

## On the Very Idea of Romantic Irony

Nicolás Lavagnino

It can be said that the main concern of Rortian pragmatics of language consists in trying to reconcile ethnocentrism and ironism with the romantic and imaginative horizon of culture. In this essay I'm trying to call attention to a crucial link, rarely analyzed, that leads from Gadamerian *Bildung* to irony, and thence to the metaphorical rupture in pursuit of a romantic perspective of our social world. In sum, I propose to show how Rorty, using the figures of *Bildung*, irony and metaphorical romance, has helped us to have a different conception of the very idea of romantic irony.

*Nature I loved, and next to nature, art  
I warmed both hands before the fire of life  
it sinks, and I'm ready to depart.*

– Walter Landor, “On his seventy-fifth birthday,” 1849<sup>1</sup>

*The life of man is an ever-expanding circle, which, from a ring  
imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new  
and larger circles, and that without end...*

*There is no outside, no enclosing wall, no circumference to us.*  
–Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles,” 1841<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Landor or the Missing Verse

In one of his last writings, “The Fire of Life,” Richard Rorty makes a poignant, brief and devastating journey that leads from the mention of his terminal illness, up to the recognition of the place and importance of poetry in culture. Poets (in the sense of Bloom – “the strong poets” like Plato, Hegel, Marx, and Freud, as well as Milton or Blake) invent for us lexicons, textures of life in which we inhabit.<sup>3</sup> Textures of a full life, that opens to new lexicons, and becomes more varied, as we enrich ourselves when we make new friends. “Cultures with richer vocabularies are more fully human – farther removed from the beasts – than those with poorer ones.”<sup>4</sup>

In this context I refer to the first epigraph quoted above: the epitaph that Landor wrote for himself, and that Rorty inserted into his text, with the notable exception of the first verse. That line, excluded by Rorty, reads: “I strove with

none, for none was worth my strife.” It is easy to see why it was not included in the poetic-philosophical epitaph of Rorty.

The new realities we can imagine, in the process of shaping our lives, and be farther removed from the beasts, are certainly worth the effort, and that’s why the first line of Landor cannot appear in Rorty’s emotive text. The full life enrichment through “strong” poetry, the enlightenment through the fire of life, cannot be exercised appealing to the haughty look of those who observe with disdain a foreign territory, but from the effective embedding of those who are engaged in the task of reshaping culture and hope.

The fire of life might be consumed and go out, and still we could be ready to depart. But that fire also is oriented, or so we may think, in the direction of contributing to the “ever expanding circle” we inhabit. The figure of the circle, as in the second epigraph that opens this text, does not denote here the idea of an area surrounded by a limit, beyond which lies the ineffable, the ominous reality that cannot be captured by appearances. “There is no outside, no enclosing wall,” says Emerson, quoted by Rorty in “Pragmatism and Romanticism.”<sup>5</sup> This figure implies all the known Rortian references to the spaces of malleable practices, to beliefs as habits of action, as networks of allusions and reverberations, that follow the many and varied purposes inside the frame of the contingency of language.

It also involves the idea of an incremental space in the articulation of meanings. Like a tree that adds rings, we link habits, beliefs, desires, words, vocabularies, purposes, weaving and reweaving our practical orientations. It is a network that multiplies itself in webs, without assuming more than two things: a previous system of beliefs and the desire to use old and emerging beliefs in response to new challenges.

Landor’s missing verse is one that cannot be in the epitaph of that immense re-weaver that was Rorty because in that line is discredited the value of an effort to enlarge the circle of life that we are constantly broadening, in pursuit of the collective self-creation of a species. This little omission of Rorty in one of his last philosophical gestures serves to clarify my main goal here: to emphasize that what we could call a Rortian pragmatics of language involves the combination of two complex images. On the one hand, the image of the constant re-weaving and widening of experiential circles, a sort of material, fallible and creative vision of culture and thought, and, on the other, the idea of a collective destination self-created and self-assigned, which does not require joining or connecting with something eminently non-human.

