

**AN INTEGRATIVIST ATTEMPT TO DISSOLVE AND
RECONSTRUCT RICHARD RORTY'S CONCEPTION OF
IRONISM**

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Abstract

Richard Rorty draws a distinction between an activity of using old words in new senses for self liberation or private autonomy and an activity of searching “for theories which will get at real essence.” He calls those who engage in the former activity “ironists,” people like Proust, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Hegel and Derrida, and calls those who engage in the latter activity “metaphysicians,” people like Plato, Descartes and Kant (RORTY^a 1989, 96—97). The ironists, he says, have radical and continuing doubts about their final vocabularies, because they have been impressed by other vocabularies. Unlike metaphysicians who search for words closer to reality, ironists engage only in playing off new words against old ones. When Rorty realized that this distinction is implausible, that both groups shared a certain unavoidable metaphysical link, he then called for replacement of theory with novel in ironism, which implies replacement of philosophy with literature. Theory, he says, is about general ideas, while the novel is about people. This paper is aimed at averting this implication, by arguing that interpretation of the novel (which is the essence of it) implicates metaphysics and is theory-laden, and that ironism should not be seen in the Rortyan way as that opposed to metaphysics, but as a new (pragmatic) way of doing metaphysics. Integrativism, an African method of philosophy, is employed to dissolve Rorty’s distinction between ironism and metaphysics, and to redescribe ironism as “innovativism.” The method of this work is argumentative, conversational, critical and redescriptive.

KEYWORDS: Ironism, metaphysics, integrativism, innovativism, redescription

Introduction

The term “ironism” is an invention of Richard Rorty, an American pragmatist. He defines ironism as the activity of “the person who has doubts about his own final vocabulary, his moral identity, and perhaps

his own sanity’’ (RORTY^a 1989, 186). The vocabulary which the ironist person doubts (denies its traditional meaning) is that of the essentialist metaphysician who sees words like ‘truth’ as something eternal or essential. Ironism lies in arguing, for instance, that truth is not found but made, not a property of nature but a function of sentences which are human creations (RORTY^a 1989, 4—5). This act of replacing the traditional, speculative sense of truth with a new, concrete sense of it is what Rorty calls “re-description,” which is the method of ironism (RORTY^a 1989, 78). His aim of inventing ironism is to undermine essentialist metaphysics, which he sees as a search for something like ghosts or spooks, an endeavor not concerned with promotion of human happiness and freedom. Metaphysics (in the essentialist sense), he says, is useless because of its concern with spirit-like entities rather than human practice. What he does to eliminate it is re-description of key metaphysical concepts such as mind, reason, truth, etc. by replacing their speculative, traditional meanings with pragmatic meanings. For instance, he argues that the word “reason” is not a source of epistemic authority but “the process of reaching agreement by persuasion” (RORTY^b 2007, 53).

When Rorty realizes that what the ironists do (redescription) is not absolutely distinct from what the metaphysicians do (speculation), that both groups do use theories to philosophize and that theories are about general ideas, not about individual humans or things, he then calls for replacement of theory with the novel in philosophizing in order to eliminate metaphysics. He assumes that using the novel rather than theory to do philosophy is a safer medium to avoid metaphysics. With the novel, one would be telling stories about the relativity and contingency of individual metaphysicians rather than making arguments about their theories of ghostly entities, the essences of things (RORTY^a 1989, 107).

With the insight drawn from “integrativism,” an African method and concept of philosophy, I observe that insofar as the use of words is concerned in every intellectual endeavor, metaphysics is unavoidable. The meaningfulness or usefulness of any novel or narrative rests on its interpretation, and interpretation is not narrative but theoretical (metaphysical). Integrativism is derived from an Igbo (African) word “Njikoka,” “which means obtaining truth, value or meaning by pulling together the relevant parts of variables. The emphasis of this concept is on group identity rather than individual identity ...” (OZUMBA and CHIMAKONAM 2014, 119). The central tenet of integrativism is that reality or practice is diverse but integrative; inclusive and not exclusive; relative and not absolute; and dialectical. Integrativism accounts for the reason Rorty tried and failed to separate

ironism from metaphysics, and now calls for replacement of philosophy with literature in order to avoid or eliminate metaphysics.

