory of truth. This contradicts James's assertion that pragmatism is a method (the view held by Peirce on how to practically understand a thing, or better referred to as the theory of meaning), and also a theory of truth. However, Rorty (1998) always says that his position on truth is to refute the claim that truth has an intrinsic nature and exhibits 'metaphysical objectivity'.<sup>50</sup> Issues of metaphysical objectivity and epistemological objectivity will not matter for Rorty. In fact, Rorty thinks that pragmatism should be separated from epistemology. But issues of truth and beliefs are epistemic notions and one will be wondering how that separation could be achieved, but Rorty think that it is possible. I will discuss this issue of 'a theory of truth' in chapter four as I look at the similarities and differences between James's and Rorty's notion of truth.

More often than not, philosophers who try to give a distinction between what is real and what appears to be real give the impression that the idea of reality suggests an intrinsic value.

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<sup>50</sup> Metaphysical objectivity simply refers to that metaphysical concept about objective reality. This is different from epistemological objectivity.

Thus, things are and continue to be, irrespective of our knowing about them. This does not hold for the pragmatists. What counts for the pragmatist is the practical value of a thing; what James refers to as the cash value<sup>51</sup> of a thing. In Rorty & Engel (2007), Rorty argues that truth has no intrinsic good, and that it possesses no intrinsic value. Again, Rorty (1998) claims that notions like intrinsic good and intrinsic value do not add to our understanding of practical value. Philosophers grapple with what intrinsic value is. A concept like intrinsic good brings to mind the idea of objectivity which Rorty (1998) argues has no place in human narratives or beliefs; if a belief is justified, that is sufficient (p.22).

#### *3.4.4 Replacing truth with justification*

Rorty proposes the idea of substituting truth with justification. Rorty (1998) argues that if James had substituted truth with justification, it would have been better. It means that instead of truth, we could use justified beliefs (p.21). Is Rorty's conception of justified belief equivalent to James and the likes of Dewey and Davidson? Could James substitute truth with justified belief without a problem? Not only did Rorty argue truth in the 'cautionary use' sense, he argues that the idea of truth could be seen and appreciated more from the perspective of justification. As part of my comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in chapter five, I will make an analysis of truth and justification. Let me continue with the discussion on Rorty's replacement of truth with justification.

For Rorty (1998), it could have been better to say that we can tell you about justification, but we cannot tell you much about truth; there isn't that much to be said about truth. In other words, we know how we justify beliefs and we know the adjective 'true' is the word we apply to

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<sup>51</sup> James' (1907) explains the 'cash value' of a thing to mean 'practical' benefit. James idea of 'practical' is not oppose to theoretical; it is dualistic. I mentioned briefly this issue on page 29.

the beliefs we have justified; we know a belief can be true without being justified. Rorty maintains an epistemic possibility that a belief that is justifiable might not be justifiable for another group of people. Rorty (1991) refers to Putnam's naturalistic fallacy<sup>52</sup> argument which suggests the impossibility of an ideal audience (p.22). Yet, he argues that justification is relative to an audience, but truth is not relative to anything. Again, in Rorty & Engel (2007), Rorty maintains that justified belief here is what holds to be true for me at one instant and can be otherwise in another instant. In addition, Rorty argues that the assertion that a belief is justified but maybe not true does not imply an epistemic necessity of distinguishing between something human from something nonhuman (p.41). The only way to establish the truth of a belief, as Rorty argues, in Rorty's & Engel (2007), is by referring to justification (p.44). For Rorty, in this rests the practical importance of truth. This way of understanding truth makes it, in Rorty's view, more practical, and it adds to James's (1907) claim that if there is no practical difference then there is nothing; everything is nil. Let me add that Rorty stresses that there isn't any practical consequence between justification and truth. But can one claim that justification and truth remains practically the same thing? I will return to this issue in my analysis in chapter five.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The main issues in Rorty's arguments about his notion of truth are as follows: our norms and practices are as a result of our existence as a people, whereby our common humanity thrives on the foundation of reducing objectivity to solidarity. Rorty argues for the re-description of things as a means of understanding organic nature of the human narrative. For Rorty, truth primarily is not correspondence to reality. Yet, the idea of truth, according to Rorty, is nothing but futility. In

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<sup>52</sup> Naturalistic fallacy in this case refers to G.E. Moore's explanation that a notion like 'good' cannot be defined by anything other than itself. In other words, it will be an error in thinking that a concept like 'good' can be explain or replaced with another concept.

other words, there is not much to be said about it; truth is just a vocabulary of use just like the words 'good,' 'right' and 'health.' There is nothing intrinsic about truth that implies a correspondence to a reality out there. Also, truth is used in the minimalist or cautionary sense to mean a variance between a more useful and less useful or more practical and less practical situation. Again, Rorty offers justification as a replacement for the word truth; for something to be justified is not to distinguish something human from nonhuman. Rorty accepts that much can be said about justification but we cannot tell much about truth. The adjective 'true' is the word we apply to the beliefs we have justified, and that we know a belief can be true without being justified. Although Rorty branded much of his views with James's conception of truth, he wished James could have used the phrase 'justified beliefs' in place of 'truth'. For Rorty, truth is a mere vocabulary which could be substituted with another vocabulary, and there should not be so much of an uproar about it. It is the view of Rorty, when we begin to use words like 'more useful' and 'less useful' in place of 'true' and 'false' and see truth as justified belief, then we stand the chance of clearing ourselves from linguistic confusion.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### JAMES AND RORTY ON TRUTH

In chapters two and three, I discussed James's and Rorty's conception of truth. In this chapter I will be discussing the similarities and differences between James's and Rorty's notions of truth. The method to be employed in this chapter is a comparative approach. The comparative approach will simply mean an articulation of the similarities and the differences between James and Rorty.

#### 4.1 Similarities

Both James and Rorty pay attention to the focal point of pragmatism that if an assertion has no practical importance then it has no philosophical significance. According to James practical importance is certainly a useful stance. How do James and Rorty explain practical importance? Rorty shares a similar view with James (1908) that "...by practical one often means the distinctively concrete, the individual, particular and effective, as opposed to the abstract, general, and inert (p.14)." Again, James (1907) argues that what matters for pragmatists is the idea of a practical difference between two options or claims. If there is no practical difference, then what we articulate is of no use. Truth, for James, must inevitably be practically significant. Being practically significant here implies being useful. It is Rorty's view that emphasis on practical difference demythologizes truth and makes it almost an empty notion. Thus, Rorty promotes demythologizing of truth by way of looking at its practical usefulness; that is what makes the difference. In Rorty & Engel (2007), Rorty argues that his sameness with James is based on James's own proclamation that if an idea or claim has no practical importance then it has no philosophical significance. In a nutshell, truth is connected to practical significance, and it

is James's and Rorty's view that this position of practical importance cannot be compromised by pragmatists.

Another similarity between James and Rorty has to do with their assertion about metaphysical claims<sup>53</sup>. Following their position on practical importance, both James and Rorty resorted to quietism<sup>54</sup>. They argue that metaphysical assertions lack practical importance because they are abstract stuffs and that the truth of a claim will only make sense when viewed from a perspective of practical significance and not from a metaphysical standpoint. Again, Rorty in Rorty & Engel (2007), argues that what is important is to pay attention to the usefulness of a vocabulary or its effect in practice (p.33). The point here is that in the absence of practical importance metaphysical assertions would be of no use, according to James and Rorty. Although a quietist, James has an addition to his stands on metaphysical assertion which does not distance him from Rorty.