Seen this way, what elsewhere I’ve termed “the paradox of Rorty” consists in trying to reconcile ethnocentrism and ironism with the romantic and imaginative horizon of culture.<sup>6</sup> Put more simply, the ethnocentric ironism (that which separates Rorty from Landor) is not necessarily consistent with the edifying purposes of a self-creative *Bildung* with romantic attributes. In this essay, then, I’m trying to call attention to a crucial link, rarely analyzed, that leads from *Bildung* to irony, and thence to the metaphorical rupture in pursuit of

a romantic perspective of our social world. Simpler still: I propose to show how Rorty, using the figures of *Bildung*, irony and metaphorical romance, has helped us to have a different conception of the very idea of romantic irony.

## 2. From *Bildung* to Irony

In the final chapter of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* Rorty concludes by making the jump that drives him from *philosophy-as-metaphysics-and-epistemology* up to philosophy as *conversation-and-hermeneutics*, appealing for it to the Gadamerian concept of *Bildung*.<sup>7</sup> Certainly, in the masterpiece of Gadamer, *Truth and Method*,<sup>8</sup> Rorty finds reasons for departing from the epistemological tradition, arguments to distrust the notion of method, elements for opening the realm of significance to other purposes. The irreducibility of the human sciences is not due to an unsustainable metaphysical or epistemological dualism, but to the fact that “re-describing ourselves is the most important thing we can do.”<sup>9</sup> Certainly in Gadamer the term *Bildung* is one of the key elements in the self-justification and affirmation of the humanities or moral sciences. This term incorporates not only aspects of what we call education (as in the *novel of formation*, or *Bildungsroman*), but also elements of what we call *formation* or self-development – for example, in the *formation* of a species or the biological development of a creature.<sup>10</sup>

According to Gadamer “the concept of *self-formation*, which became supremely important at the time, was perhaps the greatest idea of the eighteenth century, and it is this concept which is the atmosphere breathed by the human sciences of the nineteenth century, even if they are unable to offer any epistemological justification of it.”<sup>11</sup> The main historicist contribution to the understanding of historical drift through the *Bildung* figure is to show that we are, in a substantive sense, nothing else than this self-development. It is not a process that we manage in a distant fashion, externally, like someone who crosses a landscape, but that there is a logical interdependence between the subject of the process and the instances of it, between the subject involved, the process, and the result. *Bildung*, then, is a process of development and deployment, an *Auslegung*, which means, literally, the action of extending, deploying, expanding, displaying. As such, deployment refers also to the semantic group linked with our current notion of explanation or interpretation. Deployment, clarification, the heart of the *Bildung*, is certainly its teleological orientation, the image of a series of potentialities that become effective in a course of events. However, the most significant slip between this and a crude biological organicism is that those potentials and latencies are formed during the very course of these events and do not precede them.

The figure of *Bildung* collects the topic, central to romanticism, expropriated in turn from the medieval and baroque mysticism, of the creative function of emptying oneself to reassert. Indeed, this process of de-centering and returning to self is the essence of *formation*. The process consists, more

specifically, in the renunciation of immediacy, the ascent to generality, the sacrifice of particularity, the objectification of an interiority that in its realization, far from fading away, ends up forming itself. That abandonment is no other thing than the increased attention and awareness of the effects of being exposed to a shared form of life. *Formation* consists both of a protocol of explanation and interpretation of cultural change, as well as configures a theory of the deployment of personality and the enrichment of shared sensibilities. In short, formation involves a sense of generalization and of community belonging, attained through the renunciation of immediacy and particularity. We are far from the first line of Landor. *Bildung* is always a story about a past that has become our present. Thanks to it, we become aware of the efficacies of the history that constitutes us.

The figure of the conversation and the recurring redescription of this process of “becoming” is the dramatic ending note in Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. There Rorty asserts, consistently with Gadamer, that “education has to start from acculturation. So the search for objectivity and the self-conscious awareness of social practices, in which objectivity consists, are necessary first steps in becoming *Gebildet*.”<sup>12</sup> Education consists of incorporating antecedent objectifications from the past that, with the aim of “becoming,” constituted realities for us. We must inhale webs of belief that have been created and exhaled by others, prior to our own inquiry, our own future formations.

In this sense the other figure in mind here, as Gadamer already noted, is the Hegelian *Aufhebung* (in a sense that differs significantly from the meaning given at times by Marx to the same term).<sup>13</sup> *Aufhebung* here denotes improvement and abolition, but also implies conservation.<sup>14</sup> *Bildung* as *Aufhebung* is a differentiated reaction, a widening of the sets of contexts that we might be aware of, but certainly, now they might be considered as accomplished and consummated antecedents that are in the process of consumption and exhaustion. The double implication of consumption (as consummation and as cancellation) describes well what is involved in this notion of *Aufhebung*. The hermeneutical project that Rorty adopts from Gadamer should do both: not only consummating, as does the pure criticism or as does the poetry of the private perfection,<sup>15</sup> longing for an impossible self-creation *ex nihilo*; and not merely consuming, in docile conservation of what already exists, as does the epistemological, metaphysical and commonsensical attitude.

