May 2023

Reasoning in Transitions: A Critique for Social Values

Shawn Robert Stickney Mr.
University of Windsor, sticknes@uwindsor.ca

Reasoning in Transitions: A Critique for Social Values

By

Shawn Stickney

A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Philosophy
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2023

Reasoning in Transitions: A Critique for Social Values

by

Shawn Stickney

APPROVED BY:

P. Rose
Department of Philosophy

R. Neculau, Advisor
Department of Philosophy

April 10, 2023

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices. Furthermore, to the extent that I have included copyrighted material that surpasses the bounds of fair dealing within the meaning of the Canada Copyright Act, I certify that I have obtained a written permission from the copyright owner(s) to include such material(s) in my thesis and have included copies of such copyright clearances to my appendix.

I declare that this is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my thesis committee and the Graduate Studies office, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

ABSTRACT

I consider two variants of immanent critique ala Jaeggi and Putnam which both seem wedded to forms of metaphysical realism, and I intend to show how Rorty's denial of the 'functional' as a category weighs against Jaeggi's account of the role of "functional-ethical" norms in the analysis of real crisis. I argue that Jaeggi's 'immanent' criticism relies on untenable metaphysical notions of progress and that, despite her argument that immanent critique draws its own standards from the object of criticism, she ends up sneaking strong foundations into her critique through her notion of crisis. Charles Taylor provides a non-foundational model of critique which avoids relativism and provides an effective tool for argumentation. I argue that his hermeneutical model integrates elements of both internal and immanent modes of critique and therefore provides an advance over both; it is also free from the metaphysical presuppositions and corresponding deficiencies plaguing Jaeggi and Putnam's models of immanent critique. Ultimately, the idea of an error-reducing transitions does not rely on untenable presuppositions and is far more plausible; Taylor's straightforward examples make his method less abstract and more practical in implementation than Jaeggi's crisis-induced transformation involving historical learning processes with its blend of Hegelianism and pragmatism.

DEDICATION

In honor of my mother, Pauline Stickney, you will always be remembered for your compassion, strength, and courage in adversity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have not travelled this road alone and without the support of many friends, family, and peers, to numerous to list here, this work would never have been completed. Chiefly I would like to thank the Ontario Graduate Scholarship for generously supporting my research and the hours spent writing on this project. I would be amiss to not thank Professor Radu Neculau whose fierce criticisms of my work are only matched by his fierce passion for philosophy and a love for his students. I would like to thank Dr. Philip Rose for providing me with an indispensable knowledge of early modern philosophy, metaphysics, and pragmatism through his lectures and the lively philosophical discussions which he cultivates everywhere he goes. I would also like to thank Professor Christopher Tindale for the early assistance he provided as a referee in the grant application process. Professor Hans Hansen was extremely helpful and encouraging during the early stages of this difficult process so I would like to thank him as well and his lectures on Analytic philosophy and Aristotle's *organon* provided much food for thought. Professors Sullivan-Clarke, Macpherson, and Guetter all contributed to keeping me fed and healthy by providing me with work over the course of many semesters, not to mention all that I have learned from attending their lectures. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Professor Deborah Cooke, without her insightful lecture on the introduction to Western philosophy and her very honest and thorough comments upon my work, I doubt I should have made it this far in philosophy. Last, but not least, I am eternally indebted to my family for their continuous support of all my wild dreams and even crazier ambitions. You provide my sole reason for struggling on through the sometimes muddy and dark recesses of philosophy: my mother, Pauline Stickney, who will always be greatly loved and missed; my father, Bruce Stickney, who has been extremely patient and helpful with suggestions through many rambling conversations; and my brother, Ryan Stickney, your dream to teach others is a very noble dream indeed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In a stirring reflection, Nietzsche writes, "What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms — in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are…."[1] Diverse philosophers coming from hermeneutics, pragmatism, and post-structuralism have agreed with Nietzsche's 'perspectivism'.[2] Thus Sellars, Quine, Davidson, Rorty, and other pragmatists in their critique of representationalism and epistemic foundationalism all attempt to replace the notion of 'objectivity' with some form of communal agreement (or 'solidarity').[3] When there are only interpretations, and no hard 'facts' to buttress theories and value judgements, then it would seem like anything goes in morals and in science. As Rorty states, "When philosophy has finished showing that everything is a social construct, it does not help us decide which social constructs to retain and which to

---

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, "*From* On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann, 42-7. (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 46

[2] In *Beyond Good & Evil,* Nietzsche writes, "Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir; also that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constituted the real germ of life from which the whole plant had grown." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, (New York: Vintage Books a Division of Random House, 1989) §6, 13. In other remarks throughout *BGE*, Nietzsche argues that modern morality (§ 32), philosophy (§ 17; 20), and even physics (§ 22) are just so many perspectival interpretations of the world. Elsewhere Nietzsche says, "Against positivism, which halts at phenomena— 'There are only *facts*'—I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact 'in itself': perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing." "Belief in the 'Ego.' The Subject" in *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, (New York: Vintage Books A Division of Random House, 1967), §481 (*1883-1888*), 267. For an interesting treatment of Nietzsche's 'perspectivism' in its relation to hermeneutics see Paul Katsafanas, "7. Hermeneutics: Nietzschean Approaches." In *The Cambridge Companion to Hermeneutics,* edited by Michael N. Forster and Kristin Gjesdal, 158-83, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[3] For a good treatment of this idea see Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or objectivity," in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical papers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

replace."[4] So, a form of critique is needed that, in R.J Bernstein's words, goes "beyond objectivism and relativism."[5]

There are three recognized approaches to critique within critical theory: *external*, *internal*, or *immanent*. These approaches to critique will all be explained in detail later in the text. 'External critique' relies upon transcendent principles to evaluate the truth of beliefs regarding states of affairs and the validity of claims about the rightness of norms, practices, and institutions. If pragmatists are right about the social conditions of knowledge and justification, then external critique is no longer available to contemporary philosophy and social theory. So, the approach to critique will have to come from the remaining alternatives which means accepting either a form of 'internal' or 'immanent' critique.

Pragmatists understand critique in two main ways: (1) In terms of a *functionalist* analysis of what is good and what is better, what to keep and what to jettison[6]; or (2) a hermeneutic approach proposed by Rorty that is closer to an internal critique.[7] Pragmatists like Putnam argue that some version of functionalism[8], an adherence to

---

[4] "Feminism, Ideology, and Deconstruction: A Pragmatist View," Hypatia 8:2, 96

[5] R.J. Bernstein, *Beyond objectivism and relativism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983

[6] Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, Harvard University Press, 1990

[7] Rorty, "Hilary Putnam and the Relativist Menace," *Truth and Progress*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 43-62

[8] I should be clear that I am not referring to 'functionalism' as a theory within philosophy of mind, which Putnam also advocates for, and I realize this may be a source of confusion for some readers who are more familiar with Putnam's more technical arguments in *Representation and Reality* which compare mental states to computer programs. 'Functionalism' has another accepted usage as describing an epistemological theory regarding the adoption of beliefs which are the most functional beliefs to adopt or adopting beliefs which prove to be the most successful for a given purpose. Functionalism copes well with scientific theories where a community of scientists can agree upon which experimental results entail a good theory. However, functionalism fails to arbitrate between moral stances, because a good scientific theory can only deal with certain first-order problems, like a famine, but not more nuanced, second order problems like the fair distribution of societal resources. This is because functionalism relies upon pre-

whatever belief provides the most benefit, will prevent the slide into relativism and provide a means to distinguish between good and bad, or better and worse, interpretations. Which is to say, for Putnam, "various representations, various languages, various theories, are equally good in certain contexts […and] devices which are functionally equivalent in the context of inquiry for which they are designed are equivalent in every way that we have a 'handle on'."[9] Putnam's context-dependent view of interpretation means we are reliant upon scientific expertise and consensus to determine the criteria of value for interpretations. Thus, functionalist analysis seems to be a form of immanent critique and I argue that Putnam's internal realism does not escape Putnam's own charges against metaphysical realism.

The social philosopher Rahel Jaeggi, like Putnam, argues in favor of a version of immanent critique with its own subtle difference.[10] Jaeggi distinguishes immanent from internal and external kinds of critique and argues that it will be more successful at dealing with forms of life given their *dynamic* character.[11] According to Jaeggi, the appeal of immanent criticism lies in its ability to merge the advantages of both the external and internal modes without accruing any of their disadvantages.[12]

existing moral notions like just distribution or individual merit; these cannot be justified if the only available criterion is functional fit.

[9] Putnam, "A Defense of Internal Realism," *Realism with a Human Face*, Harvard University Press, 1998, 30-42

[10]According to Jaeggi, Immanent critique originates from Hegel. Rahel Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of* life, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018, 174; Sabia confirms this lineage for immanent critique by tracing it to Hegel and Herder, but he cites Aristotle's "endoxic method" as a possible precursor which involves seeking truth by pitting opposing opinions against one another. See "Defending Immanent Critique," 685 and fn. 1

[11] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 174

[12] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 174

Alternatively, Rorty tries hard to come up with a way to avoid relativism hermeneutically by means of a form of temporal reflectivity that allows us to put some distance between our present mode of valuation and the ones of the cultural tradition; such reflectivity may appeal to the utopia of an emancipated future. However, he ultimately fails in his attempt at going beyond objectivism and relativism. His own conception of critique is closer to an internal critique, in which we examine the consistency of our moral norms without, however, justifying them.

Although Rorty's version of internal critique fails to be robust enough to justify our moral norms, Rorty succeeds in denying as a fiction the category of 'objective,' or 'functional' matters of fact. I intend to show how this denial of 'objectivity' weighs against Jaeggi's account of the role of "functional-ethical" norms in analyzing crises. Additionally, I argue that Jaeggi's 'immanent' criticism relies on untenable metaphysical notions of "progress"; despite her argument that immanent critique draws its own standards from the object of criticism, she ends up sneaking strong foundations into her critique through her notion of *crisis*. Lastly, Jaeggi's concept of crisis throws all the available resources for identifying and thus resolving these 'second order' problems *qua* crises into disarray, so her method of critique is left without the critical power required to ferment a transformative process.

The shortcomings of Putnam and Rorty's functionalist and internal-hermeneutic critiques add urgency to the search to find criteria of normative distinction that are neither reducible to functional adequacy nor based on the historically given and culture-relative goods and values of a contingent human community. The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor proposes an excellent candidate for an alternative to the critiques I have

mentioned through his idea of "reasoning in transitions,"[13] a non-foundationalist method for deciding between contingent norms and values that does not appeal to external criteria. I argue that his hermeneutical model integrates elements of both internal and immanent modes of critique and therefore provides some advances over both; it is free from the metaphysical presuppositions and corresponding deficiencies plaguing Jaeggi and Putnam's models of immanent critique. Ultimately, the idea of error-reducing transition does not rely on untenable presuppositions; and is far more plausible as it is supported by an alternative account of practical rationality that relies upon explanation. Taylor's straightforward examples make his method less abstract and more practical as a tool for argumentation than Jaeggi's crisis-induced transformation involving historical learning processes with its blend of Hegelianism and pragmatism.

CHAPTER 1: EXTERNAL CRITIQUE

In what follows I intend to describe what is meant by 'external critique' in critical social theory and to problematize its normative justification by showing that the appeal to 'outside,' *universal* values seems to assume moral realism in a question begging way. Universal values are increasingly contested; historical appeals to what is unchanging in human nature or to notions of the "greater good" may disguise interest-relative motivations under the pretense of a more wholesome universalism. At any rate, since the days of Homer it has been prudent to question Greeks bearing gifts and to peek inside all Trojan horses; and since the time of Socrates, it has never hurt to interrogate the essence

[13] Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," *Philosophical Arguments*, Harvard University Press, 34-60

of our knowledge about the values we appeal to and our reasons for accepting them out of hand.

External critique appeals to principles located "outside" the object of criticism.[14] Jaeggi provides two examples of external critique: (1) practices wherein an agent judges foreign customs according to the criteria of their own community; and (2) cases in which universal standards are supposed to be generally applicable.[15] To further flesh this out, Kauppinen provides us with a distinction between *ethnocentric* and *universalist* kinds of external critique where the former merely takes existing values without attributing much significance to these and the latter adds to these the pretense that the reasons have been granted an authoritative status.[16] Another way of understanding external critique is that the critic is not judging a situation with the norms that are pregiven with it but rather assuming a vantage point beyond and not relative to a particular context.[17] Seen in this light it is easy to agree with Jaeggi who argues that external kinds of criticism are plagued by attempts to occupy an impossible "view from nowhere."[18] The search for some ahistorical normative criteria that can be used to resolve all ethical dilemmas once and for all or attempts to reach some final point against which all cultural and social formations can be judged must be given up as a search for metaphysical comfort.