Furthermore, James (1907) and Rorty (1999) argue that the traditional conception of truth, the notion that truth is correspondence with reality, is problematic<sup>55</sup>. For the correspondence theorist, truth is the agreement with reality or the correspondence to reality. James (1907) sees a challenge regarding how to conceptualize terms like agreement or copy and reality (p.198). James (1907) argues that it is possible to have an idea of a copy of a concrete object, but it is impossible to try to conceptualize a copy of a thing like the inner workings of a clock that is not concretely represented (p.199). On the contrary, James (1907) maintains that the truth of an idea is not fixed in that idea; instead, truth happens to an idea (p.201). Again, James's notion of truth differs with that of the correspondence theory of truth in relation to what

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<sup>53</sup> Refer to pages 22 and 23, and pages 41 and 42.

<sup>54</sup> Quietism in this sense refers to a philosophical position of avoiding matter or claim. Rorty applied quietism in a philosophical sense to mean not worth arguing about a point or claim.

<sup>55</sup> Refer to pages 17-19.

constitutes reality. According to James (1907), reality could be concrete facts, abstract kinds of things and relations perceived intuitively between them, and new ideas, together with other old bodies of truth (p.206). In effect James holds a pluralistic view of truth. For James, truth is what is useful, it is the good, it is what works, and is an affair of leading.

In a similar vein, Rorty opposes the correspondence theory of truth. The correspondence theory of truth, in Rorty's (1998) view, has been just an attempt to objectify truth into a transcendental reality. The disagreement with the correspondence theory of truth did not start with Rorty. Rorty's view is only the regurgitation of the already established positions of James, Dewey and Davidson. Davidson rejects the correspondence theory of truth as well as the humanizing of truth by making it epistemic. According to Rorty (1991), truth has been considered by Western cultures, from the Greek philosophers through to the Enlightenment, as the only point at which persons are answerable to something nonhuman (p.21). For Rorty, the explanation of the correspondence theory of truth is a problem. Truth Rorty (1998) argues, should not be treated as a property, what James referred to as the inert static relation, but as the expedient in the use of our language. Thus, truth should be seen in the light of its practical usefulness. This view is inseparably linked to the practical importance James and Rorty referred to.

Again, James and Rorty reject the intrinsic nature of truth (intrinsicity of truth). The intrinsic nature refers to that essential part without which truth will not exist. It is the claim that truth has an essence. As discussed in chapter two, James rejects the idea that truth is inert. To claim that truth has an essence would mean that truth is static. Rorty (1999) agrees with James that truth does not have an essential property. In addition, Rorty (1991) claims that realists cannot fathom why we have to deny the view that truth has an intrinsic nature, and those with the

view that truth has no intrinsic nature are antiessentialist<sup>56</sup> (p.50). Essentialists do not only accept the intrinsic nature of truth, but also claim there is the dichotomization of an intrinsic and extrinsic nature of a thing. Both James and Rorty are antiessentialists.

Another view similar to James's and Rorty's position is the idea that truth is what is useful. Here much is said about the utility of truth rather its nature. James and Rorty hold the view that practical importance presupposes usefulness. This claim by James and Rorty creates a relation between something being true and something being useful.

Again, another similarity is the view that James's and Rorty's notions of truth are inherently relativistic. James and Rorty argue that the pragmatic notion of truth is not relativistic. My point is not to try to justify James's and Rorty's position for being relativistic or not; it is to argue that James's and Rorty's notion have some element of relativism. According to James, truth is not relativistic; truth is made. For James, we create truth and it is only an affair of leading. There seems to be an implicit relativism connected to the claim made by James. He expresses the view that truth can go into cold storage, and can become useful when there is a need for it. This view portrays an idea of a relativistic standpoint of his claims regarding truth. In another breath James claims truth is created. Similarly, Rorty (1991) claims that "'relativism' is the traditional epithet applied to pragmatist by realist" (p.23). Rorty presents three different views which arguably suggest relativism. One is the self-refuting view that every belief is as good as the other. The second is what Rorty calls the eccentric view that the word true is an equivocal term with a lot of meanings just as there are procedures of justification. The final and what Rorty subscribes to is the ethnocentric view that we have descriptions of familiar procedures of justification given by our society out of solidarity; there is not that much to say

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<sup>56</sup> I used the term 'antiessentialist' to refer to someone who denies essence, as Rorty used the concept in *Philosophy and Social Hope*.

about truth (p.23). Rorty argues that the pragmatist would only accept the third viewpoint, a view that is more of solidarity than objectivity. Rorty claims that his position and James's are the same as the 'ethnocentric' claim. However, I will argue in my analysis that this ethnocentric claim has in it an implicit relativism. But, again both James and Rorty try to distance their positions away from relativism.

In addition to the above, there is in one way or the other a form of hypostasis<sup>57</sup> deep-seated in James's and Rorty's (as Engel suggests about Rorty views) conception of truth. What this means is that there is a claim of an essence in James's and Rorty's views on truth. Ideally, James's and Rorty's claim are predicated on practical importance, and that is what defines truth claims. Recall that James (1907) claims that truth is not an inert static property.<sup>58</sup> James's claim is to debunk the intrinsicity of truth. But James presents a pluralistic account of truth, the Jamesian corpus, a gathering of truth with no intrinsic nature. These truths are not destroyed. This articulation of James's creates awareness about the primacy of existence;<sup>59</sup> the fundamental necessity that guarantees being. Also, Rorty claims that the pragmatist is not bothered with essence in the first place, and that the idea of an essence of truth creates an artificial figure outside the human narrative and that a truth claim is just a mirage if it has no practical significance. Again, Rorty wants us to understand the word truth as a mere word of convenience like good, bad, right etc. However these words are different from each other. There is the primacy of existence which makes these words different.

Another similarity is that both James and Rorty relied on Darwinian evolution in their discussion of a notion of truth. Just as Darwinism presents a transformation in human thought,

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<sup>57</sup> In this context hypostasis was used by Engel to refer to essence.

<sup>58</sup> Refer to pages 23 and 24.

<sup>59</sup> Primacy of existence is used in this sense to mean that things by default do have particular nature.

James and Rorty regurgitate a pathway of thinking in American pragmatism. In “William James’s Social Evolution in Focus,” Mcgranahan (2011) argues that James was influenced by evolutionary theory and by Darwin’s theory of natural selection in particular. James agrees with Darwin’s position that we select and shape our truth. Boffetti (2004) expresses a similar view that Rorty maintains the view that pragmatism is compatible with the materialist account of man’s origin<sup>60</sup> which makes language an essential faculty from the rest of animals. Language is experiential, but Rorty sees it as a means of carrying on a discourse. Rorty (1999) argues that Darwinian evolutionary theory did not only theorize an evolutionary frame work but presents a forceful challenge to the Kantian a prior synthetic truth. James’s idea that truth is made is a borrowed view from Darwin. It is a Darwinian structure that truth is always in the process of making.

#### **4.2 Differences**

‘James explains pragmatism, in another sense, as a theory of truth,’<sup>61</sup> whereas Rorty’s anti-foundationalism inclination necessitates a rejection of the idea of a theory of truth. Foundationalism refers to the epistemological claim that beliefs are justified by making inferences to rudimentary beliefs. Evidently, James (1907) argues that “... the word Pragmatism has come to be used in a still wider sense, as meaning also a certain theory of truth” (p.55). Contrary to James’s view, Rorty says that there is not a theory of truth. Although Rorty is against a theory of truth, he agrees with James’s pragmatic theory of truth. Is this in any way a contradiction on the part of Rorty? Why would Rorty refute a theory of truth, and at the same

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<sup>60</sup> The materialist account of man’s origin refers to the idea that the origin of man is reducible to matter. Basically, man is a material thing, says Darwin.

<sup>61</sup> Refer to pages 14 and 15.

time agree with James's theory of truth? I will analyze this issue in chapter five; I will argue that Rorty's approach does not contradict James's position of a theory of truth.