In this paper, integrativism shows also that literature is not a safe haven for ironism to hide from metaphysics or a safer medium to do ironist philosophy without the influence of metaphysics; that the only thing possible in theory and practice is to see ironism as an act of creating new ideas of doing metaphysics and other things with words, and not as an attempt to eliminate metaphysics. The procedure for detailed presentation of this claim takes the first step of exposing Rorty's concepts of ironism and metaphysics; the second step of exposing the African philosophy of integrativism; the third step of pointing out the inability of literature to hide ironism from metaphysics; and the fourth and final step of giving ironism the suitable name capable of preventing further creation of artificial opposition between it and its essence, which is metaphysics.

Rorty's Ironism as an Attempt to Eliminate Metaphysics

As a contemporary thinker of heuristic society and education, Richard Rorty wants philosophy to be nothing but what he calls 'cultural politics'---- 'arguments about what words to use' (RORTY^b 2007, 3), and the traditional philosophy of essence to be replaced by the former. He wants the Platonic, Cartesian and Kantian talk of knowledge to be replaced with the new Wittgensteinian talk of using language to do things, of language game. Plato's attempt to answer the question about the nature of justice (using Socrates) introduced the idea of searching for the true essence or nature of things as the ultimate business of philosophy (Cf. RORTY^a 1989, xiii). The torchlight which he recommends for the search in the dark room of the senses is *reason* which is innate, universal and eternal. With it, he discovered the true essence of things which he calls the *forms* of things (PLATO 1974). With the Platonic reason, Rene Descartes claims to have discovered a certain, indubitable truth called *thought*, the essence of existence (DESCARTES 1993, 125—155). With it, Immanuel Kant claims to have discovered a universal law of morality which he calls the *categorical imperatives* (KANT 1993, 524—531).

It is the Platonic, Cartesian and Kantian talk about something intrinsic and essential named truth which reason can pierce the veil of the senses to unveil that Rorty calls metaphysics which prioritizes the universal (the changeless) over the contingent (the particular) (RORTY^a 1989, 33). To eliminate the talk about knowing the changeless truth and to replace it with pragmatism, Rorty argues that truth is not an objective reality out there, but a function of sentences, and sentences are elements of human creations (RORTY^a 1989, 4—5). Having replaced the

epistemic meaning of truth with this linguistic meaning of it thus, Rorty replaces the search for truth with the search for and use of vocabularies, and the metaphysician with a fellow whom he calls “ironist.”

The said ironist is:

... someone who fulfils three conditions: (1) she has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself. (RORTY^a 1989, 73)

Rorty sees Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Proust, and Nabokov, for instance, as those who have fulfilled the three conditions. What they have done in philosophy is different from what Plato, Descartes and Kant have done. While the former group named “ironists” is absolutely concerned with the use of vocabularies (the contingent), playing off old vocabularies against the new ones, the latter group named “metaphysicians” are absolutely concerned with the search for truth, the universal and the changeless. While the ironists play what Rorty calls “cultural politics” which is “arguments about what words to use” (RORTY^b 2007, 3), the metaphysicians “search for theories which get at real essence,” the act which he sees as useless, because human beings are mere contingencies---“centreless webs of beliefs and desires ... nothing more than sentential attitudes” (RORTY^a 1989, 88).

Rorty’s suggestion that metaphysics is useless is more pronounced in his attempt to dissolve the Platonic claim that the human mind is immaterial (or eternal). The word “immaterial,” he argues, means nothing because it is not the same thing as the word “mental” which is the opposite of the word “physical,” “material” or “spatio-temporal.” And the word “mental” and “immaterial” are not synonymous. If they are, then the disputes about the status of universals between conceptualists and realists would look sillier than they do. Since the opposite of “mental” is “physical” which is synonymous with “material,” it then follows that “immaterial,” which is distinct from “mental,” is not the opposite of “material,” because two distinct concepts (immaterial and mental) cannot have synonymous opposites (physical and material). The word “mental” is also contradictory and useless because the so-called mental states such as pains and beliefs (for

instances) do not appear to have anything in common save the metaphysical refusal to call them “physical” (RORTY^c 1979, 20—22).

