



Richard Rorty's Critique of the "Self" : For Re-description and Solidarity

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Richard Rorty's Critique of the "Self": For Re-description and Solidarity

リチャード・ローティの「自己」批判一再記述と連帯のために――

神戸大学大学院人文学研究科博士課程

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Richard Rorty's Critique of the "Self": For Re-description and Solidarity

リチャード・ローティの「自己」批判—再記述と連帯のために—

by

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Abstract

In this study, we will explain Richard Rorty's view of the self and some of the criticisms he received regarding his doctrine of private irony and liberal hope. The notion of the self is approached both directly as reality and as a philosophical concept. Based on Dan Zahavi's phenomenological approach to neuroscience, we will explain how the self forms through *re-engagement* with and *acknowledgement* from others. The process of the formation of the self begins with the perceiving subject recognizing himself/herself as an existing entity different from others. This recognition must be a result of the way by which the subject re-engages and receives acknowledgment from others, i.e., the interaction.

The self is not an abstract concept that exists ahistorically. Rather, it only makes sense when it interacts with the environment. Two necessary prerequisites for viewing the self as a historical entity are the biological conditions and the experience of the subject in the context of reality.

The process of interaction between the individual and the community is a process in which the subject extends his/her scope of interaction beyond his/her individual space towards linguistic expressions with the "third-person".¹ This causes the expansion of subjectivity to inter-subjectivity where the moral orientation, as Charles Taylor mentions, and justification in historical contexts, as proposed by Rorty, will help individual creativity and communal unity find the solidarity. Collisions between two distinct values occur when one value differs from

¹ Others and the subject perceived by others (See Gallagher, Shaun & Jonathan Shear, 1999, pp. ix).

another value, that is, in terms of the later Wittgenstein, when we refuse to play the same language game in which each individual has to expand the space for interacting and playing other people's language games. That is, search for consensus among values serves as a basis for similarities between differences, according to Cheryl Misak's commentary.

Rorty seeks a liberal hope which can contribute to reconciling personal creative space with the unity of community. Because any compromise will retract the unique creativity of the individual, he proposed to justify the contingency of the self by regarding its continuous change and adaptation to create new re-descriptions as an effective solution towards communal consensus.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Philosophy, in general terms, perceives the self as both the subject and the object of the cognitive process. As the subject, acknowledging the existence of subjectivity is a prerequisite for establishing a conceptual system with which to describe reality. In other words, one must recognize himself/herself as a living entity in reality that has a capacity for perceiving reality. Regarding the object, philosophers also acknowledge the existence of personality in interactions with others. That is, they recognize the inseparable relationship between the self and reality as well as the organic interaction among different selves. A normative system serves as the basis for the process of perceiving from the self to the others and returns to itself not only as a frame of reference for the possibility of perception but also as a precondition for liberating the self.

From a critical point of view, the subject must be interpreted as a complete entity with characteristics to provide reasonable justifications for the existence of a conceptual system that has been used by the subject to describe objects. Moreover, the subject must also be perceived as an element in a network of relationships with the objects of reality in order to not become an isolated object detached from the reality in which he/she exists.

The search for the answer to the question regarding the sense of the self and the nature of reality is interpreted according to how the subject phrases the question. For example, does the self have an inherent nature or is there is no such thing as inherent nature? Alternatively, are so-called “nature” and “subjectivity” just ways

of explaining the reality of the self in itself? The process of re-phrasing these questions is the process of creating a pragmatic interpretation of the self and positioning of the self concerning its existence.

Contrary to the Platonic – Cartesian interpretations, Rorty argued that the self, as a concept, cannot be separated from the social and historical conditions that formed it. If we want to interpret the self as the self-creation in the reference of ‘the conversation of mankind,’ we must abandon the way of understanding the self as an ahistorical entity with immutable substances.

However, Rorty’s proposals for individuality and individual creativity have separated two elements in human existence: the individual's free will and the individual's role in the community. Rorty’s inadequacy in resolving the conflict between these two elements has received much debate from philosophers.

1.1. Thesis Statement

Our research in this dissertation will focus on analyzing Richard Rorty’s standpoint on the self as well as the criticism and complement he receives when presenting his perspective on the term “self.” The approach and interpretation of the self begins with the question of the very nature of the self’s existence, i.e., whether the self exists as a real entity or is merely the feeling the subject has about himself/herself in interaction with the external environment. If the self exists as an entity, how will we understand it? If we claim the existence of the self, we have to identify it as a perceived object. Because we cannot perceive an object that is completely non-existent, “the self” cannot be an empty concept that describes something that only makes sense in pure conversation.

Questioning the existence of the self as an entity will lead to a core problem of consciousness, which is language. Consciousness is the language of the subject speaking to himself/herself. It is an internal form of language. However, personal experiences will not have real meaning if they are not named and described in words. Language cannot be a human language; it has to be language in a particular community. So, to identify the self through language, the notion of the self must be a real concept that implies a real entity.

The self, in this interpretation, will no longer be the inner conversation of the subject with himself/herself. The self is just itself in interaction with the outside world. In other words, no single self exists through time and space. The notion of self and the self itself can only be the self in interaction. When Rorty explains the self, he does not approach the self as an independent cognitive object. He describes the self as one of three contingency attributes: the contingency of language, the contingency of selfhood, and the contingency of community.²

By placing the self in the change and adaptation through the use of language, the self facing itself, and the self in adapting to the community, Rorty establishes a socio-historical interpretation in which each individual must be a historical individual; a non-historical individual is impossible. The premises that individuals receive from the beginning of the formation of their cognitive abilities are the language conditions that they will use as a frame of reference to explain and describe reality. The way in which an individual uses language to describe reality reflects the community into which he or she is born. When proposing that the self

² See Rorty, Richard (1989). Part I: Contingency. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (pp. 3-69).

should be the self-creation as private irony, Rorty is skeptical of the correctness of the linguistic system in describing real events to be able to create useful values for the subject in the present.

The question of meaning and value is raised when the individual is faced with a conflict between their personal life (towards creativity) and the purpose of the community (towards solidarity). When the conflict between these two dimensions of interaction occurs, the assessment of whether a behavior is right or appropriate is not only a matter of morality or conduct but will inevitably lead to political interpretations.

However, the way Rorty abandons explaining the origin of the self in terms of psychology and neuroscience and goes straight to the contingency and the interaction of the self with reality caused a lot of controversy and criticism. The purpose of tracing the origin of the self is not only to complement our understanding of ourselves but also to respond to the controversy surrounding the responsibility and duties of an individual related to his/her community.

Therefore, our research will begin by examining the origin of the self and gradually explaining how the self describes and identifies itself in the process of awareness and action.

1.2. Objectives

First and foremost, the objective of this research focuses on interpretation as the way of forming the self, both as an entity and as a concept. The self is formed not from the outburst of the subject in private experiences with himself/herself but when the subject realizes that he/she is an existing entity and different from others.

Second, the interpretation of the self cannot be complete without overlooking two important conditions of the self's formation: biological and interactive conditions. Therefore, the second topic of this research will focus on the analysis of neuroscience's useful discoveries to facilitate the understanding of the self as a convincing scientific basis. We will also use neuroscientific research to explain how an individual can see himself/herself in others and how the mechanisms that create understanding and empathy among individuals stem from specific functions of the brain.

Psychological and neuroscientific explanations will lead to the analysis of the third objective in this study, which is how an individual can expand his/her own interactive space outside his/her scope to an inter-subjectivity in order to create an understanding between the differences by using the justification.

1.3. Rationale

This study has three driving factors.

First, the identification of the self begins with the question of ourselves as objects to make sense of our lives. This is not only an academic question but also a question regarding daily life needed to give meaning to our lives. Depending on the specific context of the questioner and the targeted object, the answers to the self will give us hints to determine the practical actions of the cognitive subject in reality.

The next factor comes from the debate regarding the normative system that serves as the basis for the perception and action of the self. Does a foundation similar to those characteristics inherent in real objects exist? If that foundation is rational arguments, does the continuation of the argument of that foundation change

the foundation itself? If we continue the debate the foundation of consciousness, the core issues of the individual and society will be the topic of the argument, especially the question of belief. Some beliefs have formed and affected the thoughts and actions of individuals and communities so much that they are considered truth. Thus, questioning the correctness and stability of cognitive foundations will raise the question regarding how we will understand and behave according to the beliefs that already exist as part of the community's culture.

From the question regarding the stability of the foundations for personal and communal thinking and behavior, the issue of the relationship between the individual and the community will have to be interpreted. How does the self connect reasonably with others in a totality of relations? When the argument of the self is based on a normative system, it is difficult to connect with another self if those selves do not have the same cognitive standards. So, what is this normative system and what are its features to connect the subjectivities in the inter-subjectivity in which having the same purpose?

1.4. Methodology

Our research is divided into three parts.

In the first part, we will explore Richard Rorty's questions of the self, which emphasize the language and social conditions that the individual cannot avoid while interacting with the environment. We will then apply Dan Zahavi's analysis to Galen Strawson's phenomenological viewpoint to explain the existence of the self as an experiential self. In this chapter, the research also focuses on explaining the psychological debates of Kym Maclaren and neuroscientists in order to understand

the mechanism of simulating and reproducing others' behaviors and feelings in the subject's mind to understand the way the subject sees himself/herself in others.

The second part of the study will explain the biological mechanism of forming the self using Cheryl Misak's arguments about setting standards so that subjectivity can expand its dimension to form inter-subjectivity. The expansion of subjectivity raises the issue of conflict between personal values and the interests of the community; the morality-oriented approach of Charles Taylor and the proposals of Wittgenstein regarding interpreting private experience will give us a more comprehensive view of Rorty's analysis about the distinction between private and public life.

The final part of the study will focus on explaining how an individual, when shaping himself/herself in relation to others, will be affected when his/her image network is broken. Rorty differs from Jacques Lacan in that he considers the subject's imagination as an unconscious suggestion of personal creativity, as proposed by Sigmund Freud. G. H. Mead's view of the generalized others and William James's view of the self perceiving itself as both the subject (knower) and the object (known), as well as Richard Bernstein's analysis of Rorty, will also be analyzed in response to questions asked by Nancy Fraser about Rorty distinguishing between private and public factors to form the self-creation.

Chapter 2

The Self's Formation Begins with the Subject Realizing Itself as a Different Entity

The diversity and complexity of the arguments and criticisms among philosophers regarding the actual existence of the self can be condensed into two contrasting issues: The self is an experienced phenomenon that is generalized into a concept assigned to the cognitive subject as a tool for identification, or the self exists as an a priori entity that is activated and developed through interactions between the cognitive subject and the environment. Phenomenologist and psychologist, like Dan Zahavi and Kym Maclaren, summed up the endless controversy over the formation of the self through phenomenology, existentialism, and new insights in neuroscience to conclude that the existence of the self is only meaningful when it is the experiential self. This chapter will focus on three issues. First, we will give a brief history of the question of the self and the key point of Richard Rorty's perspective on this term. Second, we will explore how the self is formed by the interaction between the subject and the object in which the object is actively engaged in the control space of the subject. Third, we will explain how, according to the neuroscientific perspective, the understanding of the subject's self-perception process is triggered by the subject seeing himself/herself in another person.

2.1. The starting point of the sense of self

Truth cannot be out there – cannot exist independently of the human mind – because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but the descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own – unaided by the describing activities of human beings – cannot (Rorty, 1989, p. 5).

When Rorty asserted the above statement in Part I of his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, he not only denied the traditional Platonic and Cartesian philosophical views, which separate human beings (as the subject of cognitive process) from the world (as perceived objects) but also the existence of inherent nature in the world and human beings, that we must discover. He also not only asserted that what we call truth is not inherent in things but what we interpret and describe human and the world. Rorty asserted that the formation of the self is not an internal monologue process or the self-creation of new words to satisfy individual desires. Rorty's approach to the concept of the self begins with recognizing the linguistic, social, historical, and community premises that create the original characteristics of the self. The next step is to place the subject in constant interaction with others and the environment; this way, new words are created when the subject re-describes past events in a new way to create usefulness that are useful to the subject at the present.

However, as every other philosophical notion, the question of the self has been mentioned and interpreted throughout the history of philosophy. The earliest interpretations of the self can be found in the way Socrates emphasized self-

knowledge in the context of moral life, accompanied by quoting one of the most famous Delphic maxims, “Know Thyself.” Philosophers approach the problem of the self by defining three ways humans can be perceived: first-person (the perceiving subject himself/herself or the knower), second-person (the subject perceiving himself/herself as an object), and third-person (the subject perceived by others). Plato, a student of Socrates, isolated human nature, associated with the aspirations to a spirit of freedom, out of pure animal desires. He also directed us to a realm of forms outside the tangible, visible reality that make up true reality and the nature of all things, including human beings. Aristotle, a student of Plato, focused on the rational part of human beings (social and linguistic), which enhance the diverse functions of the body “to a higher, human and close to divine level.”³

Descartes interpreted the self as self-thinking; the mental states that the subject perceives itself are separate from the external or physical conditions, an Archimedean approach that asserts that self-knowledge will provide the knowledge of the whole things. Rorty denies this when arguing that the Archimedean viewpoint recognizes non-historical individuals.⁴

Wittgenstein’s interpretations of self focus on concepts associated with the sense of self, such as “self,” “I,” and the way private experiences of the self manifest in interaction through language. That is, how the subject (first-person) interacts with others (third-person) through the use of language. Wittgenstein was inspired by how words express human life.

³ See Gallagher, Shaun & Jonathan Shear (1999), pp. ix.

⁴ See Nielsen, Kai (2009). Richard Rorty. In Shook, John R. & Joseph Margolis (Ed.), pp. 133.

[Wittgenstein] is trying to get his reader to think of how the words are tied up with human life [...] His description of the human forms of life on which our concepts are based make us aware of the kind of creature we are (Malcome, 1970, as cited in Goodman, 2002, pp. 90).

Based on Wittgenstein's analysis, we need to consider "what it is like to be a human being."⁵ The self or the sense of the self is the way of being human.

William James focuses on "the empirical self" as comprised of three core elements: "the material self," "the social self," and "the spiritual self." He explained that the underlying problem of the awareness of the self is that an individual first perceives himself/herself as an entity that exists with biological conditions (his/her body), which is the sources of the subject's feelings and reasonings about himself/herself and surrounding objects.

The body is the innermost part of *the material Self* in each of us; and certain parts of the body seem more intimately ours than the rest. The clothes come next [...] Next, our immediate family is a part of ourselves. Our father and mother, our wife and babes, are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When they die, a part of our very selves is gone. If they do anything wrong, it is our shame. If they are insulted, our anger flashes forth as readily as if we stood in their place. Our home comes next. Its scenes are part of our life; its aspects awaken the tenderest feelings of affection; and we do not easily forgive the stranger who, in visiting it, finds fault with its arrangements or treats it with contempt (James, 1890, pp. 652–653).

⁵ See Goodman, Russell B. (2002), pp. 90.

James's introspective point of view directs attention and interpretation to the particular experiences of each individual rather than explaining conceptual foundations that separate the direct impact of the external environment on the individual's perception and experience.

Therefore, the experience of an individual is not just a topic of debate among philosophers; it is the subject's questions about himself/herself in everyday life—a form of “inner life” in which the subject questions himself/herself as a living entity. According to Lakoff and Johnson, there are five types of experiences associated with subjects' interactions with objects that are inseparable from the role of biological human functions:

First, there are the ways in which we try to control our bodies and in which they “get out of control.” Second, there are cases in which our conscious values conflict with the values implicit in our behavior. Third, there are disparities between what we know or believe about ourselves and what other people know or believe about us. Fourth, there are experiences of taking an external viewpoint, as when we imitate others or try to see the world as they do. And last, there are the forms of inner dialogue and inner monitoring we engage in (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, pp. 267).

Affirming human cognitive and practical behaviors as well as an approach to the self that cannot be explained by pure rational cognitive foundations, both Lakoff and Johnson want to offer an approach to obtaining unconscious cognition in which every human being is a metaphysician not in an academic sense but in our ability to make our experiences meaningful. By using conceptual premises, we have the

ability to “make sense of everyday life.”⁶ They also assert that the self cannot be understood as the inner experience of human cognitive processes but as “everything about us – our bodies, our social roles, our histories, and so on.”⁷

As such, it is impossible to interpret the self as a single, absolute entity in all interactions with reality. There is only the self in a particular relationship – a context – in a certain experience. The selves exist as “pearls” in “a string of pearls” associated with certain social conditions and mechanisms of biological functions, “namely a set of neurons in a certain state of activation.”⁸ Galen Strawson similarly began his view of mental self by asserting that we cannot identify an individual personality as an inherent characteristic of the whole manifestation of the self. The mental self must be understood as a connection to all the constituent elements of the self as an internal and synchronic connection, that is, the self can only exist and have momentary significance rather than a diachronic setting that exists through space and time.

In order to interpret the sense of the self, Strawson proposed a metaphysical approach. It is not a traditional metaphysical but a phenomenological perception of the self. He explained that we have to start analyzing the self with phenomenology because when we consider the self a cognitive object and reveal a phrase like “the self,” we are assuming that an object already exists in an independent sense. Therefore, the phenomenological approach will help us approach the self as an

⁶ See Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson (1999), pp. 10.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 268.

⁸ See Gallagher, Shaun & Jonathan Shear (1999), pp. xii.

object that exists temporarily. In addition, Strawson stated that when we set up a local “phenomenological question” of “What is the nature of the human sense of the self?” then this question will lead to “the general phenomenological question” of “Are there other possibilities when it comes to a sense of the self?” Answers to these two questions will lead to “the conditions question”: “What are the grounds or preconditions of possession of a sense of the self?” To answer all three of these questions, we need to answer “the factual question”: “Is there such a thing as the self?”⁹

Similarly, when we ask the question “Who am I?” the first step is to admit there is an “I” (which already exists) that we ask questions about. However, the “I” cannot answer the question of its existence without the cause of “I.” Therefore, we proceed to the second question: “Where does the ‘I’ come from?” So, if we replace “I” with “human nature,” we must admit that the interpretation of the nature of reality is the quest to answer to the first question.

