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A Pragmatic View of Value

> "Normal discourse…is discourse…which embodies agreed-upon cri-
> teria for reaching agreement; abnormal discourse is any which
> lacks such criteria" (Rorty 1980: 11).

When considering issues of value, worries that relativistic perspectives might undermine the nature of the critical project are commonplace.[1] Less prescient in these discussions, and therefore less visible in the theoretical and practical deliberations that accompany them, is the need to avoid essentialism. The axiomatic demand that a critique and analysis of value should be measured against (or grounded in), meta-critical notions of 'truth', 'authenticity', 'realism', 'experience' and 'contestability', are, I shall argue here, the product of a positivist critical paradigm. This is a paradigm in which the deeply held cultural assumption that meaning is found, revealed or otherwise objectively characterised (through the positive acts of an intellectually self-assertive subject), is exploited. Moreover, this positivist hypothesis suggests that value is hermeneutically self-revealing and universally explicable: both in the production context in which value is given form, and in the symbolic environment in which value is circulated. Value, and concomitantly quality with it, is said by the positivist critic to represent an historically and ideologically transcendent force of, on the one hand, social stasis, and on the other hand, social change.

Thus value, in the role of a transcendent power, is asserted both theoretically and practically, to have direct impact on the social realm through the structuring of a regime of critical independence and objectivity. An independence and objectivity in which the methodologies and the modes of enquiry that are developed to account for values operation, are given legitimacy. In other words, value according to positivist criticism, is held to be characteristic of both *subjectivity* and *objectivity*, and thus, is claimed to operate as a motor of historical development, dialecticism and hermeneuticism.

It is with this in mind, and *pace* Rortian pragmatism, that I will argue here that no critical enterprise - particularly of a positivist kind - can be progressed that is able to finalise and guarantee, *once-and-for-all*, a formula or statement of what is valuable, and what is not valuable, within our culture. Moreover, any attempt to provide for, or seek to establish such a guarantee, is open to the challenge that it is a critically normative, reductive and unproductive task. That is, it is an exercise which can never be verified in any final or ultimate critical account or analysis. As such, then, the positivist critical enterprise, which seeks to explain, account for and describe, which texts and artefacts are valuable and qualitative *in themselves*, is purposefully unable to succeed. The reason for this failure comes down to the attempt being made by the positivist critic to build a realist and foundational account of value, an account that is forged on what are otherwise constantly shifting conceptual sands. Moreover, the positivist

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critical project is too often put into play without necessary refer-
ence to the complex historical, political and interpretative matrix
through which cultural expression and communication is contingently
mediated and practised. The positivist critic can be said, there-
fore, to look at value axiomatically. Bearing this in mind, then,
and as Richard Rorty suggests, "the question is not whether human
knowledge in fact has 'foundations', but whether it makes sense to
suggest that it does" (Rorty 1980: 178).

     So, what makes any attempts to develop a positivist guarantee
implausible, in these circumstances, is the practicality of dealing
with the numerous conversations about value that are taking place
between the many different members of different communities - at any
one particular time. These conversations, it should be noted, take
place in a realm of both direct, mediated and networked communica-
tion. These forms of communication generally include processes of
information and language systemisation, and can roughly be charac-
terised through descriptive strategies such as: signs, representa-
tions micro/mezzo/macro discourses, ideologies, and aestheti-
co/ethical practices.[2] Predominately these conversations are *on-
going,* and take a variety of forms that are unlikely, in finite hu-
man experience, to be epistemologically or phenomenally recognised
as having reached an end-point.[3] Further, these many and diverse
conversations, can never attain a critical mass, or aggregate at a
sufficiently cohesive point (i.e. at an abstract universal fulcrum),
where the infallibility of our human ideas and actions are consid-
ered as secure from doubt and scepticism. Moreover, it is implausi-

ble to suggest that the positivist critical approach is able to function in an environment of boundless good faith, for as this faith is generated in the localised analytical process, and the justifications and arguments that are provided by way of explanation for others are shared and interchanged as part of this localised process, attention must always be drawn to pacifying doubt. For:

> The trouble with aiming at truth is that you would not know when you had reached it, even if you had in fact reached it. But you *can* aim at ever more justification, the assuagement of ever more doubt (Rorty 1999: 51).