Another clear difference is that Rorty replaces truth with justification. Rorty (1998) argues that replacing truth with justification will do James a lot of good. It may be possible that Rorty was trying to present a broader picture that can capture James's corpus of truths. In Rorty & Engel (2007), Rorty argues that "the philosophical distinction between justification and truth seems not to have practical consequences" (p.44). Pondering over the distinction between truth and justification is not worth doing, says Rorty. However, Rorty admits he could not clearly argue that truth and justification are one and the same thing. Could it be that substituting truth with justification may change the truth corpus of James? Whether truth can be reduced to justification or not will be discussed in the next chapter.

Again, another point of difference has to do with radical empiricism and pragmatism. James pays attention to a wider scope of pure experience which forms the basis of his notion of radical empiricism. Also, James focuses on both radical empiricism and pragmatism, whereas Rorty discusses pragmatism only. James radicalizes experience and does apply pragmatism to it. The theory of truth is a step towards making James's radical empiricism more viable. However, Rorty staunchly sees his pragmatism as similar to James's. Can Rorty distance himself from James's radical empiricism and still claim to be a Jamesian regarding James's pragmatic theory of truth?

Another difference between Rorty and James is that James explains truth in different ways whereas Rorty discusses just some of James's view. At a point Truth, for James (1907), is the useful in the way we comprehend (p.222), and in another instance, truth is what works. Also,

truth is what gives satisfaction, and elsewhere truth becomes an affair of agreeable leading. Rorty argues for a minimalist account of truth; the one popularized by Davidson. Rorty's view of truth is not a combination of theories neither is it of different explanations of truth. Could it be that Rorty argues for just a segment of James's notion of truth as Boffetti suggests in "Rorty's Nietzschean Pragmatism: A Jamesian Response?" Rorty in *Objectivity, relativism, and truth: philosophical papers* (Vol. 1) claims that James ignores the cautionary and the disquotational use of truth, and for that reason pragmatism has been associated with relativism. Could this difference make a difference between James's and Rorty's notion of truth? I will analyze these similarities and differences in the next chapter. I do not think the difference will distance Rorty from James.

#### **4.3 Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the similarities and the differences between James's and Rorty's notion of pragmatic truth. I discussed seven similarities and four differences. Regarding the similarities, I discussed practical importance as a prerequisite for James and Rorty in dealing with the pragmatic conception of truth. Practical importance is inseparably linked to practical difference. Again, I discussed the approach to a metaphysical claim by James and Rorty. A metaphysical assertion or otherwise should have practical importance or worth. If not Rorty and his predecessor James will remain quiet about it: they will rather not comment on it. In addition, I discussed the claim that truth is correspondence to reality. I articulated the view that James shows limitations of the correspondence theory by questioning what is meant by correspondence and reality. Rorty repudiates the correspondence theory because of its implicit nature of objectionable 'correspondence' and 'reality'. Furthermore, I discussed the intrinsicity of truth; the idea that truth has an essence. I added discussion of the epithet attributed to pragmatism: the

notion of relativism. Again, I opened up the inherent attachment claim of hypostasis in the claims of James and Rorty. Finally, I discuss the view that both James and Rorty were influenced by the Darwinian explanation of truth.

On the contrary, I discussed a difference in the sense that James calls his exposition a theory of truth, whereas Rorty does not. Again, Rorty suggests that truth should be replaced with justification. James subscribes to both radical empiricism and pragmatism, whereas Rorty subscribes to pragmatism only. And finally, I discussed the view that James's explications of truth are numerous, but Rorty touches on just a few. I have set out the similarities and the differences between James's and Rorty's notion of truth.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF JAMES'S AND RORTY'S CONCEPTION OF TRUTH

In the previous chapter, I discussed the similarities and differences between James and Rorty. In this chapter, I will be making a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences. After the analysis, I will put forward arguments in support of the claim that Rorty's conception of truth is similar to James's pragmatic notion of truth. It is expected that some philosophical issues of importance may surface which cannot be discussed in this thesis; however, I will recommend these for future research. Finally, I will conclude by summarizing the entire work together, with a reiteration of the claim that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's pragmatic notion of truth. Before I begin the analysis, let me recap briefly the similarities and the differences between James and Rorty.

Beginning with the similarities, James's and Rorty's pragmatic notion of truth are built on the shared view that practical importance is linked to philosophical significance; they share the same view towards metaphysical claims. Both James and Rorty argued for the rejection of the correspondence theory of truth as well as the intrinsicality of truth, but remain oblivious to an implicit relativism and imperceptible presence of essence. Also, James and Rorty argued that truth is what is useful; Darwin's evolutionary thinking influenced James's and Rorty's conception of truth. As for the differences, Rorty appears to contradict James when he argues that there is no theory of truth, and also suggests the replacement of truth with justification. James proposes radical empiricism as well as pragmatism, whereas Rorty's proposition is based solely on pragmatism. James suggests the explanation of truth from different perspectives, whereas Rorty articulates just a few of James's views.

James (1907) maintains that the primacy attached to a true idea is the practical importance of that idea (p.203), meaning, when an idea or claim loses its practical significance, that idea practically becomes, at that moment, irrelevant but not destroyed; it goes into storage. Rorty, on the other hand, remains silent on what becomes of an irrelevant idea or view. If it is an irrelevant idea, it has less use philosophically. Rorty does not discuss ideas going into storage as James did. Nonetheless, what Rorty takes to be the building block upon which James's notion thrives is the issue of practical importance; a position which Rorty never compromises. This idea of practical importance is entrenched in the conception of pragmatism. Rorty's position is that for a concept or a claim to be taken seriously it must exhibit practical importance. Practical importance is arrived at when there is a difference that makes a difference. The idea of a difference making a difference is about a change in difference. For example, how does one practically explain the meaning of the difference between Kofi is sitting and Kofi is standing? If one can practically tell the difference in meaning between sitting and standing, then a difference has been arrived at. This is what James refers to as a difference that makes a difference. This is in line with Rorty's claim that the pragmatist reduces objectivity to solidarity, and it is possible only when there is a practical difference. Rorty (1999) claims that what matters or what calls for attention is James's criterion that any difference must make a difference (p.58). This is the first supervisory principle of the pragmatic conception of truth on which Rorty's assertion is predicated, likewise James's conception of truth. Rorty's explanation that truth is mere futility captures the idea of practical importance. If a claim, Rorty argues, lacks practical importance then it will lead to no difference, hence that claim cannot be termed truth because it is futile. Rorty's critics turn to ignore the idea that Rorty's chief claim is that practical importance leads to

philosophical significance, or a difference must make a difference. If anything at all, it should be Rorty's chief claim.

In chapter two, I discussed how James, in a limited way, uses the idea of what practical means.<sup>62</sup> James uses the word 'practical' in a linguistic sense to mean a word with two different meanings, whereby the word could be understood in the literal and the loose sense. Practical for James (1908) does not mean only the concrete or the particular; it means the abstract or general as well (p.14). James (1908) claims that "'pragmata'<sup>63</sup> are things in their plurality..." (p.14) (superscript mine). The issue with James's assertion about the plurality of the word 'practical' has to do with when to use it in the literal and loose sense. However, the claim about practical importance is unanimously accepted by James and Rorty and it is their strongest claim in dealing with the notion of truth.

Issues of metaphysical claim lack the practical capacity to point to a difference that makes a difference. James's only positive assertion towards metaphysical claims is to ask if it can be of practical importance. If not, then it is not worth pursuing. It is better to be quiet about it. Practical importance entails a difference making a practical difference. James (1907) gives a response to a metaphysical question about visualizing a squirrel hanging on to one side of a tree-trunk, and with an imagination of a person on the opposite side of the tree attempting to get a view of the squirrel, whereas the squirrel goes very fast in the opposite direction (p.43). The question to James is that can the human go around the squirrel or not. James's (1907) responds is that the only way to resolve the issue is to understand what is practically meant going around the squirrel (p.43). This is James's position in dealing with metaphysical assertions. However, in James's explanation of radical empiricism, there is a leeway for metaphysical claims, as part of

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<sup>62</sup> Refer to page 27 to 28.