In other words, we can understand that the “I” as an “object” (second-person) does not exist outside of our justification of the “I.” When we say that the “I” is an available presupposition, it is thought to be available “before” our justifications of the “I.” However, the “I” is completely meaningless outside its monologue. The “I” is both independent and depends on subjective explanations. Thus, it would be more convincing if we focus on the notions of “self” instead of “I.” The self is understood as the place of its own concentration of will, emotion, and self-evaluation. The “I-self” is the self-concept of the knowing subject.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 2.

However, the “I-self” does not exist independently if it lacks the sense of self-concept. This sense comes from two sources; first, the “I-self” perceives its value system through a “mirror image”, the “Me-self.” Second, the “I-self” separates itself and observes and evaluates itself as an external object.

The process of the “I” separating itself to understand the self-concept concerning the “Me” results in subjectivity. Subjectivity can feel like a relatively independent object. It is the sum of the perceptions, evaluations, and characteristics of the “I” and its relationship with others. In a conversation, understood as a space for expression, subjectivity is defined as the characteristics of behaviors and interactions that are influenced by personal emotions, attitudes, and perceptions.

Subjectivity can be interpreted as consisting of the following characteristics:

- Judgment based primarily on emotional impressions and personal views rather than external reality.
- One’s perceptions, views, feelings, beliefs, and desires. It is often used to denote personal views as opposed to knowledge and beliefs based on reality.
- Things that happen in the mind and are governed by personal prejudices.
- It belongs to the knowing subject concerning the object.
- It exists in mind of the knowing subject and is not necessarily compatible with any object outside of the mind.

The approach of the self and subjectivity is meaningful and valid when we recognize them as objects existing momentarily. Therefore, in this chapter, we will begin to interpret the self by approaching the phenomenology through Dan Zahavi’s perspective and consider arguments from psychologists and neuroscientists.

2.2. Possession of things is the beginning of the process of the self's formation: a phenomenological interpretation

There is nothing else like “the self.” If there is something similar, it is just an “ontologically independent entity.” In *Self & Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame*, Dan Zahavi began his argument on the real existence of the notion of the self by using the anti-realism ideals of Thomas Metzinger and Miri Albahari.

Through use of neuroscientific findings, Metzinger denies the existence of the self as “a really existing entity.” He stresses that the notion and content of the self are our internal self-experiences that have been created and produced by the “multitude of interrelated cognitive modules in the brain.”¹⁰

Albahari continues this trend by emphasizing the distinctions between phenomenology and metaphysics as well as between experience and reality, in which she notes that our sense of self has been formed by our feelings, thoughts, and sensations of existence in reality only. She suggests that our sense of self lacks realistic elements that can exist together as an entity but instead merely exist as a non-real abstract concept (the notion of the self). Zahavi repeats her analysis in order to question the real existence of the notion of the self:

One of the interesting aspects of Albahari's proposal is that whereas many advocates of a no-self doctrine have denied that consciousness is characterized by unity, unbrokenness, and invariability, and have taken the

¹⁰ See Zahavi, Dan (2014), pp. 3.

denial of these features to amount to a denial of the reality of the self, Albahari considers all three to be real features of consciousness, but she nevertheless considers the self to be illusory. (Zahavi, 2014, pp. 42)

In other words, these two scholars have drawn a clear line between the self as a product of human brain activity and the self as a mechanism the subject uses to access the structure of facts. That is, we cannot refer to the independent entity of the self as an experienced event. However, this interpretation holds an intrinsic contradiction within itself. In assuming that the self is only a product of mental activity constituted by interactions within thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Human feelings, sensations, and thoughts cannot exist independently of external interactions with events or objects. There is no such thing as pure feeling or thought. It is always the feeling of *what*, the thought of *something*. We are addressing the subject's ability to evaluate, judge, and deduce during its interaction with the environment. In other words, the self is not only the product of that interaction but also a form of the cognitive subject involved in the projection of things.

Zahavi disagrees with both the abovementioned scholars. He mentions that their understandings seem to imply that the concept of the self is merely a domain of interpretation by philosophers. They have ignored the fact that the concept of the self is a topic of concern and interpretation not only in “cognitive science, development psychology, sociology” but also in “neuropsychology, and psychiatry.”¹¹

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 4.

To solidify his argument, Dan Zahavi used interpretations of other scholars, like Gibson and Ulric Neisser's research on psychology, to prove that the cognitive subject is not an entity that passively receives a reflection of reality but rather a dynamic one that actively explores the environment. Moreover, it is the sense of the self that, when actively involved in interactions with diverse objects and environments, helps the cognitive subject recognize himself/herself in the relationship between the perceiver and the environment. All human perceptions are the "co-perception of self and environment."¹² Neisser's studies indicated that as soon as a baby is one month old, it is able to distinguish between objects both within and without his/her reach. This means the infant possesses the capacity to determine what belongs to him/her and what is outside his/her access. By distinguishing five different concepts of the self - "ecological self, interpersonal self, conceptual self, temporally extended self, and private self"—Neisser concludes that the self is an individual experiencing himself/herself in order to determine his/her own space and peripheral space; the self has potential materials of the "basic form of self-experience"¹³ to shape judgment and motivate behavior.

We can explore this statement in more detail by returning to Jean Piaget's child psychology experiments.¹⁴ These experiments demonstrated that an infant aged 14

¹² Ibid., pp. 4.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 4.

¹⁴ In these experiments, for example, when an object (such as a watch) was hidden under two different cushions, the baby, Jacqueline, raised the right cushion to find the watch and ignored the other cushion. She only focused on the object that she wanted to find. In another experiment, a baby named Laurent was able to manage both visual and invisible space when he ignored all of the options that were shown by the

to 20 months has already formed a capacity for judging the absentee status. Tran Duc Thao argued this by suggesting the existence of a complex consisting of all positions (the whole unseen situation) in which the child is able to manage the space and objects around himself/herself.¹⁵ These interactive actions create contact and connection between the subject and the object to which the actions are directed. Moreover, by managing the space around himself/herself and unseen situations, the subject can form his/her representation of the object. The next step in this interaction is the subject's ability to extend his/her own space beyond his/her physical and visible reach to assign his/her control to the object and simultaneously enclose the object into his/her own space.

It should be noted that the formation of the subject's representation of the object here should not be construed as the establishment of a stable and constant reference system with which to determine the object. To paraphrase Kai Nielsen, we cannot separate any representations of specific objects and practices. The human language

experimenter (a shoe, a toy, a ribbon) to find the right object that he was searching for from the beginning (a little box). This means that a baby's eyes will search for the object, and he/she will point his/her fingers towards the space where his/her eye cannot see and find the object that it wants to have. (See Piaget, Jean, 1954. *The Construction of Reality in the Child*, pp. 66 – 78).

¹⁵ “Now, in the child, it is toward 19 months that a first representation of the absent situation appears, which is demonstrated by the fact that he becomes capable of following a hidden object through *several invisible displacements*. The representation of these successive displacements is possible only within the framework of a complex image which envelops the ensemble of invisible positions, in other words the ensemble of the *invisible situation*, through which the object has been displaced. As a working hypothesis, we thus propose to consider the 14 – 20 months period in the child as ‘*the age of the prehomind*’.” (See Tran Duc Thao, 1984, pp. 48 – 49).

used to access the object cannot stand outside the relationship to which the language refers.¹⁶ This interpretation negates Metzinger and Albahari's stance of the concept of the self as unrealistic.

In the early stage of the self's formation, as seen in Piaget's experiment, a child applies his/her own representation to the object he/she seeks. At that point, the object no longer exists as an external entity (i.e., outside the subject) but becomes the subject itself. In other words, it becomes part of the subject's space of management. The self, at the beginning of its formation, does not exist as "a pure self" separated from interaction but must be understood as the enlargement of itself in the object and the inclusion of the object in the self's space.

The beginning of the possible existence of the self originates from the interaction between the subject and object. The self cannot be understood as an independent thing but is formed by the subject experiencing himself/herself and thus becoming aware of himself/herself, similar to how Dan Zahavi asserts that the self can only be the experiential-self, the self-consciousness. It should be noted that the experience cannot be interpreted as a process originating from the subject's private purpose and intention. The subject is not able to experience himself/herself but is only able to experience something in something else. Even the process of self-consciousness is the result of self-liberation as a means through which the subject recognizes himself/herself as an object that they aim to achieve.¹⁷ Thus,

¹⁶ See Nielsen, Kai (2009). Richard Rorty. In Shook, John R. & Joseph Margolis (Ed.), pp. 131.

¹⁷ The self as self-awareness starts with the subject realizing himself/herself as the subject, that is, he/she is different from the object. Then the subject approaches the object as part of his/her managed space. The third

“selves are not born, but arise in a process of social experience and interchange.”¹⁸ Zahavi reaffirms this point when he discusses the views of French and German philosophers Benveniste, Foucault, and Sartre. He utilizes their arguments to confirm that “subjectivity, rather than being a given, something innate and fundamental, is a cultural and linguistic construction”¹⁹ and to argue for the intention and purpose of the self as a concept that implies a possible object (one is always subject to, or the subject of, something). Arguments he used included that of Foucault, who conceived the idea of “the subject who is constituted as subject—who is ‘subjected’—is he who obeys”²⁰ and Sartre’s account that “an experience does not simply exist, it exists in such a way that it is implicitly self-given, or, as Sartre puts it, it is ‘for itself’ [...] that is, self-consciousness.”²¹

However, Zahavi’s direction has a problem that Kym Maclaren pointed out in her 2008 study.²² When Zahavi and other psychologists attempt to prove the possibility of the self in the interaction and exchange of itself with the object, they default to the existence of the “subject” as the starting point of the self-consciousness process. There is the default existence of “I” and “mine” as the

step is to understand that the subject assigns his/her representativeness to the object and sees himself/herself in the object. Finally, the subject separates himself/herself from himself/herself in order to see himself/herself as an object to perceive.

¹⁸ See Zahavi, Dan (2014), pp. 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 10.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 10.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 11.

²² See Maclaren, Kym (2008), pp. 66–68.

subject of cognition as well as the object outside of “I” and “mine.” Although the process of forming the self comes from the interaction with the object through which the subject realizes himself/herself, there is no process of accessing the object without the concept of “I” and “mine” as the original point of awareness. Zahavi and the phenomenologists and existentialists quoted by him all assert the embodied self by acknowledging the intention and purpose of the experience. However, this leads to another question: If we assert that the experience must be an experience of something, then should we be skeptical about “who is the subject of that experience?” Kym Maclaren argues that if the formation of the self begins to experience the difference between the subject and the object, then the experience must be presumably available when the subject approaches the object as something that does not belong within the subject’s physical and visual reach. In other words, the subject must possess a prior ability to distinguish himself/herself from the other, i.e., perceive himself/herself as a self.

2.3. The ability to see oneself in others as a premise for the self-consciousness process: arguments from psychology and neuroscience

In her study, Maclaren points out that Zahavi, Neisser, Butterworth, and Stern have acknowledged that the infant’s ability to see himself/herself as an embodied entity that is different from others occurs very early; an infant is able to perceive that “I” is approaching and interacting with the object and that the object “is not me” or “does not belong to me.”

Infants possess, much earlier, an ability to distinguish themselves *perceptually, as embodied subjects*, from other objects and people [...] she may be able to distinguish unreflectively, in her perceptual engagement with the world, between ‘my’ and the other’s actions, ‘my’ embodied being and the other’s, and ‘myself’ and that thing. (Maclaren, 2008, pp. 66)

Thus, recognizing the subject’s “very nature of perception” as “a lived sense of distinction”²³ as a premise for the experiential process is imperative in order to access the interaction between subject and object. In other words, there is no process of experience if the subject does not recognize the distinction between himself/herself and others.

Maclaren explains this trend by analyzing Gibson and Butterworth’s psychological studies on the movement of the subject’s vision and the “moving room” case study.²⁴ Whether accidentally or deliberately, the vision of the world from the subject’s point of view will change depending on whether the moving head of the subject is the starting point for this interpretation. As we turn our heads, the image of the world moves in the direction of the head’s rotation, i.e., the image of the world the subject receives is not fixed but instead depends on how the subject looks at it. Simultaneously, the subject’s body does not move, and if we look down the tip of our nose at any time, it does not move. Put yourself in the shoes of a child who is beginning to become capable of managing things in the space he/she is trying

²³ Ibid., pp. 66.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 66.

to access, which is a primitive understanding of the distinction between the viewer and the viewed world.

Maclaren contends that Zahavi used this view to point out how a child perceives the difference between his/her body and the world around him/her. This is the crux of the theory of self-experience as self-consciousness. It begins with the premise that an individual recognizes himself/herself as a “self” rather than a “thing.” The acceptance of the interaction of the environment in oneself must emanate a clear distinction, that is “I” am looking at the world, and the world is coming to “me”: “Primary body-awareness is not a type of object-consciousness, is not a perception of the body as an object at all..., but on the contrary a genuine form of self-experience.”²⁵ This view, according to Maclaren’s argument, is the continuation of traditional phenomenological perspectives that assert the subjectivity of the experience process and that the self-consciousness cannot be seen as an object. In the study by Butterworth and Neisser on the “moving room,” the psychologists also pointed out that when a child is placed in a room with a movable wall, it will move forward if the wall recedes or fall backward if the wall approaches him/her.

That means that the child, in addition to being able to manage the surrounding space, can also use the information that the world brings to him/her to promote action as an active subject: “the infant as agent ‘makes use of’ this information to control her actions.”²⁶ Thus, the sense of self is formed when the

²⁵ Dan Zahavi (2004), pp. 58 as cited in Maclaren (2008), pp. 67.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 68.

subject, using “an internal motor schema or ‘motor plan,’”²⁷ perceives himself/herself as a self and recognizes himself/herself as an active subject who can willfully manage space and promote action.

Zahavi and the above psychologists acknowledge that the consciousness of the self as a unique entity is the most important premise in forming the distinction between the subject and the object; it is through this consciousness that the self experiences the interaction between his/her body and the environment. That is, the perspective of the “first-person” as “I” and “mine” is already present in a complex set of possibilities that a baby has since birth, and the interaction with the object, as well as the possibility of space management, does not stem from social conditions or the will of others.

Maclaren contends that the perception of an object as a person is entirely different from seeing an object as an inanimate object. The innate ability of a child to observe objects could play a role in shaping a clear perception of the difference between subject and object, but this is not enough to form an awareness of the self. The child can catch things and manage space around himself/herself proactively, but this is not an expression of self-awareness as a self. When a child receives feedback from others, such as when a baby is pointing at and demanding a toy, another person understands and gives the toy to the baby. Then and only then, when the baby receives this *acknowledgment* and *re-engagement* from others, can the infant realize the possible existence of himself/herself as a living entity. This means that according to Maclaren’s theory, “selfhood is socially conditioned rather than

²⁷ Stern (1985) as cited in Maclaren, (2008), pp. 68.

given with consciousness.”²⁸ We can move backward in time to find a point of view that supports this analysis. Mark Johnson pointed out that the self cannot be identified by purely biological mechanisms and physical interactions but by the participation of the subject in the process of interacting with others in social contexts and historical situations.

The self is defined [...] by its ends, its interpersonal relationship, its cultural traditions, its institutional commitments, and its historical context. Within this evolving context it must work out its identity. (Johnson, 1993, pp. 150).

The identification of the self and the definition of its action begins privately with a complex of subjective perception and imagination when perceiving an object. It plays an initial role in the forming of the self, but it is not the self. We must understand the self as a process of experiencing itself from moment to moment, from situation to situation, in a social and moral relationship in which the subject recognizes the temporary nature of his/her characteristics.

How do we understand the conflict that Zahavi is facing? Is there another explanation for Maclaren’s critique of Zahavi? Is there a possible explanation of the cognitive ability of the self that is formed as soon as a baby is born?

Zahavi seems to have realized that he must utilize scientific explanations rather than purely philosophical inquiries to form a notion of the self. Nowadays, neuroscience is a competent field of study that provides us with a necessary foundation for self-awareness and self-image. David Precht pointed out in his research that as early as the 1920s, scientists like Emile Devaux and Louis Bolk

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 63.

discovered the mechanism of brain development. The human brain continues to grow after birth at the same rate it does in the womb. Eventually, it reaches a size that surpasses the brains of other primates, especially in the cerebral cortex areas of spatial orientation, musical sensibility, and concentration capability.²⁹ Precht also observed that Cajal's research gave us an insight into the fantastic properties of brain cells, which are completely different from cells in other parts of the body. It is noteworthy that nerve cells can feel, act, hope, and desire.³⁰

Using neuroscientific studies, Zahavi presented his views regarding how the self is formed through interaction with others. How can one survive in a living space—not just the subject and the object but also the many others that the subject must interact with? The subject is not only required to be capable of understanding, recognizing, and responding to the actions of others but must also possess the capacity to explain and predict the behavior of others. Gallese points out that we can understand other persons as intentional objects not only tracing the origin of

²⁹ “While the brain of every other mammal grows more slowly than the body after birth, in man it continues to develop for quite a while at almost the same pace as in the womb. In this way, the human brain grows to size that substantially surpasses that of other primates. The cerebellum and the cerebral cortex in particular profit from this continued growth. And within the cerebral cortex, it is above all the regions that are important for orientation in space, musicality, and powers of concentration that continue to develop” (Precht, 2011, pp. 15).

³⁰ “His essays and books provide spirited descriptions of dynamic activity, with neurons feeling, acting, and anticipating, emergent fibers groping to find others [...] Ramon y Cajal's research was so noteworthy because neurons in the brain did not resemble normal somatic cells, and their odd, irregular shapes and many fine extensions had baffled scientists before him” (Ibid., pp. 20).

their linguistic interactions or states of mental activity but also from the most essential element of the self: the mirror neurons.

Rizzolatti, Gallese, and Forgas discovered that a group of neurons in the premotor cortex of the macaque monkey fired not only when the monkey performed a certain action [...] but also when it observed other individuals, be it other monkeys or humans, performing the same goal-directed action.