So, whatever positive critical responses a critic proffers, there is little to suggest that it will assuage the conditional doubts and apprehensions about the value of texts and artefacts that agents acquire through experience and practice. Particularly, in this sense, as it is impossible to escape from, or independently judge, the locally generated meanings circulated through the texts and artefacts that are produced historically, politically and contingently. In short then, and *contra* Cartesian certainty, there is no way that human-beings can establish if they are infallible, and as such, our critical attention should be turned to those matters where change can more readily be effected.

This lack of closure around issues of value is highlighted by the increased debate taking place in contemporary reflexive-postmodernist circles. Here I will be drawing in part on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Michel Foucault (1970), Anthony Giddens

(1984) and Richard Rorty (1980, 1982, 1999). This is a debate which challenges and re-evaluates modern (i.e. post-enlightenment and positivist) models of social and individual consciousness. This re-evaluation is sustained through increased degrees of reflexivity - be it reflexive conceptions such as language communities, structuration, taste classification or discourse analysis. These debates posit that there are no universal, meta-critical, or objective viewpoints from which either quality or value (*qua* politics or history, or other such metanarratives), can be measured: only contingent views bound by perspective formed through the will to knowledge.[4] The *linguistic-turn* of reflexive-postmodern criticism has provoked considerable re-evaluation of the realist paradigm of objective cultural structuration and practice.[5] A re-evaluation which is expressed from a position primarily influenced by Nietzsche. As Andrew Connor notes:

> For Nietzsche, truth and the morality founded upon truth is just the mirage of metaphor, but, rather than seeking to rescue ethical truth from language, he prefers to affirm the destructive-creative power of language itself (Connor 1992: 103).

Foucault has been responsible for developing this representational anti-essentialism. For Foucault

> Representations are not rooted in a world that gives them meaning; they are open themselves on to a space that is their own, whose internal network gives rise to meaning (Foucault 1970: 78).

This turning away from realist economy of the sign, towards a re-flexive-postmodernity, implies not simply a move from an attempt to "model social processes in such a way as to establish the mechanisms which underlie observed patterns" (Tudor 1999: 176), but instead, seeks to bring into question the status and the genealogy of the language of criticism and historicism itself. As Foucault notes, for Nietzsche:

> It was not a matter of knowing what good and evil were in themselves, but of who was being designated, or rather *who was speaking* (Foucault 1970: 305).

As such, then, criticism becomes a process of anthropological or ar-chaeological investigation, building pictures of discursive communities bound by the perspectivism of agency, community and bodies acting within a social order.

Mapping these ideas into critical enquiry has been a contro-versial, yet productive exercise, based as it is on the move away from the self-confirming forms of 'judgement' that have previously stood as markers of critical certainty.[6] Coupled with the shift to-wards semiotic and deconstructive methods of 'meaning' and 'inter-pretation' analysis, the perception and role of cultural value, in its positivistic sense, has been significantly challenged. Prior concern with "aggressive realism" (Borgmann 1992: 51), in which "value is conceived of as an objectified space" (Frow 1995: 6), has given way to forms of reflexive cultural analysis that regard the act of critical enquiry *itself* to be a form and product of language.

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That is, as a form of reading and interpretation. Significantly here, the works of Foucault, Rorty, Giddens and Bourdieu, contribute towards this shift, challenging traditional models of agency by positing the primacy of discursively reflexive acts within a field of dynamic relations (i.e. within a habitus or within a model of structuration). Crucially, this move, with its recognition of degrees of agency, can be said to introduce a critically reflexive mode of analysis that characterises and delimits expressions of value, and in a major part, contributes towards the creation of these fields of reference and study. The differences between each theorist are significant, but it should be noted that each recognises, in some important respects, that:

> Primary perception of the social world, far from being a simple mechanical reflection, is always an act of cognition involving principles of construction that are external to the constructed object grasped in its immediacy (Bourdieu 1984: 471).

This promotion, of what McGuigan calls "reflexive modernity" (McGuigan 1999: 130) has had a transformative effect on our understanding of realism and ontological certainty, and suggests that the social and symbolic world can no longer be accessed as a positive and objective phenomenon in its own right. Rather, the social world has increasingly come to be regarded as the product of process taking place within competing paradigms of cognitive interpretation (reading) and meaning generation (understanding). The lack of determination inherent in these acts, generated as they are through a practice/praxis continuum of meaning construction and deconstruction,

can be mapped out in the descriptive regularities, the frames and the routines of discursive enunciation that take place within language communities. And so, taking its impetus from the actions of agents who occupy reflexive roles (as well as social defined status positions within the *habitus*), anti-essentialist reflexivity succeeds in undermining axiomatic and normative positivism. Collectively, these reflexive ideas have contributed to the move away from the positivist certainty of value as *representation*, and have added *utility* and *technicality* to the more reflexively enabled and paradigmatically located understanding of value as discourse. As Foucault notes "Value has ceased to be a sign, it has become a product" (Foucault 1970: 254).