After his elimination of the notion that the mind is immaterial, Rorty embarks on the replacement of abstract meanings of metaphysical concepts with pragmatic meanings, in order to eliminate metaphysics. He argues that the word “mind” is not an immaterial entity which looks like “a movie theatre inside the skull... It is the ability to use persuasion to get what one wants” (RORTY^b 2007, 113); “reason” is not a source of knowledge or truth, but “the process of reaching agreement by persuasion” (2007, 53); “imagination” is not a faculty that generates mental images but the ability to change social practices by creating new and usable ideas with use of language (2007, 107); “morality” is not the Kantian search for universal laws of nature that determine good will, but promotion of solidarity and diminution of cruelty (RORTY^a 1989, 192—198); and “philosophy” is not a search for the essential, but cultural politics---“arguments about what words to use” (RORTY^b 2007, 3). This act of replacing the metaphysical senses of these concepts with the pragmatic senses and arguing for the latter against the former is what he calls *redescription*, which the ironists do rather than search for truth or the essential, which the metaphysicians do.

At this point, Rorty noticed himself that the distinction he drew between ironism and metaphysics was not capable of separating the former from the latter. Although the ironists are concerned with redescription of vocabularies rather than the search for the essential, they are still making reference to something essential or spiritual. Rorty calls this the problem of the ironist theory,

the problem of how to finitize while exhibiting a knowledge of one’s finitude---of satisfying Kierkegaard’s demand on Hegel--- is the problem of the ironist theory. It is the problem of how to overcome authority without claiming authority. That problem is the ironist’s counterpart to the metaphysicians’ problem of bridging the gap between appearance and reality, time and eternity, language and the nonlinguistic. (RORTY^a 1989, 104—105)

Hegel wants Kant to see “knowledge” not as limitation of reason to appearance, but as absolute freedom of reason to develop itself through an endless dialectical process. The reason in view is not a mental state of individual humans; it is rather a spiritual entity which Hegel calls the *World Spirit* (HEGEL 1954, 11). Nietzsche, according to Rorty, wants the Platonists to see “truth” not as an objective reality out there to be found by reason, but as “a mobile army of metaphors,” a creation of

human imagination (RORTY^a 1989, 27). Heidegger (one of the ironists) calls Nietzsche “the last metaphysician,” because his *will to power* (associated with the imaginary entity he calls the superman or the strong poet) is the same thing as Platonism which he wants to invert (RORTY^a 1989, 111). To avoid Platonism, Heidegger talks about the history of “being” rather than the essence of being. However, his concept of being is his “own idiosyncratic spiritual situation” which is “the essence of what it was to be a human being” (1989, 110). Although the ironists are talking about something contingent rather than essential, they are metaphysicians, because their talk about the contingent (vocabularies), like that about the essential (truth), is a talk about general ideas in books, not about humans in flesh (1989, 107).

Having failed to separate ironism from metaphysics (due to the problem of the ironist theory which both share), Rorty resorts to separation of vocabularies into private and public sectors (1989, 100). Vocabularies of private sector, according to Rorty, are used to discuss things that bother the ironist, how to avoid being a footnote to Plato. Those of public sector are used to discuss things like justice, things of common concern. The ironist should avoid use of vocabularies of public affairs, because they are bound to lead to metaphysics. This also failed to separate ironism from metaphysics, because the ironist’s talk about his private affair is nothing more than his theory (metaphysical explanation) of how to replace old vocabularies of Plato with new vocabularies of self-creation and private autonomy.