(Zahavi, 2014, pp. 154)

Gallese's discoveries in 1996 and Rizzolatti's accidental discoveries when studying the activity of the F5 brain region (the premotor cortex) in 1992³¹ proved that when the subject observes an action, the reflection mechanism in this group of neurons is triggered as a form of action simulation, i.e., the actions observed by the subject are not only reflected in the observer's subjective image but also trigger the corresponding brain regions to simulate the observed activity.³²

³¹ In 1992, by chance, scientist Giacomo Rizzolatti of the University of Parma in Italy found that cells in the F5 area in the cortex of the monkey were very specific: these cells activate (the brain cells glow red, indicating that they are active) not only when the monkey performs a deliberate task, such as opening a door, but also act when the monkey sees its friend doing the same movement (in this example, the movement consists of opening a door). That is, there is a similarity between the brain of the practiced monkey and the observed one. Rizzolatti published the results in 1996 in the journal *Cognition Brain Research*.

³² In neurosurgery, by using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), both Allan Siegel and Hreday Sapru proved in their book *Essential Neuroscience* that the response in the premotor cortex is more complex than in the primary motor cortex. This brain region can even control and manage the muscles by predicting the information that it received from the F4 region (the primary motor cortex): "This region of cortex controls the distal musculature by virtue of its projections upon primary neurons of area 4," and lesions in this brain region – supplementary area cortex (SMC) and premotor area cortex (PMC) – will make a person lose the ability to control the targeted behavior. (See Siegel, Allan and Sapru, Hreday N., 2011, pp. 332).

It is not just an ability to simulate the other's actions; the mirror neurons can also help the subject perceive the object as an intentional entity, which grants him/her the ability to predict behavior. The subject can understand another person's behavior because the subject is capable of practicing that behavior, and the subject can explain and predict that behavior because the subject is capable of explaining himself/herself when they perform the act.

The motor schema of the observer has to be involved. That is, the observer must rely in his or her own internal motor knowledge (provided by the mirror neurons) in order to translate the observed movement. (Zahavi, 2014, pp. 154).

This means that if the actions cannot be simulated or explained by the observer's internal motor schema, the purpose and intentionality of action cannot be understood or accepted by the subject. This simulation and interpretation mechanism is not limited to the visual observation of physical actions but extends to a larger dimension of human relations, including the sensation of emotion.

When the subject observes an action that contains emotion, the effect reaches the subject and activates the corresponding brain regions to cause in him/her both a simulation of the action and similar emotion. Why does this mechanism appear? Emotions conveyed through specific behavior are a complex set of reflections that the subject cannot experience through simple senses. We cannot see pain or smell insults, but why can we perceive those feelings in others? Here, we are referring to a system of perceptions in the brain that function corresponding to each behavior it receives. This perception comes from the understanding and explanation of others' behavior. When the subject explains and simulates the behavior of others, they unconsciously and automatically recognize the similarity between himself/herself

and others. In other words, the other person does not exist as an object that is independent of the subject but as an object assigned as a representative of the subject.

By combining neuroscientific findings with the philosophical arguments on the cognitive process, we can recognize that this ability to simulate behavior is not just a mental response but a form of self-consciousness similar to the explanation of the Theory of Mind (ToM, neural basis) of Rebecca Saxe:

An observer might understand someone else's action using the same cognitive and neural mechanisms that she uses to plan her own. The idea is sometimes called the 'motor theory of social cognition' (Saxe, *Theory of Mind*, in Banks, 2009, p. 408).

We have an image of an object attached to the image of the subjectivity of the subject, which constitutes the object-consciousness as the subjective experience of the subject.

Humans see themselves first in others, as in a mirror. "I" can understand "your" behavior because "I" can simulate it. "You" are my image outside of "me," so "you" are representative of "me." Therefore, the effects that make up the emotion in "you" can be understood and felt by "me." An account initially expressed by Marx in which "Peter only establishes his own identity as a man by first comparing himself with Paul as being of like kind. And thereby Paul, just as he stands in his Pauline personality, becomes to Peter the type of the genus homo"³³ was further explained by neuroscientist Marco Iacoboni:

³³ See Marx, Karl (1887), pp. 55, note 19.

mirror neurons suggest that we pretend to be in another person's mental shoes [...] In fact, with mirror neurons we do not have to pretend, we practically are in another person's mind."³⁴

It was also explained in Zahavi's account regarding the ability of the subject to establish a bridge between experiencing action and feeling a sense of action.³⁵

When we receive information from others, the intrinsic representation, which we use to assign to others, is awakened by functional brain areas expressing emotions corresponding to the emotions that we recognize could arise in others: "Observing others experience disgust activates regions involved in the subjective feeling of disgust."³⁶ This means that although "I" cannot see the feeling of disgust in "you," "I" have the ability to associate the disgusting act, from which "you" are suffering, with my feelings about that act because that is the feeling that "I" would feel if "I" were treated like "you" are now. Gallese asserted that our internal motor knowledge (provided by the mirror neurons) gives us the ability to perceive others as our reflection and see that we are also a reflection of others' emotions. From the very beginning, this mechanism allows us to directly and automatically experience the understanding of other people without inference and without depending on any cognitive method, concept system, or rational thinking process.

Thus, if we assume that the subject can perceive himself/herself as a self, we should recognize that the possibility of forming the self exists in the human brain

³⁴ Marco Iacoboni, a neuroscientist at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Medicine (as cited in Than, Ker, 2005, accessed February 10, 2020).

³⁵ See Zahavi (2014), pp. 155.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 155.

structure as soon as it is created. Interaction with the environment (i.e., inanimate objects and other people) will activate the features available in the human brain. The awareness of the self has congenital conditions, and it is characterized by social interaction.

It is obvious that the neuroscientific arguments above do not deny the skepticism of Maclaren towards Dan Zahavi. As long as we assume that an individual already has a default of himself/herself as a self that is different from external objects, then her question is remain. Neuroscientific discoveries that demonstrate the function of the mirror neurons do not negate the effect of interaction with others on the subject's formation of the self, i.e., the interaction between humans with each other rather than only observing things. However, the explanation for the ability of neurons to simulate and predict behavior and emotion, especially the automatic and unconscious nature of this function, has demonstrated the understanding of the self's formation which already has biological materials since the baby was born, but these biological materials alone cannot form the self-awareness of a person as a self if there is no interaction with others.

In conclusion, what we recognize here is that the self-awareness of the subject himself/herself does not constitute the self. Psychological, neurological, and philosophical analyses show that the existence of the subject as an entity is only relative, i.e., the identification of the subject and subjectivity is only valid in the frame of reference with the object and space around the subject. The self does not originate from the subject's inner contemplation of himself/herself. The self, with its innate conditions, is activated and formed from birth when the subject realizes

the difference between himself/herself and objects. The recognition of this difference goes hand in hand with the process of extending the physical and visual reach of the subject out of his/her scope and entering him/herself into objects. In other words, the subject realizes the difference between himself/herself and the object and finds the image of himself/herself in the another.

Chapter 3

The Interaction Between the Self and Others or the Enlargement of Subjectivity to Inter-Subjectivity

In the previous chapter, we began to explain the notion of the self by using phenomenology as the starting point; Dan Zahavi proposes an interpretation of the self in According to which the self is regarded as to be formed from the fact that an individual can differentiate between himself/herself and those outside himself/herself. The experiential self in interaction with an object is not, as Richard Rorty emphasizes, an inherent attribute that exists before real interactions, nor is it an entity with fixed characteristics.³⁷ The key point, as Kym Maclaren points out, is that as a phenomenologist, Zahavi has assumed that the existence of the self is a premise that cannot be doubted. However, what Rorty constantly highlights is that the interaction in forming the self must achieve self-awareness as an entity impacted, acknowledged, and evaluated by others. This line of interpretation leads to two important concepts regarding the self's formation that need to be clarified: First, when an individual expands his/her ability to manage space outside the reach of his/her physical person and visual perception (in accordance with Jean Piaget's experiment), it is imperative that the individual is aware that he/she is controlling his/her own body, i.e., the body is an important basis for forming a person's ability to expand his/her space management. Second, the reciprocal effect from others cannot make the individual self-aware of his/her own existence as an independent

³⁷ See Maclaren, Kym (2008), pp. 66–68.

entity if there is a lack of the other's skepticism and questioning (i.e., evaluation) of the subject himself/herself. In this step of the self-experience process, the self's attributes and its existence in relation to its surroundings are questioned. This chapter will focus on the explanation of the feasibility of perceiving the self as a form made up of biological premises and the awareness of the self as a living entity with contingent and flexible characteristics.

3.1. Biological body awareness is the first step of self-experience

It is important to deny recognizing the self merely as a cognizant subject and an external thing that the self aims to attain. Dan Zahavi describes the self as a kind of perceptive ability and experience; subjects participate in shaping the self through interactions with others. Despite contradicting the traditional philosophical paradigm that recognizes the existence of cognitive processes as a distinct entity independent from the object and stresses that the self's formation is only possible through the subject experiencing itself in reality, Zahavi's interpretation still defaults to the inherent ability of the subject to perceive himself/herself as an entity different from an object, as pointed out by Kym Maclaren and analyzed in the previous chapter. This interpretation indirectly acknowledges the process of self-awareness (i.e., the process of shaping the self) as how the subject receives, evaluates, and selects possibilities when participating in a network of interactions with the external environment. That is, the self becomes the center of awareness, and self-inquiry becomes the most important clue regarding the interpretation of the self's formation. Rorty, however, doubts and denies the default existence of the self

as an entity with fundamental characteristics independent of the external environment.

Our language, as much as our bodies, are shaped by our environment. Our languages could no more be “out of touch” with our environment (grandiosely the world) than our bodies could [...] Rorty is thoroughly Darwinian. That is, like all the other pragmatists, Rorty, takes Darwin seriously and tailors his account to fit and build on Darwin. (Nielsen, *Richard Rorty* in Shook & Margolis, 2009, p. 132).

Thus, the subject as the experienced self in interaction with others in a specific context is always Rorty’s consistent viewpoint. However, debates arise when Rorty develops interpretations about the relationship between personal life and public life.³⁸

The idea of individual and community relations as well as Rorty’s account of the perspective of contingency and non-determinism of the self often creates fierce debate, and critics often contend that he does not want to reconcile the conflict in tendency and purpose between the private space and community interests. It has even been claimed that he wants to give up the definition of the self by determining the “group identity and identity politics”³⁹ of an individual. In response, Patricia Rohrer⁴⁰ sought to resolve this debate by softening Rorty’s convictions and

³⁸ We will return to this content more clearly in section 4.3.

³⁹ See Holland, Scott (2004), *The Coming Only Is Sacred. Self-Creation and Social Solidarity in Richard Rorty’s Secular Eschatology. Crosscurrents*. Retrieved from <http://www.crosscurrents.org/hollandwinter2004.htm>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

⁴⁰ See Rohrer, Patricia (2000), pp. 55–58.

comparing them to Charles Taylor's idea of the purpose of the private sphere as striving towards private happiness (the meaning of life) and the purpose of the community as the pursuit of common interests as not entirely contradictory interests. In other words, in the face of conflicts between value systems, as Rorty states when explaining Isaiah Berlin, we should give up: "the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail each other."⁴¹ In addition,

We should think of ourselves as just one more among Nature's experiments, not as the culmination of Nature's design, echoes Berlin's use of J. S. Mill's phrase "experiments in living" (as well as echoing Jefferson's and Dewey's use of term "experiment" to describe American democracy) (Rorty, 1989, p. 45).

Here, Rorty proposes a relativistic cultural perspective in which emphasizing one value as dominant or more important than another is not appropriate. Any personal identification associated with a community's socio-political identity must be seen as being shaped in interaction with space and time, i.e., a particular period of time. It is not an inherent characteristic that we have to find because once we assume that identity is an essential attribute that we must find, we will default to the isolation of one value from the others and thereby risk comparing and positioning one value to other values. The harmony⁴² between private happiness and common interests is

⁴¹ See Berlin, Isaiah (1969), pp. 167.

⁴² The harmony here is not understood in the sense of harmony (in the monist Platonic ideal) that Isaiah Berlin criticized in his theory of value pluralism. The three points Berlin criticizes are as follows: authentic questions must have a correct and unique answer, there must be a reliable way to discover the right answers, and a coherent and harmonious universe that serves as the basis for the compatibility between the correct

ensured when “the unconditional commandment”⁴³ for personal happiness not only makes sense for the subject’s personal life and experience but also works towards creating a possible network of connections to expand the private sphere and incorporate community purpose.⁴⁴

Why is the problem regarding the value of personal happiness and community interests emphasized by Charles Taylor and re-analyzed by Rohrer? From Taylor’s perspective, the sense of the self only makes sense within a moral framework. He

answers, in a single whole. Berlin points out that collisions are possible between values. Once a collision occurs, it does not mean that one value has been misunderstood or is more important than another. That is, the values may not be compatible with each other. In many cases, such incompatible values may be incommensurable.

⁴³ See Rohrer, Patricia (2000), pp. 55–58.

⁴⁴ The self-enlargement has also been explained by Guignon and Hiley: When an individual seeks greater diversity than the original standpoint he/she has in order to, first of all, freeing him/herself from purely personal limitations. “Narratives of our life that enable us to see our own solitary existence as geared into a larger historical narrative are worth having because they impart ‘a Romantic sense of grandeur to our existence’” (See Guignon and Hiley (1990). *Biting the Bullet. Rorty on Private and Public Morality*. In Malachowski, pp. 354). However, both Guignon and Hiley point out the contradiction in this viewpoint by Rorty. Personal creativity, an important concept in Rorty’s “liberal ironist,” cannot expand its scope to a greater dimension to achieve public interest, the solidarity. The individual’s creativity, in terms of re-description, there is only meaning, firstly, within the scope of self-awareness and self-reflection of the subject of consciousness. Rorty’s optimism and innocence are pointed out by these philosophers as follows: “It is naïve in its faith that poets and intellectuals will serve us well if they are given enough rope. Behind Rorty’s thinking, there appears to be some version of the rudimentary classical liberal belief that a society designed as a neutral matrix to promote freedom, where freedom is understood as negative liberty, will naturally lead to the public good. But this belief made sense only given a substantive view about human nature which seems untenable today.” (Ibid., pp. 357). I will return to this point in section 4.3.

refuses to approach the problem of the self from Kantian's categorical imperative that promotes the core concepts of cognition and reason.

One could put it this way: because we cannot but orient ourselves to the good, and thus determine our place relative to it and hence determine the direction of our lives, we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a 'quest'. But one could perhaps start from another point: because we have to determine our place in relation to the good, therefore we cannot be without an orientation to it, and hence must see our life in story. From whichever direction, I see these conditions as connected facets of the same reality, inescapable structural requirements of human agency (Taylor, 1989, pp. 51–52).

We recognize two similarities between Taylor's and Rorty's recognition of the self: both men approach the problem of the self not from epistemological or rational perspectives but from the perspective of the social conditions in which the self is formed; their views are similar in that we cannot separate our awareness from the premises of the self; as Taylor said, "the place of framework in our lives"⁴⁵ or "a set of words,"⁴⁶ as Rorty mentioned.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the way Taylor refers to the assessment and orientation of the self based on qualitative, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions is similar to the way Rorty emphasizes the role of literature and art in interpreting human life instead of the distinguished human being in the dimension of philosophy, science or religion.

⁴⁵ See Taylor, Charles (1989), pp. 25.

⁴⁶ See Rorty, Richard (1989), pp. 73.

⁴⁷ It is a coincidence that both of these similar views stem from two works that were released in 1989.

Rohrer's explanations of the "unconditional commandments" focus primarily on social and moral conditions in the search for a logical, non-confrontational expansion between individuals and the community. As Taylor mentioned, the self is identified based on identifications and commitments "which provide the frame or horizon within [...] which I am capable of taking a stand."⁴⁸ The self is identified not based on rational or metaphysical foundations, but on the moral and spiritual commitment to "the nation or tradition to which they belong."⁴⁹ However, this is only possible if we identify the self in a bigger dimension - a moral orientation - existing not only in the private sphere, but also as the space management ability of the individual.

We must start at the genesis of the self's formation, which comprises the biological conditions and the awareness of the cognizant subject of said biological conditions.

By returning to the perspectives of Jean Piaget and Tran Duc Thao in their experiments with child psychology, we can obtain possible answers to this issue. Both scholars confirm the process of a child beginning to perceive himself/herself as a different entity by observing and directing attention to an object outside of himself/herself.⁵⁰ Moreover, by controlling the space around them,⁵¹ a child can point to things beyond his/her physical reach and know how to find objects hidden

⁴⁸ See Taylor, Charles (1989), pp. 27.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 27.

⁵⁰ See Piaget, Jean (1954), pp. 66–78.

⁵¹ See Tran Duc Thao (1984). Chapter II. The birth of language, pp. 48–59.

out of sight, which is the first step in a child expanding himself/herself beyond his/her physical scope.

The self or the perception of the self is essentially what underlies being human. In addition, Piaget found that the first thing that a child can move and control by himself/herself is his/her body, and that when the child catches or points at an object, he/she moves his/her hands and fingers by proactive will; consequently, he/she can see his/her own hands and fingers. In other words, the body is the first thing a child realizes is not an object and does not belong to the external world; it is a part of him/her, and thus “is” him/her. Therefore, given the awareness that his/her body is different from external objects, it can be seen that the first thing a child can manage and control is not the object that he/she points to but the body that is considered to belong to “me.” Based on this understanding, links can be drawn to James’s view that the role the body plays in understanding the conceptual self cannot be disputed.