But this process of conduction and orientation takes place in a modern era in which we have come to be aware that we might not know what the real important issues are. In fact what Rorty, through Blumenberg, considered distinctive of Modernity, once the historicist criticism of enlightenment is rendered effective, is not the idea of an ahistorical criterion of rationality, but the Fichtean motive of self-affirmation:

For Blumenberg, the attitude of “self-assertion,” the kind of attitude which stems from a Baconian view of the nature and purpose of science, needs to be distinguished from “self-foundation,” the Cartesian project of grounding such inquiry upon ahistorical criteria of rationality.<sup>16</sup>

In this context, then, “modern” means the kind of consciousness that takes contingency seriously, renounces the longing for self-foundation of rationality but, nevertheless, acts, impinges, *forms* itself.

Taking into account this honest awareness of narrative fallibility, we must face the spectrum of what Rorty has called, in the occasion of discussing the historiographical genres of philosophy, “doxography.”<sup>17</sup> This is the kind of bad conscience that imposes a canon or a problem, and considers explicitly or implicitly the belief that philosophy is a natural kind. While what Rorty called *Geistesgeschichte*<sup>18</sup> is consciously committed in the formation of a canon, aiming to integrate in a synoptic view a long philosophical journey, we find that *doxography* operates in the realm of common sense, by imposing a notion of reality that appears to be located outside any conversation between past and present.

Indeed, according to Rorty, *Geistesgeschichte* is necessary “to justify our belief that we are better off than those ancestors by virtue of having become aware of those problems,”<sup>19</sup> precisely by virtue of *formation*, while *doxography*, on the contrary, is pernicious as it negates our historical sensibility towards the problems themselves. Rorty’s point is to sustain the utility of *Geistesgeschichte* from a nominalist and materialistic point of view. We need to form canons, even though they may crystallize and become obsolete. But to challenge a canon requires the re-description of the social world in terms of another. This is the reason why Rorty argues that he is in favor of getting rid of canons which have become merely quaint. But “I do not think,” he says, “that we can get along without canons. This is because we cannot get along without heroes. We need mountains peaks to look up towards.”<sup>20</sup>

Instead the doxographer provides us, as the metaphysicians in general, “the two sorts of metaphysical comfort to which our intellectual tradition has become accustomed.”<sup>21</sup> First, the idea that there is a place prepared beforehand for our species, something non-human in which our human reality melts. Second, the idea that our community, our beliefs, what we know, cannot die completely. Something like our worldview, our virtues and our art, are part of the convergent final scenario to which our cognitive enterprises are addressed. In short, the doxographer needs convergence and affiliation with something non-human, two kinds of certainties that convert her into a dishonest narrator who conceals our effective historical consciousness, and that holds a metaphysics that she dare not openly assume.

At this point we reach the problem of irony. The metaphysical solace is expressed in the form of a “final vocabulary,” a lexicon in which the

doxographer does not feel authorized to express doubts. For Rorty, as is known, an ironist is a person who fulfills these three conditions:

- (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself.<sup>22</sup>

The opposite of irony is common sense, the field of “those who unselfconsciously describe everything important in terms of the final vocabulary to which they and those around them are habituated. To be commonsensical is to take for granted that statements formulated in that final vocabulary suffice to describe and judge the beliefs, actions and lives of those who employ alternative final vocabularies.”<sup>23</sup> Ironism then complements the ethnocentric sense of proximity and belonging, with a healthy sense of distance and estrangement to what was previously objectified. At this point we must consider that irony is connected with the idea of a “double vision,” and the posture of humility and modesty of one who considers himself less than what it ends up being (the classic figure of *iron*).<sup>24</sup> Ironism alerts us, at the risk of sometimes being cruel, to the dangers of being so *whiggish* in the legitimation and the formation of canons, the uncritical celebration of the rites of our own tribe.