Consequently, the ironist cannot talk about his/her private affairs (what bothers him) without theorizing---making reference to general ideas. The problem of the ironist theory, as Rorty has already pointed out, is “the problem of how to finitize while exhibiting a knowledge of one’s own finitude, ... the problem of how to overcome authority without claiming authority. That problem is the ironist’s counterpart to the metaphysicians’ problem of bridging the gap between appearance and reality, time and eternity, language and the non-linguistic”. Because of this problem, Rorty recommends the use of novels (rather than theories) for ironism. Proust discovered the metaphysical implication of using theories for ironism and abandoned it and began to use novels. “The lesson I draw from Proust’s example,” says Rorty, “is that novels are a safer medium than theory for expressing one’s recognition of the relativity and contingency of authority figures. For novels are usually about people--things which are, unlike general ideas and final vocabularies, quite evidently time-bound, embedded in a web of contingencies” (1989, 107). That is why Rorty wants literary criticisms to replace philosophical arguments, literature to replace philosophy.

An Attempt to Dissolve Rorty's Ironism with Integrativism

Integrativism is an African method of doing philosophy propounded by Godfrey O. Ozumba of the Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Nigeria. Jonathan O. Chimakonam of the same university later became the leading figure in the development and popularization of the theory (see the footnote in OZUMBA and CHIMAKONAM 2014, 5; See also CHIMAKONAM 2013, 73-83). It is derived from the Igbo (African) word "Njikoka Amaka," meaning that "to integrate is better than to disintegrate!" It is "the philosophical orientation that sees reality as having both physical and spiritual dimensions, past and present, as well as harmonized future framework in which seeming variables unite without contradiction to achieve progress and epistemic wholeness" (OZUMBA and CHIMAKONAM 2014, 5—6; OZUMBA 2014, 13-21).

The essence of integrativism is to show that through physical and spiritual insight, one can offer answers to most of the questions that confront one in one's daily life, be they ethical, epistemological, metaphysical, logical, linguistic, religious and scientific (CHIMAKONAM 2013, 73-83). Integrativism as a method of philosophy is contextual, analytic, complementary, dialectical and conjunctive (CHIMAKONAM 2013, 73-83). With it, one can cautiously manage relevant variables in a context-dependent dynamic network for resolving tasks that would rather prove difficult for mono-sequestered and non-contextualized theoretic framework. It enables one to bridge the gap between one culture and another; and between one philosophical tradition and another. Integrativism explains the reason the mathematician talks of *integers* which is the root word that bears integration and which means whole number; the physicist talks of the law of conservation of mass which says that energy is neither lost nor gained; the biologist talks of fusion of male and female sex cells that leads to the formation of the foetus, emergence of human life. This informed the integrativist conviction and teaching that reality is integrative rather than separative, and most importantly, that "seemingly opposed variables are contraries rather than contradictories" (OZUMBA and CHIMAKONAM 2014, 4).

Integrativism offers the explanation for Rorty's inability to eliminate or avoid metaphysics with his ironism. He sees ironism and metaphysics as contradictories rather than sub-contraries. The integrativist explains that African logic is trivalent and not bivalent (as in Western logic). This means that a theory of an ironist or metaphysician, for instance, can be true, false or integrated (true and false at the same time) depending on the contexts or situations of its use. It is different from the Aristotelian (Western) logic whose law of

contradiction does not allow a theory to be both true and false at the same time. With trivalent logic (three-valued logic), we can see that ironism as a philosophical theory is true for certain people in American society whose beliefs and desires are captured by pragmatism and, at the same time, false for certain people in African or Oriental societies whose beliefs and desires are captured by essentialism. In the same way, metaphysics as a philosophical theory is also true for one society and false for another at the same time. None of the two is absolutely or universally true or false as the law of contradiction entails. Thus, ironism and metaphysics are not exclusively opposed to each other; they are inclusively opposed to each other.

