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Universality and Truth[1]

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I. Is the Topic of Truth Relevant to Democratic Politics?

The question of whether there are any beliefs or desires common to all human beings is of little interest apart from the vision of a utopian, inclusivist, human community – one which prides itself on the different sorts of people it welcomes, rather than on the firmness with which it keeps strangers out. Most human communities remain exclusivist: their sense of identity, and the self-images of their members, depend on pride in not being certain other sorts of people: people who worship the wrong god, eat the wrong foods, or have some other perverse, repellent, beliefs or desires. Philosophers would not bother trying to show that certain beliefs and desires are found in every society, or are implicit in some ineliminable human practice, unless they hoped to show that the existence of these beliefs demonstrates the possibility of, or the obligation to construct, a planet-wide inclusivist community. In this paper, I shall use "democratic politics" as a name for the attempt to bring such a community into existence.

One of the desires said to be universal by philosophers interested in democratic politics is the desire for truth. In the past, such philosophers have typically conjoined the claim that there is universal human agreement on the supreme desirability of truth with two further premises: that truth is correspondence to reality, and that reality has an intrinsic nature (that there is, in Nelson Goodman's terms, a Way the World Is). Given these three premises, they proceed to argue that Truth is One, and that the universal human interest in truth provides motive for creating an inclusivist community. The more of that truth we uncover, the more common ground we shall share, and the more tolerant and inclusivist we shall therefore become. The rise of relatively democratic, relatively tolerant, societies in the last few hundred years is said to be due to the increased rationality of modern times, where 'rationality' denotes the employment of an innate a truth-oriented faculty.

The three premises I have listed are sometimes said to be "necessitated by reason." But this claim is usually tautologous, for philosophers typically explain their use of the word 'reason' by listing those same three premises as "constitutive of the very idea of rationality." They view colleagues who have doubts about one or another of these three premises, as 'irrationalists.' Degrees of irrationality are attributed according to how many of these premises the distrusted philosopher denies, and also according to how much or little interest he or she shows in democratic politics.[2]

In this essay I shall consider the prospects for defending democratic politics while denying all three of the premises I have listed. I shall be arguing that what philosophers have described as the universal desire for truth is better described as the universal desire for justification.[3] The grounding premise of my argument is that you cannot aim at something, cannot work to get it, unless you can recognize it once you have got it. One difference between truth and justification is that between the unrecognizable and the recognizable. We shall never know for sure whether a given belief is true, but we can be sure that nobody is presently able to summon up any residual objections to it, that everybody agrees that it ought to be held.

There are, to be sure, what Lacanians call impossible, indefinable, sublime objects of desire. But a desire for such an object cannot be made relevant to democratic politics.[4] On my view, truth is just such an object. It is too sublime, so to speak, to be either recognized or aimed at. Justification is merely beautiful, but it is recognizable, and therefore capable of being systematically worked for. Sometimes, with luck, justification is even achieved. But that achievement is usually only temporary, since sooner or later some new objections to the temporarily justified belief will be developed. As I see it, the yearning for unconditionality – the yearning which leads philosophers to insist that we need to avoid "contextualism" and "relativism" – is, indeed, satisfied by the notion of truth. But this yearning is unhealthy, because the price of unconditionality is irrelevance to practice. So I think the topic of truth cannot be made relevant to democratic politics, and that philosophers devoted to such politics should stick to that of justification.

II. Habermas on Communicative Reason

In order to place my view within the context of contemporary philosophical controversies, I shall begin with some comments on Habermas. Habermas draws his well-known distinction between subject-centered reason and communicative reason in connection with his attempt to separate out what is useful to democratic politics in the traditional philosophical notion of rationality from what is useless. I think that he makes a tactical error when he tries to preserve the notion of unconditionality. Although I think Habermas is absolutely right that we need to *socialize* and *linguistify* the notion of 'reason' by viewing it as communicative,[5] I also think that we should go further: we need to *naturalize* reason by dropping his claim that "a moment of *unconditionality* is built into *factual processes* of mutual understanding."[6]

Habermas, like Putnam, believes that "reason cannot be naturalized".[7] Both philosophers think it important to insist on this point in order to avoid the 'relativism' which seems to them to put democratic politics on a par with totalitarian politics. Both think it important to say that the former sort of politics is more *rational* than the latter. I do not think that we should say this, because I do not think that the notion of 'rationality' can be stretched this far.

We should instead admit that we have no neutral ground to stand on when we defend such politics against its opponents. If we do not admit this, I think we can rightly be accused of attempting to smuggle our own social practices into the definition of something universal and ineluctable, because presupposed by the practices of any and every language-user. It would be franker, and therefore better, to say that democratic politics can no more appeal to such presuppositions than can anti-democratic politics, but is none the worse for that.

Habermas agrees with the criticism which post-Nietzschean writers have made of 'logocentrism,' and specifically with their denial that "the linguistic function of representing states of affairs is the sole human monopoly."[8] So do I, but I would extend this criticism as follows: only over-attention to fact-stating would make one think that there was an aim of inquiry called "truth" in addition to that of justification. More generally, only over-attention to fact-stating would make one think that a claim to universal validity is important for democratic politics. Still more generally, abandoning the logocentric idea that *knowledge* is the distinctively human capacity would leave room for the idea that *democratic citizenship* is better suited for that role. The latter is what we human beings should take most pride in, should make central to our self-image.

As I see it, Habermas' attempt to redefine 'reason' after deciding that "the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted"[9] – his attempt to redescribe reason as 'communicative' through and through – is insufficiently radical. It is a half-way house between thinking in terms of validity-claims and thinking in terms of justificatory practices. It comes down half way – between the Greek idea that human beings are special because they can *know* (whereas other animals can merely cope) and Dewey's idea that we are special because we can take charge of our own evolution, take ourselves in directions which have neither precedent nor justification in either biology or history.[10]

This latter idea can be made to sound unattractive by dubbing it "Nietzschean" and construing it as a form of the ruthless will to power which was incarnate in the Nazis. I should like to make it sound attractive by dubbing it 'American' and construing it as the idea common to Emerson and Whitman, the idea of a new self-creating community, united not by knowledge of the same truths but by sharing the same generous, inclusivist, democratic hopes. The idea of communal self-creation, of realizing a dream which has no justification in unconditional claims to universal validity, sounds suspicious to Habermas and Apel because they naturally associate it with Hitler. It sounds better to Americans, because they naturally associate it with Jefferson, Whitman and Dewey.[11] The moral to be drawn, I think, is that this suggestion is neutral between Hitler and Jefferson.

If one wants neutral principles on the basis of which to decide between Hitler and Jefferson, one will have to find a way of replacing Jefferson's occasional references to natural law, and self-evident political truths, by a more up-to-date version of Enlightenment rationalism. This is the role in which Apel and Habermas cast "discourse ethics." Only if one has given up hope for such neutrality will the alternative I have suggested seem attractive. Whether one gives up that hope should, I think, be decided – at least in part – by evaluating the argument from performative self-contradiction which is at the heart of that ethics.

I see that argument as weak and unconvincing, but I have no substitute to offer. So I am inclined to reject both discourse ethics and the very idea of neutral principles, and to ask myself what philosophers might do for democratic politics other than trying to ground this politics on principles. My answer is: they can get to work substituting hope for knowledge, substituting the idea that the ability to be citizens of the full-fledged democracy which is yet to come, rather than the ability to grasp truth, is what is important about being human. This is not a matter of *Letztbegründung*, but of redescribing humanity and history in terms which makes democracy seem desirable. If doing that is said to be mere 'rhetoric' rather than 'argument,' I should rejoin that it is no more rhetorical than my opponents' attempt to describe discourse

and communication in terms that make democracy seem linked to the intrinsic nature of humanity.

III. Truth and Justification

There are many uses for the word 'true,' but the only one which could not be eliminated from our linguistic practice with relative ease is the cautionary use.[12] That is the use we make of the word when we contrast justification and truth, and say that a belief may be justified but not true. Outside of philosophy, this cautionary use is used to contrast less-informed with better-informed audiences, past audiences with future audiences. In non-philosophical contexts, the point of contrasting truth and justification is simply to remind oneself that there may be objections (arising from newly discovered data, or more ingenious explanatory hypotheses, or a shift in the vocabulary used for describing the objects under discussion) which have not yet occurred to anyone. This sort of gesture toward an unpredictable future is made, for example, when we say that our present moral and scientific beliefs may look as primitive to our remote descendants as those of the ancient Greeks look to us.

My grounding premise, that you can only work for what you could recognize, is a corollary of James' principle that a difference has to make a difference to practice before it is worth discussing. The only difference between truth and justification which makes such a difference is, as far as I can see, the difference between old audiences and new audiences. So I take the appropriate pragmatist attitude toward truth to be: it is no more necessary to have a philosophical theory about the nature of truth, or the meaning of the word 'true,' than it is to have one about the nature of danger, or the meaning of the word 'danger.' The principal reason we have a word like 'danger' in the language is to caution people: to warn them that they may not have envisaged all the consequences of their proposed action. We pragmatists, who think that beliefs are habits of action rather than attempts to correspond to reality, see the cautionary use of the word 'true' as flagging a special sort of danger. We use it to remind ourselves that people in different circumstances – people facing future audiences – may not be able to justify the belief which we have triumphantly justified to all the audiences we have encountered.

Given this pragmatist view of the truth–justification distinction, what about the claim that all human beings desire truth? This claim is ambiguous between the claim that all of them desire to justify their beliefs to some, though not necessarily all, other human beings, and the claim that they all want their beliefs to be true. The first claim is unobjectionable, and the second dubious. For the only other interpretation which we pragmatists can give to the second claim is that all human beings are concerned about the danger that some day an audience will come into being before which one of their presently justified beliefs cannot be justified.

But, in the first place, mere fallibilism is not what philosophers who hope to make the notion of truth relevant to democratic politics want. In the second place, such fallibilism is not, in fact, a feature of all human beings. It is much more prevalent among inhabitants of wealthy, secure, tolerant, inclusivist societies than elsewhere. Those are the people who are brought up to bethink themselves that they might be mistaken: that there are people out there who might disagree with them, and whose disagreements need to be taken into account. If you favor democratic politics, you will of course want to encourage fallibilism. But there are other ways to do so beside

harping on the difference between the conditional character of justification and the unconditional character of truth. One might, for example, harp on the sad fact that many previous communities have betrayed their own interests by being too sure of themselves, and so failing to attend to objections raised by outsiders.

