

How to be a Pragmatist without Surrendering to Naturalism

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In this paper I examine what pragmatism in general, and Rorty's pragmatism in particular, have to say about the status of theories of human rationality, especially as applied to rational action and decision. More precisely, I discuss the legitimacy of a certain kind of theorizing, which deals with rationality as understood, and as experienced, by the first person point of view. I contend that this language game can, and should, be preserved within the quarters of a pragmatist philosophy.

1. Introduction

In this paper I would like to raise some worries about the place of naturalism within a pragmatist philosophical outlook. More precisely, I want to discuss what pragmatism in general, and Rorty's pragmatism in particular, have to say about the status of theories, and theoretical talk, of human rationality, particularly as applied to what we take to be rational action and rational decision. What is at stake here is the legitimacy of certain language games, or a certain kind of theorizing, which deals with first person rationality – with rationality as understood, and as experienced, by the first person point of view. I think this language game should be preserved, and moreover, I think it can, and should, be preserved within the quarters of a pragmatist philosophy.

Of course, naturalism is understood in many different ways, so we have some clarification to do. As is well known, Rorty vindicated some senses of naturalism, and rejected others. Indeed, Rorty's position on naturalism is rich and complex, and not easy to pin down. Among the senses of naturalism he endorsed we can mention, in the first place,

(1) naturalism as anti-essentialism, or 'anti-transcendentalism', in Dewey's and Quine's sense: the methods of natural science have no need of external grounding or validation, and hence there is no such thing as a first philosophy; and second,

(2) naturalism as Darwinism: the idea that Darwin's theory of natural selection should guide our philosophical thinking about human beings;

thus we have no privileged status among other natural creatures, and hence there is no privileged vocabulary for our various descriptive practices.¹

We also could discuss to what extent he was committed as well to:

(3) naturalism as physicalism, under some possible understanding of 'physicalism', such as Donald Davidson's; and of

(4) what Alessandra Tanesini dubbed 'disenchanted naturalism', the view that there is no place for the normative as such in the natural world (Tanesini 2010).

Unlike (1) and (2), however, how to interpret (3) and (4), or whether they really capture Rorty's intentions, is somewhat controversial. (3) would include, at the very least, the idea that everything there is, is physical. Rorty describes a physicalist as

...someone who is prepared to say that every event can be described in micro-structural terms, a description which mentions only elementary particles, and can be explained by reference to other events so described.²

Here we should remember, however, that talk of particle physics is valuable only for its utility, for its consequences, and not because of any hopes that physical theories will eventually lead us to a true description of the world – so his physicalism is, at best, *sui generis*. Consider, for example:

To us antiessentialists, descriptions of objects in terms of elementary particles are useful in many different ways – as many ways as particle physics can contribute to either technological advances or imaginative, astrophysical, redescriptions of the universe as a whole. But that sort of utility is their only virtue. (...) [The essentialist philosophers] share a sense that particle physics – and more generally, whatever scientific vocabulary could, in principle, serve to redescribe any phenomenon whatever – is an example of a kind of truth which pragmatism does not recognize. (...) Particle physics has, so to speak, become the last refuge of the Greek sense of wonder – the sense of an encounter with the almost Whole Other.³

Point (4) is also problematic, I think, in the sense that Rorty made it clear in many places that it is not so much that there are no such things as norms within the realm of the physical world, but rather that the question of how to conciliate the normative and physical dimensions is not, say, politically compelling, in a broad sense. We read, for instance, that:

[Q]uestions about the place of values in a world of fact are no more unreal than questions about how the Eucharistic blood and wine can embody the divine substance, or about how many sacraments Christ instituted. Neither of the latter problems are problems for *everybody*, but their parochial character does not render them illusory. For what one finds problematic is a function of what one thinks important. One's sense of importance is in large part dependent on the vocabulary one employs. So cultural politics is often a struggle between those who urge that a familiar vocabulary be eschewed and those who defend the old ways of speaking.⁴

So we should remain critical of (4), and we should be careful as to how to interpret (3). In any case, even though I will not endorse them (at least not under their current formulations), it is useful to keep in mind that some exegeses of Rorty's work may find them compelling; this makes it all the more urgent to discuss whether Rorty's view on naturalism can, or cannot, make room for the conception of normativity and the first person perspective that I deem reasonable.