---

[14] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life,* 177

[15] Additionally, we might add any justifications from authority which are taken to count as valid simply because the source is deemed as authoritative enough i.e., the pronouncements of God; and Taylor introduces the idea of anthropological or 'human constants' which implicitly underlie all human activities. See Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," and Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 177-8

[16] Kauppinen, "Reason, Recognition, and Internal Critique," 480-1

[17] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 177

[18] Additionally, the impossibility of occupying an "Archimedean point" or a "God's eye view" is a perennial theme of Pragmatists and Jaeggi's ends up drawing upon many of their insights in formulating her critique. Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 177; To see Nagel's use of this phrase and more on this concept see his *The View from Nowhere*, Oxford University Press, 1986

Borrowing a distinction from Peirce[19], one could argue that ethnocentric and universalist external critiques block inquiry by at once removing any doubt about their validity through either the method of tenacity or authority rather than allowing for a more experimental and fallibilistic attitude towards one's chosen norms. In addition, I agree with Kauppinen when he argues that there has been zero success finding a universal foundation for morality and that value pluralism means any universal norm would end up being so abstract that it would fail to motivate action or social practices in any significant way.[20]

CHAPTER 2: INTERNAL CRITIQUE

Jaeggi states that internal critique is paradigmatic in that it embodies what many consider to be the proper methodology for criticism.[21] Internal and immanent criticism both appeal to standards that operate "within[22]" a particular ensemble of practices and so can be said to be intrinsic to them.[23] Jaeggi describes how internal criticism focuses on cases where there is an "inconsistency" or "contradiction" between what is asserted as being the case and the *de facto* shape that matters have assumed.[24] For the internal critic agreement over what should be the case is already established so the dysfunctionality is illustrated by highlighting the dissonance between the normative ideal and reality.[25] Therefore, the

---

[19] Peirce, *The Fixation of Belief, Popular Science Monthly* 12 (November 1877), 7-8
[20] Kauppinen, "Reason, Recognition, and Internal Critique," 481
[21] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 179
[22] Though Jaeggi cautions us that, relative to the "social place" occupied by a critic, different approaches for distinguishing the "inside" and "outside" of an object of criticism may be taken since demarcating such boundaries is often subject to contention. Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 178
[23] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 177
[24] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life,* 180
[25] Agreement over what should be the case is already established because critic shares in the same "social space" and "space of reasons" as the community or practice they are criticizing. I will discuss more on this "internal and biased" social space of the internal critic below. Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 180

process of internal criticism starts by identifying the ideals associated with a practice and showing that between the practice and the ideal exists a contradiction.

Taking heed of the contradiction allows the deficient practice to be criticized as lacking. Therefore, internal criticism primarily aims at restoring something to a practice which realigns it with a norm that is already bearing on that practice.[26] The most hopeful outcome of such criticism is a resolution of the contradiction between the "deviating practices" and the corresponding norms so that the practices now reflect more of what, for the most part, the situations or communities were already presumed to contain; the criticism provides the opportunity for a self-realization or "self-clarification."[27]

The standards of critique are described as 'internal' to the object, say a practice, because they are either the self-avowed ideals of those involved in a practice, or a practice is seen as instantiating a particular set of ideals. In contrast, external criticism tries to substitute other norms in place of the ones currently in circulation on the basis that these norms have universal applicability; for example, an external critic may be aiming to bring one community's actions into line with another, sufficiently different, community's ideals.[28]

Jaeggi argues that the judgment of a keen critic is required because it may not always be clear, for example, whether an act of violence constitutes warfare or whether a practice

---

[26] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 180-1

[27] A typical example of this critique is provided by Jaeggi: the chief executive of a large conglomerate who voices promises to bring more women into the workplace but refuses to fairly consider female applicants; in this case, we can infer that a norm such as female empowerment or sexual equality is implied by the CEO's promises but between this norm and the practice, which is not reflective of the norm, there exists a contradiction. Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life*, 179 for examples of internal critique and 180-1 for discussion.

[28] This sufficiently different community could also take the shape of the same community in a utopian future or perhaps a more idyllic point in its past. Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 181

counts as discriminatory.[29] If a context remains unclear as to whether and which rules apply to it, then it will also remain unclear whether a contradiction exists. "Internal criticism is thus not least *a procedure of pointing out connections*," says Jaeggi.[30] Internal critics simply "*bring the norms to bear*" without questioning their validity as norms and as such Jaeggi considers it a "'weak normative' procedure."[31]

CHAPTER 3: BENEFITS AND LIMITS OF INTERNAL CRITIQUE

Being part of a community elevates its members to a position of social trust which can add to the motivational force of adhering to the ideals of others because they share a particular vision or participate in the same form of life.[32] Therefore, Jaeggi, following Michael Walzer[33], argues for the efficacy of a "connected critic" who has a stake in the interests of their community and whose criticisms can be seen as constructive efforts towards the same shared goals and values.[34] Another practical advantage that arises from having a critic who shares in the same social life and setting of their object of critique is that their interpretations of existing practices and norms can be more exacting; since

[29] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life*, 182

[30] Jaeggi's point here is that the critic must discern which concepts are applicable to a practice and occasionally explicate norms which are only implied by the practice; being able to discriminate between instances of discrimination and something more benign is a case of pointing out such connections. Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 182

[31] It is a "weak normative" procedure because of its conventionalism and structural conservatism (though not necessarily political conservatism) which stops short of questioning the applicability of the norms themselves with the consequence that this form of critique is wedded to maintaining the *status quo*. Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 182

[32] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 183

[33] Walzer states, "The project of modeling or idealizing an existing morality does depend, however, upon some prior acknowledgment of the value of that morality. Perhaps its value is simply this: that there is no other starting point for moral speculation. We have to start from where we are. Where we are, however, is always *someplace of value*, else we would never have settled there." *Interpretation and Social Criticism*, 17

[34] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life,* 183

they're absorbed in the same daily way of life, it is less likely their critique will become lost in abstractions.[35]

Alongside the practical advantages just described is the *systematic* advantage of appealing to a norm that is already accepted as valid by the community. If the norm has already met with widespread approval and is a shared belief within the community, then in theory anyone within the community could put forward the same criticism without the need arising to question the epistemic authority of any particular standpoint.[36] If the community, through its practices, illustrates its acceptance of an ideal, then the critic does not need to appeal to anything "utopian" or external to further justify the norm.[37]

However, the wellspring from which internal criticism draws its greatest strength is also its greatest weakness: Since it is always appealing to norms posited alongside existing reality, it therefore never seeks to go further than restoring the *status quo*; it also relies on a uniform picture of society that ignores inner disagreements and tensions.[38] Jaeggi suggests internal criticism may not be *critical* enough since both the descriptions of the state of the world and the normative prescriptions issuing from these descriptions are both tethered to the way things currently stand.[39] Jaeggi suggests that the standpoint of the internal critic who is involved within their community may not allow them to see the flaws and fissures in the current order of things since they run the risk of being too attached to the present state of affairs.[40] In addition, there is rarely a case of internal

---

[35] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 183
[36] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 184
[37] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 184
[38] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 184
[39] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 184
[40] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life,* 184

criticism where the norm, the practice, and the contradiction are so self-evident that no work remains for the critic (for example a CEO who contradicts his own public stance on sexual equality through misogynistic hiring practices).[41] Rather, the internal critic must lay the groundwork through their own contextual interpretations of a situation.[42]

Interpretations are always up for debate, and this can create unforeseen challenges for a critic who must not only draw a connection between a certain norm and a practice, which may not be readily apparent, but must also in many cases provide an articulation of norms which are not always explicitly laid out. Furthermore, the meaning of practices may need elaboration since it is not always clear how to classify sets of actions or behaviors outside of a given context; what passes for fair trade in one setting may be viewed as exploitation in another.[43]

Jaeggi argues against the efficacy of internal criticism by citing that, even if it were somehow true that a community was in a state of widespread agreement on most issues, interpretations of contradictions in the community would exist in competition with one another.[44] I shall develop this as an objection to Jaeggi's immanent critique along pragmatist lines by showing how her reliance upon theory and interpretation to analyze a crisis ultimately amounts to a clash between interpretations and not, as she envisions, a clash between many subjective interpretations and a "functional," "objective" (or empirically measurable) portion of the crisis which resists certain interpretations and confirms the *necessary* solution to a problem as it were.

---

[41] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 185; See also p. 13, fn. 25 above and *Ibid.*, 179
[42] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 184-5
[43] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 185
[44] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 185

Often groups who seem to be operating with different ideals altogether simply have varying interpretations of a single norm.[45] Jaeggi argues that the problem of justifying a community's chosen norms resurfaces because of the need to choose between competing interpretations.[46] Further complicating this picture is the fact that there is rarely *one* norm being appealed to by a community, but *several* that may be in conflict.[47] Internal criticism also fails to elucidate cases in which a norm may be outmoded, or has not kept pace with changes in culture and society; it has no mechanisms for knowing when it might be necessary to abandon ideals, since it primarily aims at their restoration.[48]

Jaeggi argues that internal criticism suffers from "*normative conventionalism*" because a contradiction can only be found where there are contradictory norms adhered to in the first place.[49] Jaeggi states, "internal criticism can criticize a bad practice only where this comes into contradiction with norms that already exist. As a result, internal criticism expressly contents itself with a conventionalist conception of norms according to which norms are valid because they apply as a matter of fact, whether as a matter of convention or of tradition."[50] A society could exist which either has no, or very perverse, ideals and these could not be scrutinized with the tools available to internal critique.[51] Jaeggi states, "[t]he counterpart of this normative conventionalism is a *structural conservatism* [….] it is *not dynamic* and *not transformative*," and, as a result, internal

[45] Jaeggi provides the example of the indefinite number of denominations and interpretations which can circle around a single text like the Bible. Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life*, 185
[46] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 186
[47] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 185
[48] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 186
[49] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*,187
[50] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*,187
[51] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*,187

critique may not be able to map actual changes in the social fabric of a community therefore it remains "a limited model."[52]

Another issue that plagues internal criticism is the problematic division between internal and external—a boundary which may be difficult to distinguish in a society that espouses a *plurality* of values; for example, practical questions arise for a critic as to where to place the boundary between internal and external when viewing divisions such as those witnessed between Christian fundamentalists and the LGBTQ community during the 1980s AIDS crisis; because the critic could either assume a standpoint based on the espoused positions of each group or assume a shared common standpoint and, depending on which standpoint is chosen, the critique may end up assuming a very different form. In cases like these, it is "the frame of reference of a form of life" which is hard to account for since it can be widened to the point where all the distinctive value orientations in a community become blurred.[53]

Jaeggi argues internal critique fails on "sociological grounds" since the picture of "static social units" assumed by this model of critique is inaccurate and does not take account of influences between groups or track societal changes.[54] Furthermore, Jaeggi argues that internal criticism is not adequate for critiquing forms of life because it becomes trapped within its frame of reference—both falling into relativism and failing to allow the self-understanding that is gained to be questioned for its cogency.[55] Another flaw with internal criticism is its inability to grapple the systemic reasons for why a norm

[52] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life,* 187
[53] See also p. 12, fn. 19 above; Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 188
[54] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 188
[55] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 189

might have been superseded since it always maintains the norms involved in a contradiction by adjusting the corresponding practices; unfortunately, this only succeeds at sealing *forms of life* into little "black boxes" so that they cannot be interrogated and debated.[56] Internal criticism precludes a deep analysis of whether the constitutive norms of a social formation may be contradictory as it focuses exclusively on whether the explicit values of a community are embodied in its practices, as a result, internal criticism has no mechanism for determining whether the norms underlying a set of practices are congruent with one another.[57] Therefore, any systematic reasons for the recurrent crises which make forms of life uninhabitable can never be gleaned by internal critique.[58]

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY – RORTY'S HERMENEUTIC INTERNAL CRITIQUE

In describing the genesis of pragmatism, Peirce writes, "Suffice it to say once more that pragmatism is, in itself, no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things. It is merely a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words and of abstract concepts. All pragmatists of whatsoever stripe will cordially assent to that statement."[59] To this end, Peirce contributed his 'pragmatic maxim,' a method of ascertaining the meaning of concepts, which states: "consider what effects which might conceivably have practical bearings we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception

[56] See Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, X-6 for discussion of forms of life becoming inaccessible "black boxes" because of the sort of ethical abstinence defended by Habermas and others. i.e., forms of life become uncriticizable and mysterious phenomena under this viewpoint.
[57] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life*, 201
[58] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life,* 189
[59] Charles S. Peirce "Historical Affinities and Genesis," in *Pragmatism: The Classical Writings*, ed. H.S. Thayer, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982), 57

of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."[60] The aim of pragmatism, as stated by Peirce, was to clear up conceptual muddles and resolve semantic quibbling between philosophers.[61]

The hope animating this aim was that if both parties to a dispute were grasping the same meaning for a given concept, then they would not be at "cross-purposes" or merely battling with words.[62] Peirce provides a great example of how the pragmatic maxim might be applied to a concept in the case of "lithium."[63] The practical application of this maxim to 'lithium' with the aim of ending tiresome and unfruitful verbal disputes in the natural sciences is easy to see. However, when the classical pragmatists move from focusing on more concrete examples like those in the chemistry textbooks to concepts like "truth" and "Reality" the fissures and cracks within the movement quickly become apparent. Despite Peirce's attestations that pragmatism is "no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things," pragmatists found themselves embroiled in discussions of the pragmatic meaning and the conception of truth; Peirce's own realism arguably pushed him into adopting the sort of metaphysics the movement had aimed to avoid.