Furthermore, we should distinguish between fallibilism and philosophical skepticism. Fallibilism has nothing in particular to do with the quest for universality and unconditionality. Skepticism does. One will usually not go into philosophy unless one is impressed by the sort of skepticism found in Descartes' *Meditations*, the sort of skepticism which says that the mere possibility of error defeats knowledge-claims. Not many people find this sort of skepticism interesting, but those who do ask themselves: is there any way in which we can insure ourselves against having beliefs which may be unjustifiable to some future audience? Is there any way in which we can insure that we have beliefs which are justifiable to any and every audience?

The tiny minority which finds this question interesting consists almost entirely of philosophy professors, and divides into three groups.

(1) Skeptics like Stroud say that Descartes' argument from dreams is unanswerable; for the skeptics, there is always an audience, the future self who has awoken from the dream, which will not be satisfied by any justification offered by our present, possibly dreaming, self.

(2) Foundationalists like Chisholm say that, even if we are now dreaming, we cannot be wrong about *certain* beliefs.

(3) Coherentists like Sellars say that "all our beliefs are up for grabs, though not all at once."

We pragmatists, who have been impressed by Peirce's criticisms of Descartes, think that both skeptics and foundationalists are led astray by the picture of beliefs as attempts to represent reality, and by the associated idea that truth is a matter of correspondence to reality. So we become coherentists.[13] But we coherentists remain divided about what, if anything, needs to be said about truth. I think that, once one has explicated the distinction between justification and truth by that between present and future justifiability, there is little more to be said. My fellow-coherentists – Apel, Habermas, and Putnam – think, as Peirce also did, that there is a lot more to be said, and that saying it is important for democratic politics.[14]

IV. "Universal Validity" and "Context-Transcendence"

Putnam, Apel and Habermas all take over from Peirce an idea which I reject: the idea of convergence upon the One Truth.[15] Instead of arguing that because reality is One, and truth correspondence to that One Reality, Peircians argue that the idea of convergence is built into the presuppositions of discourse. They all agree that the principal reason why reason cannot be naturalized is that reason is normative and norms cannot be naturalized. But, they say, we can make room for the normative without going back to the traditional idea of a duty to correspond to the intrinsic nature of One Reality. We do this by attending to the universalistic character of the idealizing presuppositions of discourse. This strategy has the advantage of setting aside

metaethical questions about whether there is a moral reality to which our moral judgments might hope to correspond, as our physical science supposedly corresponds to physical reality.[16]

Habermas says that every validity claim has "a transcendent moment of universal validity [which] bursts every provinciality asunder" in addition to its strategic role in some context-bound discussion. As I see it, the only truth in this idea is that many claims to validity are made by people who would be willing to defend their claims before audiences other than the one which they are currently addressing. (Not all assertions, obviously, are of this sort; lawyers, for example, are quite aware that they tailor their claims to suit the quaint context of a highly local jurisprudence.) But willingness to take on new and unfamiliar audiences is one thing; bursting provinciality asunder is another.

Habermas' doctrine of a "transcendent moment" seems to me to run together a commendable willingness to try something new with an empty boast. To say "I'll try to defend this against all comers" is often, depending upon the circumstances, a commendable attitude. But to say "I can successfully defend this against all comers" is silly. Maybe you can, but you are no more in a position to claim that you can than the village champion is to claim that he can beat the world champion. The only sort of situation in which you would be in a position to say the latter is one in which the rules of the argumentative game are agreed upon in advance – as in 'normal' (as opposed to 'revolutionary') mathematics, for example. But in most cases, including the moral and political claims in which Habermas is most interested, there are no such rules. The notion of context-dependence has a clear sense in the sorts of cases I have just mentioned – in provincial law courts and in language-games, such as normal mathematics, which are regulated by clear and explicit conventions. For most assertions, however, neither it nor that of 'universal validity' has such a sense. For assertions such as "Clinton is the better candidate," "Alexander came before Caesar," "Gold is insoluble in hydrochloric acid," it is hard to see why I should ask myself "is my claim context-dependent or universal?" No difference to practice is made by coming down in favor of one alternative rather than the other.

Habermas puts forward an analogue of this distinction between the context-dependent and the universal which might seem more relevant to practice. This analogue is what he calls "the tension between facticity and validity." He views this tension as a central philosophical problem, and says that this tension is responsible for many of the difficulties encountered in theorizing democratic politics.[17] He thinks it a distinctive and valuable feature of his theory of communicative action that it "already absorbs the tension between facticity and validity into its fundamental concepts."[18] It does so by distinguishing between the 'strategic' use of discourse and the "use of language oriented to reaching understanding."[19] This latter distinction might seem the one we are looking for: the one which lets us interpret the distinction between context-dependence and universality in a way that makes a difference to practice.

As I see it, however, the distinction between the strategic and non-strategic use of language is just the distinction between cases in which all we care about is convincing others and cases in which we hope to learn something. In the latter set of cases, we are quite willing to give up our present views if we hear something better. These cases are two ends of a spectrum, at one end of which we shall use any dirty trick we can (lying, *omissio veri*, *suggestio falsi*, etc.) to convince. At the other end we talk to others as we talk to ourselves when we are most at ease, most reflective, and most curious. Most of the time we are somewhere in the middle between these two extremes.

My problem is that I do not see that the two extremes have anything in particular to do with the distinction between context-dependence and universality. "The pure pursuit of truth" is a traditional name for the sort of conversation which takes place at one end of this spectrum. But I do not see what that sort of conversation has to do with universality or with unconditionality. It is "non-strategic" in the sense that in such conversations we let the wind blow where it listeth, but it is hard to see that the assertions we make in such conversations presuppose something which is not presupposed in the assertions I make when I am at the other end of the spectrum.

Habermas, however, thinks that unless we recognize that "the validity claims raised *hic et nunc* and aimed at intersubjective recognition or acceptance can at the same time overshoot local standards for taking yes/no positions," we shall not see that "this transcendent moment alone distinguishes the practices of justification oriented to truth claims from other practices that are regulated merely by social convention."[20] This passage is a good example of what seems to me Habermas' undesirable commitment to the logocentric distinction between opinion and knowledge – a distinction between mere obedience to *nomoi*, even the sort of *nomoi* which would be found in a utopian democratic society, and the kind of *phusei* relation to reality which is provided by the grasp of truth. Both the opinion–knowledge and the *nomos–physis* distinction appear to Deweyans like myself as remnants of Plato's obsession with the kind of certainty found in mathematics, and, more generally, with the idea that the universal, being somehow eternal and unconditional, somehow provides an escape from what is particular, temporal, and conditioned.

In this passage Habermas is, I take it, using the term "practices of justification oriented to truth claims" to refer to the nicer end of the spectrum I described above. But from my point of view, truth has nothing to do with it. These practices do not transcend social convention. Rather, they are regulated by certain *particular* social conventions: those of a society even more democratic, tolerant, leisured, wealthy and diverse than our own – one in which inclusivism is built into everybody's sense of moral identity. In this society, everybody always welcomes strange opinions on all sorts of topics. These are also the conventions of certain lucky parts of contemporary society: for example, of university seminars, of summer camps for intellectuals, and so on.[21]

Perhaps the most far-reaching difference between Habermas and me is that pragmatists like myself sympathize with the anti-metaphysical, 'postmodern,' thinkers he criticizes when they suggest that the idea of a distinction between social practice and what transcends such practice is an undesirable remnant of logocentrism. Foucault and Dewey can agree that, whether or not inquiry is always a matter of 'power,' it never transcends social practice. Both would say that the only thing that can transcend a social practice is another social practice, just as the only thing that can transcend a present audience is a future audience. Similarly, the only thing that can transcend a discursive strategy is another discursive strategy – one aimed at other, better, goals. But, because I do not know how to aim at it, I do not think that 'truth' names such a goal. I know how to aim at greater honesty, greater charity, greater patience, greater inclusiveness, and so on. I see democratic politics as serving such concrete, describable goals. But I do not see that it helps things to add 'truth' or 'universality' or 'unconditionality' to our list of goals, for I do not see what we shall do differently if such additions are made.

It may sound at this point as if the difference between me and Habermas is one that makes no difference to practice: we both have the same utopias in mind, and we both engage in the same sort of democratic politics. So why quibble about whether to call

utopian communication practices "oriented to truth" or not? The answer is that Habermas thinks that it does make a difference to practice, because he gets to make an argumentative move which is not open to me: he gets to accuse his opponents of performative self-contradiction. Habermas thinks that "the universal discourse of an unbounded community of interpretation" is "unavoidably assumed" by anybody, even me, who gets into an argument. He says that "Even if these presuppositions have an *ideal* content that can only be approximately satisfied, all participants must *de facto* accept them [the presuppositions of communication] whenever they assert or deny the truth of a statement in any way and would like to enter into argumentation aimed at justifying this validity claim."[22]

But what about somebody who is outraged (as are many trustees of American universities) by the social conventions of the better parts of the better universities – places where even the most paradoxical and unpromising claims are seriously discussed, and in which feminists, atheists, homosexuals, blacks, etc. are taken seriously as moral equals and conversational partners. I take it that in Habermas' view such a person will be *contradicting* themselves if they offer *arguments* to the effect that these conventions should be replaced with other, more exclusivist, conventions. By contrast, I cannot tell the narrow-minded trustee that he is contradicting himself. I can only try to wheedle him into greater tolerance by the usual indirect means: giving examples of present platitudes which were once paradoxes, of the contributions to culture made by black lesbian atheists, and so on.[23]

The big question is whether anybody has ever been convinced by the charge of performative self-contradiction. I do not think that there are many clear examples of such a charge being taken to heart. If you tell a bigot of the sort I've sketched that he is committed to making context-surpassing validity claims, to aiming at truth, he will probably agree that that is exactly what he is doing. If you tell him that he cannot make such claims and still balk at the paradoxes or the people at whom he balks, he will probably not get the point. He will say that people who advance such paradoxes are too crazy to argue with or about, that women have a distorted view of reality, and the like. He will think it irrational or immoral, or both, to take such paradoxes and people seriously.[24]

I cannot see much difference between the bigot's reaction to me and Habermas and Habermas' and my reactions to him. I cannot see that anything like "communicative reason" favors our reactions rather than his. This is because I do not know see why the term 'reason' is not as much up for grabs as the term 'academic freedom' or 'morality' or 'pervert,' nor how the anti-foundationalist coherentism which Habermas and I share can make room for a non-recontextualizable, non-relativizable, conversation-stopper called "performative self-contradiction." What the bigot and I do, and I think should do, when told that we have violated a presupposition of communication is to haggle about the meanings of the terms used in stating the purported presupposition – terms like 'true,' 'argument,' 'reason,' 'communication,' 'domination,' etc.[25]

This haggling will, with luck, eventually turn into a mutually profitable conversation about our respective utopias – our respective ideas about what an ideal society, empowering an ideally competent audience, would look like. But this conversation is not going to end with the bigot's reluctant admission that he has entangled himself in a contradiction. Even if, *mirabile dictu*, we succeed in convincing him of the worth of our utopia, his reaction will be to regret his own previous lack of curiosity and imagination, rather than to regret his failure to spot his own presuppositions.

