

1. **Dissertation Title:** *Richard Rorty on Representation of Reality: A Critical Study*
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ABSTRACT

Dilemmas and mysteries in human life are the reasons why we study philosophy. Whenever men face the dilemmas and mysteries they naturally search the ways to explain them. Because of dilemmas men try to explain the meanings of their life in persuasive ways. Because of mysteries men try to understand what the world is. Philosophical discourse is one of the ways of solving those problems. Through philosophy men hope to know who they are and what the world is.

But in postmodern era some thinkers are not happy with the dilemmas and mysteries so they want to remove them from philosophy (rather than facing them). Some of them even want to proclaim 'the end of philosophy.' They insist the impossibility of finding (through philosophy) the ultimate answers. They believe the role of philosophy is *outdated*. With removing the traditional philosophy, they insist, we can have more chances to construct a better society. Richard Rorty is one of the thinkers who try to do that under the name of the pragmatic philosophy.

In this paper we will discuss about what Rorty's pragmatic philosophy is and why he wants to eliminate the epistemology and metaphysics which are considered as the core of philosophy. We will talk about how Rorty tries to nullify the traditional philosophical discourses. Rorty's project for this goal can be called "anti-representation of reality."

He says the traditional philosophy played with “representation of reality.” It is built on a belief that there is reality “over there.” It is transcendental, so it can be the foundation of ‘objective’ knowledge. The reality is represented into human mind. And with the “representation” human mind can form the objective knowledge about the world. The objective knowledge representing the world as it is helps men to control the world. “Representation of reality,” therefore, is one of the most important aspects of human knowledge.

But Rorty rejects all these aspects of human knowledge. He rejects the existence of transcendental reality. There is no “representation of reality.” He even refuses the existence of mind as the “mirror” which represents the world as it is. All knowledge is subjective and humanly formed. There is nothing “given.” So, Rorty says, Epistemology or Metaphysics that presuppose the “*given*” representation of reality “*out there*” should be ended.

How does Rorty reach such a conclusion? One of the reasons is Rorty’s disappointment with philosophy as a whole. He says philosophy is not successful in answering to the questions which philosophers raise. It is not just successful but rather has no possibility to find the answers. So he insists the “end of philosophy.”

To end the philosophical discourses Rorty tries to eliminate 3 most important factors in forming the human knowledge: mind, reality and universal rationality. He says there is no mind as an entity. It is culturally formed and works under contingencies. And there is no reality as the transcendental foundation of human knowledge. Rorty does not deny that there is the independent reality. But the reality we perceive is always a linguistic one originated from human activities. So the pictures of reality we know is linguistically

formed. They never are 'objective' and 'transcendental.' So Rorty suggests another new paradigm of philosophy: "philosophy without mirror," philosophy without epistemology and metaphysics. And then Rorty tries to eliminate the innateness of human nature. He tries to replace the innate human rationality and universal morality with solidarity, contingency, desire to survive, and human creativity and imagination.

This dissertation approaches Rorty's philosophy critically. Rorty moves too far until forgetting that our life should go with dilemmas and mysteries. Logically his explanation seems persuasive. But it goes too far away from people's daily life. In this paper Rorty's philosophy is defined as 'eliminativism.' And his eliminativism is criticized for it is too easy way to afford the real life situations.

Rorty's attempt is understood as the trials to eliminate the "ineliminable." Human mind cannot be reduced to anything explainable when we consider its "consciousness." Human consciousness is beyond our explanation but it is one of obvious ("incurable") aspects of human experience. Another "ineliminable" is the concept of reality "over there." Rorty insists to remove the concept of reality (as it is) from human discourses for there is no way to prove that our understanding of the world and the world 'as it is' are identical. It is not provable. But we cannot eliminate the existence of 'transcendental' reality. If we remove it we will also lose the ground of critical discussion. There is no rationality which is regarded as the most important tool in achieving human progresses. We lose the weapon to fight against the 'undesirable' errors. And Rorty's negation of intrinsic human dignity endangers our society rather than makes people freer and more creative.

So conclusion of this dissertation is that philosophical discourses (including metaphysics and epistemology) should be continued. And because of the “ineliminable” aspects in our philosophical discourses we continuously need to wrestle with the dilemmas and mysteries. Philosophy should be the “philosophy with the ineliminable.”