In *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty[64] describes how in the early formation of pragmatism the chief target of the movement was the metaphysician or the Platonist. So,

---

[60]Charles S. Peirce, "How To Make Our Ideas Clear," in *Pragmatism: The Classical Writings*, ed. H.S. Thayer, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982), 88

[61] Charles S. Peirce, "The Architectonic Construction of Pragmatism," in *Pragmatism: The Classical Writings*, ed. H.S. Thayer, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982), 51

[62] Charles S. Peirce, "The Architectonic,"51

[63] Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers, Vol. 2: Elements of Logic*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press Harvard University Press, 1974), 2.330

[64] Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xiii-xviii

the strategy taken up at that time in the movement was to place pragmatism on more of a positivist path such that figures like Comte would appear to have much in common with Peirce or James; however, according to Rorty, the eventual aim was that of shifting back in the opposite direction to perform an about face on the positivists who the pragmatists also had their issues with. More recently, it seems like the pendulum has swung back the other way and many pragmatists have accepted the insights of what Rorty aptly terms "[t]he Wittgenstein-Sellars-Quine-Davidson attack on distinctions between classes of sentences"; pragmatists who accept this attack on distinctions are consequently more willing to accept many of the arguments volleyed against logical positivism and empiricism in the 20th century and are more open to reconsidering much that has been taken for granted in science and analytic philosophy.[65] I think this explains somewhat why Peirce's contribution is downplayed by Rorty because Peirce is both the most Kantian of the pragmatists and his project seems to prefigure some views of the early Wittgenstein[66] on clearing up vagueness within a language through the application of logic and so it also seems to parallel some of the logical positivists' views. So, Peirce, at least for Rorty, is seen as a less useful source for shaping contemporary pragmatist arguments against the dominance of science over arts, culture, and ethics.

I'm not even going to even attempt to summarize the significance of the 'Wittgenstein-Sellars-Quine-Davidson' attack as I believe this would be a formidable task and not integral to the success of the argument I am making here. I think I can do

---

[65] Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xix

[66] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F McGuinness, (London: Routledge, 1961). For a manifesto describing the logical positivists verification theory of meaning which is significantly influenced by the early Wittgenstein, see Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, 1936.

justice to Rorty's position without venturing too far into the history of analytic, or linguistic, philosophy via another route and this is to stick to the story that Rorty tells. Rorty is consistent in several of his works including *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and *Consequences of Pragmatism*. As you may have gathered, Rorty sees himself as a kind of pragmatist carrying the torch lit by the classical pragmatists Peirce, James, Dewey, Mead et al. Even though Rorty is no longer with us, he is still viewed as being at the forefront of the pragmatist movement and as its most stalwart, modern representative and defendant. Therefore, I will do my best, in true Rorty style, to thread a narrative and to place Rorty within the pragmatist tradition by drawing a line between him and Dewey and James that reveals many parallels between these thinkers but, all the while, keeping my present aim in sight which is to illustrate that Rorty is performing a version of an internal critique. I will show this by illustrating how Rorty's commitments to antifoundationalism, to antirepresentationalism, and to 'solidarity' all coalesce into a kind of hermeneutical critique which relies upon an ethnocentric appeal to Western values, but which also contains a Utopian moment of looking forward to what will hopefully be a better, more tolerant society. Although it is unusual, I wish to start this sketch of Rorty with a brief anecdote that I think provides a way of further understanding Rorty's genealogy—or philosophical development.

In what may seem like an aside I wish to shift briefly to relaying a short account of a technical term coined by James and picked up by Dewey which I hope will serve the double purpose of illustrating a pragmatic approach to dissolving a philosophical problem and introducing something of a connection between the classical pragmatists and Rorty.

In *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, James argues against what he calls a "dualistic inner constitution" view of experience, which argues that consciousness, as an "impalpable inner flowing," can be isolated and hived off from the intentional content present before the mind.[67] Instead, James argues that this *dualistic* view of consciousness arises when one function of consciousness, viewed in one context, is added onto another without noticing that these different functions describe the same object.[68] In this discussion, James introduces his notion of "double-barreled terms," and by this James means to capture this same idea of an "undivided bit of experience" which takes on more than one function while appearing to be two distinct things.[69] It is already easy to see how a 'double-barreled' term dissolves a dualism by explaining away how one object with a dual function might seem to appear as two things.

Relating to James' use of this term in his *Experience and Nature*, Dewey states "It is 'double-barreled' in that it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality."[70] The reason I wish to draw attention to the concept of 'double barreled' terms is because this exchange lends support to the claim that James and Dewey were suspicious of dualisms—a claim that Rorty also makes.

In another work touching again on consciousness and experience, Dewey writes, "If the essence of [man's] nature is to be the realization of the universe, there is no aspect in which, *as man*, it appears as a mere object or event in the universe. The distinction is

---

[67] William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 6-8
[68] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 9
[69] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 10
[70] Dewey, *Experience and Nature 2nd edition*, (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1959), 10-11

now transferred to the two ways of looking at the same material, and no longer concerns two distinct materials. Is this distinction, however, any more valid?"[71] This is another example of Dewey approaching a neat, philosophical distinction and questioning its validity. In this case also the idea of a "double-barreled' term is applicable to the essence of man's nature, divided as it is between being contained within and realizing the universe, so therefore the validity of this dualism can be questioned as another philosophical confusion.

Throughout Dewey's article, "Psychology as Philosophic Method," Rorty argues that there can be found an exposition of three Deweyan doctrines which I take to be guiding lights for Rorty: (1) Several philosophic dead ends and useless controversies can be traced to "untenable dualisms"; (2) a critique of classical empiricism as providing an incomplete account of experience by trying to artificially cleave off perceptual and conceptual portions; and (3) a psychological method, which relies upon experience to dissolve troubling dualisms.[72]

In the concluding pages of *The Quest for Certainty*, Dewey provides a few remarks on his vision for philosophy and the future particularly what must be given up by philosophy and what it stands to gain: "To abandon the search for absolute and immutable reality and value may seem like a sacrifice. But this renunciation is the condition of entering upon a vocation of greater vitality. The search for values to be secured and shared by all, because buttressed in the foundations of social life, is a quest

[71] John Dewey, "Psychology as Philosophic Method," *Mind* 11, no. 42 (1886): 156, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2247469
[72] Richard Rorty, "Dewey's Metaphysics," *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 78-9

in which philosophy would have no rivals but coadjutors in men of good will."[73] It is towards this end, of values "secured and shared by all," because based on mutual agreement, that the efforts of what Rorty[74] calls "clearing away the dead wood of the philosophical tradition" is striving for. It is also what Sidney Hook, in his book on Dewey, describes as eliminating the "pseudo problems" of traditional philosophy by illustrating the fruitless efforts and dead ends to which these problems inevitably lead.[75]

Rorty views epistemology and much of modern philosophy as involved in an unfortunate and misguided search for "foundations of knowledge" which he believes arises from having adopted some particularly seductive "perceptual metaphors."[76] Rorty argues that knowledge can either be seen as relation amongst propositions or as a "privileged" and direct access to objects.[77] According to Rorty, accepting the latter view of knowledge precludes the possibility of argument since such unfettered access to objects is usually formulated in a way which makes the percept as indubitable as a stream of thought is to conscious awareness.[78] A thing so indubitable is precisely the kind of foundation that a Descartes or a Locke are seeking.[79] According to Rorty, preceding Kant epistemological foundations came in two flavors: Humean 'impressions' or

---

[73] John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation Between Knowledge and Action*, (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1929), 311
[74] Rorty, "Dewey's Metaphysics," 73
[75] Sidney Hook, *John Dewey: An Intellectual Portrait*, (New York: The John Day Company, 1989), 44
[76] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, First Princeton Classics Edition, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018), 159
[77] Rorty, ibid., 159
[78] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror*, 159
[79] Rorty, ibid.

Cartesian clarity and distinctness.[80] The latter of these was merely Platonic 'forms' in new dress but interiorized "behind the veil of ideas."[81]

Rorty argues that it was Kant who took the first steps towards the more modern 'linguistic turn' in philosophy when he came to see propositions as a possible foundation; however, he, and all subsequent academic epistemology, ultimately succumbed to "Locke's confusion between justification and causal explanation."[82] This confusion is the mistake of thinking that our reasons, or propositions, brought in defense of a particular belief must connect in some fashion to causes so that these either concur with each other à la Locke or are unable to operate on one another à la Kant.[83] According to Rorty, Kant was correct to assume that this 'space of reasons,' in which justification occurs, could not "interfere" with "the logical space of causal explanation," but wrong to adopt as the explanation for this the subjects' constitution of nature.[84] Rorty argues that several centuries worth of philosophic dead ends might have been avoided if Kant dropped "causal metaphors," like that of nature's "constitution" by the subject, and had advanced all the way to a propositional account of the foundations of knowledge; but, alas, this was not meant to be.[85]

According to Rorty, philosophy since Kant had very much accepted the framework laid by Kant but was divided in terms of how it should be understood.[86] Russell and the analytic school of philosophy thought Kant had been wrong about

---

[80] Rorty, ibid., 160
[81] Rorty, ibid.
[82] Rorty, ibid., 161
[83] Rorty, ibid.
[84] Rorty, ibid.
[85] Rorty, ibid.
[86] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror*, 162

founding mathematics on synthetic a priori grounds, which proved elusive, and had reverted to Locke's empiricism with propositional logic affixed, whereas on the Continent "freedom and spirituality" were pursued by following through on the insights provided by Kant's 'transcendental' constitution of nature by the subject.[87] Rorty argues that, despite these differences, the set of philosophers, as a whole, have remained Kantian in thinking that the role of their *Fach* is limning the formal structure of belief and justification to be able to censure, rebuke, limit, or police acceptable knowledge claims by acting as *the* grounding for culture and the other academic disciplines.[88] Rorty views Dewey and James as "waiting at the end of the dialectical road which analytic philosophy traveled" as philosophers who have managed to avoid being Kantian and eschewing the search for foundations as an unfortunate byproduct of enticing visual metaphors that have always had a grip on us.[89]

Rorty argues for the end of epistemology which he connects with the search for foundations, but he acknowledges that this will, for many, seem to leave a gaping a hole in the culture which must be filled.[90] However, Rorty urges us to resist the temptation to provide a placeholder for a vacated epistemology and instead suggests that a better alternative would be adopting *hermeneutics* to continually challenge the idea of seeking a neutral framework— or criteria with which to end all argument.[91] Rorty argues that hermeneutics might play the role of keeping the conversation alive between disciplines by acting as both a "Socratic intermediary" and "informed dilettante" in such a way that

---

[87] Rorty, ibid., 161-2
[88] Rorty, ibid., 162
[89] Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism,* xviii; *Philosophy and the Mirror*, 162-3
[90] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror*, 315-16
[91] Rorty, ibid., 316

disputants might be challenged or encouraged to reach agreement and move beyond or dissolve stand stills.[92]

Rorty's suggestion to drop epistemology and keep all lines of dialogue open and productive with *hermeneutics* aligns with the other suggestion he has made to adopt 'solidarity' instead of 'objectivity.'[93] Rorty's idea of giving up on the quest for certainty long associated with the desire for "objectivity"— "as standing in immediate relation to a nonhuman reality"—and accepting solidarity between other, like-minded members of a community brings us back to the subject at hand of internal critique. Rorty's position is that we have no way "to step outside our skins" to confirm our representations of reality and so should stop speaking of our representations as latching onto something 'objective'—a transcultural and ahistorical reality, or an "intrinsic nature of things."[94] Therefore, Rorty advocates for a version of 'antirepresentationalism'; "antirepresentationalists typically do not think that, behind the true sentence *S*, there is a sentence-shaped piece of nonlinguistic reality called 'the fact that *S'*."[95]

Rather than adopt an untenable view of truth as correspondence Rorty adopts the idea that "in the process of playing vocabularies and cultures off against each other, we produce new and better ways of talking and acting—not better by reference to a previously known standard, but just better in the sense that they come to *seem* clearly better than their predecessors."[96]

---

[92] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror*, 317
[93] Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or objectivity?" in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 32-4
[94] Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, xix; "Solidarity or objectivity?" 22
[95] Rorty, "Solidarity or objectivity?" 4
[96] Rorty, *Consequences of* Pragmatism, xxxvii

Rorty would probably readily admit that this is a fairly straightforward adaptation of James's version of truth: "*The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite assignable reasons*."[97] James's definition of "true" is connected to the idea that in any dispute over the meaning of a term, "If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing and all dispute is idle."[98] This combination of adopting the most effective belief to achieve a given purpose and identifying and eliminating idle disputes by analyzing the difference adopting each alternative would make to practice led James and the other pragmatists to set aside many philosophical debates as useless distinctions. Rorty argues that the "correspondence" theory of truth was one of these outmoded philosophical ideas which James and Dewey also tried hard to jettison.

"Objectivity," and thus the idea of an "objective" fact, is connected to the correspondence theory of truth because any explanation of the justification of belief which relies on this designation must posit a special veridical connection between beliefs and objects such that all beliefs come out true or false.[99] However, Rorty argues that the problem is picking out exactly what these "truth makers" are from our experience which is always moving and changing.[100]

I have tried my best to sketch out Rorty's views towards the end of showing that Rorty must ultimately end up with a version of internal critique because of his denial of

---

[97] William James, *Pragmatism, a new word for some old ways of thinking,* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 76
[98] James, *Pragmatism, a new word*, 45
[99] Rorty, "Solidarity or objectivity?" 22
[100] Richard Rorty, "Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry? Donald Davidson versus Crispin Wright," in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume 3*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 35

the kind of transcendental foundations which would be required to perform an external critique. I will also be drawing upon his critique of representationalism, "objectivity," and "matters of fact" when I turn to probing Jaeggi's "ethical-functional" norms in a later section. I have shown that Rorty wishes the pursuit of truth to be replaced with some kind of agreement between peers or as he calls it "solidarity" and how he views *conversation* as being the key to reaching better beliefs that help us achieve more of what we want to achieve.