In addition, Rorty explicitly opposed to at least two other claims usually associated with philosophical naturalism:

(5) *reductivism*, the view that all normative and intentional vocabulary can be reduced to, or eliminated in favor of non-normative physicalistic vocabulary.

Rorty takes reductivism to be a further twist on representationalism, and hence it should be rejected. Finally, he also rejected:

(6) *scientism*, the view that philosophy is continuous with the natural sciences in the sense of being subject to the same standards and norms.

To make matters simpler, let me profit here from the distinction between 'object naturalism' and 'subject naturalism' proposed by Huw Price in "Naturalism without Representationalism,"⁵ as well as from Bjørn Ramberg's account of 'pragmatic naturalism', as presented in his "Naturalizing Idealizations."⁶ In these two cases, the terminology suggested by Price and Ramberg was explicitly endorsed by Rorty in one of his last papers, "Naturalism and Quietism."⁷ Thus, "[o]bject naturalism is 'the view that in some important sense, all there is is the world studied by science.'"⁸ By contrast, according to Ramberg's *pragmatic* naturalism, or to Price's *subject* naturalism, "we humans are natural creatures, and if the claims and ambitions of philosophy conflict with this view, then philosophy needs to give way."⁹ This is the position Rorty identifies with.

In short, Rorty was clear about his rejection of some senses of naturalism – those we can subsume under the label of 'objective' types of naturalism. Let me try now to clarify the sense of naturalism I deem problematic. I am worried about a slippery path that begins with a Darwinian version of naturalism – even

one that acknowledges anti-reductivism – and ends up claiming that, insofar as human rationality is a natural phenomenon (and it certainly is), as such, it can be *explained away* by Darwinian narratives, so that there are no longer any interesting problems remaining related to reason as seen from the first person point of view.

Here we may think that the anti-reductivist cautionary note – i.e., Rorty's rejection of (5) – takes care of the problem. But this need not be so, *precisely because – to put it in Rortian terms – considerations of cultural politics in a broad sense could be taken to recommend that we abandon certain projects*. In this sense, some passages should be handled with care. Consider, for example:

The subject naturalist expresses his fear of spooks by insisting that our stories about how evolution led from the protozoa to the Renaissance should contain no sudden discontinuities – that it be a story of gradually increasing complexity of physiological structure facilitating increasingly complex behavior.¹⁰

It rests to be argued that this and similar passages are not meant to be dismissive of first person phenomenology. Presumably, a Rortian perspective would advise us to stop using the first person vocabulary to account for human rationality *if* Darwinian narratives were deemed to be more useful – if they were deemed to be better tools to think of ourselves and the way in which we connect to our surroundings. In this paper I will seek to show that they are not always more useful. In other words, I want to speak in favor of the legitimacy of a certain kind of theorizing: one that wonders what is rational for an agent to do, and takes deliberation seriously; accordingly, I am particularly interested in deliberative brands of rational decision theory. To put it differently, I will argue against the view that advocates the dissolution of normativist theories of rational decision making, while endorsing a purely descriptivist account – the type of account according to which all we can do is describe strategies that are rooted in our genes. It is in this precise sense that reason should not be naturalized. Still, I do not mean to say that descriptivist accounts are essentially misguided; I support a pluralistic position on the topic. I will argue that a pluralistic position is, if not required, at least fully consistent with a broad pragmatist perspective, and, quite possibly, with Rorty's particular brand of pragmatism.

2. What is at stake? An example

To see what is at stake, consider rationality in the context of decision making. More precisely, let me discuss here a few standard examples drawn from the game theoretic literature. As it will become clear below, many classical concepts of game theory (such as the concept of Nash equilibrium, or the notion of common knowledge of rationality), have been scrutinized and eventually criticized from two opposite sides of the spectrum. Indeed, classical game theory is thoroughly normative, though not radically first person-orientated. So let me

present here a first person-orientated criticism, on one hand, and, on the other, a naturalized way of accounting for rational behavior.

From a first person perspective, an agent will attempt to assign personal probabilities to the possible behavior of other agents, and will then seek to maximize expected utility; at the limit, a radical first person perspective might even commit us to the view that the presumption of common rationality is incoherent – given that *deliberation*, from the first person point of view, prevents the agent from *predicting* that she will choose rationally, as if looking at herself from the third person point of view.¹¹ Notice, incidentally, that the agents we are referring to can very well be collective agents. On the opposite side of the spectrum, within evolutionary game theory, rationality talk is just ‘super-structural’. Bacteria or genes can play the game too, so to speak, and we don’t want to attribute intentionality to them.