Accordingly, this conclusion gives rise to two broader concepts of the formation of the self. First, in terms of biological function, a child must control his/her eyes and arms, which involves biological connections between the brain and the body. The gesture of directing the eyes and pointing at objects is not merely the control of space, but also the control of the body itself. Therefore, in the first step of self-formation, the child’s experience is not focused on objects but on mastering his/her own body. That is, the self does not begin to be shaped when the subject becomes aware of the difference between him/her and the object, but when the subject becomes aware that he/she can master his/her own body and that the body

is part of him/her and not the object. This is not in agreement with Dan Zahavi's interpretations based on research by Neisser, Butterworth, and Stern.⁵²

Second, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in Kym Maclaren's commentary, only when the child re-engages with and receives acknowledgment from others can the child become aware of himself/herself as an entity existing and interacting with his/her environment. Consequently, the self (understood as the experiential self) cannot be limited to either the self-contemplation by the subject when observing, interacting, evaluating, and choosing the possibilities in reality or to the subject's ability to perceive his/her regard from and interaction with others as external influences on himself/herself. The objects (pointed by the child) need to be understood as an extension of the child, given that they are part of the space the child is controlling. Moreover, the external objects to which the child points represent the will and desire of the child, which is the same thing that happens when a child engages with and receives acknowledgment from others because only when a child receives feedback from others does he/she realize that he/she is a different entity from them; thus, interaction with others also becomes part of the child's field of awareness.

In other words, the space of the self expands to not only encompass the subject's inner experience when interacting with the environment but also the objects that the subject incorporates in his/her development of the self. Essentially, when an individual expands his/her control of space beyond himself/herself, an individual experiences himself/herself in his/her interaction with the environment,

⁵² See Maclaren, Kym (2008), pp. 66.

i.e., the self does not involve introspection alone but also the self-experience of engaging with others. Accordingly, others are no longer objects outside the subject but become part of the subject himself/herself, which can be linked to James's interpretation of the "material self" and "social self".

The interactions in an individual's private and concrete experiences will form a network that links objects outside the subject to his/her individual space. Moreover, objects are not just passively collected according to the needs of the subject but also represent how the subject sees himself/herself in them. Likewise, others also reflect the image of the subject because if they are not seen as a mirror of the subject's image, the subject cannot interact with them through language or behavior (as analyzed in the previous chapter). Recognizing others as a mirror of the subject's image, however, is not a one-way reflection as the subject himself/herself also reflects the image of others; accordingly, the "social self" that James identifies is the formation of an interactive network of individuals who embody the images of others. Due to this extension of the subject's field of awareness, the self is no longer confined to the concept of "I" as a single entity or "mine" in regard to personal possessions but has developed the self to include "us" and "ours."

The first experience of the self, as formed by the expansion of the subject's awareness of objects, is purely private. However, this experience has two characteristics that must be noted: First, this experience is not merely the internal story of the subject; rather, it comes from how the subject practices his/her awareness when interacting with others. Second, the network of objects that reflect

the image of the subject acts as a source of awareness rather than a feature that serves to respond to or denote the subject's personal experience.

Furthermore, the contingency of the self that Rorty emphasizes is expressed by the creation of the self through personal experience rather than the practice of a system of principles or general values. This is the difference between Rorty and Taylor in the interpretation of an individual's perceptions. Interactions and reflected images are formed and re-described through specific interactions and emotions that distinguish individuals and those with whom he/she interacts.

Consequently, this interaction and reflection will form an image network that affects the subject and no longer limits the self to a single entity separate from his/her environment and others but a social entity that embodies the image of others. However, were this network of images to be destroyed, the subject would be vulnerable not only to emotional loss or injury but also to the breakdown of the self itself: "to wound any one of these his images is to wound him."⁵³ As analyzed in the previous chapter and repeated above, the engagement and acknowledgment by others of the subject allows him/her to become aware of himself/herself as a different entity. As a result, a controlled space within a network of others bearing the subject's image creates a space for the self to develop; thus, the self would be injured and become skeptical of itself were this image network to be broken.

⁵³ See James, William (1890), pp. 281–282.

3.2. Inter-subjectivity as the relationship between the individual and the community

Despite the widely acknowledged fact that Rorty was influenced by Dewey's idea of the denial of the "privileged foundations," Misak notes that Rorty's account of culture and social practices was a kind of contemporary version of James's in which Rorty tried to replace a theory of knowledge with an expression of social hope. In doing so, he recalled James's viewpoint regarding "what is better for us to believe rather than as the accurate representation of reality."⁵⁴ The problem of traditional philosophy is the failed attempt to provide a foundation for the correctness of the knowledge that we, "the knowing subject," can use to evaluate the correctness of a social action or the truthfulness of an intellectual activity, in other words, a standard system of value for social practices. Consequently, philosophers are required to admit a proper and non-historical norm to which they have access in order to obtain an indisputable reference system when identifying an object. These epistemological efforts play a highly significant role in forming a platform for cognitive processes to use to assess whether a particular action or social project is better or worse than an alternative.

There are many criticisms of Rorty's denial of cognitive progress as the foundation of knowledge regarding his denial of the role of proper knowledge in determining the characteristics of a specific behavior. However, if we framework that seeking foundations for knowledge is not a purpose of cognitive progress, if we consider that the mission of our thinking is the process of improving and finding

⁵⁴ See Rorty, Richard (1979), pp. 10.

our “selves” instead of simply aiming at perfecting the thinking process itself, and if we realize that the process of recognizing our “selves” is not merely a self-activity but is in fact based on an organic interaction with others in a community of language, then we can determine that the foundation of knowledge is a progression of thinking that is useful for human solidarity. In addition, along with finding the self, we have the ability to improve the socio-historical situation in which we are engaged through dialogue. This is a form of “meliorism,”⁵⁵ which is based on the belief that society can be improved by human efforts to participate in social practices rather than through a purely intellectual capacity-improving process.

Although Rorty is admittedly too radical relative to his pragmatist predecessors, such as James and Dewey, when he advocates replacing “experience” with “narrative,”⁵⁶ as in Sellars’s account of the debunking of the theory of knowledge, we must accept that Peirce should be treated the right way, as he provided the idea of an answer that we must recognize in order to arrive at solidarity among the differences. Rorty emphasizes that if an answer or a goal does not have

⁵⁵ See Misak, Cheryl (2013), pp. 228.

⁵⁶ The narrative is not the only concept that Rorty focuses on to explain self-creation in the cognitive process. Paul Redding emphasized that Rorty has renewed Hume’s views on social and political progress by focusing on a trio of concepts that interact with each other: imagination, re-description, and narrative (see Paul Redding reviews on the book *The Philosophy of Richard Rorty*, Randall E. Auxier and Lewis Edwin Hahn (Ed.). Retrieved from <https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-philosophy-of-richard-rorty>). Answering Giovanna Borradori’s question about the relationship between the notion of text and narrative, Rorty asserts that “narrative means telling a story about something [...] in which you can place your own story” (See Mendieta, 2006, pp. 43).

useful meaning for social practices or provide a better re-description for the justification, we should abandon all illusions of an *a priori* answer.

Why does this point matter? Misak stresses that Rorty took a step further than all of his pragmatist predecessors with his idea that solidarity rather than truth is only thing that matters to us, the knowing subjects (the “inquirers,” in Misak’s usage). Richard David Precht points out that the ambition to discover the truth or the purpose of the world is merely a category of human thinking. Innovations in neuroscience and human brain research have proven that human beings and human thinking are not the ultimate goal of evolution. Based on the research of Santiago Ramon y Cajal and William Calvin,⁵⁷ Precht contends that the process of nature does not have any inherent meaning; the categories of meaning, purpose, and truth are only valid in the self-awareness process of the cognitive subject at a particular stage of development. In other words, the meaning of the world is only valid to the “I.” Thus, the “I” is at the center of cognitive activity. The existence of the “I” is a prerequisite for the implementation of cognitive activity, i.e., the existence of the “I” is presumed to be a reality because the subject must be identified before we can discuss the seeking of truth. However, the “I” is an entity that has been rejected by neuroscience. Therefore, the “I” is merely something that is inferred, as pointed out by David Hume. The question is, from what is the “I” inferred? We cannot answer this question by stating, for example, that the “I” is inferred from the emotions of “I” or the idea of “I.” To deal with this vicious circle, philosophers usually use the

⁵⁷ See Precht, Richard David (2011), section Madrid The Cosmos of the Mind: How does my brain function? pp. 18 – 26.

word “self” rather than “I.” The self is some sort of center of our *will* and *judgement* that has been formed in the process of receiving material from reality and can be used to express our account of cognitive objects. Hence, the self divides itself into two categories: the I-self (the self-concept) and the Me-self (the sense of self-value).

In explaining the concepts of the I-self and Me-self, David Precht made a mistake when analyzing this key point of James’s.⁵⁸ First and foremost, the Me-self does not appear as others, but the I-self appears as an object. That is, I (“the self as knower” or pure-ego, certain author) see myself as an object outside of me, and the evaluation of Me (“the self as known” or empirical ego) is not an assessment from an independent object outside of me, but my self’s evaluation. The subject is aware of itself both as “I” and “Me” – a dual existence – the perception of the self as both the perceiver and the perceived in which the subject relates to himself/herself as both the subject and the object.

The Me and the I – Whatever I may be thinking of, I am always at the same time more or less aware of *myself*, of my *personal existence*. At the same time it is *I* who am aware; so that the total self of me, being as it were duplex, partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject, must have two aspects discriminated in it, of which for shortness we may call one the *Me* and the other the *I*. I call these ‘discriminated aspects,’ and not separate things, because the identity of *I* with *me*, even in the very act of their discrimination, is perhaps the most ineradicable dictum of common-sense, and must not be

⁵⁸ See Precht, Richard David (2011), pp. 37.

undermined by our terminology here at the outset, whatever we may come to think of its validity at our inquiry's end (James, 1892, pp. 176).

The subject has the capacity to escape from himself/herself in order to perceive himself/herself as an object. In the next step, the subject realizes himself/herself in others. The Me-self now acts as both the subject's self-evaluation of itself as the object and the role of others (the image of the subject on others) assessing the subject.

The sense of self-value is a purely subjective credit provided to the I-self by the Me-self.⁵⁹ My Me-self comes from other Me-selves, which are outside of my I-self. This inquiry leads us to two conclusions. First, all value systems and the perception of value systems are only meaningful in the context of the interchange among the I-selves. Second, the sense of self-value possessed by the I-self is provided by the Me-self, but the I-self does not have access to all information from the external world, meaning that it is necessary to posit a standard for the I-self to make an acceptance. In other words, the I-self can find and understand the world when the I-self comprehends that the image of the world is reflected in the thinking of the I-self because all things that "the knowing subject" knows about the world are not available as innate images. The only innate thing is the cognitive ability to obtain personal experiences. This is the issue that brain researchers, such as Paul MacLean and Marie Jean Pierre Flourens,⁶⁰ did not explain.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 37.

⁶⁰ "MacLean's neat little divisions were easy to grasp, and they quickly caught on. He subdivided the brain into three distinctions philosophers had been drawing for two millennia among animal instincts, higher

Nerve impulses and links between brain cells are prerequisites for the creation of the characteristics of the self, such as emotion, vibration, hope, desire, etc. However, the deciphering of the brain's central and functional components cannot be applied to explain the production of spirit, consciousness, and the things that make up the identity of the self. The external environment affects the mind through which senses are filtered that evoke different sensory experiences in each individual.

The private experiences of one person are only perceived in the personal domain. Given this, how can an “I-self” (certain author) understand the “Me-selves” of others? If private experiences can only be felt in the personal domain, how can a single person understand the Me-self's providing?

3.3. From inter-subjectivity to a liberal culture

Tran Duc Thao explains the above questions using the reflection of the self's image in other persons. In the earliest forms of language, which used single syllables, a person would voice the syllable and point to the object he/she was referring to. The action of pointing in combination with the single syllable was

feelings, and clever human reason. The only problem was that MacLean's theory, which can still found in many textbooks today, is wrong. [...] the crucial point is that the connections among the brain stem, cerebellum, and cerebrum are actually very close; they are not simply stacked on top of one another, as MacLean had suggested. Their tight and complex connection is extremely important and is our key to understanding the way instincts, sensations, volition, and cognition really function. [...] Flourens realized that the old model of brain regions that governed discrete abilities such as addition and subtraction, speech, thought, and memory was incorrect, but he went too far the other way in claiming that everything in the brain was responsible for everything else”. (Ibid., pp. 21 – 22).

performed as a gesture of communication with other members of the community. At the time, the speaker had to assume that the listeners understood what he/she meant, meaning that the listeners were a reflected image of himself/herself outside of himself/herself. If not, the listeners would not be able to understand the implications of that action.⁶¹ Meanwhile, subjectivity is no longer an activity of self-awareness but has become the perception of subjectivity itself in others, i.e., inter-subjectivity.

This communication process, or the transformation of subjectivity into inter-subjectivity, can function if and only if the speaker and listeners have a similar background through which to communicate. Linguistic similarity (through the use of grammatical structures and vocabulary) is a compulsory premise. Similarities in living habits and hunting practices in the prehistoric period also formed a background for this kind of communication. However, when we talk to each other using more complex forms, as in exchanges and debates over value systems, this background must be extended to include such elements as culture, politics, religion, knowledge, etc., along with expressions of the self in communication, e.g., emotions, understanding, empathy, etc. Conversations regarding complex subjects require certain criteria in order for a person to make conclusions. Propositions offered in the course of communication must have a fulcrum if a judgement is to be asserted or negated. Expanding from personal experience to community and society, we must admit that without these fulcrums, or standards, the process of

⁶¹ See Tran Duc Thao (1984), *First investigation: The indicative gesture as the original form of consciousness*, pp. 1–29.

communicating and exchanging value systems is merely a presentation of content or ideas.

How can we understand this kind of standard?

A standard is a system of opinions, reasons, and/or beliefs that serve as a benchmark for an argument or an orientation. To be a standard, a statement must first meet the following criteria: it must correspond to the conventions of grammar and vocabulary and must also express the accuracy of the object to which that statement is referring. For instance, “Killing innocent people is evil behavior,” “Children must be filial to their parents,” “The right to life, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness are the inviolable right of man.” These statements are true because they are proven to be true in social practices rather than via pure inferences of thought. Second, if these statements cannot be substantiated by reality, they must promote an engine of truth. This is the key to distinguishing between Rorty and his predecessors. Charles Peirce and his followers, such as Misak, believe that the inquirers need to set goals for our practices of assertion and inquiry, which they call “belief” and which are “stable and independent”⁶² from individual and community opinions. This kind of belief is not an illusory dream of a supernatural or metaphysical truth; rather, it is a goal set for social practices in order to help the inquirers create solidarity and provide a method by which to evaluate experience. For his part, Rorty puts himself in a completely different position. He is very consistent in his view of “dialogues” and ignores everything outside dialogue. From his standpoint, what a community thinks is right constitutes the truth. Truth is the

⁶² See Misak, Cheryl (2013), pp. 232.

best thing a community believes. That is, when asserting that something is truth, a community recognizes the correctness of a particular standard and demonstrates its consistency. Rorty denies this tendency. Misak repeats his core idea that “the gap between justification and truth is the gap between the actual good and the possible better”⁶³ because what a community believes may not be “true” in the sense that belief does not provide any better idea regarding how to make things right. A better path for “the knowing subject” is to extend a community’s references beyond the limitations of the said community; that is, in this extended relationship, a community plays the role of a subject, and this extension leads to a larger inter-subjectivity between standards. A community is an inter-subjectivity between subjectivities. We can call this expansion an inter-inter-subjectivity.

When discussing the expansion of subjectivity in interaction with inter-subjectivity to become inter-inter-subjectivity, the problem of value system collisions becomes the collision between community cultural forms.

The first thing that needs to be clarified is how can an individual understands and perceives the language of others? Each individual has the ability to experience his/her emotions and moods in his/her language (expression). Language is a sense of reality; it is consciousness itself in its direct reality. Consciousness is the language that the subject speaks to himself/herself, a kind of inner language. However, how do these pure personal experiences become communal language, not merely the individual’s feelings about himself/herself? If it were only the inner language, only the subject could understand that language. That is, the inner

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 235.

language must be expressed in words, symbols, signals, or scripts. The spoken language, in conjunction with the movement of the eye and with the gesture of the hand (when pointing at ourselves or the object), is an inner speaking to ourselves; we have a sense of it in the sketching motion of the throat and tongue, and also what comes to us is its appearance.

For example, in the early stages of the self's formation, a child experiences pain, and he/she cries. An adult will explain to him/her that it is "pain." The word "pain" is a public form of criteria that acts as a frame of reference for others to understand the child's painful feelings. This gives us two conclusions: first, language can only be communal language when monologue is placed in the interaction; second, words are forms that express the inner language according to common conventions, thus replacing the subject's private experience in search of a shared understanding, which does not describe a private experience.

A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later sentences. They teach the child new pain-behavior. "So you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?" – On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it (Wittgenstein, 2001, §244, pp. 75–76).

Others can understand the meaning of the subject's private experiences through expressions of common language and behavior, but emotions, being subjective experiences, are private.

Language cannot be individual; it must be interactive. Even if an individual creates a private language that only he/she understands, the problem is how can he/she understand the language when he/she uses it? How can he/she understand a

word or expression if that private language cannot be explained or understood by others?⁶⁴ Wittgenstein assumes that each individual has his/her own box that contains something called a “beetle.” The boxes are completely different because “no one can look into anyone else’s box.”⁶⁵ So, how can a person understand another person’s box? This requires us to name things. If the names are made privately, they are not really names at all since names require common recognition to make them meaningful. If an individual wants to name his/her own private experience so that the experience is meaningful and understood by others, then he/she faces a prerequisite that there must be a linguistic structure related to that private experience to make those new words meaningful. Moreover, the lexical and grammatical structures themselves also need linguistic structures that serve as the premise. Thus, when the self is formed in interactions through language, he/she cannot avoid being attached to a linguistic system; in other words, the system of socio-historical values depends on a particular community.

Unlike Wittgenstein’s metaphor of a box of “beetle,” where private experiences and the language for personal feelings are private once the individual has not yet named the “beetle” inside the box, Rorty admits that each individual has a set of words (final vocabulary) that is relevant to the context premise of the community language. However, unlike a mere individual with private experiences, Rorty’s “private ironist” is one who guarantees the following three conditions:

⁶⁴ Ibid., §257, pp. 78.

⁶⁵ Ibid., §293, pp. 85.

(1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses [...]; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) [...] she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others (Rorty, 1989, p. 73).