In taking this somewhat thorny critical position, and by attempting to establish a pragmatic analytical approach which, in part, is capable of articulating an anti-essentialist discourse of value (as these concepts are articulated within the cultural field), there are a number of arising issues that need to be considered. In characterising the forms of value that are expressed within a discourse, thought must continually be given to how these forms are *represented*, how they are perceived as *warranted*, and how they are made *actionable*. The symbolic and the material will that gives direction to a community is worked out, as Anthony Giddens argues, through a relationship between 'generalisation' 'maxims of action' and 'agents who knowingly apply' those maxims (Giddens 1984: 347). It is through this relationship that individual agents act, and are motivated to act with these generalisations in mind. Importantly,

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in giving consideration to how these maxims are practically acted on by individuals or communities, and indeed, how the generalisations themselves are characterised as frames of perception, it is possible to mark out and identify the *temporal* and *localised* fixity through which these relationships of pronouncement and action are sustained (remembering that not all perceptions and interpretations within a community of thinking-beings will gain expression, acknowledgement, legitimacy or primacy). That is, it is possible to describe the 'routinised' and multiply 'framed' encounters of daily and social life which give rise to the systematic organisation and the social positioning of agents within a 'primary framework of structu-ration'.[7] For Giddens:

> In structuration theory 'structure' is regarded as rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction (Giddens 1984: xxxi).

This structuration is accordingly expressed through 'frameworks' that give substance to the differing conceptual schemes that recur within that culture. Organising the rules and the definitions that accompany concepts into primary and subsidiary frameworks. Giddens stresses, however, that:

> Whatever its level of organisation, a primary framework allows individuals to categorise an indefinite plurality of circum-stances or situations so as to be able to respond in an appro-priate fashion to whatever is going on (*ibid.*: 88).

Individuals, therefore, who make sense of, sustain and promote the 'primary framework' of quality and value, are positioned as 'actors'

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who understand the "rules of language [and] of primary and secondary framing." These agents are able, at the same time, to conduct themselves over "large areas of social life" (*ibid.*: 89) in both adaptive and imaginative ways. The point here being, according to Giddens, that while frameworks of reference exist for individuals within communities, they are neither determined nor programmed by those frameworks, but instead act with a recursive degree of agency, interdependence and independence, against a background of claim and counter-claim.

This means that in discussing value and quality it is advantageous to begin from a theoretically enabled position at which the individual and the social system are seen neither as determined, nor as determining. Instead, and as Giddens further points out, quality and value are enabled from a perspective in which the relationship between individuals and social systems is one of mutual repositioning. For:

> Human societies, or social systems, would plainly not exist
> without human agency. But it is not the case that actors cre-
> ate social systems: they reproduce or transform them, remaking
> what is already made in the continuity of *praxis* (*ibid.*: 171).

So, in opting for a pragmatic view of the way individuals within communities act and respond (drawing on, but avoiding the straight-jacket of an holistic ontology and epistemology),[8] it is possible to study how a community is motivated to generate a coherent discourse expressing sentiments of quality and value. A discourse in which

partial agreements about terms and meanings are reached, through which representative samples of typical examples are collated, and through which cannons of qualitative texts and data are debated, described and theorised. Particularly, in opting for a pragmatic anti-essentialism, it is possible to develop a tactic of investigation that is counter to the oppressive configuration of *a priori* positivistic claims – either moralist, historicist, ideological, economic or pedagogic (etc.). Mono-logical and singular social theories, that attempt to deal with the social world as it is represented in a form of holistic connectivity and through differing degrees of homologically sealed interrelationship, while perhaps romantically desirable, all too easily amount to a tyranny of social thinking. As Giddens suggests:

> The reification of social relations, or the discursive 'naturalisation' of the historically contingent circumstances and products of human action, is one of the main dimensions of ideology in social life (Giddens 1984:25)

Importantly, however, ideology in these terms cannot be given precedence as an independent social force, but must be seen somewhat more prosaically, as the coincidence of ideas and thinking within a field of discursive regularity and structuration. The positivist and axiological characterisation of ideology (suggesting that ideology is an independently force acting in a symbolically and conceptually similar way to gravity), has been undermined by reflexive anti-essentialism, to the extent that ideology no longer holds the critical currency that it once held within the academy, politics or culture, and no longer forms a primary framework of critical enquiry.