V. Context-Independence Without Convergence: Albrecht Wellmer's View

I agree with Apel and Habermas that Peirce was right in telling us to talk about discourse rather than about consciousness, but I think that the *only* ideal presupposed by discourse is that of being able to justify your beliefs to a *competent* audience. As a coherentist, I think that if you can get agreement from other members of such an audience about what is to be done, then you do not have to worry about your relation to reality. But everything depends upon what constitutes a competent audience. Unlike Apel and Habermas, the moral I draw from Peirce is that we philosophers who are concerned with democratic politics should leave truth alone, as a sublimely undiscussable topic, and instead turn to the question of how to persuade people to broaden the size of the audience they take to be competent, to increase the size of the relevant community of justification. The latter project is not only relevant to democratic politics, it pretty much *is* democratic politics.

Apel and Habermas think that the demand to maximize the size of this community is already, so to speak, built into communicative action. This is the cash value of their claim that every assertion claims universal validity.[26] Albrecht Wellmer, who, like me, rejects the convergentism Habermas and Apel share with Putnam, nevertheless accepts their claim that our truth claims "transcend the context – the local or cultural context – in which they are raised."[27] He opposes this claim to my own ethnocentrism, and interprets the latter as denying some things he thinks it important to affirm: in particular, that "the arguments for supporting and critically developing democratic-liberal principles and institutions" are 'good arguments',[28] even though they do not convince everybody.

My problem with Wellmer, Apel, and Habermas is that I do not see what the pragmatic force of saying that an argument which, like most other arguments, convinces certain people and not others is a "good argument." This seems like saying that a tool which, like all tools, is useful for certain purposes but not others, is a good tool. Imagine the surgeon saying, after unsuccessfully attempting to dig a tunnel out of his prison cell with his scalpel, "Still, it's a good tool." Then picture him saying, after unsuccessfully trying to argue his guards into letting him escape so that he may resume his position as leader of the resistance, "Still, they were good arguments."

My problem is intensified when I ask myself whether my truth claims "transcend my local cultural context." I have no clear idea whether they do or not, because I cannot see what "transcendence" means here. I cannot even see what the point of taking my assertion as "making a truth claim" is. When I believe that *p*, and express this belief by asserting it in the course of a conversation, am I making a *claim*? What is the force of saying that I am? What does saying so add to saying that I am (to speak with Peirce) informing my interlocutor about my habits of action, giving her hints about how to predict and control my future conversational and non-conversational behavior? Depending on the situation at hand, I may also be inviting her to disagree with me by telling me about her different habits of action, suggesting that I am prepared to give reasons for my belief, trying to make a good impression on her, and a thousand other things. As Austin reminded us, there are lots of things I do when I make an assertion. All of them together make up the give and take between me and my interlocutor. This give and take is a matter of, roughly, the reciprocal adjustment of

our behavior, the strategic coordination of that behavior in ways which may prove to be mutually profitable.

Of course if somebody asks me, after I have asserted *p*, whether I believe *p* to be true, I shall say "yes." But I shall wonder, with Wittgenstein, what the point of his question is. Is he questioning my sincerity? Is he expressing incredulity about my ability to offer reasons for my belief? I can try to straighten things out by asking him to spell out why he asks. But if he replies: "I just wanted to be sure you were making a context-transcendent truth claim," I shall be baffled. What does he want to be reassured about, exactly? What would it be like for me to make a context-*dependent* assertion? Of course in the trivial sense that an assertion may not always be apropos, all assertions are context-dependent. But what would it mean for the proposition asserted to be context-dependent, as opposed to the speech-act being context-dependent?

I am not sure how people like Habermas and Wellmer, who have given up on correspondence theories of truth and consequently cannot distinguish between a claim to report a habit of action and a claim to represent reality, can draw this distinction between context-dependence and context-independence. My best guess is that they believe that, in Wellmer's words, "Whenever we raise a truth claim on the basis of what we take to be good arguments or compelling evidence we take the epistemic conditions prevailing here and now to be ideal in the sense that we presuppose that no arguments or evidence that would put our own truth claim into doubt will come up in the future." Or, as Wellmer also puts it, "relying upon reasons or evidences as compelling means excluding the possibility of being proven wrong as time goes on."[29]

If that is what it takes to make a context-transcendent truth claim, then I have never made one. I would not know how to exclude the possibility Wellmer describes. Nor would I know how to presuppose that no arguments or evidence will turn up in the future which will cast doubt on my belief. Relying once again on the fundamental pragmatist principle that any difference has to make a difference to practice, I want to know whether this 'excluding' and 'presupposing' are things I can decide to do or not to do. If they are, I want to know more about how to go about doing them. If they are not, they seem to me empty.

I can make my point in another way by asking: what is the difference between a metaphysician, committed to a correspondence theory of truth, telling me that, whether I know it or will admit it or not, my assertions automatically, willy-nilly, amount to a claim to represent reality accurately, and my fellow Peircians telling me that they automatically, willy-nilly, amount to an exclusion of possibilities, or a presupposition about what the future holds? In both cases I am being told that I presuppose something which, even after considerable reflection, I do not think I believe. But the notion of 'presupposition,' when it is extended to beliefs which the purported presupposer stoutly denies, becomes hard to distinguish from the notion of "redescription of person A in person B's terms." If A can explain what she is doing and why she is doing it in her own terms, what right has B got to keep on saying "No, what A is *really* doing is . . ."? In the case at hand, we Deweyans think we have a perfectly good way of describing our own behavior – behavior of which Habermas approves – in ways which eschew terms like 'universal' and 'unconditional' and 'transcendence.'

It seems to me in the spirit of Peirce's criticism of Descartes' "make-believe doubt" to raise the question of whether we are not dealing here with "make-believe transcendence" – a sort of make-believe response to an equally unreal doubt. Real doubt, Peirce said, comes when some concrete difficulty is envisaged in acting according to the habit

which is the belief. (Such a difficulty might be, for example, having to cease believing some relevant but conflicting proposition.) Real transcendence, I should say, occurs when I say "I am prepared to justify this belief not just to people who share the following premises with me, but to lots of other people who do not share those premises but with whom I share certain others."[30] The question of whether I am so prepared is a concrete practical question, whose answer I determine by, for example, imaginatively previewing various other audiences' responses to my assertion that *p*, and my subsequent behavior.

But such experiments in imagination obviously have limits. I cannot imagine myself defending my assertion to *any possible* audience. In the first place, I can usually think of audiences to whom it would be pointless to try to justify my belief. (Try defending beliefs about justice to Attila, or about trigonometry to three-year-olds.) In the second place, no good pragmatist should ever use the term "all possible . . .". Pragmatists do not know how to imagine or to discover the bounds of possibility. Indeed, we cannot figure out what the point of attempting such feats could be. Under what concrete circumstances would it be important to consider the difference between "all the Xs I can think of" and "all possible Xs"?[31] How could this difference make a difference to practice?

I conclude that Wellmer's way of distinguishing between context-dependent and context-independent claims cannot be made plausible, at least to pragmatists. Since I can think of no better way, I think that we should ask why Wellmer, Apel and Habermas think this distinction worth drawing. The obvious answer is that they want to avoid the 'relativism' which contextualism purportedly entails. So I turn now to what Wellmer calls "the antinomy of truth"[32] – the clash between relativist and absolutist intuitions.

VI. Must Pragmatists be Relativists?

Toward the beginning of his "Truth, Contingency and Modernity" Wellmer writes as follows:

> If there is irresolvable disagreement about the possibility of justifying truth claims, about standards of argumentation or evidential support, for example, between members of different linguistic, scientific or cultural communities, may I still supppose that there *are* – somewhere – the *correct* standards, the *right* criteria, in short that there is an *objective* truth of the matter? Or should I rather think that truth is 'relative' to cultures, languages, communities or even persons? While relativism (the second alternative) appears to be inconsistent, absolutism (the first alternative) seems to imply metaphysical assumptions. I would call this the antinomy of truth. Much important philosophical work has been done in recent decades to resolve this antinomy of truth; either by trying to show that absolutism need not be metaphysical or by trying to show that the critique of absolutism need not lead to relativism.[33]

My problem with Wellmer's antinomy is that I do not think that denying that there are "the *correct* standards" should lead anybody to say that *truth* (as opposed to justification) is 'relative' to something. As far as I can see, nobody would think that the critique of absolutism leads to relativism unless she thought that the only reason for justifying our beliefs to each other is that such justification makes it more likely that our beliefs are true.

I have argued elsewhere that there is no reason to think such justification makes this more likely.[34] But I do not think this is a cause for concern, for I do not think our practice of justifying our beliefs needs justification. If I am right that the only indispensable function of the word 'true' (or any other indefinable normative term, such as 'good' or 'right') is to caution, to warn against danger by making gestures toward unpredictable situations (future audiences, future moral dilemmas, etc.), then it does not make much sense to ask whether or not justification leads to truth. Justification to more and more audiences leads to less and less danger of rebuttal, and thus to less and less need for caution. ("If I convinced *them*," we often say to ourselves, "I should be able to convince *anybody*.") But one would only say that it leads to *truth* if one could somehow project from the conditioned to the unconditioned – from all imaginable to all possible audiences.

Such a projection makes sense if one believes in convergence. For such a belief sees the space of reasons as finite and structured, so that as more and more audiences are satisfied more and more members of a finite set of possible objections are eliminated. One will be encouraged to see the space of reasons in this way if one is a representationalist, because one will see reality (or at least the spatio-temporal hunk of it relevant to most human concerns) as finite and as constantly shoving us out of error and toward truth, discouraging inaccurate representations of itself and thereby producing increasingly accurate ones.[35] But if one does not take knowledge to be accurate representation of reality, nor truth as correspondence to reality, then it is harder to be a convergentist, and harder to think of the space of reasons as finite and structured.