That is, it is futile for an individual to find ways to resist the manifestations of past conditions affecting reality as he/she cannot escape those conditions. Furthermore, it would be meaningless if we were to search for a set of neutral words or, to the contrary, a whole meta-vocabulary.

Rorty, in his anti-representationalism, sees language as an expression closely tied to the object and reality in which it is formed. Language does not have any concept separate from the objects to which it refers or any meaning separate from interactions outside of language.

[anti-representationalists] see [...] no sense of how we can get an accurate representation of how things are in the world independent of a particular language or scheme of representation or a set of optional practices. We have no understanding of what it would mean to stand outside any language and just compare our language with the world to see how it maps it or mirrors it (Nielsen, *Richard Rorty*, in Shook & Margolis, 2009, p. 131).

Thus, an individual cannot simply leap from the linguistic premises and community values that his/her self forms. He/she is bound by historical conditions and must identify himself/herself according to specific characteristics.

So does that mean that an individual, when exposed to an unfamiliar culture or value system, cannot understand or accept it? This leads to a pessimistic view of

cultural interaction that implies that it is impossible to understand people who belong to a different culture or have a different way of life because their way of thinking and acting is completely different from one's own principles and there are no commonalities between their way of thinking and acting and our way.

Why are people so difficult and, in many cases, unable to understand people from other cultures or cultural communities? Wittgenstein criticized the Cartesian view of the inner perception, that is, the mental state of others – an argument based on the recognition of the private experience. From Wittgenstein's account, we can still understand the feeling to a certain extent (for example, the feeling of pain) or the awareness of others' thoughts through public actions (verbal or nonverbal language), so why can we not understand people from foreign cultures? According to him, we do not understand the thoughts and actions of people from other cultures not because their minds are entirely private and inaccessible to us. We also cannot understand people's ways of life or other cultural worldviews even when their innermostness is utterly accessible to us. Naturally, language can also be an important first obstacle, but it is not the underlying cause of intercultural awareness. The underlying cause of intercultural awareness is related to the phenomenon of "cultural blindness," i.e., not understanding, not experiencing, and not practicing "language games" and ways of living according to the culture, traditions, habits, and customs of a foreign culture. In *Philosophical Investigations, Part II*, Wittgenstein points out that

We also say of some people that they are transparent to us. It is, however, important as regards this observation that one human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come into a strange country with

entirely strange traditions; and, what is more, even given a mastery of the country's language. We do not *understand* the people. (And not because of not knowing what they saying to themselves). We cannot find our feet with them (Wittgenstein, 2001, *part II*, pp. 190).

To solve this problem, to overcome the phenomenon of cultural blindness or the impossibility of being aware of culture, we not only need to understand that culture along with its people's worldview, way of life, and language but also need to participate directly in the language games and its way of life.⁶⁶

Participation in language games at this time was based on neither the grammar norms nor the expressive meaning with which an individual was equipped (from his/her spatial-temporal reasoning), but was the “new programs” from the specific contexts that he/she must describe, and it only makes sense in that particular interaction, as Hilary Putnam points out:

⁶⁶ Guignon and Hiley also emphasized the influence of Freud and Nietzsche in Rorty's account of self-enlargement that “see ourselves as made up of different persons, each person having a different language-game with its own inbuilt interpretations, criteria and standards [...] This sense of ourselves as a space for the interplay of optional vocabularies of self-interpretation points to a new kind of character-ideal for shaping our private morality” (See Guignon and Hiley, 1990. *Biting the Bullet: Rorty on Private and Public Morality*. In Malachowski, pp. 352). However, re-describing past events and conditions affecting the subject is not an attempt to enlarge the dimension of the self. Guignon and Hiley argued in this regard when pointing out that the evaluation of the possibilities to create useful values for the future lies in the subject's self-focusing, rather than trying to enlarge the scope of the self: “Recognizing our ‘situated freedom’ and our historicity, our task is seen as critically evaluation our current commitments in the light of the possibilities laid out by the past in order to articulate meaningful goals for the future. And this task, it could be argued, is better undertaken by individuals who take self-focusing rather than self-enlargement as their character-ideal.” (ibid., pp. 361).

On Rorty's view, we have a variety of language games; the use of words in a language game is determined by what Rorty sometimes refers to as "algorithms" or "programs". The inputs to these programs are themselves, Rorty says, always "tailored to the needs of a *particular* input-output function, a *particular* convention of representation," and the outputs are ways of coping (kicking back), ranging from technological strategies to emotional, aesthetic, even spiritual attitudes. Insofar as I do something that can be called "describing reality" at all, the description is the whole system of vocables I produce (Putnam, 2000, Richard Rorty on Reality and Justification. In Brandom, pp. 83).

In a critical view, Hilary Putnam points to the core of Rorty's "justification" as being too focused on personal creativity and interpretation when Rorty addresses social issues. The problem is, when Rorty was skeptical of public normative systems and focused on individual interpretations, he lacked the consistency to lead to the risk of forming normative systems that were separate from the context of the community. That is, from a philosopher who is always consistent with the concept of "context," and denies non-historical perceptions; Rorty gradually enters a non-contextual tendency. Putnam also points out whether there are any socially or logically progressive advances that are logically independent of the community's interpretation, and that, can there exist standard that falls outside the logical interpretations of the community where the standard is evaluated?

As stated above, an individual cannot simply abandon the linguistic and value conditions with which he/she has been equipped. Rorty uses the term "ethnocentrism" to refer to human conditions that we cannot simply escape. It is a

form of “an unblinking acceptance of our finitude as inescapable, and a recognition that we cannot stand utterly free from our culture and our place in history.”⁶⁷ Thus, even intellectuals are not free liberals under these conditions.⁶⁸

Therefore, when interpreting the relationship between language and the environment and proposing a “liberal culture,” Rorty replaced the Cartesian and Platonic epistemology and objectification with the categories “causation” and “justification.”⁶⁹ Here, Rorty recommend that we play a sort of “new language game” in which rather than using the current vocabularies to play with the present and the past, we can create a new perspective in justification process by “playing the new off against the old.”⁷⁰ Justification is the extension of the subject’s perceived dimensions beyond his/her own value spaces. By continually expanding cognitive spaces, we can justify the objects that we perceive and even the premises with which we have been equipped; then, we can justify new values in terms of others.

The justification is also necessary for the cognitive subject in which it is towards consensus and inter-subjectivity because when the cognitive subject expands its receiving and interpretation space, it will create interactions with the space of another subject (inter-subjectivity). As a result of this inter-subjectivity, a consensus will be established among similarities and shared values. Objectivity

⁶⁷ See Nielsen, Kai (2009). Richard Rorty. In Shook, John R. (Ed.), pp. 133.

⁶⁸ In fact, Rorty emphasized that intellectuals, or those equipped with solid intellectual backgrounds, are subject to difficulty in becoming a “private ironist.” I will analyze this term in section 4.3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 132.

⁷⁰ See Rorty, Richard (1989), pp. 73.

makes sense if placed in interaction with subjectivity and if subjectivity performs its characteristics when interacting with objectivity.

In conclusion, the truth of statements and promoting means by which to improve things are not enough to form a standard. To form a standard, a consensus among a majority of participants in a specific conversation must be established as the most important factor of solidarity because when subjectivity transforms into inter-subjectivity and continues to expand towards inter-inter-subjectivity, the content of a standard cannot remain the way it was when that standard was first established and validated in the community. The extension of subjectivity to inter-inter-subjectivity is inversely proportional to the specificity of a standard; that is, the content of the standard will need to become simpler, more abstract, and more universal. To the extent that a standard is more universal, it is more likely to be consensual than local, community-based constraints. However, this solidarity and universality are neither immutable nor eternal. The movement and transformation of social practices will inevitably change the consensus regarding this universality.

Chapter 4

The Self in an Imaginary Network

As analyzed in section 2.3., Kym Maclaren provides explanations about the movement of directing vision and about pointing at objects outside the field of vision, as well as the reach of the hand to prove that a child begins to form a sense of itself and others by widening its ability to control its surrounding space. In addition, as the interpretation of the “selves” in William James’ account in section 2.1. that an individual has many selves with different dimensions, not only within the subject that perceives itself. The expansion of the controlled space extends the self out of the scope of the individual. Instead, elements of the external scene are received as a part of the self. All these interpretations assume that individuals see themselves in others, and that others carry the “imaginary” of the subject (in which the subject looks at itself and finds itself at first in just another person).⁷¹ These subject-bearing objects form an image network that the subject sees itself within. French philosopher Jacques Lacan warns of misconceptions and illusions about the images of objects that the subject receives.

⁷¹ See Marx, Karl (1887), pp. 55, note 19.

Tran Duc Thao asserts that the images of others are identified with the images of the subject itself and cause the images of others to appear as internal boundaries to the subject. That is, an image of the object accompanied by the image of the subject in itself is used to constitute the sense of the object as a self-experience. (See Tran Duc Thao, 1984, section First investigation: The Indicative Gesture as the Original Form of Consciousness, pp. 1-29)

4.1. An image network or network of imaginary?

Often viewed as “the most controversial psycho-analyst since Freud,”⁷² Jacques Lacan used Freud as the basis of his structuralism. Freud likens people’s mental activity to an iceberg, in that much of it is deeply submerged, while Lacan determines that the manifestation is the Symbolic, and the repressions below it are the Imagination and the Real. In so doing, Lacan establishes an open and dynamic structure in the double helix between the three specialties of classical psychoanalysis – Id, Ego, Superego – and his three replacement characteristics – the Real, the Imaginary, the Symbolic. Therefore, he proceeds to break the autonomous and closed system of classical structuralism. The double helix is denoted by the Borromean knot,⁷³ and these three aspects have a dialectical link in the mental structure of the subject, akin to a trinity, that its members can call the Fraud, the Absence, and the Impossibility.

The Fraud, so-called because the Real never fully shows up as entirely and precisely in front of the subject’s view, deceives the subject through the illusion of the Imaginary. Lacan defines the Real as “ineffable” and “impossible.” The Real is vivid, deep, and complex, but for the subject it is illusory, superficial, and contingent. The Real is both inside and outside and loosely depends on the subject’s clarity and stupidity. As such, the Real is hidden under the shadow of the Imaginary,

⁷² See Mokaya, Nyauma (2019). Freudian and Lacanian Psychoanalyses: A Comparison and Contrast.

Retrieved from

https://www.academia.edu/8904743/freudian_and_lacanian_psychoanalyses_a_comparison_and_contrast. Accessed February 10, 2020.

⁷³ See Bowie, Malcolm (1991), pp. 110–112.

while the Imaginary is only a temporary substitute for the non-existent and absent Real. After all, our identities and our understanding of both ourselves and the world are explored through the Symbolic, which translates the Imaginary into the logical order of experience and thinking.

Thus, a person's mental structure is the product of invisible power influences on the subjective consciousness that create the internal repression of instinctive impulses. These thereby constitute the subject's identity in the form of three layers—the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic—which are entangled like a double helix. Their intersection constitutes the entire spiritual life of a person, whether compressed or in various produced effects. The Borromean knot is a geometric concept in which three circles are interconnected and the removal of one circle leaves the other two unconnected. This is a way to illustrate the interdependence of these three layers, as a way of exploring each's characteristics and interactions. Its main value lies in the fact that it is made up of two separate circles that are connected by a third, and thus each layer is fundamental in the entire structural system and any separation will result in an automatic, complete breakdown of the relationship, with disastrous results for the formation of the self and obstacles for itself.

Lacan's Real-Imaginary-Symbolic model deconstructs psychoanalysis. He dismisses the so-called natural chaos of Freud's theory, as well as orderly, rational people like Hegel and Descartes. Subjectivity incorporates all paradoxes, conflicts between order and disorder and rationality and irrationality. This starts with the mirror stage, which is a way of explaining condemnation for the process of the self's

formation by the child's identity, through finding the illusion itself. In a similar manner to Hegel's way of speaking, it duplicates itself and produces heterogeneity in external objects, but not to establish the formal order of ideas but to assimilate the misconception and confusion between illusion and reality. Thus, assimilation is also synonymous with alienation and misrecognition: it is both itself and not itself. The self, as the traditional concept, is just an inflated tendency of the illusory self.

Lacan asserts that this is just a sign of the disease; the self is structured exactly like a symptom. The center of the subject is just a symptom of privilege, human symptoms, and human mental illness.⁷⁴ Descartes's account of "I think, therefore I am" is a cognitive failure. Thinking is just a habit of experience that takes the Real, with its decay of integrity, and the Imaginary, with its repressed fragility, and engages them with the Symbolic. Therefore, thinking never reaches the Real. Conversely, it is the Symbolic that covers but awakens the natural desire to return the Real and the Imaginary tendencies to the original state. In terms of the condition of personal development, the representation of the Symbolic is the final step after the mirror stage, which is the Imaginary identity point that defines the formation of the self after it has yielded to the Symbolic order.

Lacan's notion of the mirror stage understandably received much criticism, since it contained many contradictions in terms of recognizing human nature and personality through experiential observations:

If epistemological maturation and the formation of a world picture were dependent upon catching sight of oneself in a mirror, then the [mirror

⁷⁴ See Lacan, Jacques (1997), pp. 62.

stage] theory would predict that congenitally blind individuals would lack selfhood and be unable to enter language, society or the world at large.

There is no evidence whatsoever that this implausible consequence of the theory is borne out in practice. (Tallis, 1995, pp. 153)

The observation to form the self does not simply rely on seeing; those who are born blind still form a sense of the self. The mirror stage discussed by Lacan is not limited to the image of a specific mirror that reflects the subject the child sees and recognizes. It must be understood that the mirror here is a metaphor for the stage in which a child can recognize their existence as a different entity from surrounding objects and know how to recognize their re-engagement with others by, for example, touching hands or bodies, or by answering voices, as explained by Dylan Evans.⁷⁵

In the framework of Lacan's view, unconsciousness is a complex structure of spirit that only begins to appear when people engage in social and cultural life. It is a product of the conflict and peace between nature and social culture, between desire and legal order, and between integrity and fragmentation. Lacan differs from Freud in that, while Freud emphasizes the physiological nature whereby humans identify through the collection of fragments in the dream, Lacan insists on the social culture that creates pathways and deviations through common sense. According to Lacan, physiological nature is integral but cannot be fully realized because it is always fragmented, mutilated, and edited by the order and rules of the Symbolic. The borders around our lives are Symbolic, with the form of estimation as the linguistic sign, so no subject is independent of the order of the Symbolic or of

⁷⁵ See Evans, Dylan, pp. 193.

language, which have entered spiritual depth and are running our lives: they mask and repress the Real and make us fall into ignorance or misrecognition.

Essentially, we tell and act (but actually: *have been* told and acted) according to the principles of order and law but also forget that life itself is not. Hence, we have few opportunities to be aware that the Symbolic and language have formed a mask that covers the nature of life, one that always wants to rebel both around us and within us.

Lacan's interpretation does not deny the process of the self's formation, which stems from the subject realizing it is different from others and their environment, as well as denying that the subject sees its image in others. However, it is essential to note that Lacan highlights the content of the images assigned to things by the subject. That is to say, the subject's perceptions of others and things are not objects with inherent characteristics but are actually images processed through the owner's perspective. Lacan uses the concept of the Imaginary to emphasize the subject's misunderstandings and illusions about objects. The existence of the self is undeniable, but its characteristic as a reflection of the relationship between the subject and objects must be understood as a contingent and non-deterministic characteristic. Human nature, or what Lacan calls illusion and even a form of pathology, is seen by American philosopher Richard Rorty in a more positive way as the re-description of the subject's objects, through which the subject re-creates itself in the self-creation process.⁷⁶ In terms of the concept of the self, Lacan and

⁷⁶ As analyzed in section 3.2., the re-description is not the only concept that Rorty focuses on to explain the self-creation in the cognitive process. It is a trio of concepts that interact with each other: imagination, re-

Rorty are similar in that both reject the self as an *a priori* form of awareness. They focus their attention on practical, sociohistorical interactions and problems arising from the use of language, which is not merely a tool for transmitting information between individuals but also used to present the creation of the subject: “Rorty’s pragmatism is a form of thinking that is obsessively focused on the practical, or praxis, above theory or contemplation.”⁷⁷ But, like Lacan, these practical interactions are not objects themselves. They are always subjective images of the subject. The privilege (even if it is an illusion) of the cognitive subject in relation to objects is that a person is able to form a network of their (imaginary) image of the object. Moreover, the subject’s interpretations of the object, in order to give it meaning (for the subject), denote personal power. As Mendieta explains:

There is no supreme power that can offer an alibi, warrant, or proof for our claims and beliefs, nothing except fallible human authority. There is no supreme authority, other than the authority of human justifications and reasons, whose only power is the power of persuasions. (Mendieta, 2006, pp. xvii)

This clarification of Rorty’s perspective on philosophy should give up the ambition to seek truth and the inherent nature of things because these lie outside the subject’s perspective. As Lacan analyzed, there is no nature other than the subject’s own

description, and narrative. This is what makes the difference between Lacan and Rorty when interpreting the concept of imagination. Unlike the negative perspective of Lacan, Rorty assesses the imagination, along with re-description and narrative, as essential in the process of the subject’s self-experience.

⁷⁷ See Mendieta, Eduardo (2006), pp. xvi.

attachment to itself and to things.⁷⁸ Furthermore, if what is interpreted by the subject is not nature but is instead the subject's interpretation of nature through language expression, then the conversations in which the self is created also need to be considered. The quest for nature and truth should focus on interpersonal dialogues in conversations that are solely meaningful in a particular context and that can be re-described entirely and re-analyzed according to another perspective in another context.⁷⁹

Rorty does not interpret the subject's illusions about the object pessimistically. He admits that, according to Lacan's analysis, images of the world are the subject's individual images of the world and of the subject itself. Indeed, Rorty goes a step further: instead of attempting to understand the nature of the world, attempts should be made to understand and describe the world and ourselves. That is to say, the way the subject perceives the world and expresses that perception through language and human interaction need to be interrogated.