The common theme in the articulation of this Rortian network of terms – *Bildung*, ethnocentrism, ironism – is always the same: the coming into being of a collective consciousness through a material and contingent process, obstructing the slip that leads to metaphysics, doxography, commonsense. Within this framework, *Bildung* refers to the content of belief, the story told. Ethnocentrism refers to the subject who believes, the narrator. The ironism is, finally, the attitude that should be taken relative to that belief and that story. Ironism, in this context, acts as the complement of this *formation* of pragmatic, materialist and nominalist canons, of this self-conscious *Geistesgeschichte* that tends to reintroduce the teleological virus through the account of the *formation*. Rorty’s prodigious task, then, is to try to find a way to harmonize the teleological orientation of *Bildung* with the redescriptive prudence of ironism, thereby achieving the creation of a collective and contingent subject. The meeting point that Rorty finds lies in the prospect of a *romantic and non-teleological history of culture*.

### 3. Metaphor and Romanticism

In “The Contingency of Language”<sup>25</sup> Rorty proposes to conceive the history of arts, sciences and moral sense under the light of the history of metaphor, in order

to obtain a “non-teleological view of intellectual history.”<sup>26</sup> Then he links this concept with the romantic horizon, which rests on “the thesis of the priority of imagination over reason – the claim that reason can only follow paths that the imagination has broken.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, the fate of Rortian pragmatism is attached to the romantic legacy.

In this non-teleological account the role of metaphor is crucial. It is the kind of use of language that generates unfamiliar noises that delve into the area of established meaning or doxographical common sense, and require a gradual reconfiguration of belief. This robust, expansionist conception of metaphor allows a perspective on the cultural drift that reduces the longing for appeals to patterns of necessity, teleology and the reduction of practices to specifiable *a priori* criteria of rationality. Thus, metaphors impinge in the area of exchange of marks and sounds in the same way as mutations in the context of the evolution of species.

Romanticism, as Rorty remarks, seeks nothing more than the consideration of this metaphoricality that subtends our system of belief and which generates endless reverberations and allusions in our fabric of meanings. As such, metaphor works as a factor of social and linguistic change and is what obliges us to consider the finitude, contingency and historicity of the adopted ultimate lexicons. This pragmatic view of metaphor and language makes us all “polytheists,” tolerant of the possibility of a plurality of norms, comprehensive of the idea that an object of knowledge that allows us to rank and commensurate all human needs will never exist.<sup>28</sup>

Thereby Romanticism, as a priority of metaphorical imagination, becomes not a metaphysical thesis about the ultimate nature of reality, but a historical thesis about the nature of human progress. The image of a widening circle of collective practices and affiliations, a circle for which there is no outside, that meets no limit and that has no circumference coincides with the aforementioned image of Emerson about human life. This thesis about human progress reads as follows:

No imagination, no language. No linguistic chance, no moral or intellectual progress. Rationality is a matter of making allowed moves within language games. Imagination creates the games that reason proceeds to play... reason cannot get outside the latest circle that imagination has drawn. In this sense, imagination has priority over reason.<sup>29</sup>

The Romantic movement, in this sense, consists in weaving a “better poem” than that which we inherited from the old Greek philosophers. That old story, now overcome, dealt with

how human beings might manage to get back in touch with something from which they had somehow become estranged – something that is not

itself a human creation, but stands over and against all such creations. The new story is about how human beings continually strive to overcome the human past in order to create a better human future.<sup>30</sup>

The old story wanted to achieve an impossible horizon sheltered against all ironic redescription, a space immune to contingency, in the immediacy of believing in something non-human with which we can affiliate in order to overcome estrangement. The new story, to the extent that it recovers Gadamerian hermeneutical emphasis, is about a human past that must be overcome – *Aufgehoben* – in the future. As in the figure of the Emersonian circles of human propagation, the fire of practices and collective achievements expands endlessly.

In fact, romanticism, in all its forms, “strives to overcome the human past” because the past is no other thing than the imaginative response of those who have narrated, lived and suffered before. It becomes strange by virtue of the addition of acts and deeds that overlap each other, in the context of the circles we inhabit. This sedimentation between pasts is converted, by the doxographic, metaphysical and epistemological temptation, into a mystical chasm between us and something unsurpassable and preferably non-human. But the denial that there is such a thing does not eliminate the problem of sedimentation; it only understands it in pragmatist, hermeneutic and *geistesgeschichtlich* terms.