Wellmer, it seems to me, wants to project from the conditioned (our various experiences of success in justifying our beliefs) to the unconditioned (truth). The big difference between me and Wellmer is that I think that the answer to his question "do our democratic and liberal principles define just *one* possible political language game among others" is an unqualified "yes." Wellmer, however, says that "a *qualified* 'no' can be justified, and by justification I now mean not justification *for us*, but justification, *period*."[36]

As I see it, the very idea of "justification *period*" commits Wellmer to the thesis that the logical space of reason-giving is finite and structured. So I should urge him to abandon the latter thesis for the same reasons that he abandoned Apel's and Habermas' convergentism. But, oddly enough, these reasons are pretty much the reasons he gives for giving his "qualified 'no'." His central point in defense of this answer is one which I whole-heartedly accept: viz., that the very idea of incompatible, and perhaps reciprocally unintelligible, language-games is a pointless fiction, and that in real cases representatives of different traditions and cultures can always find a way to talk over their differences.[37] I entirely agree with Wellmer that "rationality – in any relevant sense of the word – cannot end at the borderline of closed language games (since there is no such thing)."[38]

Our disagreement starts when, after a semi-colon, Wellmer finishes his sentence with "but then the ethnocentric contextuality of all argumentation is quite well compatible with the raising of truth claims which transcend the context – the local or cultural context – *in* which they are raised and in which they can be justified." I should have finished that same sentence by saying "but then the ethnocentric contextuality of all argumentation is quite well compatible with the claim that a liberal and democratic society can bring together, include, all sorts of diverse *ethnoi*." I see no way to get from the premise that there are no such things as mutually unintelligible standards of argument to the conclusion that the claims of democratic societies are "context-transcendent."

Here is a way of summing up the difference between Wellmer and myself: we agree that one reason to prefer democracies is that they enable us to construct ever bigger and better contexts of discussion. But I stop there, and Wellmer goes on. He adds that this reason is not just a justification of democracy *for us*, but "a justification, *period*." He thinks that "the democratic and liberal principles of modernity" should "*pace* Rorty" be "understood in a universalistic sense."[39]

My problem, of course, is that I do not have the option of understanding them that way. Pragmatists like me can't figure out how to tell whether we are understanding a justification as just a "justification for us" or as a "justification, *period*." This strikes me as like trying to tell whether I think of my scalpel or my computer as "a good tool for this task" or as "a good tool, *period*."

At this point, however, one could imagine Wellmer rejoining, "Then so much the worse for pragmatism. Any view which makes you unable to understand a distinction everybody else understands must have something wrong with it." My rebuttal would be: you are only entitled to that distinction as long as you can back it up with a distinction between what seem good reasons to us and what seem good reasons to something like an ahistorical Kantian tribunal of reason. But you deprived yourself of *that* possibility when you gave up on convergentism, and thus gave up the non-metaphysical substitute for such a tribunal – viz., the idealization called the "undistorted communication situation."

I agree with Wellmer in regarding "democratic and liberal institutions as the only ones in which the recognition of contingency could possibly coexist with the reproduction of their own legitimacy,"[40] at least if one takes "reproduce their own legitimacy" to mean something like "make its view of the situation of human beings in the universe hang together with its political practice." But I do not think that the recognition of contingency serves as a "justification, *period*" for democratic politics because I don't think that it does what Wellmer says: namely, "destroys the intellectual bases of dogmatism, foundationalism, authoritarianism and of moral and legal inequality."[41]

This is because I don't think that dogmatism or moral inequality *have* "intellectual bases". If I am a bigoted proponent of the inequality of blacks, women and homosexuals to straight white males, I need not necessarily appeal to the denial of contingency by invoking a metaphysical theory about the true nature of human beings. I could, but I might also, when it came to philosophy, be a pragmatist. A bigot and I can say the same Foucauldian/Nietzschean thing: that the only real question is one of power, the question of which community is going to inherit the earth, mine or my opponent's. One's choice of a community for that role is intertwined with one's sense of what counts as a competent audience.[42]

The fact that there are no mutually unintelligible language games does not, in itself, do much to show that disputes between racists and anti-racists, democrats and fascists, can be decided without resort to force. Both sides may agree that, although they understand what each other says perfectly well, and share common views on most topics (including, perhaps, the recognition of contingency), there seems no prospect of reaching agreement on the particular issue at hand. So, both sides say as they reach for their guns, it looks as if we'll have to fight it out.

My answer to Wellmer's question about whether our "democratic and liberal principles define just *one* possible political language game among others" is "yes, if the force of the question is to ask whether there is something in the nature of discourse which singles this game out." I cannot see what other force the question

could have, and I think we have to rest content with saying that no philosophical thesis, either about contingency or about truth, does anything *decisive* for democratic politics.

By 'decisive' I mean doing what Apel and Habermas want to do: convicting the anti-democrat of a performative self-contradiction. The most that an insistence on contingency can do for democracy is to supply one more debating point on the democratic side of the argument, just as the insistence that (for example) only the Aryan race is in tune with the intrinsic, necessary, nature of things supplies one more debating point on the other side. I cannot take the latter point seriously, but I do not think that there is anything self-contradictory in the Nazi's refusal to take me seriously. We may both have to reach for our guns.

VII. Is Reason Unified by Universalistic Presuppositions?

Unlike Habermas, I do not think that disciplines like philosophy, linguistics, and developmental psychology can do much for democratic politics. I see the development of the social conventions in which Habermas and I both rejoice as a lucky accident. Still, I should be happy to think that I was wrong about this. Maybe the gradual development of those conventions *does*, as Habermas thinks, illustrate a universal pattern of phylo- or onto-genetic development, a pattern captured by the rational reconstruction of competences offered by various human sciences and illustrated by the transition from 'traditional' to modern, 'rationalized' societies.[43]

But, unlike Habermas, I should be unperturbed if the offers currently made by the human sciences were withdrawn: if Chomsky's universalistic ideas about communicative competence were repudiated by a connectionist revolution in artificial intelligence,[44] if Piaget's and Kohlberg's empirical results proved to be unduplicatable, and so on. I do not see that it matters much whether there is a universal pattern here. I do not much care whether democratic politics are an expression of something deep, or whether they express nothing better than some hopes which popped from nowhere into the brains of a few remarkable people (Socrates, Christ, Jefferson, etc.) and which, for unknown reasons, became popular.

Habermas and Apel think that one way to help create a cosmopolitan community is to study the nature of something called 'rationality' which all human beings share, something already present within them but insufficiently acknowledged. That is why they would be depressed if the support for univeralism apparently offered by such empirical studies as those of Chomsky and Kohlberg were, in the course of time, withdrawn. But suppose we say that all that rationality amounts to – all that marks human beings off from other species of animals – is the ability to use language and thus to have beliefs and desires. It seems plausible to add that there is no more reason to expect all the organisms which share this ability to form a single community of justification than to expect all the organisms able to walk long distances, or to remain monogamous, or to digest vegetables, to form such a community. One will not expect such a single community of justification to be created by the ability to communicate. For the ability to use language is, like the prehensile thumb, just one more gimmick which organisms have developed to increase their chances of survival.

If we combine this Darwinian point of view with the holistic attitude toward intentionality and language-use found in Wittgenstein and Davidson, we can say that

there is no language-use without justification, no ability to believe without an ability to argue about what beliefs to have. But this is not to say that the ability to use language, to have beliefs and desires, entails a desire to justify one's belief to *every* language-using organism one encounters. Not any language-user who comes down the road will be treated as a member of a competent audience. On the contrary, human beings usually divide up into mutually suspicious (*not* mutually unintelligible) communities of justification – mutually exclusive groups – depending upon the presence or absence of sufficient overlap in belief and desire. This is because the principal source of conflict between human communities is the belief that I have no reason to justify my beliefs to you, and none in finding out what alternative beliefs you may have, because you are, for example, an infidel, a foreigner, a woman, a child, a slave, a pervert, or an untouchable. In short, you are not "one of us," not one of the *real* human beings, the *paradigm* human beings, the ones whose persons and opinions are to be treated with respect.

The philosophical tradition has tried to stitch exclusivist communities together by saying: there is more overlap between infidels and true believers, masters and slaves, men and women, than one might think. For, as Aristotle said, all human beings by nature desire to know. This desire brings them together in a universal community of justification. To a pragmatist, however, this Aristotelian dictum seems thoroughly misleading. It runs together three different things: the need to make one's beliefs coherent, the need for the respect of one's peers, and curiosity. We pragmatists think that the reason people try to make their beliefs coherent is not that they love truth but because they cannot help doing so. Our minds can no more stand incoherence than our brains can stand whatever neuro-chemical imbalance is the physiological correlate of such incoherence. Just as our neural networks are, presumably, both constrained and in part constructed by something like the algorithms used in parallel distributed processing of information by computer programmers, so our minds are constrained (and in part constructed) by the need to tie our beliefs and desires together into a reasonably perspicuous whole.[45] That is why we cannot "will to believe" – believe what we like, regardless of what else we believe. It is why, for example, we have such a hard time keeping our religious beliefs in a separate compartment from our scientific ones, and in isolating our respect for democratic institutions from our contempt for many (even most) of our fellow-voters.

The need to make one's beliefs coherent is, for reasons familiar from Hegel, Mead and Davidson, not separable from the need for the respect of our peers. We have as hard a time tolerating the thought that everybody but ourselves is out of step as we do the thought that we believe both p and not-p. We need the respect of our peers because we cannot trust our own beliefs, nor maintain our self-respect, unless we are fairly sure that our conversational interlocutors agree among themselves on such propositions as "He's not crazy," "He's one of us," "He may have strange beliefs on certain topics, but he's basically sound," and so on.

This interpenetration of the need to make one's beliefs coherent among themselves and the need to make one's own beliefs coherent with the beliefs of one's peers results from the fact that, as Wittgenstein said, to imagine a form of human life we have to imagine agreement in judgments as well as in meanings. Davidson brings out the considerations which support Wittgenstein's dictum when he says: "The ultimate source of both objectivity and communication is the triangle that, by relating speaker, interpreter and the world, determines the contents of thought and speech."[46] You would not know what you believed, nor have any beliefs, unless your belief had a place

in a network of beliefs and desires. But that network would not exist unless you and others could pair off features of your non-human environment with assent to your utterances by other language-users, utterances caused (as are yours) by those very features.

The difference between the use which Davidson (and I) would like to make of Hegel's and Mead's realization that our selves are dialogical all the way down – that there is no private core on which to build – and the use which Apel and Habermas make of this realization can be exhibited by looking at the sentence immediately following the one I just quoted from Davidson: "Given this source," Davidson says, "there is no room for a relativized concept of truth."

Davidson's point is that the only sort of philosopher who would take seriously the idea that truth is relative to a context, and particularly to a choice between human communities, is one who thinks that he or she can contrast "being in touch with a human community" with "being in touch with reality." But Davidson's point about there being no language without triangulation means that you cannot have any language, or any beliefs, without being in touch with both a human community *and* non-human reality. There is no possibility of agreement without truth, nor of truth without agreement.