The exclusive opposition which Rorty attempted and failed to create between ironism and metaphysics suggests that both share nothing. The inclusive opposition which integrativism teaches shows that both ironism and metaphysics have a theoretic feature in common; differ by ironism being concerned with contingency and metaphysics being concerned with essence; and are an inseparable whole by essence (metaphysics) being the essence of contingency (ironism), and contingency being the essence of human freedom and social progress; hence the Heraclitus' dictum: the only thing changeless (essential) is change itself. For freedom or progress presupposes contingency (state of change), and the suitable description for indefinite occurrence of any state of change is 'permanence,' which presupposes essence.

The integrativist talk about the inseparable connection between essence and contingency (or metaphysics and ironism or theory and practice) is unavoidable in literature to which Rorty ran to hide ironism from metaphysics. My two novels titled *Shegado Republic* (ODOH^a 2010) and *The Jobless Graduate on the Flying Horse* (ODOH^b 2012) are good examples in the context of this paper. The former is a story of goats, sheep and dogs which were trained to behave like humans by a zoologist. At a point, the human training made them to discover that the zoologist was not really training them to be free like humans but for sale and experiment in zoology. They then evicted the zoologist and formed an animal government of their own. But all of a sudden, the crisis of salt among the sheep and goats forced the dogs to use the human training they received from the zoologist to kill and eat some sheep and goats in secret and to overthrow the animal government led by the sheep and goats. The latter is a story about two university graduates named Bamiee and Joseph. Bamiee saw the essence of university education as securing high-paying white-collar jobs. Joseph saw it as knowledge for self-reliance. After failing to get his dream job for many years, Bamiee unknowingly stumbled into Joseph's business office in search of a job.

That was the person he (Bamiee) taunted and fought to prevent from encouraging others to embrace entrepreneurship after graduation.

Only kids can enjoy the story of the animal government without asking for the meaning or message it conveys. It is only the kids, too, that can see the story of the two university graduates as a picture of reality out there without bothering about the lesson to be drawn from it. Any story that has no meaning or use for solving human problems or promotion of human happiness is useless in itself. If this is granted, then it calls for no argument to agree that the meaning or use of any story is not found in it but in its interpretation.

As already noted, Rorty sees any causal discourse (i.e., theory, interpretation or explanation of causal relations between phenomena or events) other than narratives as metaphysics. Given this, it then follows that interpretation or explication of any narrative (which is meta-narrative) is metaphysics. A narrative can only remain metaphysics-free if and only if its purpose or meaning can be understood without verbal or non-verbal *interpretation*, which is impossible. To explain a story is to say out its meaning or use from a certain theoretical point of view. That is the main reason for my claim here that interpretation implicates metaphysics or theory, because it is an act of explaining the essence (meaning, use or purpose) of art, science and all human creations. To interpret a story is not to tell another story about the story in view; it is *to go beyond* the obvious wording and subject of the story and to create or point out the meaning, use or purpose of the story which is not stated in it by the author. Thus, the Rortyan use of novels (story) for ironism without theory (interpretation) is implausible.

The Rortyan attempt to reduce philosophy to mere story-telling should be undermined in order to guard the existence and growth of African philosophy which is primarily metaphysics-laden. Such reductionism aimed at avoiding or eliminating metaphysics amounts to relegation of spiritual or religious dimensions of reality to the back of the drawers. Integrativism “was instigated by the need to debunk the view that philosophy should be concerned about the mundane and not the metaphysical, the spiritual or the religious dimensions of reality” (OZUMBA 2011, 153). Metaphysics is what Innocent Asouzu presents in his *ibuanidanda* philosophy as “a transcendent complementary comprehensive systematic inquiry into the structure and dynamics of human consciousness as to determine the reason for the subject-object tension and dichotomy by reason for which the ego always seeks its autonomy outside the foundation of its unity” (2014, 28). Ironism can only be a serious and fruitful philosophy if it is re-described in terms of

ibuanyidanda philosophy, made to be pro-metaphysics rather than anti-metaphysics.

A Suitable Conception of Ironism

If the novel is not a safe haven for ironism because of the metaphysical inclination of literary interpretation, then Rorty's conception of ironism as an enemy of metaphysics is a misnomer. It is still the same old metaphysics wrapped up in new vocabulary. By seeing it in this sense, Rorty stands ironism on its head; it need be stood on its legs.