<sup>63</sup> Pragmata in this sense means 'practical'.

his radicalization of experience. James is careful in his pragmatic step in order not to be misunderstood. Talking about experience, James's radical empiricism allows not only what appears to be practical or physical or concrete or particulars, but also the non-practical or non-physical aspect like relations and religious experience. He separates radical empiricism from pragmatism. In other words, being a pragmatist does not make one a radical empiricist. Clearly, there is a distinction regarding James's approach to metaphysical claims regarding his conception of pragmatism and radical empiricism. James's conception of truth is situated within the scope of his theory of pragmatism, and it is in this regard that James pays attention to practical importance.

In Rorty's view a metaphysical assertion does not project anything; it is untenable in practical terms. Rorty does not subscribe to radical empiricism at all: his attitude towards metaphysical claims is geared towards James's pragmatic notion of truth which emphasizes practical importance. For Rorty, the idea of metaphysical claim brings back a kind of philosophy which James and himself are against; the idea of a subjective and objective truth. The value of truth should remain in the ability to point to practical importance and not something that has to be searched for because of its nature, Rorty argues. In this regard, Rorty in *What is the Use of Truth* mentions that "if we do things the pragmatist way, we will no longer think of ourselves as having responsibilities toward nonhuman entities such as truth and reality" (p.40). Rorty argues further that metaphysical claims which are traditionally questions of metaphysics and epistemology can be brushed aside because they lack the simple trait of social utility (p.38). But to what extent can epistemology be ignored since it has concepts like truth. First of all, it may be the case that Rorty's issue in this regard may have to do with the issue of reality (the idea that reality is the ultimate target to be achieved, and the only genuine thing). Rorty has been silence

in this regard. Secondly, it could be argued that Rorty's call for the edification of philosophy ('to educate'<sup>64</sup> ourselves on how to do philosophy) in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* may be because of how discussions on epistemic notions in epistemology failed to realize how the conformity of culture and the idea of acculturation influence the understanding of our communities. It is in this respect that Osei & Inusah (2012) claim that Rorty offers a pragmatic method to an epistemology which differs from conventional pragmatism, whereas Haack (1990) argues that Rorty's views are dangerous to philosophy. Yet, James's and Rorty's reaction to metaphysical assertions remain the same. There is a line to draw here. Rorty's quietism towards metaphysical assertions is in line with James's pragmatic position about metaphysical claims. Rorty's claim here has nothing to do with James's claims in relation to radical empiricism.

There are other issues which I think are important to discuss. James and Rorty are against the subjective-objective distinction. Objectivity could be the view that something exists independently of our perception. It could also mean that something exists independently of our thought process. This second explanation of objectivity could mean staying in touch with reality. There could be metaphysical objectivity as well as epistemological objectivity. I think Rorty will not accept metaphysical and epistemological objectivity. For Rorty, these are just representations and he would rather opt for the redefinition of things; a view which Engel has issue with.<sup>65</sup> But then again James might accommodate this metaphysical and epistemological objectivity in relation to truth; but the focus will be James's notion of truth being an agreeable lead which will bring about practical importance. James is willing to let go if practical importance gets no room. This does not contradict Rorty's view at all. Rorty does not want to get into the representation of

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<sup>64</sup> Rorty argues that "...education—even the education of the revolutionary or the prophet—needs to begin with acculturation and conformity merely to provide a cautionary complement to the "existentialist" claim that normal participation in normal discourse is merely one project, one way of being in the world" (p.365).

<sup>65</sup> Refer to pages 36-38.

things. That is why Rorty calls for a re-description in philosophy including the idea of a notion of truth. Seeing how truth has been misrepresented, Rorty proposes the replacement of truth with justification. Maybe Rorty thinks that will bury the whole idea that truth has an essence. There is always a common ground between James and Rorty when it comes to metaphysical claims.

James argues against the problematic nature of the correspondence theory of truth. James's suggestion is that the definition of the correspondence theory lacks clear explanation<sup>66</sup> of what agreement and reality mean. As I discuss in chapter four, James demonstrates why the myopic explanation of 'agreement' and 'reality' need a comprehensive explanation. Haack (1976) states that:

So far from denying the correspondence theory which their opponents championed, the pragmatists incorporate it as a part of their theory. But they are better aware than their opponents how inadequate, because unspecific, the formula of 'correspondence with reality' is as it stands (p.241).

I disagree with Haack's view that pragmatists incorporate the correspondence theory. I think pragmatists are aware of the inadequacies that are associated with the correspondence theory of truth. I argue that there are variations in the articulations of pragmatists when it comes to the correspondence theory. My focus is not to discuss the merits or the demerits of Haack's claim regarding the positions of pragmatists. What I disagree with is the idea that James incorporates the correspondence theory into his notion of truth.

There are two issues regarding James's discussion of the correspondence theory. First, there is the impression, on the part of James, that correspondence theory tries to provide an understanding of agreement and reality. On the other hand, James's articulation suggests a

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<sup>66</sup> Refer to pages 17-19.

replacement to the correspondence theory. The question to ask is why would James offer an alternative or a perspective if he does incorporate the correspondence theory of truth into his notion of truth? James never asked for the rejection of the correspondence theory of truth explicitly. James's discussion of the inadequacy of the conception of agreement and reality by the correspondence theory of truth implicitly suggests an idea of a problematic position of the correspondence theory of truth. Of course, James's stance may not have been a total rejection of the correspondence theory, but what he proposes forcefully argues for the inadequacy of the correspondence theory. James argues that the idea of copying reality is in itself inadequate and flimsy, but the idea of an agreeable lead is what the pragmatists recommend. The correspondence theory of truth would have issues with this version of James. The idea of agreeable lead does not involve the notion of copying. In fact, James view of agreeable lead is not about settling on some kind of reality. It is the leading that matters for James; the leading should be an agreeable one. Secondly, there are various versions of the correspondence theories of truth. James's main issue has to do with what to make of agreement and reality which is at the heart of the correspondence theory of truth. That is a problem for James. There are other versions<sup>67</sup> of the correspondence theories of truth. Which of the versions would pragmatists accept? Could it be the Aristotelian or the Kantian version, or the Russellean version or the Austinean version, or the Horganean version? That might be difficult to tell. Haack has been silent on that. I have to concede that James's and Rorty's approach to the correspondence theory of truth might be different. While James discusses a gradual inadequacy of the correspondence theory of truth Rorty rejects it abruptly. In my view what is at issue is the acceptance of a problem with the correspondence theory by James and Rorty.

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<sup>67</sup> Refer to pages 16 and 17.

On the other hand, Rorty rejects totally the correspondence theory of truth. Rorty rejects the correspondence theory truth because of the implicit idea in the theory that truth is an end in itself; it has a nature that is universal. The universality of truth is the understanding that the idea of what is real necessarily resides in objectivity. This is what Rorty calls reducing solidarity to objectivity. The correspondence theory of truth suggests the idea of some transcendental, metaphysical or nonhuman notion out there which need to be corresponded to. Rorty argues against the idea of a subjective and objective truth which the correspondence theory promotes. James may have been tactful in his rejection of the correspondence theory, but Rorty shows strong refutation of the correspondence theory. James provides an explanation of what agreement and reality could mean, whereas Rorty abstains from that. Could that be detrimental on the side of Rorty for failing to provide an explanation of agreement and reality? Of course not, what matters, in my view, is the similarity between the thinking of James and Rorty that there is a problem with the correspondence theory of truth.