I should like to say a couple words also about just who Rorty sees himself as in solidarity with, or what he describes as 'postmodernist bourgeois liberalism'—he advocates for a non-vicious kind of Western ethnocentrism. Like Jaeggi, Rorty believes it is impossible to occupy an impartial, neutral starting point for criticism, and he admits honestly and openly that his starting point must be within the community that he inhabits: a liberal, democratic Western community, specifically the United States.[101]

The benefit of placing himself in the liberal tradition, Rorty argues is that despite the fact that he does seem to be showing a preference for a Western-centric, perhaps Eurocentric, view of the good, he believes it is part of the self-vision that the liberal West has of itself that it is open to growth and accepting new ideas and values from anywhere; this sort of openness to "constantly enlarging its sympathies" and growing by coming into contact and exchange with other ways of life and traditions offsets, Rorty thinks, the kind of self-sealing solipsism that often befalls ethnocentrism.[102] In addition to adopting

[101] Richard Rorty, "Postmodernist bourgeois liberalism," in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 199-200

[102] Richard Rorty, "On ethnocentrism: A reply to Clifford Geertz" in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 204

'postmodernist bourgeois liberalism,' Rorty's version of hermeneutical-internal critique appeals to a Utopic vision which combines "the hope of greater convenience in the future"[103]; a "better version of our present selves"[104]; and a post-philosophical culture which is somehow better[105]; or even the dream of a world where science and literature are "on the same footing."[106] This is a vision somewhat like the view he shares with Dewey, and which is illustrated in the passage I quoted from *The Quest for Certainty* that finds "coadjutors" in persons of good will.

CHAPTER 5: IMMANENT CRITIQUE

A large part of my argument in this paper arises from grappling with the issues surrounding so- called 'immanent critique.' This ambitious section aims to accomplish a few different things. Firstly, I need to define what immanent critique is by combing through the literature on this topic and trying to outline the points of agreement between those who have written on the topic since these points of agreement should capture the essence of what 'immanent' critique is. Secondly, much of the research I have done on 'immanent critique' regards the variant of this critique proposed by Rahel Jaeggi and so my aim in outlining a sketch of immanent critique is to specifically show how this applies to Jaeggi's approach (and then Hilary Putnam's in the following section). It is my position in this paper that the immanent critique Jaeggi advocates for is not successful because, while promising a metaphysically deflated kind of Hegelian critique, her

[103] Richard Rorty, "Hilary Putnam and the Relativist Menace" in *Truth and Progress*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 57
[104] Rorty, ibid., 54
[105] Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, xxxviii
[106] Rorty ibid., xliii

method, which relies on a moment of *crisis*, ends up re-introducing strong metaphysical foundations and a historical teleology like that of Hegel's. So, my last task in this section will be both proving this assertion and spelling out exactly why Jaeggi's critique will not work before turning to a more promising version of immanent critique practiced by Hilary Putnam in the next section.

Although each mode of critique seems to have benefits and limitations, my goal in this paper is to weigh each against the other to establish which is the most effective. Part of this project involves sifting through the many promises which philosophers have developed towards their preferred mode of critique and to decipher whether a given mode of critique can meet the philosophical challenges it faces or whether it tries to escape these challenges through unavailable means. Towards this end I have outlined two types of critique thus far in the form of external and internal critiques and then tried to spell out the dilemmas each face. The boundaries between external and internal critique are sharp, perhaps almost as sharp as the difference between *universals* and *particulars*, but the distinction between 'internal' and 'immanent' is fuzzier since they both accept that the critic occupies a standpoint within the criticized object. Therefore, I would like to lay down a framework that can help me to establish whether a critique meets the criteria of being immanent which I can then use to distinguish between philosophers who are practicing some form of immanent critique from those, like Rorty, who are doing something closer to internal critique.

I need to be able to distinguish more precisely the differences between internal and immanent modes of critique, but it is best to avoid a definition of immanent critique

that is too broad.[107] According to Jaeggi, Hegel first established the methodological and the theoretical framework for all subsequent developments of the concept of immanent criticism during his "phenomenological self-examination of consciousness."[108] According to Jaeggi, Hegel's examination of consciousness is immanent criticism because it draws its own standards of critique out of what is being criticized.[109] Since consciousness is examining its own cognition, it is its own criteria against which it is measured and against which its presuppositions are tested.[110] At the same time, critical insight into an object should identify any presuppositions that are either not present or only partially realized in the object.[111] Again citing Hegel, Jaeggi argues that the phenomenology of consciousness encounters several obstacles during its attempt to examine its own conditions of cognition, which, in turn, provide a critique "of self-deception, one-sidedness, and false objectification."[112] Therefore, immanent criticism is never "purely destructive," rather the initial one-sided position assumed by the critic becomes integrated into a more truthful

[107] Sabia has described immanent critique "as a family of philosophical-hermeneutical practices bearing a complex lineage and associations with a wide variety of moral and political projects and thinkers." However, he casts a very wide net which includes Walzer, who I consider to be doing internal critique. Since Sabia does away with the helpful distinction between 'internal' and 'immanent' critique and seems to describe what he calls "immanent criticism," as opposed to "immanent critique," in terms which are very similar to the way I and others have described internal criticism, then his inclusion of Taylor in his list of immanent critics presupposes the answer to the very question I am trying to answer and as such is not very useful; Sabia also seems to be at odds with the literature in his criticism-critique distinction and, for my own purposes, I will treat 'critique' and 'criticism' as being two, virtually synonymous words. Dan Sabia, "Defending Immanent Critique," *Political Theory* 38, no. 5 (2010): 684-5, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25749176

[108] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 193
[109] Jaeggi, ibid.
[110] Jaeggi, ibid., 193-4
[111] Jaeggi, ibid., 194
[112] Jaeggi, ibid., 193

picture of the object as what comes to be seen as false becomes integrated into a more holistic standpoint.[113]

Jaeggi argues that her version of immanent criticism provides "a mediating position" between external and internal criticism.[114] External criticism relies on some form of a claim to universality to buttress its norms by affirming that a value is applicable to all regardless of whether these ideals are present in a particular social formation.[115] On the other hand, internal criticism can recognize when a norm should apply to a set of practices but fails to provide authoritative reasons *why* certain norms are applicable over others.[116] Conversely, Jaeggi argues that the transformative process initiated by the immanent critic provides its own justification for the values it arrives at and that these ideals are also justified by how successfully they overcome the problems facing a social situation.[117]

Michael Walzer provides the framework for most subsequent discussions on providing a normative justification for critique.[118] For Walzer, moral justification takes one of three paths: "discovery," "invention," or "interpretation."[119] Stahl has construed these paths further by associating discovery with versions of "moral realism" and invention with "constructivist" approaches.[120] According to Stahl, those who engage in

---

[113] Pinkard provides an excellent description of the mechanism, "determinate negation," whereby a one-sided standpoint is able to reach a more holistic standpoint through dialectic which Jaeggi also draws upon. See Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 12; Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life,* 192

[114] Jaeggi, ibid., 210

[115] Jaeggi, ibid.

[116] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 210

[117] Jaeggi, ibid.

[118] Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*; see Stahl, "Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique," 533-4

[119] Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*, 3

[120] Stahl, "Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique," 533-4

immanent critique seem to fall between Walzer's distinctions because they do not consider themselves to be moral realists "discovering" pregiven norms and nor do they see themselves as engaged in either interpreting found norms or constructing entirely new ones.[121] So, in what ways does the immanent critic validate their own practice or, in other words, what does an immanent critic appeal to if not pre-existing norms, socially constructed norms, or interpretations of these? And what are the procedural or methodological differences between the immanent and internal critique?

Stahl argues that the critic appeals to "*immanent potentials in social reality*."[122] According to Stahl, these potentials can take the shape of latent possibilities that exist within a practice which could be leveraged towards reshaping society for the better.[123] Because immanent critique appeals to normative potentials—which often exist only negatively within a community— rather than just norms, either the ones pre-given with the situation or external ones, it is claimed immanent critique avoids some of the pitfalls, i.e., relativism, foundationalism, and conventionalism, that befall internal and external criticism while providing the upshot that these potentials can be harnessed to transcend and transform their initial situation.[124]

Jaeggi identifies two broad variants of immanent critique: "reconstructive immanent criticism," and "negativistic transformative-immanent criticism."[125] Jaeggi's version of immanent critique is described as "negativistic" because while an internal critic can argue for a return to a previous state where the practices of an institution and its

[121] Stahl, "Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique," 534
[122] Stahl, "Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique," 534
[123] Stahl, "Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique," 534
[124] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 190; Stahl, "Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique," 534
[125] Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 360fn25

explicit values were in conformity, the immanent critic views the entire complex that has formed between both the norms themselves and their actualization as somehow "inverted or *wrong in itself*."[126] Therefore, it is not that certain ideals remain unfulfilled within a social formation but that their fulfillment is problematic such that their effects end up being detrimental to the efficacy of norms themselves.[127]

'Reconstructive' critique, on the other hand, is described by Kauppinen as similar to spelling out such implicit norms as those governing dinner table etiquette, the inherent ideals that are manifested in the practice are made explicit and can then be used to critique the practice without looking for external norms of critique.[128] In addition, Kauppinen provides a useful distinction between a 'weak' reconstructive critique, in which the norms are particular, and a 'strong' version in which universal implicit norms are appealed to on the basis that the practice cannot help but adopt these norms.[129]

Stahl divides the range of problems that all theories of critique must somehow address and account for into three headings: (1) *"social ontology*"; (2) "*epistemic access*"; and (3) "*authority*."[130] Stahl describes how first with a social ontology it must be elaborated how such 'immanent' norms or potentials "exist," then the question of how it is these social entities come to be known must be answered, and, lastly, the question of whether or not these norms or normative potentials are valid must be considered through scrutinizing the reasons they provide for their grounding of a critique.[131] In response to

[126] Jaeggi, ibid., 200
[127] Jaeggi, ibid., 200-201
[128] Kauppinen, "Reason, Recognition, and Internal Critique," 487
[129] Kauppinen, "Reason, Recognition, and Internal Critique," 485
[130] Stahl, "Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique," 534
[131] Stahl, ibid., 534

these problems, Stahl distinguishes between "hermeneutic" and "practice-based" approaches that can be taken two provide answers to these issues.[132] Lastly, Arvi Särkelä provides another distinction between the choice of adopting either a two-stage critique, which is divided into the "*metacritical*" activity of "modeling" followed by its separate application to a practice, or, what he prefers, a critique which eschews model-making metaphors in favor of "the ideas of a *mutable method* and a *transformative self* ."[133] I have provided this very rough overview of some of the classifications which have been made in the literature on immanent criticism not to be exhaustive, but to provide some context to my subsequent discussions of Jaeggi and Putnam who are both engaged in this kind of critique.

According to Jaeggi, the transformative potential of immanent criticism is a result of a paradigm shift in the way the values are accounted for as orientations which "exert effects in social practices."[134] Whereas internal criticism operates on the assumption that the ideals in question are shared by those within a community, immanent criticism assumes that values are the basis of *any* social formation regardless of whether these beliefs have been consciously adopted.[135] The immanent critic articulates the implicit values that must be present for the practices and institutions of a community to

---

[132] Stahl, ibid., 534

[133] Arvi Särkelä, "Immanent Critique as Self-Transformative Practice: Hegel, Dewey, and Contemporary Critical Theory," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 31, no. 2 (2017), 219-22, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jspecphil.31.2.0218

[134] This less static and more dynamic account of the role of norms in social practices is, I would argue, *the* crucial distinction between internal and immanent modes of critique and I intend to draw upon it when I compare Jaeggi's critique with what I take to be a similar mode of immanent critique in the work of Hilary Putnam. Jaeggi's notion of *crisis* and the promise of transformative potential are both additional features of Jaeggi's critique which do not feature as prominently in Putnam's work. Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 190

[135] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 199

function.[136] Additionally, immanent criticism can accomplish what internal criticism cannot by coming to question the norms themselves rather than simply restoring norms which may have systemic reasons for being out of practice.[137]

For internal criticism, the norms which are subject to "*reconstruction* or redemption of normative potential" are those of happenstance, since it is a contingent matter whether one set of ideals happens to be the local convention over another.[138] Furthermore, internal criticism does not view the contradictions which arise between norms and practices as being necessarily tied to the norms.[139] Conversely, the immanent critic aims to reveal the ideals which constitute the *essence* of an institution such that without these norms a social formation would no longer be identifiable.[140] For immanent criticism, the problems, and contradictions, inherent in a "social constellation" are seen to be systematically linked to norms which are operational in that context, and so immanent criticism holds out the promise of being able to do what an internal critique cannot by using the contradictory nature of a situation as the impetus for questioning the norms which are the cause of the contradiction.[141]

Jaeggi argues that the immanent critic does not consider relations between norms and reality to be static, but rather that they view this relation as a dynamic of interaction

---

[136] Jaeggi, ibid., 199
[137] Jaeggi, ibid., 190
[138] Although Jaeggi goes to some lengths to show how her immanent critique draws *necessary* and systematic connections between norms and practices, it is not clear that she succeeds in doing this and some of my objections to her mode of critique in this paper will be aimed at denying the immanent critic the resources to make such necessary and systematic connections. For the full source of the quotation see Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms*, 190
[139] Jaeggi, ibid., 190
[140] Jaeggi, ibid., 200
[141] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 190-1

and change "that affects both sides."[142] Therefore, it is not just a matter of altering a set of practices to adhere to norms, as the internal critic would have it, but that both the ideals and their realization must be fine-tuned and adapted to one another.[143] So, in Hegel's account of bourgeois civil society, *real* disturbances prompt the realization that both *freedom* and *equality* must undergo refinement with the result of a better understanding of the meaning of these values.[144]

Jaeggi identifies immanent criticism as a form of "objective criticism."[145] The term *objective* is employed by Jaeggi to highlight a few different aspects of immanent critique: Firstly, "objective" is used to describe how the focal point of critique is not "the critic's subjective critical intention," but rather the standards of critique that arise from a *crisis* in the object of criticism and this is close to the usual sense of "objective" to imply something mind-independent, "valid", and "true," i.e., empirically verifiable in some sense; However, it is clear that Jaeggi is also employing "objective" in another sense, since she describes how critique involves a subjective evaluative dimension in addition to its orientation to real tensions and "social conditions" so must be "simultaneously active and reactive."[146] Although immanent criticism is passive, in the sense that it must always take its orientation from a crisis affecting a social formation, it also actively incites the transformation of this situation; therefore, Jaeggi can ascribe both a passive and an active role to immanent criticism.[147] Jaeggi adopts the phrase "given and made" to describe the

---

[142] Jaeggi, ibid., 202-3
[143] Jaeggi, ibid., 203
[144] Jaeggi, ibid., 203
[145] Something which I shall have to take difficulty with. Jaeggi, ibid., 192
[146] Hegel's sublation of the subject-object dichotomy through dialectic is described in *Phenomenology of* Spirit; Jaeggi, *Critique of forms,* 192
[147] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 208

objective-subjective character of problems: A problem may be subject to certain interpretations, but nevertheless there is something objective to the crisis which impinges itself upon reality and circumscribes the possible readings of a situation which Jaeggi compares to a "symptom."[148] Following my discussion of Rorty, it is easy to anticipate my rebuttal against the way Jaeggi appeals to "objectivity," since I question whether anything can be mind-independent and so 'objective,' as opposed to a matter of varying interpretations, and this leads me below to challenge what Jaeggi calls the "functional" component of a crisis—as something *real* which impinges on us to accept only certain interpretations over others.