There is a difference in kind, not in form that still exists between ironism and metaphysics. That is the fact that the former is about contingency of language and the latter is about essence of things. Teed Rockwell suggests that this difference makes ironism a pragmatic metaphysics and not an opposition to metaphysics. While criticizing Rorty, he says: "If I say that the sole essential property of true statements is that they are all useful, and therefore demand that no more be said about the subject, I am also doing epistemology" (ROCKWELL 2003, 10). C.I Lewis agrees with Rockwell that the pragmatist talk of use of language has a metaphysical sense. He sees the a priori as meaning that "naming, classifying, defining activity is essentially prior to investigation" (LEWIS 1949, 289). Both scholars suggest that ironism is a pragmatist kind of metaphysics as opposed to the essentialist kind. This difference, of course, has saved ironism (and philosophy in general) from Rorty's attempt to bury it in the literary grave; hence, the independence of philosophy from literature.

The name which, I think, is suitable for ironism is what I call *Philosophy of Creativity and Innovation* (PCI). What Rorty's re-description (ironism) reveals is the principle by which we can explain, in a practicable way, how new ideas of doing things are created. Before Rorty's ironism, the psychological definition of imagination as generation of mental images (EGWU 2011, 458), which is speculative, was the usual way of explaining the mental act of creating novel ideas. By arguing that the word "mind" is not an immaterial thing that mirrors nature but the skill or ability to use persuasion rather than force to make people do what one wants, Rorty has not eliminated the word "mind," but created a pragmatic philosophy of mind (as opposed to the essentialist philosophy of mind) with the word. This kind of argument is better called PCI than an attempt to eliminate or avoid metaphysics.

Rorty's re-description of mind has created a practicable, non-speculative way of explaining how influential philosophers or other scholars develop ideas that change the course of their fields/discipline for the better. Instead of saying in the speculative way that Hegel, for

instance, changed the course of philosophy from essentialism to historicism by his ability to generate new ideas in his mind, we can rather say in an articulate way that he did so by using the word “knowledge” in a new progressive sense (as absolute freedom of reason from limitation) against Kant’s use of it in an old conservative sense (as limitation of reason to appearance).

Re-description also explains in the practicable way how Nietzsche replaced the old Platonic talk about knowledge with his new talk about self-creation and private autonomy by using the word “truth” in a new sense as “a mobile army of metaphors” against Plato’s use of it in the old sense as an objective reality (NIETZSCHE 2004). It explains how Heidegger inspired many philosophers to move from the talk about essentialism to that of existentialism by using the word “being” in a new sense as freedom of time-bound humans to recreate themselves against the old sense of it as eternal and immortal essence of causal entities responsible for human existence (HEIDEGGER 1996). It explains how Joseph Schumpeter has recently replaced the Marxian bloodsucker picture of capitalism with the innovation-creator picture of it by using the word “capitalism” in a new sense as an act of destroying old methods of production by creating new and better methods against Karl Marx’s old sense of it as exploitation and enslavement of the working class by their employers (SCHUMPETER 1976, 5—121).

Thus, the articulate, practicable way to teach someone how to be creative or innovative like Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Schumpeter, etc. is to show him/her the way they used their key words of discourse in new senses against the old senses in which the key words were used. The act of doing this, an account of how to create new and usable ideas with words, and arguments about what words to use or the senses in which they should be used for promotion of creativity and innovation are what I call *Philosophy of Creativity and Innovation* (PCI)---what I think re-description (ironism) really is, and not an attempt to eliminate or avoid metaphysics.

PCI should be seen as a sub branch of philosophy that exists together with essentialist metaphysics, epistemology and ethics as an integrated body of knowledge and practice. Its method is *innovativism*, i.e., an act of creating new and usable ideas in contexts by re-describing old terms, using them in new senses against their old senses, with a view to creating new ideas of doing things and replacing undesired thoughts and actions with desired ones. In PCI, discrimination need not be made between useful and useless terms. Every term has to be seen in terms of being suitable or unstable in the context of its use. Metaphysics is to be seen as one of the terms for creating new and usable ideas, and not as a

representation of something immaterial or useless to be eliminated or avoided as Rorty sees it.