As it happens, choosing where to stand in the aforementioned space of options has important consequences and ramifications at the time of discussing cooperative behavior, and at the time of looking for adequate ways to conceptualize situations in which conflict and cooperation might arise. Let me illustrate this point with the Prisoner’s Dilemma.¹² Two criminals are suspected of robbing a bank, but the sheriff does not have sufficient evidence to convict them for the robbery. So they are arrested and placed in isolated cells, and the sheriff talks to them separately. Each of them can confess to the robbery or remain silent. If they both confess, they will spend 10 years in jail. If one confesses and his accomplice remains silent, the one who confesses will be granted a sentence reduction and get only a 1 year jail sentence, while his accomplice will be charged with 25 years. If they both remain silent, they will both be accused of a minor offense, and will be imprisoned for 3 years. Suppose each prisoner only cares about his own personal welfare, and suppose they both wish to minimize the number of years they remain in prison. Then they reason thus:

If my partner remains silent, it is better for me to confess, because 1 year in jail is better than 3. If my partner does confess, it is also better for me to confess, because 10 years in jail is better than 25. Either case, irrespectively of what my accomplice does, it is better for me to confess than to remain silent”. Both players reason the same way, and they get 10 years each. Of course, they could have obtained a mutually beneficial sentence of 3 years, had they both remained silent.¹³

As is very well-known, the standard analysis of the story in terms of a game theoretic matrix – henceforth, ‘a PD matrix’ – goes as follows. In a PD matrix we have payoffs T , R , P and S for Row, and T^* , R^* , P^* and S^* for Column, as shown below (Figure 1), such that $T > R > P > S$, and $T^* > R^* > P^* > S^*$, with both $R > (T + S)/2$ and $R^* > (T^* + S^*)/2$.¹⁴

Figure 1

		Column	
		C (Cooperate)	D (Defect)
Row	C (Cooperate)	R, R^*	S, T^*
	D (Defect)	T, S^*	P, P^*

As we can see, there are two courses of action open to the agents: they can either cooperate (C) (in the previous story, for example, agents cooperate by remaining silent), or defect (D) (for example, by confessing to the robbery). T stands for ‘temptation’, R is the ‘reward’ for cooperative behavior, P amounts to the ‘punishment’ obtained for defection, and S is the ‘sucker’s payoff’. Moreover, for the particular story told in the previous paragraph, $T = T^* = -1$; $R = R^* = -3$; $P = P^* = -10$; $S = S^* = -25$, thus yielding:

Figure 2

		Column	
		C (Remain silent)	D (Confess)
Row	C (Remain silent)	-3, -3	-25, -1
	D (Confess)	-1, -25	-10, -10

Mainstream game theory usually assumes that players have common knowledge of their options and payoffs, as well as the fact that they are rational. The common knowledge assumption is not necessary, however, to account for the prisoners’ reasoning as told in the previous paragraph; each player has a strictly dominant strategy (D), and hence the game has a unique Nash equilibrium (D, D), while the single Pareto optimal point is (C, C) – hence the dilemma.¹⁵ The analysis is different for iterated versions of the game, but we need not enter into such versions for the moment.

As I have just pointed out, the matrix offered in Figures 1 and 2 are normally interpreted as embodying a *dilemma* because the theory sanctions as rational a Pareto-inferior outcome. However, if we favor a radical first person perspective, the analysis might change; among other things, we might start to question the legitimacy of the use of dominance rules in these and similar cases. There have been several attempts to do so in the literature. For example, consider a PD-like matrix in which the choices of Row are not probabilistically independent of those of Column. Say, Row judges that the probability that Column chooses C conditional on Row’s choosing C is close to 1; likewise, Column judges that the probability that Row chooses C conditional on Column’s choosing C is also close to 1. In this case, Bayesian rationality seems to indicate that both Row and Column should choose the cooperative option, as its expected utility is greater than defection.¹⁶ This conclusion might point to a possible conflict between Bayesian intuitions and equilibria concepts from game theory.

Of course, as we all know, these and similar suggestions have been criticized on the grounds that, in a PD matrix, each agent chooses independently

of what her partner does. Therefore, even if there were probabilistic dependency between the options, there is no causal dependency, so in this case weighting each agent's utilities with conditional probabilities might yield a wrong verdict. So-called *causal decision theory* is born out of these considerations (and related problems such as so-called Newcomb's paradox). The verdict on what to do when probabilistic and causal dependency comes apart is still a debatable matter, and of course I won't attempt to settle it here. My point is just that radical first person perspectives might have something important to say about cooperation conundrums.

