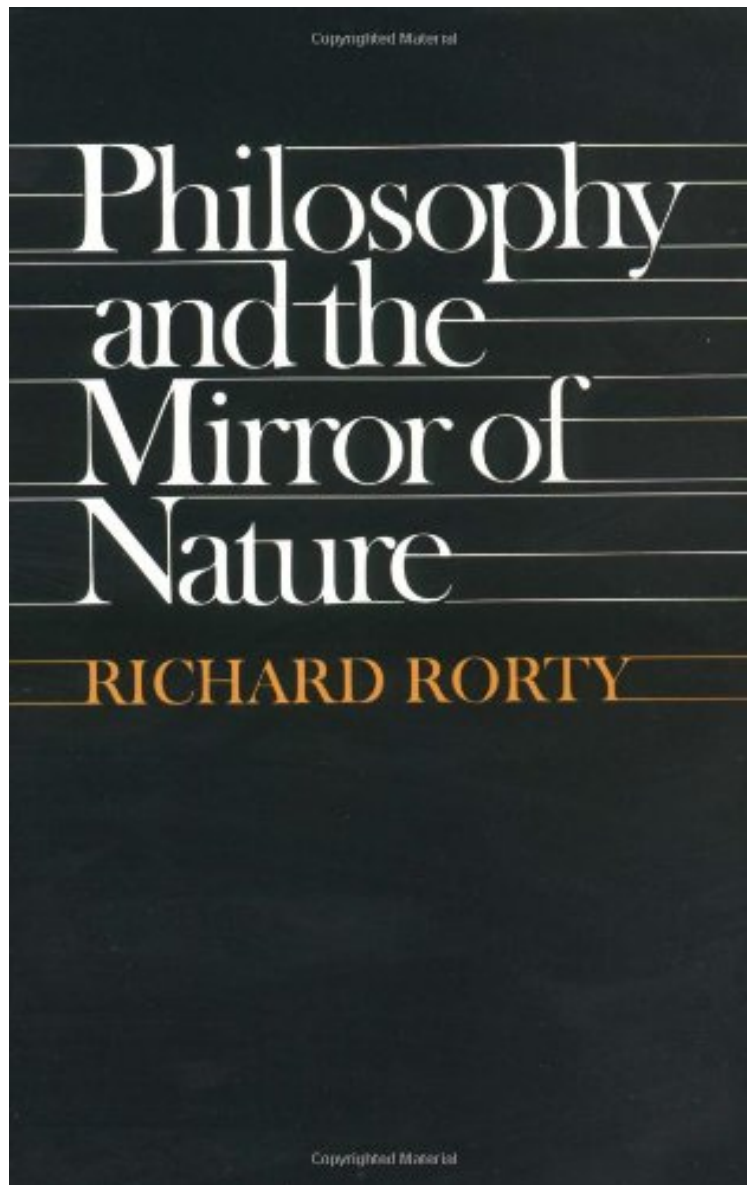


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## Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature

*Richard Rorty*

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**Richard Rorty : Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ^) Rorty cuts through the malingering Cartesian presuppositions that have (and continue to) haunt contemporary analytic philosopBy CustomerSo, I'd put off reading this for years -- and I shouldn't have. :^) Rorty cuts through the malingering Cartesian presuppositions that have (and continue to) haunt