Innovativism is underpinned by one of the integrativist approaches called ‘conversational philosophy,’ which is “the rigorous engagement of individual African philosophers in the creation of critical narratives through the fusion of relevant elements of tradition and modernity for the construction of future” (CHIMAKONAM^a 2014, 17). This explains how my idea of innovativism is generated: it is by engaging Rorty (though not an African) who favours only contemporary philosophy and African philosophers (integrativists) who appreciate and fuse the relevant elements of the ancient, modern and contemporary thought systems in both African and Western philosophies. Innovativism is a fusion of relevant elements of ironism and essentialist metaphysics. Conversationalism also explains how the nascent African philosophy can be made to occupy a universal space of comparative thought (CHIMAKONAM^b 2015, 462—479). With it, Victor Nweke has recently generated a novel conception of reincarnation in African philosophy by engaging two prominent African philosophers in a critical and creative conversation (NWEKE 2005, 403—404).

Innovativism (or re-description) is an adaptable, dynamic method of interpretation and creativity. In all fields of knowledge where use of language is inevitable, the method can be used to explain how innovative scholars therein were able to invent the breakthrough ideas that make them famous. In the essentialist metaphysics where the talk is about the intrinsic essence or nature of reality, the method can be used to explain how words are used in new senses against their old senses which brings about innovations in, and progress of, the field. It has nothing to do with the traditional talks about the nature or essence of truth, reality or value. Essentialist and innovativist talks differ from one another but are inseparable and an integrated body of philosophy. PCI is solely about the invention of innovative ideas which cannot be understood and used without the knowledge of the essence or nature of their existence.

If Rorty had seen ironism and metaphysics in the integrativist sense so as to retain the existence and independence of philosophy from literature or linguistics, then people like Colin Koopman would not have found him guilty of self-contradiction by asking Rorty to explain how the private, which is separate from the public, can drive moral progress in the public sphere (KOOPMAN 2007, 46--50); Michael Dellwing would not have seen his private-public separation of vocabularies as a betrayal of his (Rorty’s) expressed partisanship for solidarity and as an act of ignoring the often oppressive social structures connected with the separation of public and private spheres (DELLWING 2012, 62); Denis

Dutton would not have suggested that he needed to resolve the contradiction between his ironist doubt of all vocabularies of social relation and his admission “that he ‘cannot imagine a culture which socialized its youth in such a way as to make them continually dubious about their own process of socialization’” (DUTTON 1990, 232 -- 234); and others like McCollister (2006, 2), Bacon (2012, 234), Erez (2013,193), and Galis-Menendez (2006, 2) would not have stated or suggested that his recommendation of private-public separation of vocabularies for elimination of essentialist metaphysics is awkward and implausible.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Rorty’s attempt to replace philosophy with literature (or linguistics) in order to eliminate or avoid metaphysics is a failure, because the essence of literature (or the linguistic) is interpretation, and interpretation is metaphysics-laden. Integrativism, an African method of philosophy, which creates room for integration of contrary variables, suggests that Rorty’s failure arises from his inability to understand that ironism (which he ceded to literature) and metaphysics are not contradictories but sub contraries. They are not so exclusively opposed to each other that they have nothing in common. Rather, they differ from each other and share certain essential features at the same time. Ironism is a historicist kind of metaphysics as opposed to an essentialist kind of metaphysics.

Following this, it is observed that Rorty’s conception of ironism as an opposition to metaphysics is a misnomer. In actual sense, what Rorty does in the name of ironism is use of old words in new senses or brand-new words in the place of old ones. Rorty calls this re-description. The foregoing is that metaphysics is one of the words to be re-described, not to be eliminated or avoided, and that re-description is better understood as an act of creating innovations with language than as an attempt to eliminate or avoid metaphysics.

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