The aforementioned perspective on the PD matrix can be further strengthened if we consider the very interesting analysis offered by Frederick Schick on this topic.¹⁷ Schick has argued that agents might disagree on whether they face a true dilemma even when their options and preferences *are* actually as described by the PD matrix; the reason is that they might not think they are playing a game in the first place. To see this clearly we should distinguish between *Plights* and *Dilemmas*. We are dealing with a Prisoner's Plight every time Row and Column's options and preferences are as in Figure 1. To be in a true Prisoner's Dilemma, in addition, they should be *in a game*, namely, they should each see the other as now ready to make a choice from among the available options. But this further condition need not be fulfilled. Consider, for example, propositions A and B, where A is 'Column will do as I do', and B is 'Column will do the opposite'.¹⁸ Then Row might well have the payoff structure of Figure 3:

Figure 3

		Column	
		A	B
Row	C	-3, -3	-25, -1
	D	-10, -10	-1, -25

Row does not know what Column will do, so Row does not know whether A or B is true; moreover, she supposes A and B to be probabilistically independent of her own actions (which free us from the need to deal with the arguments posed by causal decision theorists). Given that Column cannot think of A or B as actions that are up to her, this is no longer a game setting, but a one-person decision problem. As there is no longer a dominant option, it may well be rational for Row to cooperate. Column, in turn, may also organize things in A/B terms, in which case she will also be dealing with a one-person decision problem, in which, again, it may be rational for her to cooperate.¹⁹

Let me go back to our initial motivations – those that led us to talk about game theoretic examples. It should be apparent that the way we interpret things affects the way we are prepared to act, which in turn affects the way we shape

our social world through our behavior. Taking the first person perspective seriously may thus lead us to surprising and fruitful results. We have just passed the pragmatist test.

3. Is there any room for pluralism?

Let us examine now, by way of contrast, a descriptivist and naturalistic account. By way of concreteness, consider an iterated version of the Prisoner's Dilemma. In this scenario we assume that individuals (which also can be genes, fish, bacteria or monkeys) are endowed with strategies for pairwise interactions, where payoffs are interpreted as fitness units; the goal now is the explanation of phenomena at the population level, rather than at the individual level. 'Tit for Tat' is a well-known example of such a strategy: it starts by cooperating, but then it does whatever its partner does. So it is a 'nice' strategy, in the sense that it is never the first to defect, but it's also retaliatory and forgiving: it goes back to cooperation if the other cooperates. Robert Axelrod's computer tournaments in the 1980s concluded that Tit-for-Tat did better than any other rival strategies submitted to the competition.²⁰ This was the starting point of fruitful research in evolutionary, and eventually spatial, game theory.

Compare now a research program in evolutionary game theory to the type of analysis offered by Schick, as presented in the previous section. Schick's analysis was not meant to take care of the iterated version of the Prisoner's Dilemma, of course, but this is immaterial for the present discussion. The interesting point is that, clearly, Schick's results are not applicable to non-human beings. A pluralistic perspective should not have problems with this. Insofar as the stories told by evolutionary game theory are found compelling (let us assume they are), we can just take the two approaches to point at different phenomena.

But die-hard naturalists are typically not pluralists. We can identify here two main possible charges:

(i) The first one is that, insofar as evolutionary game theory is able to explain the two phenomena at the same time, it supersedes traditional accounts of rationality. Recall, moreover, that the explanation is such that it entails that first person considerations are spurious, and hence should not be paid attention to.

(ii) The second one is the accusation of attempting to revive a foundationalist path, in a broad sense, or at least the accusation of relapsing into a conception of the self inherited from modern philosophy, but which is no longer meaningful in the present scientific and political context. Focusing on the phenomenology of the first person is then equated with the assumption that there is something special about us human beings, and hence that we are somehow over and above Darwinian evolution. It is a position suspicious of holding Cartesian, or even theological roots.

The second objection, in particular, might be thought to be a real worry for pragmatist-minded philosophers. I want to argue that such accusations need

not be true, so pragmatist philosophers should not buy them. Let me answer the two worries in order; they turn out to be strongly connected to one another.