Most of our beliefs must be true, Davidson says, because an ascription to a person of mostly false beliefs would mean either that we had mistranslated the person's marks and noises or that she did not in fact have any beliefs, was not in fact speaking a language. Most of our beliefs must be justified in the eyes of our peers for a similar reason: if they were not justified – if our peers could not attribute to us a largely *coherent* web of beliefs and desires – they would have to conclude that they had either misunderstood us or that we did not speak their language. Coherence, truth, and community go together, not because truth is to be defined in terms of coherence rather than correspondence, in terms of social practice rather than in terms of coping with non-human forces, but simply because to ascribe a belief is automatically to ascribe a place in a largely coherent set of mostly true beliefs.

But to say that there is no contact, via belief and desire, with reality unless there is a community of speakers is as yet to say nothing about what sort of community is in question. A radically exclusivist community – made up only of the priests, or the nobles, or the males, or the whites – is quite as good as any other sort of community for Davidsonian purposes. This is the difference between what Davidson thinks you can get out of reflection on the nature of discourse and what Apel and Habermas think you can get out of it. The latter philosophers think you can get an argument in favor of the inclusivist project – an argument which says that people who resist this project involve themselves in performative self-contradictions.

By contrast, Davidson thinks that any community of justification will do to make you a language-user and a believer, no matter how 'distorted' Apel and Habermas may judge communication within that community to be. From Davidson's point of view, philosophy of language runs out before we reach the moral imperatives which make up Apel's and Habermas' "discourse ethics."

Apel and Habermas run together the need for coherence and for justification which is required if one is to use language at all, and a commitment to what they call "universal validity," a commitment which can only be consistently acted upon by aiming at the sort of domination-free communication which is impossible as long as there are human communities which remain exclusivist. Davidson and I have no use for the claim that any communicative action contains a claim to universal validity,

because this so-called 'presupposition' seems to us to have no role to play in the explanation of linguistic behavior.

It does, to be sure, play a part in the explanation of the behavior, linguistic and other, of a small minority of human beings – those who belong to the liberal, universalistic, inclusivist tradition of the European Enlightenment. But this tradition, to which Davidson and I are as much attached as Apel and Habermas, derives no support from reflection on discourse as such. We language-users who belong to this minority tradition are morally superior to those who do not, but those who do not are no less coherent in their use of language.

Apel and Habermas invoke the presupposition of universal validity to get from a commitment to justification to a willingness to submit one's beliefs to the inspection of any and every language-user – even a slave, even a black, even a woman. They see the desire for truth, construed as the desire to claim universal validity, as the desire for universal justification. But as I see it, they are inferring invalidly from "You cannot use language without invoking a consensus within a community of other language-users" to "You cannot use language consistently without enlarging that community to include all users of language."

Because I see this inference as invalid, I think that the only thing which can play the role in which Aristotle, Peirce, Apel, and Habermas have cast the desire for knowledge (and thus for truth) is *curiosity*. I use this term to mean the urge to expand one's horizons of inquiry – in all areas, ethical as well as logical and physical – so as to encompass new data, new hypotheses, new terminologies, and the like. This urge brings cosmopolitanism, and democratic politics, in its train. The more curiosity you have, the more interest you will have in talking to foreigners, infidels, and anybody else who claims to know something you do not know, to have some ideas you have not yet had.

VIII. Communicating or Educating?

If one sees the desire and possession of both truth and justification as inseparable from using language, while still resisting the thought that this desire can be used to convict members of exclusivist human communities of performative self-contradiction, then one will see inclusivist communities as based on contingent human developments such as the twitchy curiosity of the sort of eccentrics we call 'intellectuals,' the desire for intermarriage beyond tribal or caste boundaries produced by erotic obsession, the need to trade across such boundaries produced by lack of (for example) salt or gold within one's own territory, the possession of enough wealth, security, education, and independence so that one's self-respect no longer depends upon membership in an exclusivist community (on, for instance, *not* being an infidel or a slave or a woman), and the like. The increased communication between previously exclusivist communities produced by such contingent human developments may gradually *create* universality, but I cannot see any sense in which it recognizes a previously existent universality.

Philosophers like Habermas worry about the anti-Enlightenment overtones of the views they call 'contextualist.' They recognize that justification is an obviously context-relative notion – one justifies to a given audience, and the same justification will not work for all audiences. They then infer that putting truth aside in favor of justification will endanger the ideal of human fraternity. Habermas regards contextualism as "only the flipside of logocentrism."[47] He sees contextualists as negative metaphysicians

infatuated by diversity, and says that "The metaphysical priority of unity above plurality and the contextualistic priority of plurality above unity are secret accomplices."[48]

I agree with Habermas that it is as pointless to prize diversity as to prize unity, but I disagree with his claim that we can use the pragmatics of communication to do the job which metaphysicians hoped to achieve by appealing to the Plotinian One or to the transcendental structure of self-consciousness. My reasons for disagreement are those offered by Walzer, McCarthy, Ben-Habib, Wellmer and others – reasons nicely summed up in an article by Michael Kelly.[49] Habermas argues for the thesis that

> the unity of reason only remains perceptible in the plurality of its voices – as the possibility in principle of passing from one language to another – a passage that, no matter how occasional, is still comprehensible. This possibility of mutual understanding, which is now guaranteed only procedurally and is realized only transitorily, forms the background for the existing diversity of those who encounter one another – even when they fail to understand one another.[50]

I agree with Habermas – against Lyotard, Foucault, and others – that there are no incommensurable languages, that any language can be learned by one who is able to use any other languages, and that Davidson is right in denouncing the very idea of a conceptual scheme. But I disagree with him about the relevance of this point to the utility of the ideas of "universal validity" and "objective truth."

Habermas says that "what the speaker, here and now in a given context, asserts as valid transcends, *according to the sense of his claim*, all context-dependent, merely local standards of validity.[51] As I said above, I cannot see what 'transcends' means here. If it means that he is claiming to say something true, then the question is whether it makes any difference whether you say that a sentence S is true or whether you simply offer a justification for it by saying "here are my reasons for believing S." Habermas thinks there is a difference because he thinks that when you assert S you claim truth, you claim to represent the real, and that reality transcends context. "With the concept of reality, to which every representation necessarily refers, we presuppose something transcendent."[52]

Habermas tends to take for granted that truth-claims are claims to represent accurately, and to be suspicious of those who, like Davidson and myself, give up on the notion of linguistic representation. He follows Sellars in being a coherentist rather than a skeptic or a foundationalist, but he is dubious about the move I want to make from coherentism to anti-representationalism. He commends Peirce over Saussure because Peirce examines "expressions from the point of view of their possible truth *and*, at the same time, from that of their communicability." He goes on to say that

> from the perspective of its capacity for being true, an assertoric sentence stands in an epistemic relation to something in the world – it represents a state of affairs. At the same time, for the perspective of its employment in a communicative act, it stands in a relation to a possible interpretation by a language-user – it is suitable for the transmission of information.[53]

My own view, which I take from Davidson, is that you can give up the notion of an "epistemic relation to something in the world," and just rely on the ordinary causal relations which bind utterances together with the utterers' environments. The idea of

representation, on this view, adds nothing to the notion of "taking part in the discursive practice of justifying one's assertions."

Habermas sees Putnam as, like himself, defending a third position against the metaphysics of unity on the one hand and the enthusiasts for incommensurability on the other. He defines this third position as "the humanism of those who continue the Kantian tradition by seeking to use the philosophy of language to save a concept of reason that is skeptical and postmetaphysical."[54] Putnam and Habermas have offered similar criticisms of my attempt to get rid of a specifically epistemic concept of reason – the concept according to which one is rational only if one tries to represent reality accurately – and to replace it by the purely moral ideal of solidarity. My central disagreement with both Habermas and Putnam is over the question of whether the regulative ideas of "undistorted communication," or "accurate representation of reality" can do any more for the ideals of the French Revolution than the bare, context-dependent, notion of 'justification.'

Some people care about defending their assertions only to a few people, and some care, or say they care, about defending their assertions to everyone. I am not thinking here of the distinction between specialized, technical discourse and non-technical discourse. Rather, the distinction I want is the one between people who would be glad to try to defend their views to all people who share certain attributes – for example, devotion to the ideals of the French Revolution, or membership in the Aryan race – and those who say they want to justify their view to every actual and possible language-user.

There are certainly people who say that the latter is what they want. But I am not sure that they really mean it. Do they want to justify their views to language-users who are four years old? Well, perhaps they do in the sense that they would like to educate four-year-olds to the point at which they could appreciate the arguments for and against the views in question. Do they want to justify them to intelligent but convinced Nazis, people who believe that the first thing to find out is whether the view under discussion is tainted by the Jewish ancestory of its inventors or propounders? Well, perhaps they do in the sense that they would like to convert these Nazis into people who have doubts about the advisability of a Jew-free Europe and infallibility of Hitler, and therefore are more or less willing to listen to arguments for positions associated with Jewish thinkers. But in both of these cases what they want seems to me best described not as wanting to justify their view to everybody, but as wanting to create an audience to whom they would have a sporting chance of justifying their view.

Let me use the distinction between *arguing* with people and *educating* people to abbreviate the distinction I have just drawn: the distinction between proceeding on the assumption that people will follow your arguments and knowing that they cannot but hoping to alter them so that they can. If all education were a matter of argument, this distinction would collapse. But, unless one broadens the term 'argument' beyond recognition, a lot of education is not. In particular, a lot of it is simple appeal to sentiment. The distinction between such appeal and argument is fuzzy, but I take it nobody would say that making an unregenerate Nazi watch films of the opening of the concentration camps, or making her read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, counts as *arguing* with her.

People like Habermas and myself cherish both the ideal of human fraternity and the goal of universal availability of education. When asked what sort of education we have in mind, we often say that it is an education in critical thinking, in the ability to talk over the pros and cons of any view. We oppose critical thinking to ideology, and say

that we oppose ideological education of the sort which the Nazis inflicted on German youth. But we thereby leave ourselves wide open to Nietzsche's scornful suggestion that we are simply inculcating our own ideology: the ideology of what he called 'Socratism.' The issue between me and Habermas boils down to a disagreement about what to say to Nietzsche at this point.

I should reply to Nietzsche by conceding that there is no non-local, non-contextual, way to draw the distinction between ideological education and non-ideological education, because there is nothing to my use of the term 'reason' that could not be replaced by "the way we wet Western liberals, the heirs of Socrates and the French Revolution conduct ourselves." I agree with MacIntyre and Michael Kelly that all reasoning, both in physics and ethics, is tradition-bound.