Additionally, Jaeggi points out that the critic is not free to adopt a dogmatic or idealistic stance and posit any norms they wish, but may only posit norms which are grounded in, and take their bearing from, the crisis situation.[149] However, as she continues, Jaeggi clarifies that not just any crisis is relevant to the critic but only those that can be systematically linked to normative contradictions and hence the crisis must involve what she terms "functional-ethical norms."[150] Jaeggi argues that some of the interpretive issues surrounding the identification of a "problem" are the result of an ambiguity between "*ethical*" and "*functional*" norms.[151] Jaeggi dissolves the distinction between ethical and functional norms by arguing that for social processes functioning well and functioning in a way that is (ethically) good are indistinguishable.[152] She coins the phrase "the ethical-functional justification of norms" to capture how her notion of a

[148] Jaeggi, ibid., 212
[149] Jaeggi, ibid., 192
[150] Jaeggi, ibid., 192; 198
[151] Jaeggi, ibid., 211
[152] Jaeggi, ibid.

"practical contradiction" combines both the normative and functional, "objective and subjective," aspects of a problematic social situation.[153] Since for Jaeggi all problems are both normative and functional, any solutions must be dual-pronged.[154]

According to Jaeggi, a social arrangement's "*crisis-proneness*" provides the catalyst for immanent criticism.[155] As such, the practices subject to critique are in a state of dysfunction because of their contradictoriness.[156] A set of practices may continue to function despite any inconsistencies that may be present between norms and reality; however, if contradictions are embedded in the norms, or have impacted their realization, then there will be *observable dysfunctions* within the practices, and these are intended by Jaeggi to be a matter of fact and not tied up with interpretations.[157] Jaeggi illustrates this with the example of Hegel and Marx by showing that both bourgeois civil society and capitalism suffer from various functional crises.[158] Conversely, Jaeggi argues that internal criticism is forced to rely upon a subject's "goodwill," since it always remains plausible that that an institution may change its practices and fulfill its ideals or make good on its claims.[159]

Interestingly, Jaeggi argues that the objective crisis can only be revealed through analysis by the critic "at the theoretical level," and this seems to contradict what she had said about the "functional" aspect of a crisis being a fact about an empirically observable

---

[153] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 211
[154] Jaeggi, ibid., 212
[155] Jaeggi, ibid., 201; 204
[156] Jaeggi, ibid., 202
[157] Jaeggi, ibid.
[158] Jaeggi, ibid.
[159] Jaeggi, ibid.

dysfunction.[160] Jaeggi argues that Walzer is wrong to deny a strong role for theory in criticism because the critic's theoretical analysis is required to make connections and their background context "visible"; theory is necessary to understand a given social situation as a context for "*producing*" connections, because it is only after such analysis that what appears as "two [isolated] contradictory components" can be comprehended as a "dialectical contradiction."[161] A crisis always provides the means for transforming a situation, but providing the solution to a problematic situation requires elucidating its deficiencies accurately, which requires the analysis of a critic armed with good theory and not just a "good eye," as Walzer maintains.[162]

The interplay of analysis and criticism opens new possibilities for perceiving, interpreting, and transforming contradictory social situations.[163] However, Jaeggi here blurs the distinction between analysis and criticism stating, "It is *qua analysis* criticism (not a mere *description* of the existing order) and *qua criticism* analysis (not merely a *demand* addressed to the existing order)."[164] This distinction, however, gets quickly eroded by Jaeggi's subsequent assertions including her assertion that analysis is not just a precursor to criticism but "part of the critical process itself."[165] As true as this may be, Jaeggi's blurring of the line between *analysis* and *criticism* is the counterpart to her dropping the distinction between *ethical* and *functional* norms, and, with the latter, that

---

[160] I intend to draw out exactly what this means since it is an important part of the objections I raise against Jaeggi; the requirement that the critic must draw out what is "objective" about the crisis only "at the theoretical level" seems to imply that what is supposed to be "objective" about the crisis is actually a matter of theoretical interpretation and hence subjective (though she practically avoids this problem by following Hegel's eschewal of the subject-object dichotomy. See also fn. 44; *Critique of forms of life,* 192

[161] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 207-8

[162] Jaeggi, ibid., 209

[163] Jaeggi, ibid., 208

[164] Jaeggi, ibid., 192

[165] Jaeggi, ibid., 192

between *subjectivity* and *objectivity*; unfortunately, this makes it difficult to understand exactly what Jaeggi means by "analysis."[166] However, it is not evident *how* something which is only capable of being first uncovered by theory can remain "objective" in Jaeggi's multi-variant sense of this term, and this proves to be a fatal flaw for Jaeggi's immanent criticism.

Jaeggi has adopted, from Hegel, an "antidogmatic and anti-constructivistic process" of critique which, following Marx, she adapts into an antiutopian approach to immanent criticism.[167] Therefore, Jaeggi's form of immanent criticism never tries to posit, in advance, any external ideals or standards, but, rather, the norms themselves arise from the same process which sees them justified.[168] Therefore, an acceptance of the truly dynamic character of criticism is required, and this means that no predetermined forms or presuppositions can remain unjustified during a critique.[169] The initial standards which are assumed must undergo changes as the analysis of the "existing constellation" reveals more because the process of critique always starts from a "biased" and presupposition-laden position.[170] Therefore, any standards adopted during a critique do not provide a static criterion against which the situation can be assessed so the criticism must become

---

[166] Unfortunately, the definition of what counts as "analysis" is also subject to much contention—lying as it does at the site of the great philosophical divide between analytic and continental philosophy. For an interesting explanation of the various methodologies and techniques which have historically been labeled "analysis" as well an insightful discussion of the many misuses of this term see Beaney, "Analysis," *Stanford Encyclopedia*. From her description, Jaeggi appears to be employing "analysis" to describe a type of social analysis for understanding the "genesis" of a contradiction which, once uncovered, provides a starting point for the criticism as it proceeds. However, she appeals to some version of empirical analysis to describe the "functional," objective component of a crisis which, again, is something I must object to on philosophical grounds. Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life*, 192

[167] Jaeggi, ibid., 193

[168] Jaeggi, ibid.

[169] Jaeggi, ibid.

[170] Jaeggi, ibid.

"a self-grounding process" which comes to grasp its standards and prove their necessity on the fly.[171]

Jaeggi argues that immanent criticism triggers "an *experiential and learning process*" which has the power to develop solutions in response to crises and failures.[172] This learning process can integrate its prior knowledge of a situation into a more comprehensive "self-understanding" because it employs "determinate negation" in Hegel's sense.[173] In other words, the process initiated by immanent criticism can solve problems because it learns from "the experience of failure."[174] Jaeggi must illustrate that the transformative process catalyzed by the critic is rational since the justificatory burden of immanent criticism is placed squarely upon it.[175] Jaeggi argues that a learning process qualifies as rational if and only if the solutions it provides are "*correct* (and *unavoidable*)."[176] Since, as Jaeggi argues, forms of life arise as solutions to problems, a "*rational learning process*" could provide validity along the lines of a "historical index" or a history of the problems faced by a social formation along with their attempted solutions.[177] Against such a background, it would be possible to see if a solution is correct and why it is unavoidable.[178]

Jaeggi readily relies upon Hegel and Adorno's understanding of determinate negation, wherein negation can be applied to an initially deficient position to reach a new

---

[171] Jaeggi, ibid., 191-3
[172] Jaeggi, ibid., 204
[173] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 204
[174] Jaeggi, ibid.
[175] Jaeggi, ibid., 213
[176] Jaeggi, ibid.
[177] Jaeggi, ibid.
[178] Jaeggi, ibid.

and better position.[179] Underlying this is the understanding that each supposition about an object, or social formation, contains both elements of truth and falsity which, when subjected to determination, can isolate and chip away at its falsities revealing a clearer piece of what is truthful about the object and this in turn can be the ground of further "enrichment and differentiation."[180]

The promise held out by such a process of determinate negation is that a new position can only be reached by confronting and solving the problems facing the previous position; therefore, the new state reached by the procedure of immanent criticism not only contains more of what is true about a social constellation but it also "sublates," or assimilates, its previous, dysfunctional state into a more comprehensive whole in a way that suggests a growth in knowledge.[181] Crucially, the immanent critic's normative standpoint is not external to the practical transformation brought about by their analysis and critique; their involvement marks the process in different ways which must also be accounted for because the transformation incited by the critic simultaneously alters both the object of critique and the criteria for measuring this object.[182]

To defend the epistemic access and authority of the critic, Jaeggi argues that Hegel's "basic thesis" on Kant's critique of knowledge is applicable to the "normative standpoint of the critic," since to ask whether this standpoint is internal or external is to pose the wrong question.[183] According to Jaeggi, Hegel recognized the impossibility of

[179] Jaeggi, ibid., 209
[180] Jaeggi, ibid., 193-4; 209
[181] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 209
[182] Jaeggi, ibid.
[183] Jaeggi, ibid., 194

assuming an external standpoint where "external" here means "*prior to* cognition."[184] In other words, "one is always already involved in what one is doing," so the criticizing is an important part of the practice and not something carried out "*in advance*."[185]

Jaeggi argues that Hegel's reflections upon consciousness are initially internal since consciousness is turning its critical powers upon itself. However, the dialectic of the appraisal comes to light upon the flaws of each adopted position, and this can be seen as a movement to the outside of what is being criticized.[186] Therefore, the issue of demarcating the boundaries of internal and external criticism becomes superfluous.[187] In addition, Jaeggi argues that immanent critics must be prepared to deal with an increasing number of contradictions because the plurality of forms of life precludes any possibility of a centralized perspective; the same plurality also precludes the outcome of establishing a lasting harmony.[188] However, Jaeggi argues against theories, like Mouffe's agonistic[189] approach, which seems to perpetuate conflict for conflict's sake, in favor of the optimistic idea that criticism can resolve problematic contradictions "however *provisionally*."[190]

Jaeggi argues that the internal critic merely draws a simple connection between belief and action so that the critic can only discover a contradiction between "what one says and what one does."[191] In contrast, the immanent critic must rely upon theory to create a systematic connection rather than finding a simple discrepancy between one's

---

[184] Jaeggi, ibid.
[185] Jaeggi, ibid.
[186] Jaeggi, ibid., 195
[187] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 195
[188] Jaeggi, ibid., 212
[189] See Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, (London: Verso, 2013)
[190] Jaeggi, ibid., 212
[191] Jaeggi, ibid., 197

actions and words like the internal critic.[192] Therefore, the immanent critic takes as their starting point contradictions which are constitutive to the functioning of a given social formation rather than contingent contradictions "between reality and norms."[193] For example, the connection Hegel draws between two moments in bourgeois civil society are systematically related to each other: one's *independence* to pursue their interests and the *dependence* of those who are reliant upon market forces for their wellbeing are causally related because the independence of free-market agents *relies upon* a dependence on regulating institutions.[194]

The absolutization of one moment over another produces a destabilizing "*one-sidedness*" such as when the ubiquitous valuing of independence covers over "a formation of ethical life in a condition of division."[195] The immanent critic may then have to draw upon theory to reveal that a connection exists at all since one-sidedness may disguise the connection between "separated" moments.[196]

Given that the immanent critic reveals how two moments are systematically connected, a contradiction between these two moments will also not be an arbitrary "logical incompatibility" but rather will be a tension necessitated by the systematic connection between these moments which is able to "*drive it beyond itself*."[197] Jaeggi argues that the inner contradictoriness of the norm and practice must be shown by the immanent critic to be unavoidable.[198] As such, it becomes evident that the crisis which

---

[192] Jaeggi, ibid., 197-98
[193] Jaeggi, ibid., 201
[194] Jaeggi, ibid., 198
[195] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 198
[196] Jaeggi, ibid.
[197] Jaeggi, ibid.
[198] Jaeggi, ibid., 206

Hegel diagnoses in bourgeois civil society cannot be resolved because this form of life fails to fulfill its claims for structural reasons; individuals competing against each other for work and their own means of subsistence are both constitutive and destructive for the ethical form of life of bourgeois civil society.[199]

Jaeggi places a tremendous burden of justification upon a transformative, learning process which always seems to progress towards the better and, by her own admission, this opens her to the possible objection that she has endowed this transformative process with a "final telos of history" or metaphysical notions of progress.[200] Jaeggi also concedes that an examination of history reveals many such instances where the identification of a crisis or problem is a matter of interpretation and thus "not objectively given."[201] This, along with her concession that in many cases a practice in crisis may nevertheless continue to function, seem to lead to something of a paradox for Jaeggi because it seems to lead to a denial of what she has called the "functional" aspect of crises. I argue that Allen's objections to the tacit adoption of a philosophy of history in the critical theory of Habermas and Honneth apply with equal force to Jaeggi's idea of a transformative historical learning processes triggered by crisis since Jaeggi, like Habermas and Honneth, seems to rely on a conflation of accepting historical progress as an unquestioned "fact" about the past and posting "progress as a moral-political imperative."[202]

---

[199] Jaeggi, ibid., 198
[200] Jaeggi, ibid., 210-11
[201] Jaeggi, *Critique of forms*, 211
[202] Amy Allen, *End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 14

Although Jaeggi argues, on the one hand, that society is a dynamic and disaggregated pluralism of forms of life and values in tension such that occasionally progress in one area is accompanied by regress in another and all solutions are only fallible-provisional-solutions, she tacitly adopts a "philosophy of the subject" that views history as progress in terms of the narrative of a "transsubjective" and unified collective subject which can be seen to be reaching solutions to each crisis and which, when viewed in retrospect, are always not only "*correct"* and necessary but "*unavoidable*" conclusions; unavoidable because systematically connected to essential contradictions which are the source of crises.[203] This seems to commit her to a view of a learning process which tends towards an ultimate and inevitable outcome of having reached a point, the end of history, where all the answers reached by this learning process are retrospectively seen as final because they are the only answers which can be reached.

CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY - PUTNAM'S IMMANENT CRITIQUE

Although I have hopefully illustrated some of the deficiencies of Jaeggi's immanent critique, it remains to be seen whether an immanent methodology might not after all work given the appropriate adjustments. In contrast to Jaeggi, Putnam offers a non-Hegelian version of immanent critique which does not rely on an understanding of determinate negation, dialectic, or on Hegel's philosophy of history, though it does attribute a learning process, similar to Jaeggi's, to science; thus, it seems to avoid some of the metaphysical baggage which Jaeggi's critique takes on. Rather, Putnam espouses a kind of functionalist analysis where beliefs can be adopted to serve context-specific functions

[203] On "philosophy of the subject" see Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 19-43

and beliefs which are adopted that optimize success in different pursuits are justified by that very success in optimizing those applications. Functionalist analysis has a lot going for it as a philosophical position, since it offers an explanation for the efficaciousness of holding certain beliefs over others; the practical success that arises in connection with holding a particular set of beliefs does seem to require explanation but this practical success that arises from having reasonable beliefs can be accounted for without adopting a view of truth as correspondence. A great deal of Putnam's work regards issues surrounding realism and I must admit that I have had a great deal of trouble deciphering the relevance of discussions of metaphysical realism to issues surrounding ethics; facts are appealed to by both sides in a moral debate; when holding a belief, or set of beliefs, allows us to attain more power and control over our surroundings, then it seems like common sense to assume that these beliefs perhaps better capture something about our environment that allows for their efficacy. However, this does not merit adopting 'correspondence' over 'coherence' as an explanation; does Putnam's adoption of the idea that there is a 'convergence' between the characterizations of objects described by successive theories in science commit him to arguing that there will ultimately be one correct theory in which words are affixed to mind-independent objects subject to fixed relations between them?

Putnam advocates for a kind of *realism* though he argues it is not metaphysical realism but what he calls '*internal* realism.' In contradistinction to Rorty, Putnam's espousal of internal realism sees him defending a kind of empiricist 'verificationism' that tries to wiggle free of some of the charges levied against logical positivism and

empiricism in the 20th century by performing a sort of pivot around the issues facing metaphysical realism and by adopting a theory of confirmation.

First, I will tackle explaining what Putnam's internal realism is and how it amounts to an immanent critique, then I will argue how his version of *realism*, which he claims is *internal* to theories, mirrors the claims of metaphysical 'external' realism intra-theoretically so that "THE WORLD" becomes something ideal posited within a theory that in some sense maintains the idea of a 'correspondence' if only as a regulative postulate guiding theory development. Following a somewhat Rortyan approach, I then wish to further argue that reintroducing 'correspondence' and realism intra-theoretically involves Putnam in a similar predicament as the one facing Jaeggi, since Putnam simply reintroduces realism's more problematic metaphysical claims, albeit cleverly, inside the theories. To show this I would like to start with a contrast between Putnam and Hegel.

One of Hegel's key insights that lies behind his writing of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is that a *science* which does not live up to the task of providing a *complete* description of its intended object would be inadequate hence why *Geist*'s final *Gestalt* is to culminate in *absolute* knowledge.[204] Thus, it would no doubt come as a surprise to Hegel that Putnam[205] begins *Realism with a Human Face* with a discussion of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanic's infamous "cut between the system and observer" which has the consequence that science will never reach the *absolute* knowledge sought by Hegel. Putnam draws a devastating analogy between Newton's vision of reaching a "God's eye view" in physics, which was cast asunder by the

[204] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A.V. Miller, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)
[205] Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 10-11

Copenhagen interpretation, and comparable attempts to do so by finding a general truth "applicable to any language whatsoever."[206] I contend that there is an inconsistency plaguing internal realism. I think Putnam inadvertently seems to posit a kind of *progress* for science that lapses back into metaphysical realism at points and views science *teleologically* as continuing to develop towards a point where the assertions of metaphysical realism are viewed as gaining more and more substance as the scientific progress advances.

In "Realism and Reason," Putnam describes how a metaphysical realist believes that words are fixed labels for parts of "THE WORLD."[207] According to Putnam, the view entitled 'metaphysical realism' entails that there are fixed objects, independent of mind and language, that are subject to fixed relations between these objects.[208] Furthermore, metaphysical realism is extra-theoretical in the sense that it applies to all theories such that all the true theories are seen as 'converging' upon one and the same world of which there can only ultimately be one correct interpretation—the way the world really is beyond all our theorizing about it.[209] Putnam states that "The most important consequence of metaphysical realism is that *truth* is supposed to be *radically non-epistemic* – we might be 'brains in a vat' and so the theory that is 'ideal' from the point of view of operational utility, inner beauty and elegance, 'plausibility', simplicity, 'conservatism', etc., *might be false*."[210] The 'radically non-epistemic' character of 'truth' within metaphysical realism means that it escapes the grasp of our knowledge and that it

---

[206] Putnam, ibid., 17
[207] Hilary Putnam, "Realism and Reason," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 50, no. 6 (1977), 483, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3129784?origin=JSTOR-pdf
[208] Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, 27
[209] Putnam, "Realism and Reason," 483-4
[210] Putnam, ibid., 485

can never be captured through any description of it. This inability to confirm the truth of theories using all the available means at our disposal therefore generates scepticism but this kind of scepticism about the external world can lead to absurdities if it is not checked. Aside from generating scepticism, Putnam may also have been considering issues like those surrounding the Copenhagen interpretation just mentioned when he introduces his 'infamous' distinction between metaphysical and *internal* realism. Just as the immanent form of critique attempts to capture the advantages of external and internal forms of critique, *internal* realism tries to navigate a middle road between 'metaphysical realism' and 'relativism.'

Is metaphysical realism *necessary* for science? Are there any issues that arise from adopting the idea of mind-independent objects with fixed relations as a hypothesis to test? Surely there does not seem to be a problem with putting this forward as a testable hypothesis, and maybe this could resolve the debate between Realism and antirealism. Putnam states, "The realist, in effect, argues that science should be taken at 'face value' -- without philosophical reinterpretation -- in the light of the failure of all serious programmes of philosophical reinterpretation of science, and that science taken at 'face value' implies realism."[211] Putnam tries to recapture a realistic notion of 'truth' by redefining it using Tarski's definition of truth as 'satisfaction'; since this is quite a complicated piece of Putnam's overall picture, I prefer to let him describe exactly how he redefines 'truth' in his own words:

[211] Hilary Putnam, "What is 'Realism'?," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 76, (1975-6), 193, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4544887

> Pick a model M of the same cardinality as THE WORLD. Map the individuals of M one-to-one into the pieces of THE WORLD, and use the mapping to define the relations of M directly in THE WORLD. The result is a satisfaction relation SAT – a 'correspondence' between the terms of L and sets of pieces of THE WORLD – such that the theory T^1 comes out *true* – true of THE WORLD – provided we just interpret 'true' as TRUE(SAT).[212]

Setting aside Putnam's complex terminology, his references to a set theoretic model, the essence of what he is saying is made clear by his references to "mapping" and his later reference in the same paper to the projections, Polar and Mercator, used by cartographers. He is saying enumerate how many things there are in THE WORLD whether this is done using infinite sets— because the pieces of THE WORLD are infinite — or using numbers because the pieces are finite, countable, in number is immaterial. The goal is to provide a 'one-to-one' scale representation of these things such that for each of the terms of a language L they are matched directly to "pieces of the world." This kind of 'isomorphic' mapping can be seen to be satisfying a relation that holds between language and the world and voilà! you have 'correspondence' and 'truth' rescued à la Tarski.[213] It seems to me that creating a model where language is mapped on to pieces of 'THE WORLD' in a representational way is simply to reposit the fact that there are fixed objects with fixed relations holding between them or to reassert metaphysical realism.

So, the other step Putnam takes is to make realism empirical by keeping this Tarskian notion of truth as a 'satisfaction' relation but substituting "some familiar

[212] Putnam, "Realism and Reason,"485
[213] Putnam, "Realism and Reason," 485

positivist substitutes for the notion of truth (e.g. 'is simple and leads to true predictions')."[214] According to Putnam, this is something he has borrowed from the 'mathematical intuitionists' to recast realism as a form of 'verificationism' since the truth *relation* being satisfied will now be 'is simple and leads to true predictions' however he sets himself apart from other verificationists by arguing that this has nothing to do with 'meaning' like Ayer and the logical positivists contend. However, this requires Putnam to account for 'meaning' without getting into the sort of troubles that affect verification theory of meaning while maintaining a more nuanced version of verificationism. Therefore, contra Frege, Putnam ends up arguing that 'meaning' is an agglomeration of both 'sense' and 'reference.' How he accomplishes this is quite technical and involves making 'meaning' a combination of the 'extension' of terms with paradigm cases of the objects i.e., "stereotypes" and what he calls "syntactic" and "semantic markers."[215] For my purposes, I do not need to go into further detail about Putnam's account of meaning but I wanted to provide a rough sketch of how Putnam accounts for meaning and truth.

It is difficult to determine exactly what Putnam and Rorty disagree on, since they both continued to revise their positions over the years and over time they come to agree on a great deal. However, there are a few points on which Putnam diverges from Rorty. Putnam maintains that "the extra-theoretic notions of truth and falsity […] are indispensable for rational criticism, which is why they have always been taken as fundamental in the science of logic."[216] Additionally, Putnam argues that reference also

---

[214] Hilary Putnam, "Reference and Understanding," *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 102

[215] Hilary Putnam, "The meaning of 'meaning'," *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers Volume 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 215-271

[216] Hilary Putnam, *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers Volume 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975*), X

relies on this extra-theoretic notion of truth since a term's extension is just exactly "what the term is *true of*."[217] Putnam latches on to a 'use theory' of language as a possible means to reintroduce 'truth as correspondence' through a backdoor; he argues "that the *correspondence* between words and things, between statements and states of affairs, is what explains the success of language using even if it isn't referred to in the 'program' for language using."[218] Putnam is basically arguing here for correspondence theory of truth without standing very strongly by it because he reduces it to a foundation of sorts that is necessary to explain how we can use language even if no language user relies upon on this knowledge.