Exception to this mode of investigation can be considered, however, where a positivistic outlook is *heuristically expedient*, and where it serves a specifically contingent need of explanation. As a health note, it cannot be ruled out *in practice* that positivism will be avoided, transcended or renounced by the practising critic. The possibility has to be anticipated that positivism will be betrayed in the actions of the critic/academic, which despite claims to the contrary (i.e. of the epistemological purity of thinking claimed by positivist critics), axiological and essentialist positions can all to easily rhetorically stumbled into. In adopting a pragmatic mode of investigation, then, criticism becomes a process of *separation* and *distinction*. Separation, not of the good from the bad, but rather, technical separation and distinction of the provocations and resulting consequences of any critical gesture. In other words, separating the methodological and theoretical intentions that motivate and justify critical positions from the resulting practices and actions that occur. It is subsequently worth considering that "greater attention should be paid to what theorists actually do with their conceptual tools (i.e. how they use them) rather than to what they say they will do" (Mouzelis 1995: 154). And as such, attention should be given to those critical gestures which claim degrees of independence, and those that are more explicitley the product of systematised and localised conceptual frames. Claims which assert an historical regularity are themselves bound by historical regularities, framing the historicist process as a product

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of history. In this sense, criticism as commentary cannot escape discourse. As Foucault argues:

> Commentary performs a double, interrelated role. By drawing on the multiple or hidden meanings attributed to the primary texts, it makes new discourse possible; it also says *at last* what was articulated silently in the primary text. Paradoxically, it says for the first time what has already been said and tirelessly repeats what was never said (quoted in Sheridan 1980: 124).

For the most part, according to Richard Rorty, the descriptive and theoretical explanations that we offer about how the world *is*, or what the status of our culture *is*, are made in order for us to establish agreement about our way forward within that so described world. This is a mediated process of argument, debate and discussion that has sustained implications for the self-view of a person or community, and so there are strong reasons for analysing the motivational justification (the claims toward meta-criticism) by which a critic is able to invoke and activate responses to cultural situations – i.e. calling into question the discursive grounds which give quality and value their presence. Not all critical or descriptive positions will result in either agreement or debate, as Rorty outlines:

> We can have communication and disagreement without any argument ever having been joined. Indeed, we often do. That is what happens whenever we find ourselves unable to find common

premise, when we have to agree to differ, when we begin to
talk about differences of taste (Rorty 1999: 62).

This expediency, of resorting to 'taste' (more fully discussed by
Bourdieu), is motivated when we are unable to garner agreement.
Taste is one way of marking the limit of our conversation-
al/theoretical ability (i.e. taste becomes a marker of conversation-
al technique). As Ian Hunter describes:

> Abandoning the attempt to write a history of criticism in
> terms of the universal goal of the aesthetic experience does
> not entail accepting the subjectivity of taste or slipping in-
> to some imagined chaos of critical opinions. (A 'taste' for
> the aesthetic…is anything but subjective.) Rather, it entails
> taking as the object of such a history (or genealogy) the spe-
> cific *dispersion of cultural techniques* – the techniques of
> the Romantic dialectic itself, for example – which make the
> 'aesthetic experience' possible (Hunter 1988: 175).

Particularly, then, when we reach the point at which we have run out
of adaptable, suggestive and meaningful terms, at the limit of con-
versational technique, we are left without a mechanism that would
otherwise enable us to continue this conversation in anything like a
productive, mutually beneficial or, indeed, safe environment.

So, and in other words, by employing a pragmatic anti-
essentialism, the possibility is raised that we are able to model
paradigmatic exemplars that articulate and describe the *specific* and

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localised mode by which quality and value is calculated and generated within language communities (i.e. as a mode of discourse). In this scenario, notions of quality and value can usefully be seen as tools that are *flexibly adaptive* and always *in-construction*. Or, less grandiosely, as 'thinking equipment'. In this set-up, the conceptual apparatus and tools that are manufactured and used within this process, are employed to undertake either specific descriptive and theoretic jobs - calling on a greater specialisation and complexity but with an infrequency of use. Or alternatively, more generalised jobs - calling on a greater frequency of use and a greater simplicity. It would be absurd to suggest that any theoretical tool that is not adaptable to a wider purposes has little utility. Whereas in contrast, a multi-purpose tool is said to gain utility from its wider range of often conflicting uses (and *vice-versa*). Instead, and in adopting a pragmatic stance, technical advantage can be gained in being ready to assess the utility value acquired from the use of a conceptual tool, within the confines of the operational regionality of that tool. This purely operational and technical advantage cannot be gained if these intellectual/conceptual tools are used in conjunction with transcendent (positive) markers and guarantees. For any suggestion that a tool satisfies something more than worldly, or trans-human purposes, renders that extra use (or meta-use) meaningless because it becomes the logical equivalent of pushing against air. In Martyn Hammersley's words, "whether we should be concerned with the truth or falsity of any account depends on how we plan to use it" (Hammersley 1992: 53). In light of this discussion, then, attention can be given to how both quality and value can, generally and specifically, be regarded as conceptual tools serving