The difference between Lacan and Rorty is that Rorty, instead of seeing the subjective images that the subject receives from reality as imaginary, wants to interpret these images as contingency that the subject doesn't need to deny, "we are doomed to spend our conscious lives trying to escape from contingency rather than

⁷⁸ It is necessary to distinguish things as perceived objects of the subject and things as real events. The delusions and meanings that things bring to the perceiving subject do not lose eventual "information" (facts) about things. For example, climate change is an actual event, evidenced by precise scientific experiments. However, the meaning and value of this event will influence the creation of different "images" of nature in the subject's perception: concern, apathy, anxiety, neglect, activation, or surrender.

⁷⁹ See Rorty, Richard (1979), pp. 394.

(...) acknowledging and appropriating contingency”⁸⁰ because each individual, from birth and interaction with others, is governed by the socio-historical premises on which he/she grows. This means that “After all, Plato, Kant and the man at the hardware store would all concede that the voices of our ancestors, though dead, still speak in identifiable ways in our hearts and minds”⁸¹ but the core of “the knowing subject” in an ironist narrative, as Rorty found in Nietzsche’s point of view, is:

The paradigm of such a narrative is the life of genius who can say of the relevant portion of the past [...] because she has found a way to describe that past which the past never knew, and thereby found a self to be which her precursors never knew was possible. (Rorty, 1989, pp. 29)⁸²

“A knowing subject” is one who has self-consciousness not only through interpreting the event by creating new vocabularies but, first and foremost, through

⁸⁰ See Rorty, Richard (1989), pp. 28.

⁸¹ See Holland, Scott (2004). *The Coming Only Is Sacred: Self-Creation and Social Solidarity in Richard Rorty’s Secular Eschatology*. *Crosscurrents*. Retrieved from <http://www.crosscurrents.org/hollandwinter2004.htm>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

⁸² Guignon and Hiley criticized the separation between personal freedom and public interest. The issues that belong to the individual’s responsibility to society form an inseparable bond in a liberal democracy: “Rorty hopes to protect both our individualistic commitment to personal freedom and our communal concern for solidarity by making a sharp distinction between private and public life. But it is not clear such a distinction is consistent with the goals of a liberal democracy, or that it even makes sense. An individual’s self-descriptions are realized in his or her agency in the public world, and public practices and institutions impact on the individual’s capacities for self-fulfilment. It is the task of moral and social philosophy to clarify these bonds between civic responsibility and meaningful freedom.” (See Guignon & Hiley, 1990. In Malachowski, Alan, pp. 359).

an ability to re-describe past events according to a new understanding, from a new perspective. This led Rorty to become interested in Freud's interpretation of the way that the unconscious, from past events, places its mark on conscience in a more positive way for the self in the present.

According to Rorty, Freud has provided us with detailed explanations of the specific circumstances in which an individual receives a series of facts from which to form a system of anxiety, concern, suppression, inhibition in his/her unconscious. This "narcissistic origin of compassion,"⁸³ Freud emphasized, is not an identity that individuals must share with community members as an immutable core value, but rather a path to a particular view of a specific object in a particular situation. That is, instead of a possible system organized to define an individual, Freud provides a contingent solution for identifying a person. Inhibitory states and moral emotions associated with concepts such as "paranoid," "sadistic," or "obsessional" are not the invariant regulation systems in the changing of things and specific adaptation. These vocabularies themselves will also be perceived and interpreted privately and differently in each individual, and the effect is very different on each subject that the subject interacts with.

They bring to our minds resemblances and differences between ourselves and very particular people (our parents, for example) and between the present situation and very particular situations of our past. They enable us to sketch a narrative of our own development, our idiosyncratic moral struggle, which is far more finely textured, far more custom-tailored to our

⁸³ Sigmund Freud, quoted by Rorty (1989), pp. 31.

individual case, than the moral vocabulary which the philosophical tradition offered us. (Rorty, 1989, pp. 32)

Here, Freud provides us with vocabularies not to describe the past events in a patterned manner, but as self-description in order to help an individual realize the uncertainty (in our interpretation) in the premises inherited from the previous generation, thus creating an own self that is worthy in the present by creating idiosyncratic narratives: “failure to break free of that past rather than for failure to live up to universal standards.”⁸⁴ Therefore, when referring to “Imagination” in the Romantic, Rorty noted that “Imagination” is not a central concept with epistemological ambition to replace “Reason” or “Will”. There is no central self for the cognitive process. Imagination is a bridge between the self and something that is *not* of the self, a way of expressing the self in reality that is interwoven with relationships.

Imagination is “a faculty for creating metaphors”⁸⁵ and, as Donald Davidson proved, once a metaphor is created, it is, of course, influenced and caused by pre-existing events and interactions—but it does not, and does not need to, express the previous interactions.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ See Rorty, Richard (1989), pp. 33.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 36.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 36.

4.2. A broken situation of an imaginary network in collective consciousness

Further analysis has followed Lacan's and Rorty's admissions that images received and created by the subject through interactions with things and others are only subjective images of the subject itself.⁸⁷ When these imaginary images of the subject are assigned to others, the subject will mistakenly think that others carry the image of the subject as representatives of subjectivity. Further, when representatives (assumed by the subject's perspective) form a network of images in the subject's consciousness, these representations become a collective consciousness system whereby "I" sees "myself" in others and "I" (assumes that) others see themselves in "me."

This misconception leads to negative consequences, as the subject thinks that these images are itself because it sees itself in others.

In *Investigation into the Origin of Language and Consciousness*, Tran Duc Thao analyzes the way subjects see themselves in others, which stems from original

⁸⁷ In lecture VII: Pragmatism and Humanism (Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking, 1907), James explained about a world without inherent nature, without absolute truth, without the separation between the self and the world. He emphasized that we cannot create truth from nothingness or truth is an inherent entity, existing independently from man: "We carve out everything just as we carve out constellations, to suit our human purposes"; "You see how naturally one comes to the humanistic principle: you can't weed out the human contribution." Hilary Putnam also emphasizes the conditions or circumstances that affect our classifications when he analyzes James' holism in *Pragmatism: an Open Question*: "There is no 'totality of observational facts' fixed in advance to be described; what is there, even at the level of observation fact, will depend partly on what cultures we create, and that means what languages we create [...] I have to argued that James was right [...] to think that decisions about 'fact' and 'value judgements' depend on and condition one another." (See Putnam, 1995, pp. 17 – 18).

activities and community interactions. In interactions conducted through the labor of the primitive, indicative interactions aim to engage in collective activity. That is to say, there must be at least two subjects to carry out the dialogue. This is not the inner guidelines that the subject performs to itself, but, naturally, the inner instructions still appear when the subject guides itself, as the subject places itself in the shoes of another. In primitive community interactions, some instructors and people receive instructions. In turn, individuals in the primitive community observe and imitate each other to create a collective unity (in hunting activities). Each sees in another the picture of him/herself, with the same gestures and actions.

In the movement of reciprocal indicative gestures, prehuman workers reflect themselves, so to speak, in sending one another the same gesture, and see themselves in the others 'as in mirror'. At the stage at which we have arrived, of course, perception consists only of sensori-motor images which are not conscious. From this stage on, however, the subject recognizes himself in his own image. (Tran Duc Thao, 1984, pp. 8).

These are the adaptive work habits that humans use to overcome the upper limit of animality, in order to form consciousness. By exchanging similar gestures, prehistoric humans saw themselves in the other, as in a mirror.

The process of exchanging similar gestures reminds us of the key concept of George Herbert Mead's account on the self, *the generalized other*, to emphasize the ability to place the subject itself in the position of others, a vital ability for the development of the self. According to Mead, the self begins to form when an individual interacts with others and places him/herself in the role of others in a social relationship. The self here is linked to the process of self-awareness. Why is

it important to put oneself in the shoes of others and play others' roles? Because it helps us participate in the control space of others so that we can establish a set of behaviors that are compatible with the attitude and perspective of others in our interactions with each other.

The critical point is that when an individual plays the role of another person, he/she cannot play the role without interaction—that is, a role is only valid when at least one other individual plays a reciprocal role. For example, a lawyer may only be a lawyer when he is placed in a relationship with the client, or a teacher is only valid when placed with the student:

Partly playing on the etymological roots of the term “subject” (one is always subject to, or the subject of, something), Foucault claimed that people come to relate to themselves as selves, come to engage in practices of self-evaluation and self-regulation, within contexts of domination and subordination. (Zahavi, 2014, p. 10)

However, this roleplaying is only the first step in the process of forming the self; if it is only the roleplaying of a pair of individuals interacting with the role together, it is not the self but a proto-self. To create an organized behavioral system to interact with others, an individual must not only respond to another individual in a specific situation but also build a series of responses when playing in a series of different roles in the overall picture.

This means that the observer's mechanism for simulating and explaining the behavior, as analyzed in section 2.2, is only the first step. The next step is that we place an individual in multidimensional interaction with many objects, with different positions in community, in a historical-social structure.

The organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called “the generalized other.” The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community. Thus, for example, in the case of such a social group as a ball team, the team is the generalized other in so far as it enters—as an organized process or social activity—into the experience of any one of the individual members of it.

(Mead, 1934, pp. 72)

Although communities express themselves in many different forms with characteristics and responses as well as assessments that change over time, members gathered within a group or community must be perceived as a system in which individuals are involved and receive interactions.

G. H. Mead found similarities in the interpretation of William James (whom he cited in his book *Mind, Self and Society*) about the social self in which an individual sees his/her image in many different social groups, and his/her marks and level of expression in each social group are not the same.

Properly speaking, *a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him* and carry an image of him in their mind.

To wound any one of these his images is to wound him. But as the individuals who carry the images fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct *groups* of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups. (James, 1890, e-version, pp. 656)

This means that the self is not only formed and expressed through a single image in a specific relationship but is also a panorama in which individuals recognize the diverse images of themselves in different objects and different relations. A series of images, where the subject identifies itself in different contexts and relationships, forms a set of group images in the subject and, conversely, images of the subject in the group. These different images form a set of perceptions (or collective consciousness) whereby individuals and groups recognize themselves in others.

As analyzed in section 2.3., people first see themselves in others, as in a mirror: “Here we have an image of the object: this image is accompanied by the image of itself in itself which consists of the consciousness of the object, this consciousness being experienced in itself.”⁸⁸ The relationship with “me” is the result of relationships with “others.” It is only through the relationship with others, as with a creature that resembles “me,” that “I” comes into a relationship with “myself” as a human being.

This subjective image system evolves into a collective consciousness in which all individuals of this group identify themselves in the other, each giving themselves the sign that they also give each other, ultimately making themselves confused by performing the same movement:

The *cognizance* [*prise de conscience*: grasp of consciousness] of the indicative gesture began *sporadically* in the lagging prehomimid hunter who repeated to himself the call of the others and *recognized himself in them*. Cognizance now develops into a *collective cognizance* where all the

⁸⁸ See Tran Duc Thao (1984), pp. 11.

individuals of the group *recognize each other in the others* [...] The sign, consequently, which thus appears to each individual *as experienced in himself* insofar as he is part of the action of the group and is identified with it, is somehow sustained by the social relation itself. In other words, *the sign has been internalized by the group*, in such a way that it becomes for the group *available experience* that subsequently can be used at will; in other words, it can be applied not only to particularly interesting objects, but also to any more or less interesting object *in general*. (Tran Duc Thao, 1984, pp. 12 – 13).

The cognitive process will progress to a stage in which the group's behaviors can be reduced to the long-term image of the group, within each individual. In this stage individuals will identify themselves by the social interactions with which they are familiar. The images, gestures, and words of familiar people in a group, of which an individual is a member, will form the personal experiences of the environment in which the individual realizes him/herself as a part of that context. The context, in turn, is part of that individual, whether it is an illusion part of Lacan's interpretation of Imaginary: "It is a fact of common experience that we constantly feel around us the presence of our familiar social environment, and this image essentially implies the typical form of gestures and words of people we know."⁸⁹ These are only personal experiences, obviously, but personal experiences of interacting with the common space.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 13.

In conclusion, the meaning of the world to the subject is actually mistaken for the meaning that the image network brings to the subject. In a similar manner to the origin of early consciousness through indicative gestures, the subject mistakenly believes that there is always at least two characters in any social interaction: the instructor and the receiver. Furthermore, what the subject sees in others is actually the image of the subject on others. This leads to the subject's illusions when inherently familiar spaces and meaningful interactions form a secure image network in which the subject and others see each other's familiar images.

The disruption of the self's image network is considered in the case of the disruption to community space that occurs in a community that otherwise enjoys peace and safety, which is easily recognizable in unusual circumstances such as war and natural disasters. The prerequisites for establishing the self come from "normal" (i.e., stable) interactions that create a free space for individuals to develop their networks of awareness. When an "abnormal" event occurs, the stable spaces and interactions of the self are entirely broken. Consequently, common emotions that arise from daily interactions are suddenly replaced by unexpected emotions, and images of the subject as reflected in others begin to change and break. Instead of the safe space of everyday work, there are scenes of devastation; instead of daily routines such as catching the bus, people are confronted with great destruction; instead of peaceful tree-lined streets, cities are filled with the corpses of people we once knew. Accordingly, replacing the default language and behavioral interactions between the subject and others is the loss of life and existential worries concerning food, medicine, drinking water etc. Essentially, the networks of images in the

subject's self-experience are destroyed and replaced with irregular catastrophic images and emotions.

As a result, the self begins to question its existence, and if these abnormal circumstances are the new image network that the self must incorporate to build a new self, the old self (built on previous images and interactions) must be erased—that is, the previous self does not create real value in the current situation. Therefore, the premise that set out about the fundamental existence of the default self is brought into doubt.

Of course, it needs to be added that an individual's questioning of his/her existence does not occur just in a natural disaster or social crisis. Individuals, in everyday life, still ponder the question of the meaning of life, of work, of the goal of life or the nature of their existence whenever they see themselves as an object of cognitive process. However, when we see the self as an interaction between the individual and others, and the meaning of the existence of the subject is linked to others and the context, we will not only see the self as more than the process of an individual's self-awareness but also question the individual's position in the interaction. As analyzed above, the overall picture of the self cannot isolate an individual from the socio-historical context, and the subject's self-awareness cannot be separated from the interaction with others. The collapse of the imaginary network does not just make individuals question the meaning of their existence, but also the existence of the platforms (from social structure, morality, to living conditions) that they identify with.

Moreover, these sudden disruptions can also lead to negative consequences for the existence of the self, such as the loss of opportunities through which the self creates its own space. If we interpret the word “friend” in the statement by Goodman that “to gain or lose a friend is thus to gain or lose a possibility of oneself”⁹⁰ to mean “interactions and relationships” in the network that the subject builds, it can be seen that the more elements that are added to a subject’s cognitive network, the more possibilities the subject has to develop its concept of self. Conversely, the loss of elements in this image network decreases the possibilities for the subject to define itself because the subject perceives its image through others; thus, the loss of others equals the loss of the subject’s self-image. The resulting loss and existentialism that the cognitive subject must experience in response to abnormal circumstances may render the subject’s “self-confidence” shaken, if not “broken.”

In situations where the subject’s image network is broken, the subject faces a contradiction between contingency and stability. The stability that the subject acquires in daily life creates an emotional form of safety and confidence. Objects within the cognitive network of the subject will no longer be perceived as senseless things or pure relationships. Subjects will see objects as characteristics and emotions that the object is expressing to the subject. Buses that run on time are not merely machines but, for the subject, an expression of safety and accuracy. The food-laden stalls in the supermarket are no longer merely full of the items that the subject wants to buy, but the expression of stability and peace of mind. The other

⁹⁰ See Goodman, Russell B. (2002), pp. 93.

persons in the interaction with the subject are not only people outside the subject; their responses affirm the existence and value of the subject. The self is now defined by the stable images that the subject receives from the interaction network.

When the whole stable structure is abruptly broken, the subject will face a lot of negative thoughts. The first is the feeling of fear when one's survival is threatened. An individual must address vital needs; it is the existence of "the body" of the subject put at risk. As analyzed in section 1, the subject's awareness and control of its body is the first step in the process of expanding the scope of the subject to objects. Therefore, when the body of the subject is put into a life-threatening situation, the self's existence is also questioned. That is, the threat to the existence of the subject's body will affect the subject's perception of itself as an intimidated self. Apparently, this interpretation is only convincing if we do not separate the mind and body as the two elements that form an individual but recognize a person as an organic unity between the biological part and the thinking ability. Rorty emphasizes the importance of the ability to use language:

How did we ever get the notion of the mind as something distinct from the body? Why did this bad idea enter our culture? (...) The only question about the nature of the mind is the question, "How did human beings acquire an ability that no other organism has; namely, the ability to use language?" (Palmer, 2005)⁹¹

⁹¹ See Palmer, Barbara (2005). Philosopher Richard Rorty asserts notion of mind/body distinction is false. *Stanford Report*. Retrieved from <https://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/april13/rorty-041305.html>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

The detachment of the body and the mind, as Rorty has criticized, comes from the use of visual perceptions as a model to talk about the knowledge and cognitive processes, a Platonic style (separate from those the subject “sees” outside and those the subject “realizes” inside) and is characterized by a “Cartesian theater” in which “the use of visual perception as a metaphor for knowledge led to a picture of an inner space inhabited by things called ideas, impressions and mental representations.”⁹² This interpretation leads to the systems of classical metaphysics and epistemology, which separate subject and object and, at the same time, construct patterns of the self as the subject’s dialogue with itself towards the inherent nature of the subject.

The difficulty faced by a philosopher who, like myself, is sympathetic to this suggestion — on who thinks of himself as auxiliary to the poet rather than to the physicist — is to avoid hinting that this suggestion gets something right, that my sort of philosophy corresponds to the way things really are. For this talk of correspondence brings back just the idea my sort of philosopher wants to get rid of, the idea that the world of the self has an intrinsic nature. (Rorty, 1989, p. 8)

Thus, when referring to the concept of the image network, I do not refer to the visual image networks that the subject sees (in the senses). Of course, the subject can only collect information of the world through the senses, as analyzed in section 2.2., when a child begins to recognize and point fingers at things out of reach. But the image network is not merely visual images; it is a system encompassing the social

⁹² Ibid. (2005).

relationship and interaction between the subject and the environment in which the subject identifies itself in the context and the context is part of it.