Putnam makes similar arguments regarding science's reliance on logic. Putnam wants to say that because practicing scientists view their own work as a continuation and progress upon the work of scientists in the past, that this means the acceptance of a hypothesis as true; the hypothesis that theories are "*approximately* correct characterizations of some world of theory-independent entities, and […] later theories in a mature science [are], in general, *better* descriptions of the *same* entities that earlier theories referred to."[219] This is the idea of 'commensurability' between successive theories 'converging' upon a 'correct characterization' of 'THE WORLD.' I think Putnam recommits himself to metaphysical realism at exactly this point in his argument. I also see this as lying at the heart of his disagreement with Rorty since, as he states, "in claiming that the mature sciences do 'converge' (in a very sophisticated sense), and that

[217] Putnam, "The meaning of 'meaning'?" 236
[218] Putnam, "Reference and Understanding," 106
[219] Putnam, "The meaning of 'meaning'," 237

that convergence has great explanatory value for the theory of science, […] anti-realism, 'cultural relativist' anti-realism, is bankrupt."[220]

Putnam contrasts *realism* and *relativism* by arguing that for the relativist what warrants a belief is merely a matter of mutual agreement between peers.[221] Putnam argues that the real issue between him and Rorty lies in their respective views of 'truth' although this discussion largely ends up focusing on the idea of "warranted assertability." Putnam lays out five principles of warranted belief. The first is supposed to antithetical to the relativist view held by Rorty; the principle holds that "(1) In ordinary circumstances, there is usually a fact of the matter as to whether the statements people make are warranted or not."[222] Putnam is sure that Rorty, as a relativist, will disagree with this idea that there is a "fact of the matter" about 'warranted assertability'.[223] Putnam argues that both Realism and Relativism assume a viewpoint that is both within and outside of language, but in the case of Relativism it is a fatal flaw.[224] Putnam argues that the Relativist can hardly argue for their own view without self-refutation, because relativism is "the attempt to say that *from a God's-Eye View there is no God's-Eye view*."[225] Whereas Realism at its core is an attempt to see from a *God's-Eye view* so there is no self-refutation.[226] However, following what I have previously said about Putnam's argument, I maintain that this disagreement between Rorty and Putnam on the fact of the matter about 'warranted assertability' is really at bottom Putnam's attempt to take science

[220] Putnam, "What is 'Realism'?" 193-4
[221] Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, 22
[222] Putnam, ibid., 21
[223] Putnam, ibid., 21-2
[224] Putnam, ibid., 23
[225] Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, 25
[226] Putnam, ibid., 23

at ‘face value’ by preserving the realist intuitions. According to Forster, in a paper on Rorty and Putnam’s colorful exchanges on relativism, Putnam denies himself the appeal to transcendent principles in favor of appealing to these realist intuitions i.e., the ‘convergence’ of theories upon a correct characterization of ‘THE WORLD’ or ‘correspondence’ between fixed objects with fixed relations and a theory or a language; these lie at the heart of the conflict between Rorty and Putnam.[227] Aside from shifting the burdens of metaphysical realism onto internal realism, Putnam does not fully succeed at justifying and explaining the source of his realist intuitions in any way that gets around the challenges facing metaphysical realism itself.

In *Realism with a Human* Face, Putnam recasts his internal realism as lower-case ‘r’ realism, which navigates between the metaphysical realism—maintaining that there are fixed objects and relations viewable from nowhere—and absolute Relativism.[228] Of the three forms of critique, (1) external critique is associated most with metaphysical realism, since it presupposes metaphysical or capital ‘R’ Realism in its formulation; external critique presupposes that it is possible to have a view from Nowhere, which I believe to be collectively refuted by many modern developments in philosophy and science, including the pragmatist account of the social foundations of norms and the ramifications of the Copenhagen Interpretation discussed by Putnam.[229] The second form of critique, internal, looks only at consistency between rules in practice, so it depends on the pre-existing rules and does not attempt to move beyond them.

---

[227] Paul D. Forster, “What is at Stake Between Putnam and Rorty?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52, no. 3 (1992), 593, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2108209
[228] Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, 22-42
[229] Putnam, ibid., 4-9

Therefore, only the third form of critique, the immanent form, corresponds with Putnam's internal realism, since it neither relies on the presuppositions of metaphysical realism, nor is it limited to analyzing inconsistencies between rules. Like Putnam's internal realism, immanent critique navigates a middle way between the two other forms of critique by combining the advantages of both into one. However, immanent critique is not without inconsistencies and it reshapes and reasserts many problematic, metaphysical claims attributed to realism with a capital 'R'. Perhaps it is not possible to practice immanent critique without importing much of its traditional orientation towards Hegelianism and Marxism with the concomitant errors that both of these traditions seem to have fallen into at various times throughout the last century. Before giving up on my dogged search for a critique that neither falls into relativism nor makes untenable metaphysical promises, Taylor seems to have developed a promising, non-foundationalist internal critique which is not tied in with a defense of realism and which could perhaps yet provide a promising means of resolving ethical disputes.

CHAPTER 7: TAYLOR'S REASONING IN TRANSITIONS

Taylor explains his 'reasoning in transitions' (R.I.T. for short) in "Explanation and Practical Reason,"[230] I argue that Taylor's R.I.T., somewhat like immanent critique, falls between the cracks of the usual distinctions drawn between the models of critique. Therefore, I will pursue the hypothesis that R.I.T. is a hybrid of the methodologies common to immanent and internal modes of critique; this becomes especially apparent when analyzing the three types of R.I.T. that Taylor discusses. I argue that Taylor's

[230] Charles Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," *Philosophical Arguments*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 34-60

'reasoning in transitions' would qualify in the 'strong sense' as immanent critique, because his error-reducing process has the potential to be transformative in a context-transcending sense; however, Taylor relies upon developing a thesis regarding the ethnocentric, internal standpoint of the agent of critique within a culture that is strikingly similar to Rorty's internal-hermeneutic critique. Furthermore, Taylor's reliance upon 'explanation' and what he calls 'ad hominem' reasoning seems to place him firmly within a hermeneutical framework and so it would not be unreasonable to identify what he is doing as an internal-hermeneutic critique, like Rorty's, but with the important difference of incorporating the transformational potential of immanent critique.

Arguably the most important distinction which he makes in this paper is that between two different models of practical reason viz. 'apodictic' and 'ad hominem'.[231] In his paper "Rationality," Taylor describes how the Greek *logos* has been translated variously but he latches on to the idea of "giving an account […] (*logon didōnai*)," a reason, or an *explanation* which seems to be common to both modern and ancient forms of reason.[232] Taylor then proceeds to argue that this activity of providing an explanation of a given subject matter in question is central to the conception of rationality, or as Taylor puts it, "Rational understanding is linked to articulation."[233] Taylor is then in a position to argue in favor of his 'ad hominem' mode of practical reasoning and against the traditional, 'apodictic,' kind of rationality, which in many respects is a descendent of Aristotle's demonstrative argument (deductive reasoning) that has been the prevailing

[231] Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," 36
[232] Charles Taylor, "Rationality," *Rationality and Relativism*, ed. Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982), 90
[233] Taylor, "Rationality" 90

mode of practical reason because of its promised objectivity. Taylor explains the advantage of the 'ad hominem' model of practical reasoning by referring to the abortion debate.[234]

The abortion debate is a debate where practical reason reaches its limits because neither side in the debate can be moved to adopt the other's position through reasoning; both sides believe their own position to be self-evident.[235] Taylor is concerned that if practical reason shows itself to be as useless as it appears to be in the case of the abortion debate, then this would become a major source of both moral relativism and normative skepticism since it would be incapable of arbitrating moral disputes.[236] The major issue plaguing the apodictic model is that it aims at objectivity and certainty which may work elsewhere, but in human affairs we must often settle for being less than certain.[237] Another issue with the apodictic model is that it appeals to external norms, and looks to these to settle moral debates, like those surrounding abortion, where it does not seem possible or desirable to bring in outside standards.

Taylor's overall view is committed to unburying and articulating *moral sources* which lie at that heart of many of our deepest commitments such as our commitment to treating others with "justice and benevolence."[238] Taylor makes a compelling argument that our traditional views on disengaged, practical reason, and even the kind of detachment pursued by the natural sciences, make it impossible to articulate the moral

---

[234] Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," 35
[235] Taylor, ibid.
[236] Taylor, ibid.
[237] Taylor, ibid.
[238] Taylor, *Sources of the Self: Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 515

sources that even cold and calculating scientists adhere to throughout their lives despite the way that the increasing formalization of the language surrounding rationality makes it difficult to explain these sources.[239]

At the outset of *Sources of the Self*, Taylor is interested in "exploring the 'background picture' lying behind our moral and spiritual intuitions."[240] Taylor must dig into the 'moral ontology' that articulates these moral and spiritual intuitions and part of this is what forms the basis for the obligation of respect we feel towards other human beings.[241] Taylor argues that if 'morality' is defined as a category that captures our respect and obligations towards other people, then there must also be questions of central importance to us which fall outside of 'morality,' thus defined, and which would call for 'strong evaluation'.[242] "There are questions about how I am going to live my life which touch on the issue of what kind of life is worth living, or what kind of life would fulfill the promise implicit in my particular talents, or the demands incumbent on someone with my endowment, or of what constitutes a rich, meaningful life […] These are issues of strong evaluation," Taylor says.[243] What makes these questions of central importance to us, says Taylor, is that people who investigate these questions generally have a sense of how, in getting the answers wrong, one can consequently "fail to lead a full life."[244] Accordingly, strong evaluation is necessary to leading a full life, but what kind of evaluation is 'strong evaluation,' what exactly does it involve? More importantly for my

[239] Taylor, "Rationality" 91 *ff*; *Sources of the Self,* 8-14
[240] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 8
[241] Taylor, ibid.
[242] Taylor, ibid. 14
[243] Taylor, ibid.
[244] Taylor, ibid.

purpose, how does strong evaluation fit into Taylor's description of 'reasoning in transitions'?

As I mentioned above, part of Taylor's goal in *Sources of Self* is to make explicit the intuitions in a moral picture of the world.[245] Taylor argues that it is impossible for us to not already have a view of the world that is colored, in some way, by our embeddedness in the world; put simply, we cannot extract ourselves to an 'Archimedean point' or 'the view from nowhere' in Nagel's sense, or be completely 'objective', and impartial towards our own lives as we are living them.[246]

As Taylor's quote above clearly explains, just in living our lives, questions constantly and inevitably arise which require us to dig deeper and answer other questions about our orientation in life, our vision of the good life, and our sense of ourselves that are commonly captured by questions like, 'what kind of person do you want to be?'. We would typically answer these questions with words like 'brave,' 'honorable,' 'kind,' 'respectful,' and so on.[247] From this it is immediately clear that the 'objective' world view sought by the scientist is an impossibility; though perhaps it might be argued that a scientist may manage to achieve some 'objectivity' towards his research in the laboratory; however, when he asks himself why he pursued a career in science, or decided to focus on this particular project, or moved to this particular city, it becomes evident that evaluations of some kind are involved and he is not just completely neutral about his life choices.[248] In other words, Taylor argues "to be a full human agent, to be a

---

[245] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 8
[246] Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 6
[247] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 14
[248] Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, 1-7

person or self in the ordinary meaning, is to exist in a space defined by distinctions of worth."[249] Distinctions of worth are evaluations. So, what more can be said about these evaluations?

In outlining 'strong evaluation,' Taylor relies on a distinction borrowed from philosopher Harry Frankfurt between first and second-order desires.[250] Taylor agrees with Frankfurt that second-order desires distinguish us from animals and other organisms.[251] A first-order desire would be my desire to drink the glass of water I see before me on the table when I am thirsty; a second-order desire would be my desire not to have the first-order desire to drink the water upon learning that it was rubbing alcohol someone had set out for cleaning without labeling it.[252] Taylor explains 'strong evaluation' with a contrast to a "*weak* evaluation" or a 'simple weigher'.[253] One example of a simple weigher is someone deciding what desert to have— "éclair or a mille feuilles"—and it is clear that nothing significant or important about the way I live my life is answered by my response to this decision.[254]

In contrast, strong evaluation involves a qualitative contrast between options which is not at all contingent: the choice between being courageous or fleeing in the face of danger; in this case the choice to be courageous *inter alia* directly involves deciding not to flee in the face of danger, so this is necessary to being courageous.[255] An important

---

[249] Taylor, ibid., 3
[250] Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the will and the concept of a person," *Journal of Philosophy* 67, no.1 (1971), 6, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2024717

[251] Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, 15-16
[252] Taylor, ibid.
[253] Taylor, ibid., 18
[254] Taylor, ibid., 16
[255] Taylor, ibid., 19

connection to what has already been said is that strong evaluation directly involves 'distinctions of worth,' answering questions about the kind of person we want to be, and the quality of life we want to live—and not just problems of the lunch now/lunch later variety.[256] Taylor argues that it may be tempting to see the difference between strong and weak evaluation as one between qualitative versus quantitative distinctions; some weak evaluations may involve some qualitative characterization of the alternatives involved between the desires in question, but they do not involve distinctions of qualitative worth.[257]

Another temptation is to view strong evaluation as involving second-order desires and weak evaluation first-order desires, but Taylor argues we can form 'second-order volitions' where we may wish not to have a first-order desire without so framing the alternatives in a way that involves the worth of weighed options.[258] Taylor explains, "So I can want the desire to lunch-and-swim later to be prepotent, because I know I will have a better time all things considered, though I fear that I will break down since you are offering me lunch now."[259]

Taylor argues that we may have many values, or 'goods,' which appeal to us and impact our decision making and our evaluations of ourselves and others, but for some people a particular good may be ranked higher than others.[260] For example, I may value being an honest person over and above the value I place on having a good work ethic even though I still orient myself towards having a good work ethic. Taylor states, "For

---

[256] Taylor, ibid., 15-17
[257] Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, 17
[258] Taylor, ibid., 18
[259] Taylor, ibid.
[260] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 62

those with a strong commitment to such a good […] While they recognize a whole range of qualitative distinctions, while all of these involve strong evaluation, so that they judge themselves and others by the degree they attain the goods concerned […] nevertheless the one highest good has a special place. It is orientation to this which comes closest to defining my identity."[261] Taylor calls these constitutive goods 'hypergoods' and, on par with this description, a person who espoused a certain hypergood would find it impossible to define the meaning of their lives without it: they are "incomparably more valuable than a life that lacks them" for the person who holds them.[262] As should be clear, recognizing values and goods, including hypergoods, involves strong evaluation. As I understand Taylor's R.I.T. it is meant to step in when a conflict between competing hypergoods has reached a stalemate, like that of the abortion debate, where strong evaluation has come to a head. Taylor has three modes of R.I.T. (these modes move progressively away from the apodictic/foundationalist model with the last mode being supposedly free of any appeal to external criteria).