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specific purposes within a repertoire of devices of cultural speci-ficity.[9]

In articulating a perceived set of ideas of quality and value, then, and in generating discussion about the means that are consid-ered to be operationally desirable for the realisation of these ide-as, a pragmatic view will always sharply contrast between the search for that which is *useful*, ahead of searching for that which is *cor-rect*. Moreover, and more significantly, as Rorty suggests, a prag-matist would "hope to replace the reality-appearance distinction [between the true and the false] with the distinction between the more useful and the less useful" (Rorty 1999: xxii). This para-axiom, signals a mode of escape from the positivist bind of real and unreal needs, and is one way that Rorty localises and isolates the metaphoric equivalencies of quality and value. For if we focus on assessing the usefulness of cultural texts and artefacts (i.e. changing value from a thing in itself to an active process), identi-fication can be made of the role of a text or artefact, specifically in conjunction with the practised role of the reader or agent. Par-ticularly, this pragmatic approach is a useful way of satisfying contingent intellectual needs (remembering that these identified needs are themselves discursive and contingently accounted for). The identification of these needs, and the justifications that we give to the forms of the tools that we employ, are continually chal-lenged by a feedback process that adapts these conceptual tools for future use. In this sense concepts of quality and value are open to examination and critique, not as they are expected to be understood

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in themselves, in a positivistic manner, but rather, as they are procedurally and technically deployed by agents acting in a discursive field of structured relations – in a *habitus* or a matrix.

So, in discussing these distinctions, it is warrantable that accounts of value be characterised, mapped and explained as the result of a theoretically relational process. That is, as part of a process of description that can be characterised as historical, political, sociological, ethnomethodological (and so on). Martyn Hammersley speaks to this process when he says that:

> *All* descriptions use concepts which refer to an infinite number of phenomena (past, present, future and possible). And *all* descriptions are structured by theoretical assumptions: what we include in descriptions is determined in part by what we think causes what. In short, descriptions cannot be theories, but all descriptions are theoretical in the sense that they rely on concepts and theories (Hammersley 1992: 13).

Separating out the singularly descriptive and the singularly theoretical modes of this process is a task given over to increased technological/theoretical specialisation, a specialisation which employs increasing dedicated thinkers. Thinkers (if you wish critics, academics, intellectuals and even philosophers) who form a community around a common recognition of these descriptions and theories (i.e. as a discursive community). This discursive community, then, generates sufficiently purposeful, adaptable, and quite often, robust tools (but never universal tools), by which these contingent aims

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can be catered for, understood, justified and developed in the de-
sire to get local and systematic jobs done. This recognition, that
these descriptive and theoretical tools are the product of a process
which technologically measures and adapts to the discursive environ-
ment (while at the same time participating and contributing towards
the adaptation of that discursive environment), shifts our attention
from thinking about concepts, such as value and quality, in terms of
ends, and implants our thinking firmly within the milieu of *means*.
For the challenge for the social theorist, Rorty suggests, is to ask
"Does our purported theoretical difference make any difference to
practice?" (Rorty 1999: xxi). Moreover, is this difference restric-
tive, or is this difference one that enables the widest possible
participation from members of the discursive community, and thus in-
vigorating that community with new descriptions, theories and tools?

So, in adopting this pragmatically reflexive approach, it is
possible to go further and argue that discourses of quality and val-
ue are never free from the context in which they are used, nor from
the field of relations in which they are generated. According to
Barbara Herrnstein Smith

> "All value is radically contingent, being nether a fixed at-
> tribute, an inherent quality, or an objective property of
> things but, an effect of multiple, continuously changing and
> continuously interacting variables" (Smith 1988: 30).