Again, Rorty has been criticized for conflating James with Nietzsche.<sup>68</sup> Why should Rorty do that? To be charitable to Rorty would mean to look at what the issues are. Did Nietzsche reject the correspondence theory of truth? Did James provide an alternative to the conceptualization of agreement and reality, which, I think, tacitly means a rejection of the correspondence theory of truth? Of course, both did that and it is not out of place for Rorty to conflate James and Nietzsche. Rorty does not accept everything that Nietzsche says regarding truth, although he calls himself a Nietzschean. What Rorty does here is to draw on a common view between James and Nietzsche. Without doubt James and Nietzsche have their own philosophical differences. However, when it comes to views about the correspondence theory, I

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<sup>68</sup> Refer to page 7 for Campbell's criticism of Rorty for conflating James and Nietzsche.

think they are on the same page. I certainly think Rorty was right to conflate Nietzsche and James.

James and Rorty reject the view that what they present as a notion of truth suffers an implicit relativism; what Rorty refers to as the traditional epithet called relativism. It is very hard to shake off James's and Rorty's conception of truth from the clutches of relativism. The mere mention of James's notion of truth being pluralistic brings to mind elements of relativism. When James talks about truth going into cold storage, truth happening to an idea and truth being an affair of leading, what does James have in mind, is it a relativistic claim to suit our situations, whereby individuals become the determining factor? When an idea becomes practically insignificant, it is not discarded, according to James, instead, it goes into cold storage, to use James's phrase. It comes back when its practical importance resurfaced. It could be argued that this going into storage because of practical insignificance depends on when the idea is needed and that becomes relativistic. It is difficult to think relativism does not feed into James's notion of truth. Rorty gives three classifications of views that may be considered relativistic; the self-refuting view, the eccentric view and the ethnocentric view as I explained in chapter four. Rorty's preference is the third view, the ethnocentric view, the view he considers non-relativistic. The ethnocentric view that Rorty subscribes to encompasses the process of justification given by the community. It entails the idea of desire for reducing objectivity to solidarity. These processes of justification are a result of solidarity. Rorty is of the view that the pragmatist is not suggesting a positive theory that suggests one thing being relative to another. Even the claim by Rorty and James that practical significance leads to philosophical importance, I think, is relativistic. It is, as a matter of fact debatable because what is practical may vary. Perhaps James's and Rorty's defense against the intrusion of relativism into their notion of truth might not be convincing.

What brings about their similarities is them being oblivious to an implicit relativism in their views.

James's and Rorty's positions on the intrinsicity of truth are the same. Intrinsicity of truth, as I explained in chapter four, necessitates an essence of a sort. James argues categorically that truth has no essence. To ascribe essence to truth would mean to claim that truth is inert. If truth is inert, then it becomes an objective entity which has to be arrived at. It becomes the reality and what has to be corresponded to in order to arrive at it. This would make James's conception of plurality of truth impossible. James (1907) argues that "truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it" (p.201). James debunks the inert, static relation attributed to truth. For James, truth happens to an idea if that idea is of practical importance, and Rorty shares in the understanding of the Jamesian conception that truth has no essence. Rorty refers to those who deny the view that truth has essence as antiessentialist. Both James and Rorty differentiate existential truth from essential truth: they are antiessentialists. Regarding the essence of truth, Rorty makes a differential point between essentialist and the antiessentialist. James (1908) argues that the essentialist truth is a kind of truth which no one appreciates (p.12). James (1908) likens essential truth to a coat which no one puts on or a piece of music that no one listens to. James goes on to explain existential truth to be "incidental to the actual competition of opinion" (p.12). Rorty (1999) argues that "pragmatists insist on nonocular, nonrepresentational ways of describing sensory perception, thought and language, because they would like to break down the distinction between knowing things and using them" (p.50). Essentialists create a distinction between an intrinsic and extrinsic quality. This distinction by the essentialists is to show the preference of the intrinsic quality over the extrinsic quality. For James and Rorty, this distinction has no basis at all. Rorty refers to those in the fight against the intrinsic and extrinsic distinction

as antiessentialist. Again Rorty (1999) argues that the necessity of an extermination of the intrinsic and extrinsic distinction would implicitly mean the termination of the so-called reality and appearance distinction (p.50). This would mean no worries about the notion of a barrier between us and the world. Therefore, in Rorty's description of an antiessentialist James would be one of them. There is unison on the issue of intrinsicity of truth between James and Rorty. The point here is that James and Rorty do reject the intrinsicity of truth.

One of James's pluralistic articulations of the conception of truth is the view that truth is what is useful. It is in this regard that James (1907) maintains that the true is the expedient in the way of our thinking (p.222). The aim is to point to the usefulness of an idea or an object to be what constitutes truth. This is why James (1907) says that truth is made like health and wealth (218). In chapter three, I discussed Rorty's notion of truth, and one of the four proclamations of Rorty is the cautionary and the minimalist assertion of truth. In explaining the cautionary use of truth, Rorty emphasize 'usefulness'. Thus, a thing becomes true if only it is useful. Truth for Rorty is what is useful, and the opposite is false. Due to the misconception about truth, Rorty suggested using the words less useful and more useful in place of what is true and what is false. Haack (1976) argues that "Both Moore and Russell find James's equation of the truth with the useful thoroughly unacceptable" (p.237). According to Haack (1976), Moore and Russell argue that the 'useful' has its everyday wisdom, and that a belief can be true but not useful and a belief can be useful without being true (p.237). In addition, Haack (1976) argues that Moore's and Russell's articulation give the impression that pragmatism would make truth a subjective matter (p.241). In repudiating Moore and Russell, Haack (1976) argues that true beliefs that count as useful for James are such that they are immune from future experience. In Putnam's (1992) view, Russell misrepresents James's position that makes it look as if James says that "a belief is 'true'

when its effects are good” (p.19). Instead, Putnam (1992) avers exactly the articulation of James (1907) as “ ‘the true,’ to put it very briefly is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as ‘the right’ is only the expedient in the way of our behaving...”(p.19) In this regard, I think the criticism against Moore and Russell is credible. Rorty upholds James’s view that truth is what is useful. Also, Rorty has been very particular about the usefulness of truth rather than the nature of truth. I think arguably Rorty did more as a Jamesian in addressing truth as what is useful.

James and Rorty might be antiessentialist as Rorty emphatically suggests, but somehow there is the idea of essence intricately connected to their notion of truth. This is what Engel, in Rorty & Engel (2007), refers to as a form of hypostasis. James argues that truth is not destroyed, and that truths which have become practically irrelevant go into cold storage. This involves all manner of truth. Maybe the question to ask is how do such practically irrelevant truths go into cold storage? Does it call for a change of state and at what point does it become fully stored? Perhaps the pragmatist would say anything that is practically irrelevant at that moment becomes irrelevant. But will it not be out of this practically irrelevant idea then become a practically relevant idea, and become true. James never discussed what happens at the stage of transition from a practically irrelevant idea to a practically important one. This necessitates the primacy of existence. It is the essential requirement which might guarantee the existence of an underpinning called essence. Pragmatism pays less importance to issues of ontology, but James’s view of cold storage of truth can be explained ontologically. This is an example of a direct involvement of essence in James’s subscription. It may not be the case for other pragmatist, but hardly can James be exonerated from the shackles of essence.