In the first mode of R.I.T.[263], the defeat of one of the opposed positions comes from a "self-recognized anomaly in the vanquished theory."[264] In Taylor's example for this case a 'pre-Galilean' theory of science is facing off against a 'post-Galilean' scientific theory. Taylor does not explicitly deny that a scientific paradigm (an external criteria *brought to bear*) for deciding between rival theories, like that of Karl Popper's philosophy of science, may still be a factor in determining between the rival positions.

---

[261] Taylor, ibid., 62-3
[262] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 63
[263] Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," 43-4
[264] Taylor, ibid., 48

According to Taylor, under Popper's philosophy of science rival theories "face off" against one another much like a football match where a score is determined based on a rubric of criteria that might include parsimony, elegance, and correspondence with the facts.[265]

It seems that what Taylor is going for here is that we have two theories each of which have been checked against a rubric of criteria, which includes qualifications like 'simplicity', predictive power, and so on, but that, in each case, it has reached the same result— both theories are ideal and equally adhere to the rubric's criteria; since these standards are being applied to the theories from outside of the theories themselves, and are not simply checking for internal consistency, this would be more like an external critique.

Either way, in the condition of a "tie" (in the sense described above) between rival theories the 'ad hominem model' would then become useful as a sort of tiebreaker. In the case of pre-Galilean vs. post-Galilean theories both sides acknowledge that "violent" motion is an issue with the pre-Galilean theory, but the pre-Galileans merely view this as an "anomaly." If the post-Galilean theory can explain this anomaly better in terms of their own theory, then, since both sides acknowledge the presence of this anomaly, the pre-Galileans would have to concede that their theory is inferior.[266]

It is hard to see the applicability of this mode of R.I.T. to resolving moral disputes, which are not after all scientific theories. And it clearly still relies on some

[265] Taylor, ibid. 43-4
[266] Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," 43-4

external criteria, like a rubric of scientific criteria, so it is not a good candidate for a clear comparison with immanent or internal critique.

In the second mode of R.I.T.[267], "the very success of the mechanistic science posed a problem."[268] This example appeals, not to a rubric, or external criteria, but to "human constants." What Taylor means by this is something like a piece of knowledge human beings have always held to be true to the extent that any other piece of knowledge which is entailed by this constant must be accepted by an opponent. As Taylor explains, "we are led to recognize a human constant: a mode of understanding of a given domain D, which consists in our ability to make our way about and effect our purposes in D."[269] The idea is that because both ancients and moderns believed practical know-how to be a kind of knowledge, then neither side can deny the success of modern (post-Galilean) science in providing this kind of knowledge. If one of the theories does a better job at explaining this success, then it is the better theory.

I cannot help but feel that the notion of a 'human constant,' as it is used here, makes it like the strong version of reconstructive immanent critique. A 'human constant' would be something like an 'anthropological foundation' that must be accepted because it is foundational to all human practices and societies and is thus an implicit universal which underlies all practices regardless of whether it is acknowledged by practitioners. Given the appeal to such a universal, this 'strong' kind of reconstructive critique seems to befall the same fate as external critique.

---

[267] Taylor, ibid., 44-50
[268] Taylor, ibid., 48
[269] Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," 48

The third mode of R.I.T. seems to be the best candidate for 'immanent critique,' so if it fails to meet Jaeggi's criteria for immanent critique, then Taylor's reasoning in transitions will likewise fail to qualify. In the third mode of R.I.T.[270], the move from one stance or theory to another is shown to be a gain, because "it is mediated by some error-reducing move."[271] The examples Taylor provides of error-reducing moves range from repositioning ourselves and rubbing our eyes to verify what we are seeing to clarifying whether we are in love or resentful by questioning our convictions.[272] What results from this error-reducing move is that we know X is a gain compared to Y, because we employed this error-reduction.

A couple more examples[273] of this error-reducing move may help to clarify what is meant by Taylor. Ebenezer Scrooge from Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* is a miser whose greed has tremendous consequences for his employees who live in dire poverty. Scrooge experiences a vision and is brought to see the past, present, and future by a caring ghost wherein he realizes his failures to recognize and value his employees, other people, and the Christmas spirit. One can imagine this sort of experience being brought about without the intervention of a ghost through a process of contemplation after which one acknowledges that their reflections have been a process of error-reduction analogous to Taylor's example of questioning whether he is in fact in love. Alternatively, an immoral man imagines himself descending into Dante's infernal regions and sees there his life in hell; and he then comes to attribute a value to this awakening and sets about

[270] Taylor, ibid., 50-3
[271] Taylor, ibid., 51
[272] Taylor, ibid.
[273] These are not Taylor's examples, but they seemed to me to illustrate or elaborate upon the idea of his 'error-reducing' move.

making some course corrections to his behavior. In both cases the subject undergoes something akin to an error-reducing process which does not rely on any appeal to external criteria, but which justifies the belief that the new outlook reached through this process is a gain in comparison to the beliefs that were held preceding it. I chose literary, artistic, examples because it seems to me that great literature and art contains many examples of these scenarios and is therefore a great boon to our moral outlook.

Given that such error-reductions do hold the potential to drastically change the lives of those who undergo them, I would argue that they are transformative in the context-transcending sense and so could qualify Taylor's R.I.T. as a form of immanent critique and yet R.I.T. seems to cut across these distinctions since it accepts the social nature of values, advocates a kind of hermeneutics viz. a viz 'explanation,' and occupies the ethnocentric standpoint like that of an internal critique.

CONCLUSION

By accepting the pragmatist critique of epistemic foundationalism which argues for the social conditions of knowledge and justification, I questioned the efficacy of external critique which denies the role of social agreement in forging values and tries to impose ideals upon practices from outside or above the human standpoint. The values posited by external critique were often meant to be accepted on authority and therefore the reasons for accepting these values over others which may arise within a tradition or practice are never clarified by this kind of imposition. There are also doubts as to whether universals are always as inclusive and applicable to all as they often appear since often throughout

history norms of this kind have been a mask for interest-relative ideals which reflect the ideas of the most powerful.

I turned my attention to internal critique which does not presuppose the ability to access a standpoint outside time and history but assumes that every critic is influenced by their cultural inheritances and traditions. This seemed a promising direction, but internal critique often assumes the shape of taking the values posited alongside reality without question and merely aiming to resolve contradictions between these and practices by reforming practices. However, internal critique suffers from conventionalism and structural conservativism. It ends up maintaining the *status quo* which can make it useful for certain purposes, but it fails to be sufficiently radical or critical; the norms themselves are never questioned for their cogency. In addition, internal critique relies upon a hypostatized and non-dynamic view of society, so it seems to ignore the internal dissension and conflict over values which often arise even in communities and countries.

As an example, I looked at Richard Rorty who argues that the agreement of our peers is the only justification that can be hoped for; in particular, Rorty espoused a liberal outlook and tried to show this was as good a starting point as any for a critique since it avoided solipsism through its adherence to the ideals of growth and tolerance. Rorty's approach is hermeneutical because he argued against the certainty of epistemological foundations and for a kind of openness to new and better interpretations of our shared values; he also posited a Utopian vision of a more enlightened and expressive society which he uses to criticize the current philosophic and cultural landscape. However, Rorty's internal critique raises an open question as to how simply continuing conversation will eventuate in a better society; it also seems to fall prey to the structural

conventionalism that other forms of internal critique suffer from, so it fails to be sufficiently critical and radical.

Immanent critique as Jaeggi practices it tries to merge the advantages of internal and external critique without accruing the disadvantages. Immanent critique adopts a very dynamic view of the effectiveness of norms and appears to have mechanisms which allow it to interrogate the cogency and congruence of norms which are operant within practices. The systematic way in which contradictions are tied to dysfunctions within practices also seems to provide a way of measuring the utility of accepted norms and thus it seems to escape the charge of structural conservatism. I argued that Jaeggi's concept of crisis throws all the available resources for identifying and thus resolving these 'second order' problems qua crises into disarray and that her method of critique is left without the critical power required to ferment a transformative process. In addition, her attempt to remove the teleology from Hegel's philosophy of history flounders when she opts to frame her learning processes around the idea of reaching necessary and correct solutions to problems through a dialectical process. The idea of crisis also imported strong metaphysical foundations through a notion of progress that makes it untenable as a mode of critique.

Putnam's immanent critique seemed more promising since his functionalist analysis relied on scientific expertise and did not attempt to rework Hegel's philosophy of history. However, Putnam ends up having a teleological conception of scientific progress converging upon an ideal theory. Although Putnam does not adopt metaphysical realism in a naïve form, it does seem like its outline is traced again within theories and it appears that he ends up re-adopting a sort of 'correspondence' theory of truth. The issue

here is that it seems to require an unavailable standpoint to verify whether there is a correspondence between language and pieces of the world— otherwise Putnam's realist intuitions remain unjustified.

Charles Taylor's reasoning in transitions makes more modest claims that avoid metaphysical presupposition and rather rely upon a conception of practical rationality that runs counter to traditional accounts by allowing for the articulation of the insights into moral commitments and sources that fuel disagreement. Therefore, Taylor does not posit a problematic conception of progress in either morals or science nor does it appeal to anything Utopian or beyond practices. Rather it provides a promising tool for ethical decision making and argumentation which can be applied to many dilemmas like the abortion debate without adopting unjustified presuppositions. Furthermore, the error-reducing process prescribed by Taylor is not an abstract notion but something practicable for which there are down to earth applications. There is also no end which is given in advance to error-reduction, therefore it seems like it can be used to reach more clarified understanding and articulation of the commitments which interlocutors make within a conflict without positing something akin to the end to history or all moral argumentation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Amy. *End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

Ayer, Alfred Jules. *Language, Truth and Logic*. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1952.

Benhabib, Seyla. *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Dewey, John. ""Psychology as Philosophic Method," *Mind* 11, no. 42 (1886): 156, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2247469

Dewey, John. *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action.* New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1929.

Forster, Paul D. "What is at Stake Between Putnam and Rorty?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52, no. 3 (1992): 593, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2108209

Frankfurt, Harry. "Freedom of the will and the concept of a person," *Journal of Philosophy* 67, no.1 (1971): 6

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977.

Hook, Sidney. *John Dewey: An Intellectual Portrait*. New York: The John Day Company, 1989.

Jaeggi, Rahel. *Critique of Forms of Life*. translated by Ciaran Cronin, Cambridge: The Belknap Press Harvard University Press, 2018.

James, William. *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912.

Katsafanas, Paul. "7. Hermeneutics: Nietzschean Approaches." In *The Cambridge Companion to Hermeneutics*, edited by Michael N. Forster and Kristin Gjesdal, 158-83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Kauppinen, Antti. "Reason, Recognition, and Internal Critique," *Inquiry* 45, 2002.

Mouffe, Chantal. *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, London: Verso, 2013.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good & Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books A Division of Random House, 1989.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "*From* On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann, 42-7. New York: Penguin Books, 1982.

Peirce, Charles S. *Collected Papers, Vol. 2: Elements of Logic*. Cambridge: Belknap Press Harvard University Press, 1974.

Peirce, Charles S. "Historical Affinities and Genesis," in *Pragmatism: The Classical Writings*, edited by H.S. Thayer, 53-60. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982.

Peirce, Charles S. "How To Make Our Ideas Clear," in *Pragmatism: The Classical Writings*, edited by H.S. Thayer, 79-100. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982.

Peirce, Charles S. "The Architectonic Construction of Pragmatism," in *Pragmatism: The Classical Writings*, edited by H.S. Thayer, 50-53. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982.

Peirce, Charles S. *The Fixation of Belief. Popular Science Monthly* 12, (November 1877): 1-15

Putnam, Hilary. "The meaning of 'meaning'," *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers Volume 2*, 215-71. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Putnam, Hilary. *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers Volume 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Putnam, Hilary. "Realism and Reason." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 50, no. 6 (1977): 483, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3129784?origin=JSTOR-pdf

Putnam, Hilary. *Realism with a Human Face*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Putnam, Hilary. "Reference and Understanding," in *Meaning and the Moral Sciences*, 97-122. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

Putnam, Hilary. "What is 'Realism'?," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 76, (1975-6): 193, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4544887

Rorty, Richard. "Dewey's Metaphysics." in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, 72-89. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

Rorty, Richard. "Hilary Putnam and the Relativist Menace." In *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers*, 43-62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Rorty, Richard. "Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry? Donald Davidson versus Crispin Wright," in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume 3*, 19-42. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Rorty, Richard. “On ethnocentrism: A reply to Clifford Geertz” in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 203-10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, First Princeton Classics Edition. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Richard Rorty, “Postmodernist bourgeois liberalism,” in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 197-202. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Rorty, Richard. “Solidarity or objectivity?” in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1*, 21-34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Sabia, Dan. “Defending Immanent Critique,” *Political Theory* 38, no. 5 (2010): 684-5, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25749176

Särkelä, Arvi. “Immanent Critique as Self-Transformative Practice: Hegel, Dewey, and Contemporary Critical Theory.” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 31, no. 2 (2017): 219-22, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jspecphil.31.2.0218

Stahl, Titus. “Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique.” *Constellations* 20, no. 4 (2013).

Taylor, Charles. “Explanation and Practical Reason.” In *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Taylor, Charles. *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Taylor, Charles. “Rationality,” *Rationality and Relativism*, edited by Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes, 87-105. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Walzer, Michael. *Interpretation and Social Criticism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. London: Routledge, 1961.

VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Shawn Stickney

PLACE OF BIRTH: Waterloo, Ontario

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1989

EDUCATION: Elmira District Secondary School, Elmira
2004-2008

Sir Sandford Fleming College, Lindsay
2008-2011

University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario
2017-2021 B.A.

University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario
2021-2023 M.A.