4. Explanations and Metaphors

The first worry emphasizes an asymmetry in explanation power. But maybe evolutionary theorists are explaining a bit too much. To illustrate what I mean, consider briefly some examples from the classical essay by Axelrod and Hamilton (1982) – which lies at the turning point of a whole new wave of thinking about game theoretic rationality in a naturalized way.

Hamilton and Axelrod wonder how we can account for the emergence of cooperation in the natural world. One way in which cooperation could have started is by means of genetic kinship. Then the individual has a part interest in the partner's gain (1982, p. 97), because they carry the same genes (so the existence of individuals who carry genes for cooperation turns out to be evolutionary advantageous *for the genes themselves*). Of course, you have to indulge in gene talk to make sense of their point, but let's assume this is fine.

Another way to get cooperation started – so we read – is clustering. A small group of mutant individuals starts using a cooperative strategy such as Tit-for-Tat; if a critical proportion of interactions are carried out among members of the cluster, they will have increased fitness, compared to other members of the population, and so they can thrive, even if the environment is initially populated by non-cooperative individuals. Gradually, the cooperative strategy displaces other strategies from the population.

We can then think of biological applications. Strategies such as Tit-for-Tat are successful because they make sure that individuals do not get away with defection without retaliation; this requires (a) that individuals be able to re-identify partners of interaction, somehow; and (b) that individuals be able to assess whether there is sufficiently high probability of further encounters with a particular partner. Re-identification can take place either by developing specific abilities to recognize different individuals of the same species (as in higher organisms), or by making sure all interactions are with the same player, as in the many examples of biological mutualism and symbioses (in lower species).

The upshot is that transitory pairing conditions are more likely to result in exploitation; moreover, illness or aging of a partner is a sign of declining likelihood of future interactions, which results in an incentive to defect. This can explain why symbiosis tends to revert into parasitism of aging partners. The same reasoning holds at the microbial level. Such mechanisms – so we are told – could also explain why some cancers which grow faster in the presence of other illnesses, “competing for transmission before death results” (1982, p. 104). And they could even explain Down's syndrome: homologous chromosomes compete to get into the egg nucleus, and somehow they hurry to do so (abandoning cooperative behavior) when hosted by an aging mother (1982, p. 105).

Of course, here ‘cooperation’ does not really mean cooperation. This is all metaphoric talk, isn't it? We are no longer talking about real cooperation or defection; bacteria, fish or chromosomes just act *as if* they were endowed with

reflection capabilities and will power, and were playing a game, which of course they are not. It could be pointed out that the language of rationality works here as a heuristic device, until it is no longer necessary; we climb and then push the ladder away, as it were. Perhaps. Still, metaphors are not always innocent. In this case it is precisely the metaphoric language that convinces us that we are really explaining. How so? We start by noticing the occurrence of certain phenomenon, at the population level (say, symbiosis turned into parasitic behavior). The observed behavior is assumed to have evolved so as to be coded in the genetic makeup of the corresponding organisms, and it happens to simulate a competition between Tit-for-Tatish vs. exploitative sorts of strategies in a population. But what is really a Tit-for-Tat strategy, in the context of lower organisms? It is just a matrix. Why is that matrix read as the usual game theoretic iterated PD matrix? Let us set aside the fact that theories are under-determined by observed phenomena, and suppose we hit on a particular mathematical structure which really works (whatever that means). I submit that we take it to *explain* because we are guided by our first person intuitions. Mathematical structures are thus rendered meaningful when interpreted under the light of first person metaphors. And naturally so: understanding *is* a first person phenomenon.

This might well be the case in other disciplines as well, to a certain extent. And I'm fine with this. But then we should better be careful at the next step, to wit, at the claim that, when attempting reflections on *human* behavior, rationality talk is always bound to be metaphoric as well. It might not make a lot of sense to end up saying that we get the illusion of understanding by smuggling first person attitudes to... first person attitudes.²¹

My point here is that we should better be cautious at the time of endorsing perspectives that are explicitly dismissive of first person reflections.

5. Pragmatism without (a certain kind of) naturalism

Let me address now the second (and most important) worry: first person vocabularies commit us to foundationalism, or at any rate to the exceptionality of the human self. I want to argue that this need not be the case. In particular, the dichotomy between Darwinian naturalism and foundationalism is just ill conceived.