Rorty has not directly discussed James’s claim about the cold storage of truth. Of course, Rorty does not consider a metaphysical claim to be that important. Perhaps the claim about truth

going into 'cold storage' puts a question mark on James's (1907) claim that the truth of an idea cannot be inherently stagnated (p.201). But Rorty shares similar deep-seated presence of essence in his articulation as Engel suggests. What anchors Rorty's notion of truth is the claim about practical importance, and metaphysical assertions do not have a place. Rorty predicates his notion of truth on practical importance. Engel criticizes Rorty for exhibiting a form of hypostasis in his articulations. Engel argues that Rorty makes the difference between the realist conception of truth and the pragmatist conception of truth. The fact that Rorty makes a distinction between the two does not mean he subscribes to the realist conception of truth. But there is the implicit recognition that there is something like the realist conception of truth. Would that not amount to the internal recognition of the realist conception of truth which is grounded on essence? This point could be debatable anyway. The fact that Rorty distinguishes between the realist conception and the pragmatist conception of truth may imply an inherent recognition of not just the realist conception of truth but the pragmatist conception as well. I will argue that recognition of a position does not necessarily mean an acceptance of that position. To recognize a view is to say there is this particular position. Again, I will argue that to accept a position will mean to subscribe to that position. A person can recognize a position without accepting the position. On the contrary, Rorty's view that truth should be replaced with justification could suggest an implicit hypostasis. Rorty maintains that there is no practical consequence in doing so. I want to argue that if truth and justification are just labels as Rorty claims, then it could be argued further that these labels are representing something. If replacing labels does not lead to any practical consequence then the labels must own something which does not change, and that could be essence. I think that the issue of hypostasis is a similarity between James and Rorty. Maybe

pragmatists like James and Rorty may not accept the issue of hypostasis. But can James and Rorty really deny the possibility of a hypostasis in their claim? I don't think so.

Mcgranahan (2011) maintains the view that James was influenced by Darwin's view of truth. Darwin's perspective is that the selection and shaping of truth comes from us. This Darwinian perspective is a case against the intrinsicity of truth; thus, truth is not an intrinsic quality, truth evolves. Our selection and the shaping of truth is done by language, and language evolves. It means language plays a crucial role in the evolution of truth. James's view that truth is made, that truth happens to an idea, is a notion that is traceable to Darwin's view that we decide and determine what truth is. If the choice and the modeling of truth are with us, as Darwin claims, then it means that relativism could play a role in the determination of truth. Granted that James's view that truth is made is grounded in Darwin's structure, which covertly regurgitates relativism, James's assertion could as well be a relativist's assertion. Again, Darwin's influence is seen in Rorty's conception of truth. Rorty (1999) argues that Darwin's theory of evolution attacks Kant's a priori synthetic truth which gives the idea of something nonrelational (p.68). The Kantian a priori synthetic truth contains the idea of a priori concepts and experience. Darwin claims that language is the medium of understanding human phenomenon, and that the shaping and determining of truth is by language. This brought a revolution that changes the way truth is conceptualized. It is no more the analytic and synthetic distinction, or the a priori synthetic possibility but linguistic ability. This is what Rorty refers to as re-description; the idea of a change of vocabulary for better understanding. Due to the Darwinian view of linguistic ability, Rorty (1999) argues against the correspondence theory and the idea of an appearance and reality distinction (p.47). Rorty is of the view that re-description of concepts like appearance and

reality would help do away with old dogmatic views that are not relevant. James's and Rorty's conception of truth were heavily influenced by Darwin's conception of truth.

The similarities between James and Rorty are arguably acceptable to Rorty's critics. The issue is not with what Rorty agrees with in James's pragmatic notion of truth. What is at issue is what Rorty says that is, according to his critics, different from James's notion of truth. In that case I am going to analyze the differences. Below is my analysis of the differences.

Apart from explaining pragmatism as a method, James advances another explanation of pragmatism as a theory of truth. Rorty on the other hand disagrees with the idea of a theory of truth. Not just that, Rorty has been against the idea of accepting the conventional way of doing philosophy which closes the door of re-description. This, according to Rorty, makes philosophy boring and unyielding. Rorty subscribes to anti-foundationalism. What does Rorty mean by the expression that there is no theory of truth? Is Rorty saying that there is nothing like a theory of truth which by extension suggests that there is no truth? Or is Rorty saying that there is no theory of truth simply because he doesn't want to be part of the creation of standards in philosophy which makes re-description impossible? Or is Rorty simply contradicting himself without realizing it? In one instant he tells us how to comprehend truth and in another he goes against the idea of truth? James is very clear on this issue; he subscribes to a theory of truth and makes his position clear about truth.

Rorty's position on the 'theory of truth' could be analyzed from different perspectives. Before I look at the perspectives, the idea of a theory and by extension a theory of truth have both been widely debated. Of course, Knapp & Michaels (1982) argue against the idea of theory. Knapp & Michaels (1982) explain theory as "all the ways people have tried to stand outside in order to govern practice from without" (p.724). Knapp & Michaels call for an end to theory.

What Knapp and Michael fail to understand is that they are as guilty as the ones they criticize. What Knapp & Michael is also doing is standing outside and looking at theory from without. A theory is basically a model or an idea formed by some assumptions. To register the problematic issue of the notion of a theory, Soames (1984) claims that, despite the ingenuity of Alfred Tarski's theory of truth which has an impeccable mathematical result and interesting philosophical analysis of the nature of truth, there is doubt about its being a theory of truth, or what makes it a theory of truth (p.411). On the other hand, Lentricchia (1986) argues that "theory is not simply a matter of intention or will or conscious agency. It is a matter of necessity: an impulse, an appetite" (p.4). However, I think that the issue of a 'theory' is basically around the debate between what a 'theory' is and the idea of how a 'theory' works.

First of all, Rorty's claim that there is no theory of truth is an argument against, I think, the foundationalist claims that knowledge or truth rest on rudimentary beliefs. Foundationalism relies so much on this rudimentary belief and nothing else. The idea of foundationalism brings to bear what Putnam (1981) refers to as 'God's eye view of things' (p.49), and what Rorty (1991) calls the desire for objectivity (p.24). Rorty's claim that there is no theory of truth is a rebuff against the view that truth is understood from a perspective of desire for objectivity. It is in line with this thinking that Rorty (1991) maintains the view that "...the pragmatist does not have a theory of truth, much less a relativistic one" (p.24). Again, Rorty is criticized for saying there is no truth because he denies the theory of truth. In *Truth and Progress: Philosophical papers*, Rorty denies saying that (p.1). Secondly, by articulating that there is no theory of truth and that truth is nothing but futility, Rorty is trying to stay away from the standards created around the notion of truth. Rorty suggests a cautionary approach to explaining truth; an approach based on practical importance. Again, it could be argued that the approach Rorty suggests could in itself

be a theory of truth because of his mantra of practical importance. Denying a theory in itself is proposing something to replace a theory, and that could be a theory by itself. Just as denying a theory presupposes replacing the denied; what is being proposed in the denial could be a theory. Either way, Rorty cannot really claim not to have a theory of truth. Even if Rorty denies having a theory of truth, his claim of practical importance will render his denial of a theory of truth invalid. The proposition by James and Rorty about practical importance suggests the idea of a theory of truth. The phenomenon around the idea of a practical importance suggests a replacement of other theories of truth. This means that some theories were handicapped and needed a replacement, and in this case practical importance serves as a replacement. I think Lentricchia (1986) was on point to have claimed that a theory is a matter of necessity. Again, it is interesting to note that although James makes a claim about a theory of truth, he does so sparingly. He normally refers to it as his idea or notion of truth. Thirdly, it would be contradictory to first of all suggest a notion, and then claim the notion does not exist. If Rorty chooses to go with his claim that there is no theory of truth, then he should not build his conception around other peoples' theory of truth. The fact is that he does accept James's theory of truth. It will be contradictory to accept it and claim there is nothing like that. You cannot be and be not at the same time. Rorty never said there is no truth, and his claim that there is no theory of truth is within a context of trying to demystify the whole notion of truth.