So “the new story” that Rorty wants to whisper is not outside of the semantic network of the nominalist *Bildung* (which comes to be, more or less, the kind of effective historical consciousness that lies behind and above the hermeneutics of Gadamer, and with which began our journey through the issue of *formation*). But the presence of an inevitable teleology, though attenuated, in Rortian *Bildung* is not enough to discredit or render incoherent this perspective. On the contrary, it becomes more complex, less linear, a result of diverse interests and purposes.

In the tense life of language, metaphor marks the peak performance in the imagination of a state of affairs. Metaphor postulates, identifies, associates and generates links where none existed before. Irony marks the peak performance in the criticism of these states of affairs. Irony exhibits inconsistencies, contradictions and the inability to generalize semantic links between beliefs. Metaphor is the first glimpse of a territory never trodden, a hymn to innocence, a place never seen before, a tentative description by a first person. Irony marks the multiple vision of the space of experience, the reconsideration of context, the re-description by a third person that submitted to revision background beliefs. Metaphor is cryptic, terse, a mystic idealization that tends to shy away from experience, while irony is profuse, detailed, realistic, saturated, profane and satirical.

As the language of a mode of action that constantly navigates between the orientation towards maximum economy and polysemy of terms and expressions, and the orientation towards the higher definition and exhaustive cataloging of



inferential rules, metaphor and irony are key operators in the pragmatics of lexicons and vocabularies that modulate our forms of life.

Thus, far from contradicting these two orientations, they are inherent in the very practice of exchanging marks and sounds. The contingency of language, the permanent recreation of nominalist and historicist *Bildung*, the problem of estrangement derived from the sedimentation of rings in the increasing diameter of the circle of our lives – all this generates, by virtue of the profusion of details and of the incoherence of our definitional aspirations, the diseconomies and inconsistencies that lead our constellations of beliefs to the point of saturation, the point in which a rectification is required. A new beginning. A metaphor.

It is a merit of Rorty to have shown the importance of these two elements, irony and metaphor, in the consolidation of a broad perspective of a cultural drift romantically informed. But it is one element in proximity to the other. The originality of his perspective is the inseparability of the two. In fact, taken separately they lose much of their force. Rorty has taught us to inscribe both orientations in the context of a pragmatic view of language, and in the context of a romantic and hermeneutical recreation of the *Bildung* necessary to produce a collective belonging and an individual fulfillment that deserves our striving. What remains to be seen, then, is how it does this.

#### **4. Emerson, Rorty and the Point of *Metanoia***

The narrative power of Rorty has made a brilliant use of both the imagery associated with ironic and metaphorical tropes, and of the synthetic, integrative and teleological potential of the *Bildung* figure. The polysemy and multi-directionality of the topic of *formation* seems difficult to manage consistently. And yet Rorty is capable of controlling the impulsiveness of this narrative practice, orienting it towards a theme scarcely treated, but fundamental to my interests. This is the step that leads from irony to metaphor, in the context of the practical impingement on our narrative horizon.

In fact, the opposite theme is common: the progressive collapse of the metaphorical idealist sensibility, at the hands of a brash realism of the experience, that plunges into impersonality, distance, pure context, that the metaphor wanted to keep in the plane of personality, fondness, proximity. The history of narrative certainly shows this path: we slipped from the plane of the gods, the heroes and courtly love just to culminate surrounded by shipwrecks, mediocre passions and creatures crushed on the meaningless horizon of a theater of the absurd. Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Defoe, Balzac, Musil, Beckett. And yet “we cannot get along without heroes.” The narrative horizon recreates for us, by means of seemingly invisible transitions, the space of personality and agency, of the possibilities of effective action, in search of an extension of meaning and a broader understanding of that which a saturated and ironic realism may give.

How does this happen? At the end of the ironic journey of depersonalization and abolition of the saturations of past senses, we found what

tropological studies have called the *point of metanoia*.<sup>31</sup> Although usually translated as “repentance,” “remorse,” or moral inhibition, the idea of *metanoia* is linked to the notion of “change of perspective” as a commitment with the intelligibility of an “increased vision of the dimensions of human life” in the form of an apprehension that “separates us from our primary community and unites us to another one.”<sup>32</sup> *Metanoia* is the mode that we use when we want to challenge the state of affairs obtained through a purely ironic vision, and that expresses a longing after reworking our notions of time, space, agency and reality. The *point of metanoia* connects cautionary and derogatory irony, after the excesses of metaphysical, epistemological and doxographical stances, with the need to expand the circle of life. We pass from the fire consumed in Landor, to the spreading ring in Emerson.