The feelings of insecurity and negative thoughts will arise when not only the existence of the body is threatened, but the subject also faces losses in its image network. The losses that the subject faces are not the losses of the macro system or the general moral laws, but the losses in the private experience of each person, which Rorty calls “only fear of some concrete loss.”⁹³ The loss in specific interaction breaks the elements that make up the characteristics of the self—that is, the characteristics of the self will also be questioned skeptically.

In summary, the self is unable to develop without a network of others with whom it interacts and influences, and any change or disruption to this network will also affect the self.

4.3. The unnecessary distinction between the self and others

In chapter 2, neuroscientific findings were used to demonstrate the subject’s mechanism for simulating and interpreting in the observation, reception, and evaluation of objects. However, given that the individual self has no meaning and social value if not placed within a network of other selves with multidimensional and diverse interactions, an individual cannot avoid adopting behavioral and emotional mechanisms influenced by other selves in this network—that is, what is being affected is not “I” but “we.”

⁹³ See Rorty, Richard (1989), pp. 23.

Accordingly, Martha C. Nussbaum demonstrates that one does not have to rely on neuroscientific prerequisites to make arguments about the “bridges” between the self and others. She bases her arguments on a psychological standpoint as she delves into the emotional issues in the interaction between the self and others. Nussbaum provides a valuable addition to the purely scientific arguments of Zahavi⁹⁴ by analyzing the empathy between the subject and others through the subject’s ability to put itself in another’s position: “We may define empathy as the ability to imagine the situation of the other, taking the other’s perspective.”⁹⁵ However, both the scientific interpretation of Zahavi and the psychological perspectives of Nussbaum return to the default distinction between the self and others, and a border is drawn between the private sphere of the individual and others who do not belong to that space.

Consequently, the more we emphasize the empathy between the self and others and the ability to simulate other’s behavior and emotions, the wider the gap between the self and others. This is the same trend that Rohrer explains when she softens Rorty’s critique: the purpose of seeking personal happiness when expanded to a larger dimension will eventually find similarities with the interests of the community. Scott Holland also points out that what Rorty refuses to reconcile is not the conflicts between the individual and community but his denial of community values being used to impose on and violate the individual’s creation of self. In other words, what Rorty hopes to distinguish is that the experience of an

⁹⁴ See Zahavi, Dan (2014), pp. 154.

⁹⁵ See Nussbaum C., Martha (2013), pp. 145.

individual is different from his/her community and that there is no need to find a compromise between the two; individual experiences are always different and contingent, and it is impossible to reconcile them.

In addition, Rorty admits that the self cannot be formed without inherent preconditions, such as historical conditions, social characteristics, language, political context, but that it is crucial not to allow these conditions to become a blanket system in which universal belief systems violate personal development of self.⁹⁶ Instead, the self, within a controlled environment, extends beyond the scope of a single individual, forming connections with other selves in an interactive network. During this process, the dialogues will be exchanged and practiced in accordance with what Rorty terms “social hope” in which “private irony” coexists with “liberal hopes” – that is, when there are no conflicting boundaries between the self and others.

Although Rorty has argued that it is not necessary to separate the self and others, the problem does not stop here. If we project the relationship between the self and others to a larger dimension – that is, the relationship between the individual and the community, between personal space and public space – Rorty’s interpretation meets much opposition.

When interpreting the personal creative space and the purpose of unity of the community, Rorty provoked a lot of debate, in which Nancy Fraser commented that

⁹⁶ See Holland, Scott (2004). The Coming Only Is Sacred. Self-Creation and Social Solidarity in Richard Rorty’s Secular Eschatology. *Crosscurrents*. Retrieved from <https://crosscurrents.org/hollandwinter2004.htm>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

when Rorty emphasized the concept of “private ironist,” he separated personal area and public area into two distinct parts. One part is associated with the Romantics, with the tendency of *elitization* of a small group in society which has the ability to create new vocabulary within the narrative of oneself; the second part is tied to the pragmatic view of dedication to the community. Nancy Fraser argues, like the way Guignon and Hiley points out, that Rorty contradicted himself with his “liberal hope” proposals.

What is this problem exactly?

Fraser argues that although Rorty spent a considerable amount of time in chapter 1 of his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* emphasizing the importance of romance and associating it with the promotion of pragmatism, these are two distinct tendencies aimed at opposing goals. She points out these contradictions in her book *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, explaining the opposition between the Romantic theory and pragmatic standpoint as follows: the Romantics promotes an extraordinary form of individuality intending to rewrite historical-social premises to broaden pure self-creativity; practical fields such as science and politics have been turned into an aesthetic act which “becomes aestheticizing, individualist, and elitist. It is, in short, the impulse to father oneself, to be ‘causa sui’, to separate from one’s community”;⁹⁷ the Romantics tried to replace the metaphysical view of “philosophy as science” with a new perspective of “philosophy as metaphor” in which the intellectual should become the “aesthete,” “antisocial” and “be king in

⁹⁷ See Nancy Fraser (1989), pp. 94.

the castle of his own self-fashioning” and “the strong poet as heretofore conceived must be domesticated, cut down to size and made fit for private life;”⁹⁸ the Romantic-individualist perspective forms a monologic viewpoint and creates an individualist, elitist sphere apart from “collective life and political practices.”⁹⁹

On the other hand, the pragmatism is directed at the practice of realistic topics, making an individual more useful to society, turning an individual into a reformer and away from narcissism, which only cares about personal shine; pragmatism is “community-minded, democratic, and kind” and the pragmatist aims to “solve the problems and meet the needs of his ordinary fellow citizens”;¹⁰⁰ pragmatism suggests the standpoint of “philosophy as politics,” which focuses on “the social worker and the engineer”;¹⁰¹ and the pragmatic view of politics is a polylogic perspective which pursues the goals in practice, politics, and publicity.

Having listed the mismatches between romance and pragmatism, Fraser criticized Rorty’s liberal irony view on three key points.

First, a conscious subject is an individual capable of creating a new vocabulary to create a new metaphor, forming a vocabulary shift that serves as a driving force for social progress. But individuals cannot be separated from social interaction with the political conditions they receive; that is, the vocabulary shift is only meant to be an intellectual game in a mere personal space without interactions.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 101.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 103.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 99.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 100.

Second, if an individual's self-creation process only seeks sublimation in thinking and self-awareness, it is merely an individual's ambition to replace the premises of the community, which is no different from the Oedipus complex of a son who hates his father—that is, an emotional suppression of the species.

Finally, if we frame a liberal ironist as meaning an individual capable of creating new discourses, Rorty saw the concept of “ironic liberal” as the prerogative of a small group of intellectuals separate from the socio-political process. There is no room for non-liberal others; there is no room for collective subjects; and socialist-feminist politics are ignored. Meanwhile, community issues are always political. From the workers' movements to the women's movements, all personal and community topics are political topics.

As analyzed in section 4.1., the characteristic of a “liberal ironist” is not the ability to create a new vocabulary or a new metaphor that has never existed before. A knowing subject is someone who is able to re-describe the objects or stories that have happened in his/her narrative in a different way in order to find values that are useful in the current interaction. The concept of “new” not only implies “unprecedented” but also “a different perspective.” It is because we cannot claim that a belief or a standard system can serve as an invariant fundamental in the socio-historical progress that even the most solid beliefs and judgments change their features and expressions over time. As John Rawls emphasized:

There is no ahistorical standard, no universal criteria of validity or soundness of judgment to which we can appeal to access whole belief-systems or forms of life or of what we take to be our most important and crucial commitments in some *final and unassailable* way. (Nielsen,

Richard Rorty. In Shook, John R. & Margolis, Joseph Margolis (Ed.),
2009, pp. 134)

Here, we come to fallibilism in which we can doubt everything, but not all at the same time (deny all the premises); and we cannot doubt if we do not have a belief in something. Linguistic premises and historical context, as well as social interactions, are conditions for a self-awareness process.

Any individual forms a set of words to interpret, judge, and evaluate him/herself and the images he/she takes from the context. The problem is the way the subject perceives this vocabulary system.

All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs and their lives [...] I shall call these words a person's "final vocabulary." It is "final" in the sense that if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse. Those words are as far as he can go with language; beyond them there is only helpless passivity or a resort to force. (Rorty, 1989, pp. 73)

That is, when individuals turn their "final vocabulary" into an "ultimate commitment" and a set of words into "sets of ultimate commitments", they are no different from an existentialist or logical positivist who considers "decision and commitment is king and is arbitrary."¹⁰² An ironist is a person who doubts his/her "final vocabulary" and realizes that it cannot be closer to reality than someone else's "vocabulary." When a conversation takes place, and faces controversy or denial, an ironist will allow the conversation to keep going regardless of possible conflict or

¹⁰² See Shook, John R. & Joseph Margolis (Ed.) (2009), pp. 135.

its inability to reach a conclusion. It is the condition for the exchange and interaction between selves and then the subject is no longer a monologue unto itself but has engaged in intersubjectivity.

Fraser seems to have understood Rorty in the way he is trying to isolate personal and public spaces, turning individual activities into a form of self-satisfying behavior, separate from the purpose of the community. Rorty does not isolate “private sector” from “public sector.” He interprets the three elements of language, selfhood, and community as being in a close relationship with each other from the viewpoint of contingency. The self is formed in a community of languages and practices. It is not a monologue of the subject unto itself, nor is it self-awareness of the cognitive subject separate from specific interactions, as Rorty criticizes Cartesian and emphasizes the Freudian point of view. Not only that, but Rorty also emphasizes the importance of the society’s progress, which forces us to change the way we view, interpret, and evaluate events as well as ourselves, from which the cognitive subject should create new ways of description (first, for events that took place) to establish an appropriate operating space for the self.

Rorty takes the French Revolution as an example. The French Revolution changed entire systems related to vocabulary, interpretations, concepts about social relations, socio-political structure, and state establishment.¹⁰³ These changes did not come from the self-satisfaction or self-creation of the scientists or the elite. The contingency of the self and language is closely linked to community and society

¹⁰³ See Rorty, Richard (1989), pp. 3.

change. When a change occurs, the way we understand and describe past objects must also change in order for us to adapt.

So we say that the vocabulary of Greek metaphysics and Christian theology—the vocabulary used in what Heidegger has called ‘the onto-theological tradition’—was a useful one for our ancestors’ purposes, but that we have different purposes, which will be better served by employing a different vocabulary. Our ancestors climbed up a ladder which we are now in a position to throw away. We can throw it away not because we have reached a final resting place, but because we have different problems to solve than those which perplexed our ancestors. (Rorty, 1999, pp. xxii)

Instead of restricting ourselves to the descriptions and interpretations of the verbal systems of previous generations, the cognitive subject should be curious and explore others’ stories and words, so that we can put ourselves in the position of others, and we can re-describe the object in new words.

The role of the Romantics is not to promote the freedom of an individual’s creativity to embellish personal glory. Rorty points out that the Romantics proposes a pragmatic understanding of the social and cultural change in which human problems are perceived by the eyes of imagination and creativity:

What the Romantics expressed as the claim that imagination, rather than reason, is the central human faculty was realization that a talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change. (Rorty, 1989, pp. 7)

Contrary to Fraser’s interpretation, the Romantics does not absolutize the creativity of new vocabulary, nor does it separate this creativity from the reality in which the

vocabulary is conceived. If vocabulary is absolute—that is, a standard and measurable system—and all that the subject needs to do is to find a fixed language system that fits the reality and expresses the essence of the world and the self, then we turn to traditional philosophy, with the aim of searching ontology for all perception and practice. The self is created first, not by creating new words, but by using words that can describe the different perspectives of an event, an object in reality.

Besides, the concept of “ironic liberal” has been misunderstood by Fraser as a privileged form of a small elite group, who have the ability to create new discourse, separate from the needs of the majority, and stand outside those groups that do not have that privilege. On the other hand, an “ironic liberal” is a person who is not influenced or dominated by philosophical systems and standards when referring to or interpreting the terms of social justice or equality in opportunity:

If you speak about society in terms of this liberal utopia of equality in opportunity, and you don't have a philosophical backup such as the laws of history, or the decline of the West, or the age of nihilism, then you are in a position to be what I call an ironist. An ironist is someone who says that a liberal utopia isn't something that expresses the essence of human nature, the end of history, God's will, but is simply the best idea people have had about the object for which they work. (Mendieta, 2006, pp. 43 – 44).

Now we realize that the creative activities in the Romantics do not separate the subject from the problems of real life but also act as a driving force for socio-cultural change when everyone in society has the chance and ability to build their

narrative and perspective. Rorty called the Romantics as “romantic polytheism,” the idea that there are different but legal ways of life. He associates pragmatism with pluralism. Polytheism fits the romantic idea of inventing our purpose instead of implementing a premise plan. These different purposes cannot be combined or evaluated based on a single standard. But the Romantics is not the goal that we have to focus on, as Rorty said, that we need to “move beyond the Romantics” because “The Romantics mistakenly focused exclusively on individual self-creation, ignoring the responsibilities that we owe to each other”¹⁰⁴. He also stresses that “pragmatism is presented as a successor to Romanticism in its combination of the romantic sense of the importance of self-creation with an awareness of public commitment”¹⁰⁵. That is the balance he calls “the ideally liberal society” between “private perfection and social responsibility.”¹⁰⁶

Richard Bernstein points out the key point for which Rorty receives a lot of criticism: his distinction between private and public factors. The problem is not to separate an individual from the community. An individual always exists in parallel with two lives, private and public. These two lives, existing in one subject, aim at two seemingly contradictory goals: “public justice and private pleasures.”¹⁰⁷ We cannot deny either of these two factors. A child, as analyzed in chapter 3, begins to form an awareness of self, starting from recognizing itself as a different entity from

¹⁰⁴ See Bacon, Michael (2012), pp. 105.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 105.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 105.

¹⁰⁷ See Bernstein, Richard (2010), pp. 209.

others – that is, as an individual. However, that child must receive the re-engagement from others in the interaction for this perception to be completed. That is, right from the very beginning of the formation of the self, an individual cannot separate him/herself from relation with the community. The problem is how to make these two lives harmonious.

Rorty sought to build a grand synthesis (by using a Platonic account) in order to seek a unity that would transcend the specific differences between these two lives. But then he gave up because he did not believe that an abstract conceptual system, which transcends daily-life activities, could be useful and pragmatic. Asking himself: “what [...] philosophy is good for,”¹⁰⁸ Rorty found in Dewey’s viewpoint a possible proposal in a democratic community “in which everybody thinks that it is human solidarity”¹⁰⁹ attached to the need to extend human sympathy and the project of self-creation.

With this proposal, Rorty wanted to direct the community’s attention to the most practical issues, the human issues, not the abstract topics that are only valuable to a small group of intellectuals: “there is nothing that we can rely on but ourselves and our fellow human beings.”¹¹⁰ The relationship between the personal and public life of the subject is also the relationship between the self and others. Because once an individual interacts with others, the subject’s control of space must be extended outside the scope of his/her personal life – that is, at this time, the subject must live

¹⁰⁸ See Rorty, Richard (1999), pp. 11.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 20.

¹¹⁰ See Bernstein, Richard (2010), pp. 211.

a public life. Without accepting this, interpersonal dialogue cannot take place, but only the subject's monologue to itself.

Once an individual accepts to join a conversation, he/she has accepted to engage in interaction with the community in which abstract and universal references must be replaced by communication and debate with diverse perspectives and interpretations.

In short, the distinction between the self and others is unnecessary and the separation between personal and public life is not irreconcilable. Rorty's explanations of the contingencies of the self, based on William James' views on the social self and Wittgenstein's views on private experience as clarified by Scott Holland and Rohrer's analysis (in chapter 3), deny the distinction between the self and others. The conflicts between the pursuit of personal happiness and community outcomes could be solved once we perceive self as having a broader scope in which impacts on the community (i.e., the interactive networks) will be seen as also affecting the individual's self-experience.

When referring to the harmony between personal freedom and public interest, Rorty's point of view contains many contradictions and controversies. However, it must be asserted that Rorty points out that there is no need for harmony between the individual and the public. It does not mean that individuals and the public cannot come together in appropriate and valuable ways. What Rorty explains is that we must resist the temptation to pursue a metaphysical conceptual system or a non-historical normative system, which is entirely irrelevant in a pluralistic and democratic society. This proposal related to concern for his political interest in

freedom, tolerance, and the fight against human cruelty. With his past bullying in high school, Rorty recognizes those who use violence and authority to dominate others, whether within the family, community, or society, in the name of universal values, are no different from those who voted for dictators and totalitarian systems:

I see the ‘orthodox’ (the people who think that hounding gays out of the military promotes traditional family values) as the same honest, decent, blinkered, disastrous people who voted for Hitler in 1933. I see the ‘progressivists’ as defining the only America I care about (Rorty, Richard, 1999, pp. 17).

Rorty does not think there will be any practical value in arguing about the civil rights of sexual minorities using the foundations of Reason, Nature, or the so-called universal law of God. Instead, he turned to the hope of a pluralistic, liberal democracy to ensure that all people are treated with civilization, and that cruelty is minimized through tolerance, even though he was criticized for being too romantic or utopian.

Richard Rorty’s social hope is post-metaphysical. For him, this post-metaphysical vision is pragmatic and poetic, not doctrine. When we are liberated from stable concepts like “essence,” “nature,” and “foundations,” we can be more free, generous, imaginative, poetic, and more open.

4.4. Liberal hope instead of stability

Despite many criticisms levelled at his controversial statements, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, brought a message of resonance and consensus to other countries on November 10, 2017 in Da Nang, Vietnam. President Trump delivered the keynote speech at the 29th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

In that speech, he launched a strategy to link the India-Pacific countries (“Indo-Pacific region”) as a counterweight to China’s “Belt and Road Initiative” by emphasizing the independence and distinct values of each country:

With your help, this entire region has emerged and it is still emerging as a beautiful constellation of nations, each its own bright star, satellites to none and each one, a people, a culture, a way of life, and a home.