Habermas thinks that this is an unnecessary concession, and more generally that my cheerful ethnocentrism can be avoided by thinking through what he calls "the symmetrical structure of perspectives built into every speech situation."[55] The issue between Habermas and myself thus comes to a head when he takes up my suggestion that we drop the notions of rationality and objectivity, and instead just discuss the kind of community we want to create. He paraphrases this suggestion by saying that I want to treat "the aspiration for objectivity" as "simply the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, namely, the desire to expand the referent of 'for us' to the greatest possible extent." He then paraphrases one of Putnam's objections to me by asking: "can we explain the possibility of the critique and self-critique of established practices of justification if we do not take the idea of the expansion of our interpreted horizon seriously *as an idea*, and if we do not connect this idea with the intersubjectivity of an agreement that allows precisely for the distinction between what is current "for us" and what is current "for them"?[56]

Habermas enlarges on this point by saying

> The merging of interpretive horizons . . . does not signify an assimilation to 'us'; rather, it must mean a convergence, steered through learning, of 'our' perspective and 'their' perspective – no matter whether 'they' or 'we' or both sides have to reformulate established practices of justification to a greater or lesser extent. For learning itself belongs neither to us nor to them; both sides are caught up in it in the same way. Even in the most difficult processes of reaching understanding, all parties appeal to the common reference point of a possible consensus, even if this reference point is projected in each case from within their own contexts. For, although they may be interpreted in various ways and applied according to different criteria, concepts like truth, rationality or justification play the *same* grammatical role in *every* linguistic community.[57]

The nub of the argument between Habermas and myself in this area is a disagreement about how much help for democratic politics can be gotten out of what Habermas here calls 'grammar.' As I said earlier, I think that all that we can get out of the grammar of 'true' and 'rational' is what we can get out of the grammar of a rather thin idea of 'justification.' This thin idea amounts to little more than that of using non-violent means to change people's minds.

Unlike Foucault and some others, I think that it is both possible and important to preserve intact the commonsense distinction between violent and non-violent means. I do not think it helpful to extend the term 'violence' as widely as Foucault extended it. Whatever we are doing when we make Nazis look at pictures of concentration camp survivors, it is not violence, any more than it was violence to educate the Hitler Youth to believe that Jews were worthless vermin.

The inevitable fuzziness of the line between persuasion and violence causes problems, however, when we come to the question of education. We are reluctant to say that the Nazis used *persuasion* on the Hitler Youth, since we have two criteria of persuasion. One is simply using words rather than blows or other forms of physical pressure. One can imagine, with a bit of distortion of history, that, in this sense, only persuasion was employed on the Hitler Youth. The second criterion of persuasion includes abstention from words like "Stop asking these stupid questions about whether there aren't some good Jews, questions which make me doubt your Aryan consciousness and ancestry, or the Reich will find another use for you!" and not assigning *Der Stürmer* to one's students.

Unsocratic methods of this latter sort are the kind which Habermas would say do not respect the symmetrical relationships of participants in discourse. Habermas clearly thinks that there is something in the grammar of "concepts like truth, rationality and justification" which tells us not to use methods of the latter sort. He would presumably grant that use of such words is language-use, but he must then go on to say that it can be seen to be misuse simply by thinking about what language is. This is pretty much what he does. Immediately after the passage I quoted about grammar, he says

> All languages offer the possibility of distinguishing between what is true and what we hold to be true. The *supposition* of a common objective world is built into the pragmatics of every single linguistic usage. And the dialogue roles of every speech situation enforce a symmetry in participant perspectives.

A bit later he says, "From the possibility of reaching understanding linguistically, we can read off a concept of situated reason that is given voice in validity claims that are both context-dependent and transcendent." He then approvingly quotes Putnam as saying "Reason is, in this sense, both immanent (not to be found outside of concrete language games and institutions) and transcendent (a regulative idea that we use to criticize the conduct of all activities and institutions."[58]

It seems to me that the regulative idea that we – we wet liberals, we heirs of the Enlightenment, we Socratists – most frequently use to criticize the conduct of various conversational partners is that of "needing education in order to outgrow their primitive fears, hatreds, and superstitions." This is the concept the victorious Allied armies used when they set about re-educating the citizens of occupied Germany and Japan. It is also the one which was used by American schoolteachers who had read Dewey and were concerned to get students to think 'scientifically' and 'rationally' about such matters as the origin of the species and sexual behavor (that is, to get them to read Darwin and Freud without disgust and incredulity). It is a concept which I, like most Americans who teach humanities or social science in colleges and universities, invoke when we try to arrange things so that students who enter as bigoted, homophobic, religious fundamentalists will leave college with views more like our own.

What is the relation of this idea to the regulative idea of 'reason' which Putnam believes to be transcendent and which Habermas believes to be discoverable within the grammar of concepts ineliminable from our description of the making of assertions? The answer to that question depends upon how much the re-education of Nazis and fundamentalists has to do with merging interpretive horizons and how much with replacing such horizons. The fundamentalist parents of our fundamentalist students think that the entire "American liberal Establishment" is engaged in a conspiracy. Had

they read Habermas, these people would say that the typical communication situation in American college classrooms is no more *herrschaftsfrei* than that in the Hitler Youth camps.

These parents have a point. Their point is that we liberal teachers no more feel in a symmetrical communication situation when we talk with bigots than do kindergarten teachers talking with their students. In both college classrooms and kindergartens it is equally difficult for the teachers to feel that what is going on is what Habmermas calls a "convergence, steered through learning, of 'our' perspective *and* 'their' perspective – no matter whether 'they' or 'we' or both sides have to reformulate established practices of justification to a greater or lesser extent."[59] When we American college teachers encounter religious fundamentalists, we do not consider the possiblity of reformulating our own practices of justification so as to give more weight to the authority of the Christian scriptures. Instead, we do our best to convince these students of the benefits of secularization. We assign first-person accounts of growing up homosexual to our homophobic students for the same reasons that German schoolteachers in the postwar period assigned *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

Putnam and Habermas can rejoin that we teachers do our best to be Socratic, to get our job of re-education, secularization, and liberalization done by conversational exchange. That is true up to a point, but what about assigning books like *Black Boy*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *Becoming a Man*? The racist or fundamentalist parents of our students say that in a truly democratic society the students should not be forced to read books by such people – black people, Jewish people, homosexual people. They will protest that these books are being jammed down their children's throats. I cannot see how to reply to this charge without saying something like "There are credentials for admission to our democratic society, credentials which we liberals have been making more stringent by doing our best to excommunicate racists, male chauvinists, homophobes, and the like. You have to be *educated* in order to be a citizen of our society, a participant in our conversation, someone with whom we can envisage merging our horizons. So we are going to go right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist religious community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable. We are not so inclusivist as to tolerate intolerance such as yours."

I have no trouble offering this reply, since I do not claim to make the distinction between education and conversation on the basis of anything except my loyalty to a particular community, a community whose interests required re-educating the Hitler Youth in 1945 and required re-educating the bigoted students of Virginia in 1993. I don't see anything *herrschaftsfrei* about my handling of my fundamentalist students. Rather, I think those students are lucky to find themselves under the benevolent *Herrschaft* of people like me, and to have escaped the grip of their frightening, vicious, dangerous parents. But I think that the handling of such students is a problem for Putnam and Habermas. It seems to me that I am just as provincial and contextualist as the Nazi teachers who made their students read *Der Stürmer*; the only difference is that I serve a better cause. I come from a better province.

I recognize, of course, that domination-free communication is only a regulative ideal, never to be attained in practice. But unless a regulative ideal makes a difference to practice, it is not good for much. So I ask: is there an ethics of discourse which lets me assign the books I want to assign but makes no reference to the local and ethnocentric considerations which I should cite to justify my pedagogic practices? Can you get such an ethics out of the notions of "reason, truth, and justification," or do you have to load

the dice? Can I invoke universalistic notions in defense of my action, as well as local ones?

Like MacIntyre, Ben-Habib, Kelly, and others, I think that you have to smuggle some provinciality into your universals before they do you any good. We think this for the same sorts of reasons as Hegel thought that you had to smuggle in some provinciality – some ethical substance – before you could get any use out of Kant's notion of "unconditional moral obligation." In particular, you have to smuggle in some rule like "no putative contribution to a conversation can be rejected simply because it comes from somebody who has some attribute which can vary independently of his or her opinions – an attribute like being Jewish, or black, or homosexual." I call this rule 'provincial' because it violates the intuitions of a lot of people outside the province in which we heirs of the Enlightenment run the educational institutions.[60] It violates what they would describe as their *moral* intuitions. I am reluctant to admit that these are moral intuitions, and should prefer to call them revolting prejudices. But I do not think that anything in the grammar of the terms 'moral intuition' and 'prejudice' helps us reach agreement on this point. Nor will a theory of rationality do so.

IX. Do We Need a Theory of Rationality?

As I remarked earlier, Habermas thinks that "the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted" and also that "the symptoms of exhaustion should dissolve with the transition to the paradigm of mutual understanding?"[61] My own view is that that the fruitfulness of the topics Weber suggested – modernity and rationality – have also been exhausted. I think that the symptoms of this exhaustion might dissolve if we stopped talking about the transition from tradition to rationality, stopped worrying about falling back from rationality by becoming relativistic or ethnocentric, and stopped contrasting the context-dependent with the universal.

This would mean explicitly abandoning the hope that philosophy can stand above politics, abandoning the hopeless question "How can philosophy find politically neutral premises, premises which can be justified to anybody, from which to infer an obligation to pursue democratic politics?" Dropping that question would let us admit that, in Wellmer's formula, "democratic and liberal principles define just *one* possible language game among others." Such an admission would be in line with the Darwinian idea that the inclusivist project is no more rooted in something larger than itself than, say, the project of replacing ideographic by alphabetic writing, or of representing three spatial dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. All three of these were good, immensely fruitful, ideas, but none of them need universalistic backup. They can stand on their own feet.[62]

If we abandoned the idea that philosophy can be both politically neutral and politically relevant, we could start asking the question: "Given that we want to be ever more inclusivist, what should the public rhetoric of our society be like? How different should it be from the public rhetoric of previous societies?" Habermas' implicit answer to this question is that we should hang on to a good many Kantian ideas about the connection between universality and moral obligation. Dewey, however, was willing to move much further away from Kant. Though he would have heartily agreed with Habermas that Aristotle's political vocabulary was unable to capture the spirit of democratic politics, he did not like the distinction between morality and prudence which Habermas thinks essential, and on this point he would have thought Aristotle

preferable.[63] Dewey thought that the Kantian notion of "unconditional obligation," like the notion of unconditionality itself (and of universality, insofar as that idea is implicitly accompanied by that of unconditional necessity),[64] could not survive Darwin.