To see this clearly, I suggest that we turn our attention to the work of Isaac Levi. Levi has shown us how to build a thoroughly pragmatist epistemology (based on several Peircean insights) in which we are invited to dig even deeper into our first person commitments. He suggests emphatically that any fruitful epistemological program should be built on the so-called Belief-Doubt model (as opposed to the Doubt-Belief Model, of Cartesian roots).²² There's no explicit argument in favor of this particular point: we are just encouraged to give the benefit of doubt to a promising research program that still remains largely unexplored, whereas the competing Doubt-Belief approach has turned into a degenerate research program, in Lackatosian terms.

The basic idea is that the set of full beliefs of an agent at a particular time t is in no need of justification, from the first person point of view: rather, justification applies to *changes* of epistemic corpora. From the agent's point of view, all her full beliefs are true, but revisable. So it is that Levi defines himself as an infallibilist, but at the same time as a corrigibilist. Full beliefs are understood as *epistemic commitments*, and such commitments constitute the agent's "standard for serious possibility," the golden standard that determines what is and what is not possible for the agent at a particular moment. Not every logical possibility is a serious possibility, and if the agent fully believes that p at a time t , then the negation of p is just not seriously possible – the agent does not seriously entertain the thought that it could be false at t , she finds herself taking p for granted; that's the infallibilist part. However, we can change our mind in the future and come to acquire a new standard; here comes the corrigibility claim. And *this* is precisely the point in which justification comes into play – and not before.²³

I myself am ready to concede a bit more space to justification, without falling into what Levi calls 'pedigree epistemology'. Let me state very briefly my own position here – what we might call a *moderate Peircean stance* – without entering into the details (as that would lead us beyond the scope of this paper). Those beliefs we already have and about which we feel, for the time being, certain are in general not subjected to justification qualms (because we already have them!) – except when we come to consider the possibility of revising. In other words, the concept of justification can apply to antecedent beliefs, but only under certain conditions, namely, *when we think of ourselves as potentially involved in a revision process* concerning the beliefs under consideration. More generally, an antecedent belief [by S] acquires the possibility to be justified only when seen as a potential candidate for acceptance/rejection [by some agent S^* , who may or may not coincide with S]. As a belief becomes such a candidate only upon reflection, we obtain that *reflection is the condition of possibility of justification acquisition*; so the possibility of being justified is not pre-existent: it is created under particular circumstances. Actually, the relevant concept here is that of reflection with a specific goal in mind – namely, with the goal of a potential belief change. We can call it 'J-Reflection'. As opposed to a standard reflective stance, J-reflection can be said to assume a particular deliberative perspective on our doxastic state, rather than a merely contemplative, or judgmental, perspective. Thus, *if* the question for justification comes up – which is actually like saying: if we adopt a deliberative perspective towards a particular set of beliefs, or if we conceive of a third party agent as potentially engaged in such a deliberative perspective – then we are reluctant to talk about knowledge unless the belief is found to be justified. That is, I take it, the grain of truth present in the standard conception of knowledge by mainstream epistemology.

In this section I have presented a deeply anti-foundationalist philosophical view, which at the same time strongly vindicates the first person perspective.²⁴ This completes my efforts to deactivate objections (i) and (ii) from section 4. Incidentally, it should be clear that a defense of the first person

perspective need not mean a defense of the perspective of an isolated individual. Actually, given Levi's conception of individuals as constituted by a multiplicity of unresolved conflicts and values,²⁵ the transition between the perspective of a single individual and that of a group is as smooth as it can be. The upshot is that individual decision theory naturally resolves into social choice theory.

6. Conclusions

The type of pragmatism that I sought to vindicate here is one that legitimates the first person perspective of agents who act and decide – perhaps a *plural* first person, a *we*. It also retains a pluralistic stance towards third person explanations, although it does not forget that our best theories might have evolved out of first person metaphors. Hence this position entails a rejection of what we might call '*one-dimensional Darwinian narratives*'. Moreover, we have seen that an emphasis on the use of first person vocabularies in the context of theories of rational choice need not mean that we should worry about the ontological status of the self, or about the status of intentional action in general. In light of this, it seems that Rorty's pragmatism can very well accommodate the rejection of one-dimensional Darwinism.