contemporary analytic philosophy like Marley's ghost.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Kurt Pondbrand new text and speedy delivery1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. PERHAPS RORTY'S MOST IMPORTANT BOOKBy Steven H ProppRichard McKay Rorty (1931-2007) was an American philosopher, who taught at Princeton, the University of Virginia, Stanford University, etc. He wrote many other books such as Consequences Of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers, Volume 1, Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers, Volume 2, etc.He wrote in the Introduction to this 1979 book, "by the early twentieth century the scientists had become as remote from most intellectuals as had the theologians. Poets and novelists had taken the place of both preachers and philosophers as the moral teachers of the youth. The result was that the more `scientific' and `rigorous' philosophy became, the less it had to do with the rest of culture and the more absurd its traditional pretensions seemed. The attempts of both analytic philosophers and phenomenologists to `ground' this and `criticize' that were shrugged off by those whose activities were purportedly being grounded or criticized. Philosophy as a whole was shrugged off by those who wanted an ideology or a self-image." #Pg. 5#He continues, "This book is a survey of some recent developments in philosophy, especially analytic philosophy, from the point of view of the anti-Cartesian and anti-Kantian revolution... The aim of the book is to undermine the reader's confidence in `the mind' as something about which one should have a `philosophical' view, in `knowledge' as something about which their ought to be a `theory' and which has `foundations,' and in `philosophy' as it has been conceived since Kant. Thus the reader in search of a new theory on any of the subjects discussed will be disappointed." #Pg. 7#He explains the title of the book: "It is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions. The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations... and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods." #Pg. 12#He explains, "I have been treating `mental object' as if it were synonymous with `incorrigibly knowable object,' and thus as if to have a mind were the same thing as having incorrigible knowledge. I have disregarded immateriality and the ability to abstract... and intentionality...My excuse for pretending that the mind is nothing but a set of incorrigibly introspective raw feels, and that its essence is this special epistemic status, is that the same pretense if current throughout the area called `philosophy of mind.'" #Pg. 96#He states, "A holistic approach to knowledge is ... a distrust of the whole epistemological enterprise. A behavioristic approach to episodes of `direct awareness' is ... a distrust of the Platonic quest for that special sort of certainty associated with visual perception. The image of the Mirror of Nature---a mirror more easily and certainly seen than that which it mirrors---suggests, and is suggested by, the image of philosophy as such a quest." #Pg. 181#He summarizes, "I have argued... that the desire for a theory of knowledge is a desire for constraint---a desire to find `foundations' to which one might cling, frameworks beyond which one must not stray, objects which impose themselves, representations which cannot be gainsaid. When I described the recent reaction against the quest for foundations as `epistemological behaviorism,' I was ... suggesting that Quine and Sellars ... show us how things look when we give up the desire for confrontation and constraint... I am NOT putting forward hermeneutics as a `successor subject' to epistemology... hermeneutics is an expression of hope that the cultural space left by the demise of epistemology will not be filled---that our culture should become one in which the demand for constraint and confrontation is no longer felt." #Pg. 315#He argues, "The distinction between systematic and edifying philosophers is not the same as the distinction between normal philosophers and revolutionary philosophers... what matters is a distinction between two kinds of revolutionary philosophers. One the one hand, there are revolutionary philosophers---those who found new schools... On the other hand, there are great philosophers who dread the thought that their vocabulary should ever be institutionalized... Great edifying philosophers are reactive... They know their work loses its point when the period they were reacting against is over... Great systematic philosophers... build for eternity... [they] want to put their subject on the secure path of a science. Edifying philosophers want to keep space open for the sense of wonder... that there is something new under the sun.... which... cannot be explained and can barely be described." #Pg. 369-370#He concludes, "Every speech, thought, theory, poem, composition, and philosophy will turn out to be completely predictable in purely naturalistic terms... There are no ghosts. Nobody will be able to predict his own actions, thoughts, theories, poems, etc., before deciding upon them... The complete set of laws which enable these predictions to be made... would not yet be the whole 'objective truth' about human beings... The fear of science, of 'scientism,' of 'naturalism,' of self-objectivation, of being turned... into a thing rather than a person, is the fear that all discourse will become normal discourse... But the dangers to abnormal discourse do not come from science or naturalistic philosophy. They come from the scarcity of food and from the secret police. Given leisure and libraries, the conversation which Plato began will not end in self-objectivation... simply because free and leisured conversation generates abnormal discourse as the sparks fly upward." #Pg. 387-389#This book will be "must reading" for anyone studying Rorty, or contemporary philosophy.

Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature hit the philosophical world like a bombshell. Richard Rorty, a Princeton professor who had contributed to the analytic tradition in philosophy, was now attempting to shrug off all the central problems with which it had long been preoccupied. After publication, the Press was barely able to keep up with

demand, and the book has since gone on to become one of its all-time best-sellers in philosophy. Rorty argued that, beginning in the seventeenth century, philosophers developed an unhealthy obsession with the notion of representation. They compared the mind to a mirror that reflects reality. In their view, knowledge is concerned with the accuracy of these reflections, and the strategy employed to obtain this knowledge--that of inspecting, repairing, and polishing the mirror--belongs to philosophy. Rorty's book was a powerful critique of this imagery and the tradition of thought that it spawned. He argued that the questions about truth posed by Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and modern epistemologists and philosophers of language simply couldn't be answered and were, in any case, irrelevant to serious social and cultural inquiry. This stance provoked a barrage of criticism, but whatever the strengths of Rorty's specific claims, the book had a therapeutic effect on philosophy. It reenergized pragmatism as an intellectual force, steered philosophy back to its roots in the humanities, and helped to make alternatives to analytic philosophy a serious choice for young graduate students. Twenty-five years later, the book remains a must-read for anyone seriously concerned about the nature of philosophical inquiry and what philosophers can and cannot do to help us understand and improve the world.

The Times Literary Supplement : This is an ambitious and important book. Ambitious because it attempts to place the main concerns and discussions of contemporary philosophy within a historical perspective; important because this is all too rarely attempted within our present philosophical culture, and almost never done this well.