Positivist (i.e. essentialist) models of criticism, have presupposed
that value is the property of either, on the one hand, the object,

or, on the other hand, the subject.[10] In the process value has been posited as a concept that has been said to be found either in the text or artefact itself (which is self-asserting), or, that value and quality are the result of the inherent actions of a universal social being who is abstractly capable of extracting a divine/humanistic spirit of action, appreciation and understanding - despite the barriers offered by ideology, practicality and chance. It is seldom commonplace to calculate that value, and its concomitantly assigned markers (quality and taste), are the "products of the dynamics of a system" (*ibid.*: 15); a system in which meanings are fought for and generated through ongoing conversations. It is necessary here to propose, therefore, that the positivist paradigm is regularly capable of leading to involuntary models of high and low culture, models of great and good art, as well as critical models extrapolating materialism, romanticism and historicism. The suggestion here, then, is that these often contradictory outcomes of critical enquiry and practice are, in many important respects, genealogically related in their essentialist or foundational objectives. Objectives where the goal of cultural criticism, and hence the identification of value, has been either to "ensure the preservation of quality" (Tudor 1999: 9) as a free-standing and self-justifying platform from which to project claims of how-the-world-is. Or, conversely, to "understand what's at stake" (Frith 1996: 26) in the way that material and symbolic resources are distributed or withheld within economic, cultural and symbolic systems. Both approaches lack a decisive reflexivity, and so are doomed to the fallacy of positive objectivism.

Notes:

[1] While Charlotte Brunsdon suggests that anti-essentialist (or pejoratively relativist) criticism is something akin to a "dance on a pinhead" (Brunsdon 1997: 133), Judith Squires suggests that "The rejection of relativism, need not lead to moral paralysis. It is only if we insist on adopting a strong form of postmodernism, or constructing an absolute opposition between objectivism and relativism, claiming that anything goes and avoiding all principled positions, that we undermine the possibility of sustaining the conditions for a tolerant and pluralistic intellectual political order" (Squires 1993: 7). What concerns me is that neither Brunsdon nor Squires actually point towards, or give examples of this claimed form of relativism in action or in name. As such their worries remain non-descriptive and abstract.

[2] These are, as Mouzelis points out, "tentative suggestions or guidelines in a field of study which, due to its very nature, is constantly changing" (Mouzelis 1995: 152). Here these methodological strategies are necessarily incomplete, but indicate approximately the likely critical models that are functionally open to studies of value.

[3] It is often pejoratively retorted in discussions of relativism/anti-essentialism that 'anything goes', perhaps well represented by the adage that if we leave enough monkeys in a room with a typewriter, for long enough, they will emerge having typed the complete works of William Shakespeare. This is a strong indication of the nature of the positivist myth, for if these monkeys are able to consciously type and converse, the only thing that they could converse about would be their experiences as monkeys trapped in a room with a typewriter. They would be unable to produce any writing that would bear any relation to the life, or more importantly, the literary imagination, of a male Elizabethan playwright.

[4] As Foucault argues "Discursive practices give rise to knowledge" (Sheridan 1980: 109).

[5] "Modern criticism is (among many other things, of course) that which deliberately attempts to absent the empirical other – alternity – from history in an effort to legitimise the critic as an autonomous subject of language or discourse; modern criticism is thus profoundly *semiotic* and inherently aesthticising in its determination to find a form under which the force that is a recalcitrant alterity might be assimilated in the product of autobiography or subject-legitimation" (Docherty 1999: 21).

[6] "The transformation from the age of 'isms' to the age of 'posts' signifies the passage from an age of confidence and certainty to one rooted in fear and uncertainty" (Silverman 1999: 5).

[7] A routinised encounter between agency and structure "which…can only be resolved by generating concepts which ensure that we understand structure and agency in conjoint terms – the one always implying and presupposing the other" (Tudor 1999: 177).

[8] Which say that 'subjects' are determined either by oppressive relations, ideology or other forms of powerful social control – religion, capitalism, ideology, human nature etc.

[9] "Philosopher's concepts," according to Rorty, "are no more essential…than those of lawyers, economists, or anthropologists, though in certain contexts any of these concepts may turn out to be useful shorthand. In other circumstances, they block understandings – block the road to enquiry. Talk of powerful analytical tools that a philosopher can lay hands on to bring to the problems of men is just arm waving" (Nielsen 1991: 144).

[10] According to Rorty "The Platonist would like to see a culture guided by something eternal. The positivist would like to see one guided by something temporal – the brute impact of the way the world is. Both want it to be *guided*, constrained, not left to its own devices" (Rorty 1982: xxxvii).

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