Whereas Habermas thinks that we need "the reconstructive sciences designed to grasp universal competences" in order to break out of "the hermeneutic circle in which the *Geisteswissenschaften*, as well as the interpretive social sciences, are trapped,"[65] Dewey did not feel trapped. This was because he saw no need to resolve a tension between facticity and validity. He saw that tension as a philosopher's fiction, a result of separating two parts of a situation for no good (that is, no practical) reason, and then complaining that you cannot put them back together again. For him, all obligations were situational and conditional.

This refusal to be unconditional led Dewey to be charged with 'relativism.' If 'relativism' just means failure to find a use for the notion of 'context-independent validity,' then this charge was entirely justified. But no roads lead from this failure to an inability to engage in democratic politics, unless one thinks that such politics require us to deny that, "democratic and liberal principles define just *one* possible language game among others." The question about universality is, for Dewey, just the question of whether democratic politics can start from an affirmation, rather than a denial, of that claim.

I do not think that we can get much further in debating this question by talking about either modernity or reason. The question of whether Hegel should have developed a theory of communicative reason, or should instead have dropped the topic of reason altogether in the interest of a more thorough-going variety of historicism, is not going to be settled by looking more closely at the grammar of words like 'true' and 'rational', and 'argument.' Neither is the question of whether philosophers like Annette Baier are right in suggesting that we set Kant aside and go back to Hume's attempt to describe reason in terms of conditioned sentiment rather than unconditional obligation.[66]

But although we do not, if I am right, need a theory of rationality, we do need a narrative of maturation. The deepest disagreement between Habermas and myself may be over whether the distinction beween the unconditional and the conditional in general, and the distinction between morality and prudence in particular, is a mark of maturity or a transitional stage on the way to maturity. One of the many points on which Dewey agreed with Nietzsche was that it was the latter. Dewey thought that the desire for universality, unconditionality, and necessity was undesirable, because it led one away from the practical problems of democratic politics into a never-never land of theory. Kant and Habermas think that it is a desirable desire, one which one shares only when one reaches the highest level of moral development.[67]

I have been trying to show how things look when one puts democratic politics in the context of Dewey's narrative of maturation. I cannot offer anything remotely approaching a knock-down argument, based on commonly accepted premises, for this narrative. The best I could do by way of further defense of my view would be to tell a fuller story, encompassing more topics, in order to show how post-Nietzschean European philosophy looks from a Deweyan angle, rather than a universalistic one. (This is something I have tried to do, in bits and pieces, elsewhere.) I think that narratives are a perfectly fair means of persuasion, and that Habermas's *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* and Dewey's *The Quest for Certainty* are both admirable illustrations of the power of narratives of maturation.

My reasons for preferring Dewey's are not that I think that Dewey got truth and

rationality right, and that Habermas gets them wrong. I think that there is nothing to be gotten right or wrong here. At this level of abstraction, concepts like truth, rationality, and maturity are up for grabs. The only thing that matters is which way of reshaping them will, in the long run, make them more useful for democratic politics. Concepts are, as Wittgenstein taught us, uses of words. Philosophers have long wanted to understand concepts, but the point is to change them so as to make them serve our purposes better. Habermas', Apel's, Putnam's and Wellmer's linguistification of Kantian concepts is one suggestion about how to make these concepts more useful. Dewey's and Davidson's thoroughgoing anti-Kantian naturalism is an alternative suggestion.

Notes

1 This paper was prepared for presentation to a colloquium held at Cerisy-la-Salle in 1993, and a revised version was read at the University of Girona in 1996. A shortened version was published in French as "Les assertions expriment-elles une prétention à une validité universelle?" in *La Modernité en Question: de Richard Rorty á Jürgen Habermas*, ed. Françoise Gaillard, Jacques Poulain, and Richard Shusterman (Paris: Editions de Cerf, 1993). Another, also shortened, version, appeared as "Sind Aussagen universelle Geltungsansprüche?" in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (Band 42, Heft 6 (1994), pp. 975–988). This is the first appearance of the English original of the paper, of its full text.

2 Nietzsche is the paradigm irrationalist because he had no interest whatever in democracy, and because he stoutly resisted all three premises. James is thought to be more confused than vicious, because, although committed to democracy, he was not willing to affirm two of the premises: he admitted that all human beings desire truth, but he thought the claim that truth is correspondence to reality unintelligible, and he toyed with the claim that, since reality is malleable, truth is Many. Habermas sets his face firmly against the latter idea, even though he agrees with James that we have to give up the correspondence theory of truth. So Habermas is condemned as an irrationalist only by die-hards who claim that doubts about truth as correspondence are doubts about the existence, or at least the unity, of Truth. Straussians, and analytic philosophers such as Searle, claim that you need all three premises: to give up any of them is to put yourself on a slippery slope, to risk ending up agreeing with Nietzsche.

3 Readers of my paper "Solidarity or Objectivity?" will recognize this line of argument as a variant on my earlier claim that we need to restate our intellectual ambitions in terms of our relations to other human beings, rather than in terms of our relation to non-human reality. As I say below, that claim is one with which Apel and Habermas are inclined to agree, even though they think my way of carrying through on this project goes too far.

4 The relevance of the sublime to the political is, of course, a point of dispute between Lacanians like Zizek and their opponents. It would take more than a note to deal with their arguments. I have tried to offer some preliminary backup for my claim of irrelevance in the pages of *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* in which I discuss the difference between the private pursuit of sublimity and the public search for a beautiful reconciliation of conflicting interests. In the present context, perhaps it is enough to remark that I agree with Habermas that Foucault's exaltation of a 'sublime', inexpressible, impossible, kind of freedom – a kind which was somehow *not* constituted by power – made it impossible for him to recognize the achievements of liberal reformers and thus to engage in serious political reflection on the possibilities open to welfare-state democracies. (See *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 290–291).

5 If you linguistify reason by saying, with Sellars and Davidson, that there are no non-linguistic beliefs and desires, you automatically socialize it. Sellars and Davidson would

heartily agree with Habermas that "[T]here is no pure reason that might don linguistic clothing only in the second place. Reason is by its very nature incarnated in contexts of communicative action and in structures of the lifeworld." (*Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 322).

6 *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 322–23.

7 I replied to Putnam's criticism of my view (in his essay of l983 called "Why Reason Can't be Naturalized") in my "Solidarity or Objectivity" (reprinted in my *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*). I have replied to Putnam's further criticisms of this view (in his *Realism with a Human Face*) in "Putnam and the Relativist Menace" (*Journal of Philosophy*, September 1993).

8 *Philosophical Discourse*, p. 311. At p. 312 Habermas claims that most philosophy of language outside the Austin-Searle "speech-act" tradition, and in particular Donald Davidson's "truth-condition semantics," embodies the typically logocentric "fixation on the fact-mirroring function of language." I think that there is an important strain in recent philosophy of language which is not guilty of this charge, and that Davidson's later work is a good example of freedom from this fixation. See, for example, Davidson's doctrine of 'triangulation' in his "The Structure and Content of Truth," a doctrine which helps explain why fact-stating and communicating cannot be separated. I discuss this doctrine below. (In my view, accepting Davidson's point makes it unnecessary to postulate what Habermas calls "'worlds' analogous to the world of facts . . . for legitimately regulated interpersonal relationships and for attributable subjective experiences" (ibid., p. 313). But this disagreement is a side-issue which does not need to be explored further in the present context.)

9 *Philosophical Discourse*, p. 296.

10 As I read Dewey, he would sympathize with Castoriadis' emphasis on imagination, rather than reason, as the engine of moral progress.

11 Consider Habermas' criticism of Castoriadis: "one cannot see how this *demiurgic setting-in-action* of historical truths could be transposed into the *revolutionary project* proper to the practice of consciously acting, autonomous, self-realizing individuals." (*Philosophical Discourse*, p. 318) The history of the United States of America shows how this transposition can be achieved. Apel and Habermas tend to think of the American Revolution as firmly grounded in the sort of universal-validity-claiming principles of which they approve, and which Jefferson spelled out in the Declaration of Independence. (See Apel, "Zurück zur Normalität?" in *Zerstörung des moralischen Selbstbewusstseins*, p. 117). I should rejoin that the Founding Fathers were just the sort of demiurges whom Castoriadis has in mind when he talks about "the institution of the social imaginary." What we now think of as "the American people," a community of "consciously acting, autonomous, self-realizing individuals" devoted to those principles, slowly came into existence in the course of the (very gradual – ask any African-American) process of living up to the Founders' imaginations. So when Habermas goes on to criticize Castoriadis for acknowledging "no reason for revolutionizing reified society except the existentialist resolve 'because we will it'," and asks "who this 'we' of the radical willing might be," I think it would be fair to answer that in 1776 the relevant 'we' was not the American people but Jefferson and some of his equally imaginative friends.

12 See, on this point, the opening pages of my "Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*. What I there call the 'endorsing' and the 'disquotational' uses of the 'true' can easily be paraphrased in terms which do not include 'true.'

13 Being a coherentist in this sense does not necessarily mean having a coherence theory of truth. Davidson's repudiation of the latter label for his view, a label he had previously accepted, is a corollary of his claim that there can be no definition of the term "true-in-L" for variable L. Davidson's present view, with which I have come to agree, is that "[W]e should not say that truth is correspondence, coherence, warranted assertability, ideally justified assertability, what is accepted in the conversation of the right people, what science will end up maintaining, what explains the convergence on single theories in science, or the success of our ordinary beliefs. To the extent that realism and antirealism depend on one or

another of these views of truth we should refuse to endorse either." ("The Structure and Content of Truth", *Journal of Philosophy* vol. 87 (1990), p. 309).

14 Davidson too thinks that there is more to be said, but the sort of thing he wants to say is, as far as I can see, irrelevant to politics. In what follows I draw upon Davidson, but I postpone discussion of the claim, at p. 326 of "The Structure and Content of Truth," that "the conceptual underpinning of understanding is a theory of truth," in a sense of "theory of truth" in which there is one such theory per language. This claim seems to me distinct from the claim, which I invoke below, that "the ultimate source of both objectivity and communication" is what Davidson calls 'triangulation.' I am not sure why, apart from respect for the memory of Tarski, a theory that codifies the results of such triangulation should be described as a theory of *truth*, rather than of the behavior of a certain group of human beings.