Another difference between James and Rorty is the suggestion by Rorty that truth could be replaced with justification. James never suggests replacing truth with justification, but Rorty does. I don't think that makes Rorty's notion of truth different from James's. Rorty's reason for suggesting justification as a replacement for truth could be looked at from the following perspective. James gives a pluralistic view of truth. James claims that truth is made and that truth

is an affair of leading. Rorty argues that truth is made out of solidarity shown to ideas, and these ideas are justified by communities. Truth is justified belief. Therefore, Rorty would not be wrong to replace justification with truth. The criticism against Rorty that he misread James in this respect seems groundless. Regarding the replacement of truth with justification, Rorty (2007) says that “the philosophical distinction between justification and truth seems not to have practical consequences” (p.44). Of course the idea of no practical consequences between truth and justification may seem good reason for Rorty. In spite of this, I will argue that there might be another perspective than just having no practical consequence between truth and justification. In chapter two, James (1907) argues that wealth, health, and strength are names for processes that are useful just as is truth, but unfortunately truth has been treated with a rationalistic account as self-evident. For James, if truth is understood just like the way wealth, health and strength operate, then if truth serves as a name of a collective, the idea of truth having inherent nature might not occur to us. Truth is the name of a collective just like justified belief is a name of a collective. I think that Rorty’s replacement of truth with justification is based on an idea of a collective name and the demystification of truth which James accepts. Society gives label and there is absolutely no problem replacing it with another. For this reason, Rorty’s position that truth can be replaced with justification is, I think, without any problem at all.

James maintains his defense for a pragmatist notion of truth and radical empiricism, whereas Rorty only associates with pragmatism. Perhaps, Rorty’s position on radical empiricism could be as a result of replacing experience with language. The issue here is that language cannot be outside the scope of experience. Could Rorty’s refusal to accept radical empiricism affects his inclination towards James’s pragmatic notion of truth? I don’t think it does. James (1904) argues that one can be a pragmatist without being a radical empiricist. This could mean that James’s

radical empiricism remains distinct from his pragmatism. James (1907) explains pragmatism as a method and a theory of truth. Again, James refers to his theory of truth as a doctrine, likewise his radical empiricism. Therefore, James's theory of truth and radical empiricism remain two distinct doctrines. A person can hold on to one of James's doctrines and discard the other. Rorty is such a person. Rorty calls himself a pragmatist and not a radical empiricist, and claims to be upholding the pragmatic theory of truth advanced by James. Per James's clear position on a theory of truth and radical empiricism, the criticism that Rorty is not a radical empiricist would not impede Rorty's inclination to James's notion of truth. On the other hand, I rather think there is an issue with an assertion that James makes. James (1904) asserts that his pragmatic notion of truth is a step towards advancing his radical empiricism. If one can be a pragmatist without being a radical empiricist, then why would James argue that his notion of truth is a step towards advancing his radical empiricism? I think that the step, which in this case is his pragmatic notion of truth, would inevitably be part of what is being advanced. At what point can one separate James's first step, his notion of truth, from what is being advanced, James's radical empiricism. What, then, becomes of a person like Rorty who denies radical empiricism but appreciates James's theory of truth? This will raise an issue regarding the breaking away of radical empiricism from James's pragmatist notion of truth. In addition, Putnam<sup>69</sup> (1997) argues that there are two different views in James's thought regarding his theory of truth. James makes a distinction between his radical empiricism and pragmatism; Putnam thinks that radical empiricism is a part of James's theory of truth. However, James's own separation of pragmatism from radical empiricist makes a strong case for Rorty. I think Rorty remains a pragmatist and an adherent of James's notion of truth.

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<sup>69</sup> According to Putnam, the first consists of "a Peircean strain...this strain is quite strong...the un-Peircean idea..."(p.166). The second part, according to Putnam, consist of "a realist strain... and an empiricist strain..."(p.166). These two parts reflect James's theory of truth.

The final difference is the view that James explains truth in different ways, whereas Rorty does the opposite. In addition, this difference captures the view that Rorty only gives a quasi-representation of James's notion of truth. This is a claim that needs to be examined. Primarily, James's notion of truth is pluralistic. Among the corpus of truth given by James is the following: truth is made, truth is what is useful, truth is what works, and truth is a verification process. Also, Rorty explains truth to be what is useful. All these are within James's corpus of truth. However, Rorty sometimes either deliberately or otherwise leaves out some of the articulations of truth in his discussion. Whether he does it deliberately or not is not the issue, I think. What is at issue is whether what Rorty left out without discussion satisfies the supervisory principle of practicality between himself and James. If it does, then it covertly falls within Rorty's conception of truth even if he does not recognize that. If Rorty deliberately refuses to recognize what he calls 'the constructivist truth' in James's notion of truth, that will lead to forfeiting the supervisory caveat between himself and James. The argument can be taken further in relation to his idea of re-description. Rorty narrates the occurrence of a culture hegemony<sup>70</sup> which happened some two centuries ago in which people re-described social relations and social institutions. This re-description amounts to some kind of constructivist way. Rorty is fully aware of this. I think, maybe, Rorty does not want his idea of re-description of a notion like truth to sound like constructivist truth. But there are always constructivist elements in re-description. Rorty must tacitly accept the constructivist truth by James or must dissociate himself completely from him. Rorty did not discuss so much of James's constructivist truth, but has it tacitly in his idea of truth. Similarly, as I mentioned before, Putnam (1999) argues that Rorty fails to see the distinct theories of truth (the parts in James's thought about a theory of truth) in James's work. Instead, Putnam proposes four distinct views; Peirce's truth in James,

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<sup>70</sup> Refer to pages 36 and 37.

truth as what is created, truth as complex reality and truth from the perspective of the empiricist (p.166). Well, Putnam may be right to have categorized James's theory of truth into four distinct points, but what still makes Rorty's truth claim similar to James is the issue of practical importance. Rorty may be silent on some articulations of James on truth, I think, but must and will tacitly accept all James's articulations of truth because of the requirement of practical importance. Practical importance makes the difference for James and Rorty, and their notion of truth is built on this idea of practical importance.

### **5.1 Argument in support of Rorty's Notion of truth**

James's pragmatic view is that any difference must make a difference. When there is no difference, then all claims at issue are one and the same thing. For a difference to happen to a claim or an idea, that claim or idea must be of practical significance. An idea or claim that has practical significance will lead to philosophical importance. This is James's claim about pragmatism as a method, commonly known as the theory of meaning. Taking James's other explanation of pragmatism, his theory of truth, into consideration, James (1907) maintains that the practical value of true ideas is gotten from their practical importance (p.203). The issue of practical importance affects all of James's truth in corpus. On the other hand, Rorty makes practical importance the main focus in his explanation of truth. This, then, becomes the first principle that governs James's and Rorty's notion of truth, and anything else is secondary. I think, for a criticism to hold against Rorty, his emphasis of practical importance must seize to be, or that Rorty fails to hold on to practical importance in determining truth. Practical importance is the preamble set by both James and Rorty in their conception of truth. All other claims within the scope of their similarities and differences must be examined from the lenses of practical importance. As long as the common ground for James and Rorty is practical importance, it will

be inadequate to consider assertions made by James that were not made by Rorty to be outside Rorty's conception of truth. Replacing truth with justification has not distanced Rorty from James. In fact, it has been a demystification process suggested by Rorty in order to exonerate the idea of truth from the essentialist claim that truth has an inherent property. Based on the significance of practical importance, Rorty strongly argued that there is no practical consequence between truth and justification. Again, the proclamation by Rorty that there is no theory of truth is not to deny theory of truth per se. It is to safeguard the pragmatist theory of truth from the idea of some kind of standards around truth. But Rorty may seem to have complicated his stances simply because he and James had a standard as well, their idea of practical importance. However, it is clear what his view is on the issue of theories of truth; maybe not consistent but certainly within a context which is comprehensible. The issue of radical empiricism is not an issue at all because James himself set the record straight that one can deny radical empiricism and still remain a pragmatist. James's pluralistic truth comments are certainly within the frame of practical importance and Rorty does not argue contrary to that. I think that the differences do not put Rorty's position in a mess; they support and bring together James's and Rorty's views. Based on similarities and the differences which rather support Rorty's view, I argue that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's notion of truth, and that Rorty is a Jamesian.