Let me put it slightly differently. Why should we embrace pluralism? One forceful reason is that (third person) explanations are important, as long as we remember that we don't always seek to explain. And this is precisely the point at which our second and first objections get tied together. Sometimes we are just not in the business of explaining or predicting; sometimes we want to know what to do – and we may want an answer to this question while being extremely aware of the fact that there are no ultimate foundations on which such an answer will rely. We can know a lot about what ants, and cappuccino monkeys, and even average human beings do, and still not think we have an answer. And we need a discipline that takes that question on board explicitly. By doing so, we end up better suited to develop a cautious, healthy critical attitude toward explanatory theories. While naturalism in its crudest form invites us to take models at face value, sound reflection on first person rationality should be an antidote for over-confidence, and, in short – as Rorty would have put it – for representationalism.

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NOTES

1. See for example (Rorty 1991b, 109). The present classification of different possible senses of naturalism and Rorty's attitudes towards them follows closely (Tanesini 2010). For reasons that will be apparent soon, however, unlike Tanesini, I do not believe it is a good idea to credit Rorty with a commitment in "the existence of a sharp boundary between the mind and what is exterior to it," where "[t]he mind thus becomes the locus of a normativity that is clearly demarcated from the a-normative world of physical nature with which it causally interacts."

2. Rorty 1987, 279; reprinted in Rorty 1991a, 114.

3. Rorty 1999, 59.

4. Rorty 2010, 57. This paper appeared in press for the first time in Spanish, in 2006, in the Mexican journal *Dianoia*.

5. Price 2004.

6. Ramberg 2004. Here Ramberg proposes a re-elaboration of Rorty's 'interpretivist strategy'. Although he is not concerned with decision theory or its close allies (rather, he focuses on core problems in mainstream philosophy of mind and language, such as the mind-body problem) many of Ramberg's observations apply to my paper as well. In particular, if we take Ramberg's re-elaboration of Rorty's account of rationality to reflect Rorty's own position, then there are good grounds to say that the main question I ask in this paper should be answered affirmatively, i.e., there are grounds to say that Rorty can secure the type of defense of the phenomenology of the first person I am interested in. We read, for instance, "For Rorty, no vocabulary, or division of vocabularies, is philosophically special or privileged. There is an important truth to this, but I think its significance may be slanted by Rorty's fear of reason. The truth is that there is no other measure for critical evaluation of what we do or want than other things we do or want; there is no critique or justification that transcends the contingencies of need and interest, contingencies that give our vocabularies their shape. Recognizing this, however, does not force us to give up the idea that philosophy has a constitutive relation to the norms of reason. To insist on this relation, in the context of the interpretivist strategy, is just another way of stressing the point that philosophy is reflection on *praxis*" (2004, 47). The present work can be seen as an attempt to widen some of Ramberg's worries to the decision theoretic realm.

7. Rorty 2010.

8. Rorty 2010, 59.

9. Price 2004.

10. Rorty 2010, 61.

11. This is the view Isaac Levi summarizes with the slogan 'deliberation crowds out prediction'. See Levi 1992, ch. 2.

12. See for example Kuhn 2009; for a very detailed historical account of the Prisoner's Dilemma, see Poundstone 1992.

13. Ríos and Cresto 2015.

14. Rapoport and Chammah 1965; Axelrod 1984.

15. Interestingly, some authors argued that in order for the dilemma to arise in the first place we need to *reject* the assumption that players have common knowledge of rationality; see Davis 1977; 1985. This is not, however, the orthodox view on the subject.

16. This is for instance the position adopted in Levi 1997, ch. 5.

17. In Schick 2003.

18. Schick 2003, 22.

19. See Ríos and Cresto 2015.

20. Axelrod 1984.

21. I can't resist quoting Sidney Morgenbesser here: "Let me see if I understand your thesis," he once said to the psychologist B. F. Skinner. "You think we shouldn't

anthropomorphize *people*?” (James Ryerson, “Sidewalk Socrates”, *The New York Times Magazine*, December 26, 2004). *Mutatis Mutandis*, the comment applies to the present discussion as well.

22. Levi 1980.

23. Levi 1980; 1997. On this see also Bilgrami 2000. We do not need justification for those beliefs we are really certain about, our *full* beliefs. If someone comes to us and demands such justification we might well be ready to say something in response to that, just out of politeness, but that might well be the pantomime of a justification, because there is no real doubt there, no real perplexity, as far as we are concerned.

24. Notice that Levi’s perspective is also thoroughly normative. Indeed, Levi contends that we all seek to live up to our commitments, even when we know our *performance* will inevitably fall short of this ambition (Levi 1980). Notice, moreover, that Levi’s position does not embrace coherentism either; in this sense Levi thinks that Quine was still caught up in old fashioned categories.

25. See Levi 1985.

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