In *metanoia* what is crucial is the heartfelt demand of linking an exhausted and saturated community with a wider and new one. The characteristic of this transit through *metanoia* is the abandonment of the hope of connecting with a non-human, supposedly perennial, entity, or with an area of certainty that escapes from the contingencies of a shared life. By contrast, *metanoia* expresses the transition from one community to another that overcomes, covers, contains and reconfigures the preceding one. It is an *Aufhebung* of a gregarious sense of belonging.

So Rorty has helped us to articulate an anti-essentialist, historicist and contingent vision of this process, stating that there is nothing outside the human world, rather than to jump from one belonging to another. Or, in other words, from one figure to another.<sup>33</sup> The recognition of the plurality of rules, of polytheism, of finitude, of ethnocentrism, finds in *metanoia* a functional replacement of the unfulfilled promises of universalism, of rationalism, and of essentialism. This term thus allows the coexistence in the same *praxis* of *Geistesgeschichte*, nominalist *Bildung*, irony and romanticism.

*Metanoia* at last is the key term that connects the figure of the Emersonian circle, which enlarges without boundaries or walls or circumferences, as an extended loyalty to the consummation of the fire of life, with the consumption and exhaustion of this same fire, in the image of Landor. And it also explains the difference between Rorty and Landor, which can be appreciated in the missing verse of the latter: in pursuit of self-creation, in pursuit of deploying a richer culture, of inhabiting a wider circle, separating us from the beasts, *it has certainly been worth it* to swirl in this hermeneutic circle, which seamlessly recurs and iterates between irony, metaphor, ethnocentrism, *Bildung* and romanticism. Iteration that we can call, plainly, a *pragmatist circle*.

*Metanoia*, or the very idea of a romantic irony, expresses the power of narration to change the point of view, to provide an augmented vision of the dimensions of human life, in the transit from what is exhausted to what emerges.

Landor *and* Emerson. Like a fire that lacerates and enlightens at the same time, the romantic irony that Rorty has cultivated for us is a prometheic gift that we have not yet thanked enough. Rorty has taught us to understand that, in the

end, there is nothing else than the commitment to the human, too human, stories, that we tell ourselves in times of anguish or of happiness. No other thing beyond *metanoia*, as a renewed commitment to an extended social world, redescribed with new names, richer, more fully human, farther removed from the beasts. That is, there is nothing else on the edge of imagination, than romantic irony, the exhaustion and resurrection of narrative as an extended loyalty with the fate of the conversation that we are.

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in Richard Rorty, "The Fire of Life," *Poetry Magazine* (18 November 2007), p. 130. Hereafter cited as PM.
2. Cited in Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism and Romanticism," in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 109. Hereafter cited as PCP.
3. PM, 129.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
5. PCP, p. 109.
6. Nicolás Lavagnino, "Noises Yet to Know – Post-Ironical Consequences of Rortian Metaphorizing," in *Pragmatism Today* 3.1 (2012): 90.
7. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 357–365. Hereafter cited as PMN.
8. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London and New York: Continuum, 1975). For *Bildung* see pp. 8–17.
9. PMN, pp. 358–359.
10. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 8–10.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
12. PMN, p. 365.
13. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 125–146.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 132–133.
15. On "private perfection" see Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 73–95. Hereafter cited CIS.
16. Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity," in Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 33. Hereafter cited as ORT.
17. Richard Rorty, "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres," in *Philosophy in History*, ed. Richard Rorty, Quentin Skinner, and J. B. Schneewind (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 61–67.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
21. ORT, p. 31.
22. CIS, p. 73.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
24. On *eiron* and *irony* see Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 40–43.

25. CIS, pp. 3–22.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

27. PCP, p. 105.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

31. A classic vision of *metanoia* is found in Northrop Frye, *The Great Code* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), pp. 157–158.

32. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 157.

33. On *figures* and *figurality*, see Erich Auerbach, “Figura” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), pp. 11–78.

Nicolás Lavagnino  
Philosophy Department  
National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET)  
University of Buenos Aires  
Buenos Aires  
Argentina