## **5.2 Findings worth investigating**

My position right from the start of this thesis has been to argue that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's notion of truth, and that Rorty is a Jamesian. However, there were some issues that emerged that were certainly very important but could not be considered in this work. These issues would need a comprehensive as well as good philosophical deliberation. Let me briefly elaborate on some of these issues. Regarding James's radical empiricism, I expressed the view

that although James separates his radical empiricism from pragmatism, he argues that the pragmatic theory of truth is a step towards advancing his radical empiricism. Putnam criticizes Rorty for not getting his facts right about James's theory of truth, and that there are portions of radical empiricism in James's pragmatism. Could it be that Putnam is wrong in thinking that James's theory of truth contains radical empiricism, or that James confuses the two? If Putnam's claim is something to go with, it will be difficult to separate James's pragmatism from his radical empiricism. Again, Rorty was criticized for conflating James with Nietzsche. Of course James and Nietzsche criticized the correspondence theory, but they have differences in the conceptualization of truth. I think it will be a researchable issue to investigate if Rorty is more of a Nietzschean or Jamesian. Another issue is the view that James's and Rorty's notion of truth is relativistic. Could it be a mere criticism that James's and Rorty's notions of truth are relativistic? Were they able to exonerate their position from relativism? I think these issues could be looked at in separate papers. These are issues which surfaced in the cause of my work, but never altered the thesis that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's notion of truth and that Rorty remains a Jamesian.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This thesis makes a comparative analysis between William James's and Richard Rorty's notion of truth. I have argued that Rorty's version of truth is similar to James's notion of truth, and contrary to the view that Rorty departs from James's pragmatic notion of truth. In addition, I argued that Rorty remains a Jamesian despite the view by others that he is not. My analysis of the similarities and the differences point to the view that the similarities bring out the resemblance of Rorty's and James's notion of truth, whereas the differences are not significant enough to distance Rorty from his predecessor James.

Rorty claims to be a Jamesian because he agrees with James's notion of truth that says that the truth is what is useful in the way of our thinking. However, Rorty's other assertion that truth is nothing but mere futility and that there is no theory of truth brings criticisms to him, which suggests a deviation from James's conception of truth. Rorty is criticized for misreading James, denying truth and radical empiricism, conflating James with Nietzsche, and only accepts a few of James's views. Rorty's claim to being a Jamesian is about his notion of truth being similar to James's conception of truth.

James explains Pragmatism as a method, and also a theory of truth. James claims his pragmatism is different from his radical empiricism. Radical empiricism opens up experience to include relations considered not part of experience by the British empiricist. As one of the pioneers of pragmatism, James comes up with his own pragmatic theory of truth. Peirce explains truth as an end in inquiry, whereas James explains truth from different perspectives; James's truth is pluralistic. However, James's perspectives of truth agree with his popular claim that truth is made. Again, James maintains that there are limitations to the correspondence theory truth. According to James, the correspondence theory cannot give a broad base explanation of "agreement" and "reality". Owing to this, James gives a broader conception of "agreement" and "reality". At one point, James claims that truth is what works, and at another he argues that truth is an affair of leading. Elsewhere, James enunciates that a true idea is what is useful in the way of our thinking. In addition, James explains truth as what is good, and in another instance as what gives satisfaction. James's conception of truth is truth in corpus, whereas Rorty explains truth in terms of usefulness.

Rorty was influenced by the likes of Nietzsche, Dewey, Davidson and Quine. I argued Rorty's position from four standpoints; what I called Rorty's four proclamations. The four

proclamations consist of: a call for re-description, rejection of the correspondence theory of truth, the minimalist approach to truth and replacing truth with justification. The call for re-description is to suggest the possible replacement of some philosophical notions. The correspondence theory, according to Rorty, was as a result of people reducing solidarity to objectivity, what Rorty calls the desire for objectivity. Rorty calls such people realist. Rorty calls those who reduce objectivity to solidarity pragmatists. Rorty argues the correspondence theory is to be rejected vehemently. Rorty discusses truth from a cautionary and minimalist perspective as well. This includes understanding truth from the point of utility and as a vocabulary of use. Lastly, Rorty reduces truth to justification. For Rorty, replacing truth with justification would do James a lot of good. Rorty's four proclamations are based on the notion of practical importance which leads to practical difference.

I discussed the similarities and the differences between James and Rorty. The main similarity between James and Rorty is the common ground that practical significance is what leads to a difference, and upon which a claim becomes philosophically important. All other similarities are centered on this single notion of practical importance. James and Rorty have a common approach to metaphysical assertions, and at the same time raise problematic concern about the correspondence theory of truth. Both James and Rorty reject the intrinsic nature of truth, but accept truth as what is useful. James and Rorty distanced their notion of truth from the charges of relativism by arguing that their conception of truth is not relativistic. Darwin influenced James's and Rorty's notion of truth. In contrast, James calls his view a theory of truth, whereas Rorty says there is no theory of truth. James maintains truth, but Rorty wants to replace it with justification. James is a radical empiricist and a pragmatist at the same time, but Rorty is

only a pragmatist. Finally, James explains truth from different perspectives, but Rorty discusses just a segment of James's perspectives of truth.

I analyzed the similarities and differences and then argued that the similarities discussed bring Rorty much closer to James, but the differences do not distance Rorty from James, let alone taint Rorty's claim to being a Jamesian. The first and the main point of James's assertion is that a difference must make a difference. I called it the 'supervisory principle' of practical importance. For James and Rorty, the idea of practical importance is the most preeminent qualification for truth. Again, issues of metaphysical assertions within the realm of pragmatism should center on practical importance, or else James and Rorty will be quiet about it. Although Rorty rejects the correspondence theory absolutely, James hints at the inadequacy of the correspondence theory. James then offers an alternative which implicitly suggests a rejection of the correspondence theory of truth. James and Rorty absolutely reject the intrinsicity of truth. There is a converging point between James and Rorty on the claim that truth is what is useful. My analysis revealed a form of hypostasis on the part of James and Rorty deep-seated in their notion of truth. On the contrary, my analysis of the differences pointed to the view that it is insufficient to distance Rorty's view of truth from James's although Rorty says there is no theory of truth. Rorty accepts a theory of truth implicitly; his outward rejection of it is towards the creation of standards which has muddied the whole idea of truth. Replacing truth with justification is not an issue because James's truth in corpus is as a result of a desire for solidarity, likewise justification. Again, Rorty's claim to being a Jamesian is still intact, although he does not subscribe to radical empiricism. This is because James maintains the position that one can reject radical empiricism and still accept James's notion of truth. Finally, James's truth in corpus is as a result of practical importance in spite of the view that Rorty did not discuss some of them

in his explanation of truth; by accepting practical importance as a criterion, Rorty accepts implicitly the other explanations of truth offered by James.

Finally, I argued that the issue of practical importance makes a very strong case for Rorty's notion of truth to be similar to James's, and hence his claim of being a Jamesian. The other analyses in support of Rorty's claim are predicated on the issue of practical importance. It is in line with this thinking that I argue that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's notion of truth. However, in the course of my analysis some vital issues were confronted, but couldn't be discussed in this work. This is because they are issues on their own and deserve holistic deliberations which cannot be done in this thesis. These issues include James's separation of radical empiricism from his notion of truth, and arguing that his theory of truth is a step in advancing radical empiricism. Is Rorty more of a Jamesian or Nietzschean and was there a success or a failure on the part of James and Rorty in exculpating their ideas of truth from relativism. And were there four distinct theories in James's notion of truth with traces of radical empiricism in them as Putnam suggests. These issues could not affect or crumble Rorty's notion of truth. In line with the above, I argue that Rorty's notion of truth is similar to James's pragmatic theory of truth and that Rorty remains a Jamesian.

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