15 Putnam has sometimes repudiated this thesis of convergence (see *Realism with a Human Face*, p. 171, on Bernard Williams), but (as I argue in my "Putnam and the Relativist Menace"), I do not think that he can reconcile this repudiation with his notion of "ideal assertibility". As I see it, the only sense in which Truth is One is that, if the process of developing new theories and new vocabularies is choked off, and there is agreement on the aims to be fulfilled by a belief – that is, on the needs to be fulfilled by the actions dictated by that belief – then a consensus will develop about which of a finite list of candidates is to be adopted. This sociological generalization, which is subject to lots of obvious qualifications, should not be confused with a metaphysical principle. The trouble with the idea of convergence at the end of inquiry, as many critics (notably Michael Williams) have pointed out, is that it is hard to imagine a time at which it would seem desirable to cease developing new theories and new vocabularies. As Davidson has remarked, Putnam's "naturalistic fallacy" argument applies as much to his "ideal acceptability" theory of truth as to any other theory of truth.

16 "Communicative reason stretches across the entire spectrum of validity claims: the claims to propositional truth, sincerity and normative rightness." (Habermas, *Between Facts And Norms* (Cambridge Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1996), p. 5).

17 Habermas, *Between Facts And Norms*, p. 6.

18 Habermas, *Between Facts And Norms*, p. 8.

19 Habermas, *Between Facts And Norms*, p. 8.

20 Habermas, *Between Facts And Norms*, p. 15.

21 For Davidsonian reasons, I should prefer the term 'practices' to 'conventions,' but I shall treat the two as synonomous here.

22 Habermas, *Between Facts And Norms*, p. 16.

23 I am not sure whether, when I do this, Apel and Habermas would still view me as *arguing*, or as having abandoned argument and fallen back on strategic sensitivity training.

24 Duellists used to say that some people were not *satisfaktionsfähig: one did not have to accept if challenged by such people*. We need some analogous notion – to describe *people whose requests for justification we are entitled to reject*. The sort of exclusivist bigot I have in mind does not see his or her claim as requiring justification to the wrong sort of people. But the bigot is not the only person who needs to invoke some such notion as *Rechtfertigungsempfänglichkeit*. None of us take all audiences seriously; we all reject requests for justification from some audiences as a waste of time. (Consider the surgeon refusing to justify her procedure to Christian Scientists, or to Chinese physicians who suggest relying on acupuncture and moxibustion.) The big difference between us and the bigot, as I say below, is that he thinks such non-discursive matters as racial descent matter in this context, whereas we think only beliefs and desires matter.

25 The bigot may not know how to do this, but then the local conventions which Habermas and I share suggest that we philosophers should step in and help him out – help him construct meanings for these terms which will build in his exclusivist view, just as Habermas' and my inclusivist view is built into our use of those terms.

26 The point of talking about universal validity rather than about truth seems to be to avoid the question of whether ethical and aesthetic judgments have a truth-value. Doubt that they do arises only among representationalists, people who think that there has to be an object to 'make' true judgments true. Non-representationalists like Davidson and me, and even quasi-representationalists like Putnam, are perfectly content to think of "Love is better than hate" as as good a candidate for truth-value as "Energy always equals mass times the square of the speed of light."

27 Albrecht Wellmer's *Endgames: the irreconcilable nature of modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1998), p. 150.

28 *Endgames*, p. 151.

29 *Endgames*, p. 142.

30 Consider a lawyer saying to his clients, the officers of a multinational corporation, "My brief relies, I'm afraid, on a funny little kink in the *Code Napoléon*. So though we clearly have a winning case in France, the Ivory Coast, and Louisiana, I can't do anything for you in the courts of, for example, Britain, Germany, Ghana, or Massachusetts." His clients consult another, better, lawyer who says "I can transcend *that*; I've got an argument that will work in the courts of every country except Japan and Brunei."

31 This rhetorical question might be answered by saying: it is important in mathematics. There we say not only that all the Euclidean triangles so far drawn have interior angles which sum to 180 degrees, but that this is the case for all possible triangles. But, as Wittgenstein reminds us in *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, the cash-value of this claim to have surveyed the realm of possiblity is just that one will not try to justify certain claims to certain people: you don't discuss Euclidean geometry with people who keep on trying to square the circle and double the cube. Once, with Quine and the later Wittgenstein, we drop the analytic-synthetic and language-fact distinctions, we cannot be as comfortable with the distinction between "all possible Xs" and "all Xs envisaged so far" as we once were.

32 *Endgames*, p. 138.

33 *Endgames*, pp. 137–8.

34 See "Is truth a goal of inquiry?: Donald Davidson vs. Crispin Wright," reprinted in my *Truth and Progress.*

35 This metaphor of being nudged toward truths by objects sounds less plausible in ethics and aesthetics than in physics. That is why representationalists are often 'anti-realists' in respect to the former, and why they often reserve the notion of truth-making for elementary particles, which seem more plausible nudgers than do moral or aesthetic values.

36 *Endgames*, p. 148.

37 This is the point made in Davidson's "The Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme."

38 *Endgames*, p. 150.

39 *Endgames*, p. 152.

40 *Endgames*, p. 152.

41 *Endgames*, p. 152.

42 I develop this point at some length in "Putnam and the Relativist Menace," *Journal of Philosophy* vol. 90 (September, l993). There I argue that Putnam and I both have the same idea of what counts as a good argument – namely, one which satisfies an audience of wet liberals like ourselves – and that my view, though unlike his in being explicitly ethnocentric, is no more 'relativistic' than his.

43 I tend to agree with Vincent Descombes (in the final chapter of his *The Barometer of Modern Reason*) that Weber's distinction is an invidious and self-serving use of the term 'rational.' But I should admit that if Chomsky, Kohlberg, and the rest survive current criticism, their claims would suggest that Weber had a point.

44 It is perhaps worth remarking that one of the presuppositions of communication which Habermas mentions – the ascription of identical meanings to expressions – is endangered by Davidson's argument in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" that linguistic competence can be had without such ascription, that holistic strategies of interpretation dictated by the

principle of charity render this ascription unnecessary. Davidson's argument that there is no such thing as language-mastery in the sense of the internalization of a set of conventions about what means what chimes with recent 'connectionist' criticism of MIT 'cognitivism' and thus of Chomsky's universalism. Perhaps what Habermas means by "ascription of identical meanings" is simply what Davidson means by "being charitable," but if so then, since charity is not optional, neither is such ascription. It is automatic, and nobody could be convicted of failing to abide by it. So it cannot form the basis for a charge of performative self-contradiction.

45 The 'MIT' notion, associated with Chomsky and Fodor, of 'communicative competence' is gradually being displaced, within the field of artificial intelligence, by the 'connectionist' view favored by those who see the brain as containing no hard-wired flow-charts of the sort constructed by 'cognitivist' programmers. Connectionists urge that the only biologically universal structures to be found in the brain are ones which cannot be described in terms of flow-charts labeled with the names of "natural kinds" of things and words. So the notion of 'communicative competence,' as something common to all human linguistic communities, drops out in favor of the notion of "enough neural connections to permit the organism to be made into a language-user."

46 Donald Davidson, "The Structure and Content of Truth", *Journal of Philosophy* vol. 87 (1990), p. 325.

47 Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 50.

48 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, pp. 116–7.

49 "MacIntyre, Habermas and Philosophical Ethics" in *Hermeneutics and Critical Theory in Ethics and Politics* ed. Michael Kelly (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, l990).

50 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 117.

51 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 47.

52 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 103.

53 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, pp. 89–90.

54 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 116.

55 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 117.

56 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 138.

57 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 138.

58 These last three quotations are from *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, pp. 138–139. The passage from Putnam is from p. 228 of Putnam's *Reason, Truth and History*.

59 *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 138.

60 One might try to justify this rule by deriving it from the rule that reason alone should have force. If that means "argument alone should have force," then you have to find some sense in which arguments based on the authority of the Christian scriptures are not really arguments. But does the grammar of concepts like 'reason' really tell you that reason gets distorted when you invoke the authority of the Bible? If so, does it also get distorted by a *Bildungsroman* which arouses the reader's pity and sympathy by telling her what it's like to find out, to your horror, that you can only love members of your own sex?

61 *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 296.

62 Consider Vasari on the artistic movement that began with Giotto as an analogue of Hegel on the inclusivist movements which started when Greek philosophy joined up with Christian egalitarianism. Modern art has trained us to see the former movement as optional, but not something we should want to give up now that we have got it. I take post-Nietzschean philosophy to have helped us see that the latter movement was optional, even though not something we have any reason to give up. 'Optional' here contrasts with 'destined,' in a wide sense of 'destined' which covers Habermas' notion about the universalistic tendency of phylogenetic development.

63 See Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p. 206: "In contrast to the neo-Aristotelian position, discourse ethics is emphatically opposed to going back to a stage of philosophical thought before Kant." The context makes clear that Habermas means that

it would be wrong to give up on the morality–prudence distinction which Kant made and Aristotle did not.

64 Dewey could of course have accepted Goodman's distinction between nomological necessity and universal generalizations which are merely accidental, but that is because Goodman makes nomologicality not a feature of the universe but of the coherence of our descriptive vocabulary. (See, on this point, Davidson's comment on Goodman: "Emeroses by Other Names".) Nomological necessity holds of things under descriptions, not, as for Kripke and Aristotle of things *kath' auto*.

65 Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p. 118.

66 Baier describes Hume as "the woman's moral philosopher" because his treatment of morals facilitates her suggestion that we replace 'obligation' by 'appropriate trust' as the basic moral notion. In "Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality" (reprinted in my *Truth and Progress*) I discuss Baier's suggestion in connection with my claim (reiterated in this paper) that we should try to create, rather than to presuppose, universality.

67 Another aspect of these two differing stories about maturation is the different attitudes they encourage to the quarrel between Socrates and the Sophists, and more generally to the distinction between *argument* and the modes of persuasion which I have described as 'educative' in the previous section. Apel (*Diskurs und Verantwortung*, p. 353n.) says that one of the many things wrong with the sort of view common to Gadamer, Rorty, and Derrida is these men's insouciance about the "Unterschied zwischen dem *argumentativen Diskurs* und, anderseits, dem '*Diskurs*' im Sinne von *Verhandlungen, Propaganda*, oder auch von *poetischer Fiktion* nicht mehr zu erkennen bzw. anzuerkennen vermögen." Apel goes on to say that that attitude marks "the end of philosophy." It seems to me that it marks a stage in the further maturation of philosophy – a step away from the power-worship involved in the idea that there is a power called 'reason' which will come to your aid if you follow Socrates' example and make your definitions and premises explicit. As a Deweyan tells the story, the idea of philosophy as a *strenge Wissenschaft*, as a search for knowledge, is itself a symptom of immaturity; the Sophists were not wholly in the wrong. The reciprocal accusations of immaturity to which Apel and I tempt one another can easily seem cheap and empty, but they do express heartfelt convictions on both sides, convictions about what utopia looks like, and hence about what progress toward utopia requires.