Those of you who have lived through these transformations understand better than anyone the value of what you have achieved. You also understand that your home is your legacy, and you must always protect it.

In the process of your economic development, you’ve sought commerce and trade with other nations, and forged partnerships based on mutual respect and directed toward mutual gain.¹¹¹

The speech received applause from the majority of APEC members, not only because it praised the progress of each country, but also because it made reference to anti-globalization and the fight against economic aggression through multilateral trade agreements, where the interests of small countries are vulnerable. It should be added that on September 19, 2017, in an address to the United Nations held two months before the APEC forum, President Trump also emphasized respect for the cultural, traditional, and political differences of other countries:

We do not expect diverse countries to share the same cultures, traditions, or even systems of government. But we do expect all nations to uphold

¹¹¹ Remarks by President Trump at APEC CEO Summit, Da Nang, Vietnam. *The White House*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/11/10/remarks-president-trump-apec-ceo-summit-da-nang-vietnam>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

these two core sovereign duties: to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation.¹¹²

Here, consensus is elevated into a standard for solidarity, in that President Trump introduced three mandatory standards for a sustainable economic alliance: “fairness,” “respect,” and “reciprocity.”¹¹³ These standards have enjoyed consensus in the socio-political context in the first half of the 21st century, especially after the shocking events such as the September 11 attacks in the United States and the massacre at the headquarters of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris, both times where the clash between economics, politics, and cultural or religious differences was pushed to extremes and gave rise to ongoing conflict. These concepts are emphasized as a guideline for the conduct of nations, and also advocated by the right-wing and nationalist movements from the “small nations,” which had previously been in a dependent position and have now developed into the “newly industrialized countries” through their remarkable achievements.

The three standards listed above, namely fairness, respect, and reciprocity, certainly could not have been introduced in the 19th century, when European and American empires sent warships to invade Asian and African countries, or after the end of World War II, when the universal political, cultural, and economic standards

¹¹² Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. *The White House*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/09/19/remarks-president-trump-72nd-session-united-nations-general-assembly>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

¹¹³ Remarks by President Trump at APEC CEO Summit, Da Nang, Vietnam. *The White House*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/11/10/remarks-president-trump-apec-ceo-summit-da-nang-vietnam>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

were divided into the two opposite poles of communist and capitalist ideology. For instance, in 1945, the Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh sent several diplomatic notes through the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA, to then-US President Harry S. Truman regarding the United States' proposal to recognize and protect the independence of Vietnam. At that time, however, the colonial and influential divisions established after the Yalta Conference made it very clear to the larger nations that the Indochinese peninsula was under the influence of France, and the United States of America needed a close ally at the United Nations Security Council. Obviously, in such a context, adherence to standards such as respect, fairness, and reciprocity is impossible and unconvincing.

The change in the system of concepts does not come from the private activities of scientists or intellectuals. It comes from the change of historical-social reality. An example of American history and culture – according to Rorty, “American culture is essentially political”¹¹⁴ – is based on the concept of “freedom.” It does not come from an impromptu proposal of a scholar or politician, but from America's geographic, historical, racial, and cultural characteristics since its founding, because America represented a new world of “opportunity,” a vast continent with an open vision, “the freest” and “most democratic society” that was different from old Europe with its oppressive philosophical and religious traditions and social norms. As put by Mendieta, America was where “we can create human beings as they are supposed to be.”¹¹⁵ However, the change brought by real events

¹¹⁴ See Mendieta, Eduardo (2006), pp. 37.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 37.

caused the system of concepts and interpretations of the object to collapse and be forced to adapt. The wars that the United States experienced, such as the Mexican–American War and the Spanish–American War, were interpreted in the unified view of intellectuals as the formation of a new imperialist power, similar to the old empires in Europe. The two World Wars forged unity from the perspective of defeating evil forces. But the Vietnam War, according to Rorty, brought down all America’s pride, and “we never recovered from it.”¹¹⁶ Flowery concepts and speeches about “fighting for freedom,” “ideology,” “strongholds against communism,” “domino doctrine” were all exposed in this meaningless war and the massacre of innocent people. As it turned out, the United States, in this particular context, was the aggressor, the opposite of civilization. The old conceptual system and viewpoint had to be replaced.

Therefore, the concepts presented by President Donald J. Trump above are derived from the changing reality of the socio-political context in order to reach a consensus. They are not terms that can be performed anywhere in any era.

On this point, Rorty seems to agree with Charles S. Peirce that inquirers can find something like common sense that “goes beyond mere unforced agreement” to “something we can aspire to.”¹¹⁷ However, this common sense or these standards cannot be interpreted or inferred from outside the specific context in which the discourses are produced. All criteria for a consensus must be discussed in conversation, and the rights or wrongs of an argument must be decided within the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 38.

¹¹⁷ See Misak, Cheryl (2013), pp. 230.

sphere of conversation, not from metaphysics or an external reference system. Rorty points out that the line between justification and truth is very clear: justification is used for the seeking of the solidarity between differences in conversation here and now, while truth is a goal for “future justifiability.”¹¹⁸ However, this kind of “future” is not a form of transcendence over all that is true and false that forms the foundation of our beliefs. Rorty emphasizes that truth is ultimately only a justification in another conversation, when the participants return to the same topic, but in a different context. Here, what was supposed to be true in the first dialogue may be rejected and proven false in the second one.

This means that when an inquirer assumes that one or more propositions are true, based on evidence and factual data, and those propositions, along with the consensus of the community, synthesize into the belief of “the knowing subjects,” he/she must also admit the possibility that existing facts and evidence in the future will prove those propositions false in another context. This key point led to a debate between Peircean pragmatists (including Misak) and Rorty that revolves around the position and role of truth. However, our mention of the word “key” is also the solution to unravelling this contradiction. To return to Misak’s core idea, it should be noted that her arguments in *The American Pragmatists* regarding proving the validity of a proposition are only valid for a certain period (of time) with valid facts. The flow of space-time is cut off by linguistic conventions among the participants in a conversation. At this point, her position resembles that of the later Wittgenstein.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 236.

However, it is in the “relative” nature of the justification that she recognizes the need to return to Peirce with a belief in truth.

Misak thinks that we need more than just standards in argument. This is because the rational arguments can only be true this time and will be false in another context; moreover, when there is an argument proving that A is true, then there is also another argument proving that A is false, meaning that the rational arguments must have a solid “fulcrum” in order to form the foundation for the orientation of the individual and the community. We cannot put faith in something that is often variable. However, this does not constitute a belief in a kind of abstract metaphysics, the paranormal, religion or the like. Misak states that this kind of truth both does and does not belong to justification. Firstly, that truth is something we can possess and is not beyond the capabilities of human perception; truth is a “justified belief”¹¹⁹. Secondly, that belief must satisfy the following three characteristics: “goes beyond our local justification” of that belief, “stand[s] up to the rigors of inquiry,” and “never lead[s] to disappointment.”¹²⁰ Misak wants to build a stable belief based on correct and recognized justifications, but she also wants that belief to overcome the variability of the justification.

However, this kind of belief (in the truth) is ultimately only a reflection of “the knowing subject” in reality. The inquirer wants to “create” a stable belief in the truth; that is, he/she wants to create his/her own stability in a variable reality.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 236

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 236.

William James emphasized that the subject's perception of itself both as 'I' and 'Me', "being as it were *duplex*," awareness of the self as "partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject."¹²¹ That is, the subject has the capacity to escape from itself to perceive itself as an object. It is a subject's dialogue with itself. This is the core interpretation that can go to the next step, which is intersubjectivity. The subject realizes itself in others – that is, first, it must recognize itself as an object, and this self-object ("A") is perceived by the subject as itself in others. Subject A sees itself as Object A, and this Object A is placed in the interaction with Object B-others in which the subject sees Object B-others as a mirror reflecting the image of the subject.

The process of self-consciousness, understood as the process of self-creation, in the way that Rorty reminds us of Hegel¹²² in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, is not only analyzed in two forms of self-consciousness—pre-reflective and reflective—but also, as Sartre analyzed, needs a third form: the mediation of intersubjectivity in which the mode of being is not only "being-for-itself,"¹²³ but also is "my being without being-for-me."¹²⁴ This is the form in which the subject receives *acknowledgment* and *re-engagement* from others rather than being self-aware and responding to itself.

¹²¹ See James, William (1892), pp. 176.

¹²² See Rorty, Richard (1989), pp. 24.

¹²³ See Zahavi, Dan (2014), pp. 11.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 212.

This interpretation leads us to the next step in justification. Object B (others) is a reflection of object A (I-self) in conversation, but only from A's perspective. From the perspective of B, A is the reflection of B. Thus, in order for A to be connected to B in the intersubjectivity, we need A to escape from its "self" and its own reflection on B so as to become B. The process from A reflects itself on B, and A receives the response from B as an expression of A's self. A escaping from itself to become B is the process by which the cognitive subject separates itself from the "I-self" and returns to self-awareness. Nothing else is required outside of this process.

If we argue in this direction, Rorty receives the support of his student, Robert Brandom, and his close friend, Richard Bernstein. Although Brandom is less radical than his teacher, and Bernstein is more flexible than Rorty regarding arguments that are likely to create controversies,¹²⁵ all three philosophers acknowledge the practicality of the standards, as well as the fact that if the standards form the basis for justification and the process of creating the truth, then the daily-life experiences

¹²⁵ Despite sharing many similarities with Rorty, Bernstein pointed out Rorty's limitations, especially in the interpretation of political issues. After *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*, Rorty seems to have lost his scrutiny of political arguments and tends to be too dreamy. This, according to Bernstein, makes Rorty very different from pragmatist philosophers as they have been: "Rorty lost his patience with careful argument [...] Even when Rorty is singing the praise of liberal democracy and affirming the importance of patriotism, he can sound more like a speechwriter for a presidential candidate than a serious social reformer. For a pragmatist who prides himself on paying attention to those practical differences that make a difference, Rorty doesn't provide us with the foggiest idea of how to achieve (or even approximate) the goals and hopes that he cherishes" (See Bernstein, Richard, 2010, pp. 214).

of human beings form the basis of the standards. The three forms of expression of the standards, “conceptual, moral, and political”¹²⁶ are valid only when realized in the course of social practice.

For instance, consider the following sentence: “Everyone has the right to life.” This sentence is true and would constitute a standard of behavior among people because it satisfies all three conditions for achieving a consensus in intersubjectivity (see section 3.3.). Moreover, if viewed from the perspective of self-reflection, this sentence is not merely an offer to adopt an attitude of respect for the life and dignity of others, but also respect for the subject itself. This is because, when you see yourself in others and admit that others are your own reflection, you have enough reason to respect other people’s lives because others are yourself; moreover, if you do not treat others the way you treat yourself, you cannot ask others to respect you as they do themselves.

In a country that still has the death penalty for serious crimes, a convicted murderer can certainly be sentenced to death. The question is, should that person be killed? If everyone has the right to life—that is, no one should take the life of another, including a murderer—does enforcement of the death penalty go against the moral standards of respect for the life and dignity of others?

All citizens in a country with a legal system must admit and follow a common code of conduct as part of the social contract that regulates behavior. This is both to ensure the existence of an individual’s activity space and to avoid harm to others, even harm caused by one individual to another individual’s activity space. The

¹²⁶ See Bernstein, Richard (2010), pp. 213.

legalization of human behavior in society is put in place to limit conflicts and facilitate movement towards a common consensus. Therefore, when an act of infringement upon an individual's activity space occurs, punishment is issued as a reaction to the infringing act in order to avoid negative consequences, such as vengeance or imitation of infringing behavior, which threaten to break the stability. That is, to secure consensus and stability within a community, each individual must enter his/her "I-self" into an entity called a social contract and accept its terms. The responses from the "Me-selves" provide not only opportunities for reflection, but also restrictions. Any choice comes at a cost, and one's freedom is limited by the freedom of the other. When a person crosses a line, he/she must be subject to punishment. Thus, in this particular case, the sentence "Everyone has the right to life" must be reinterpreted (or re-described) as "This person, in this context, has no right to live."

As such, a standard is not a purely abstract product of thought. Instead, it is derived from justification through social practices and is adapted to the transformation of social reality. In other words, standards begin with justifications and are re-described in the justifications for the self-adjustment itself. Standards cannot stand outside the justifications. If there is a standard that surpasses the reality by which it is formed, it is merely a utopian ambition.

In other words, when we default to a statement as the "truth," we are forced to admit that it is correct, complete, unchanging, and immutable; after all, if it is variable, it cannot be the truth. However, this leads us to the next paradoxical

question: if a statement is true, it must be based on another true statement, but if we continue to trace this kind of question, a deadlock is inevitable.

Does this interpretation style lead to nihilism?

Alan Pratt places Lyotard, Derrida, and Rorty into the same group of nihilists referred to as postmodern anti-foundationalists. Lyotard argues that the most striking feature of postmodern philosophers is their skepticism about the “metanarratives” that form the foundation of our cognitive processing of the world. Moreover, Derrida asserts that we cannot be sure that what we know about an object is correct or the way it really is because we, the cognitive subject, can only join a part of the whole; all aspirations to certainty are “fictional forms.” Rorty, who takes the same view,¹²⁷ assumes that if we focus on nonverbal, immutable foundations, we will lose the ability to face and solve the variable questions of reality:

Rorty, however, makes no appeal to some higher truth. For him, nihilism is simply the expression of the fact that; “Nothing grounds our practices, nothing legitimizes them, nothing shows them to be in touch with the way things are”; it is a reflection of our “inability to get out of our own skins.”

(Karen L. Carr, 1992, pp. 129)

Obviously, these nihilistic interpretations outlined above do not necessarily lead us to a form of doubt and negation of all our thinking abilities and the products of our thought. OSHO articulates a nihilistic view by stating that when we turn a concept into a noun, we kill it, in the sense that we deny its movement and growth.

¹²⁷ See Alan Pratt. Nihilism. Retrieved from <https://www.iep.utm.edu/nihilism>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

According to OSHO, nouns do not grow and only verbs are active.¹²⁸ If we justify this from Rorty's point of view, when we construe a concept as the truth, we must find a justification for its correctness. This will then lead to a conflicting cycle: when there is an argument to prove something is true, there is another argument that proves it false.

If this perspective based on Rorty's justifications were to achieve consensus, would this lead to an overly vague and ambiguous view? How can we build sympathy and solidarity between individuals and communities on a variable and unstable foundation? Rorty answers this question by emphasizing the decisions of individuals in the conversations: that is, the meaning of each person is only valuable to the persons in conversation, and we should only care about the person's response in our conversation. The objects outside our conversation are not something we need to bother with:

As I see it, the whole point of pragmatism is to insist that we human beings are answerable only to one another. We are answerable only to those who answer to us – only to conversation partners. We are not responsible to the atoms or to God, at least not until they start conversing with us. (Bernstein, 2010, p. 212)

This ambiguity articulated by Rorty has been the subject of many controversies among other philosophers with differing points of view. Bernstein calls this

¹²⁸ You Are Your Own Authority. In *The Last Testament*, Vol. 2. Retrieved from <http://www.osho.com/iosho/library/read-book/online-library-moment-jesus-crackpot-3bf89aa5-66e?p=d5d5ec25245450fe8691afd1ae8b435d>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

explanation “ethnocentric,” while Jeffrey Stout calls it “narcissism.”¹²⁹ But is this explanation truly narcissistic, given that Rorty simply wants to emphasize the role of an individual’s perspective in the way he/she perceives and evaluates reality? “Self-reliance” on the values held by an individual is not intended to prove the truth of the individual’s point of view, nor to counter the differences in those values. Instead, it only narrows our consciousness into the only object that has value, namely the partner in conversation in a particular context. Paul Broca’s and Carl Wernicke’s discoveries in the fields of physical and neurological surgery have been summarized by Precht to suggest that our minds can only do one thing at a time; that is, we cannot focus on many different things at once, but instead can only move from one thing to another, whether quickly or slowly.¹³⁰ This limitation in our biological capacity (mental status) determines the limitations of our ability to cognize. Thus, the focus remains on the only object in our conversation—that is, the object that is valuable to us, which not only improves the “I-self” in relation to the “Me-self” but also suggests new ideas for the next conversation.¹³¹

¹²⁹ See Bernstein, Richard (2010), pp. 211.

¹³⁰ See Precht, Richard David (2011), pp. 21 – 23.

¹³¹ See Browning, Don S. (1980), pp. 76.

In analyzing the contents of William James’ psychology, Don S. Browning pays attention to some sets of distinction in the understanding of the continuity of consciousness that James has interpreted, especially the distinction between “topic” and the “object” of thought. In our thought, there is some “topic subject about which all the members of the thought revolve.” These topics may contain “a gap which we want to fill or an interest which we want to satisfy.” However, the point is the meaning of a topic is controlled by its relation to the wider fringe or horizon. This relationship, if it is harmony, will promote the topic but will hinder the

Is Rorty's conception of solidarity ethnocentric, given that he does not provide any evaluation of the individual or community's values based on the standard of any fixed reference system? Cheryl Misak proposes a concept that differs quite substantially from that of both Stout and Bernstein: relativity. This concept is also consistent with Rorty's suggestion of the "liberal hope," which honors the "imagination" and "self-creation" of the cognitive subjects. It is a kind of cultural relativism that does not impose upon the consideration of a cognitive object. The process of explaining and understanding it must come from within the culture of the object that is formed. This is similar to the theory put forward by Franz Boas and his colleagues, who propose a cultural relativism that does not deny the role of personal perspectives and the system of standards. However, to evaluate other cultures by an individual's standards, that individual must understand the values and standards of the other cultures and not be attached to the values and standards of that individual's culture.¹³² This proposal also stresses that different social contexts give rise to different values and standards. However, this does not mean that we should unconditionally accept other cultural patterns that are unbiased

topic if it is discord. As James commented: "when the sense of furtherance is there, we are all right; with the sense of hindrance, we are dissatisfied and perplexed." (as cited in Browning, Don S., 1980, pp.76)

¹³² In terms of methodology, Franz Boas and his followers advocated the development of empirical approaches that emphasized careful collection of fieldwork and rejected the general, universal comparative method. At the same time, this approach emphasizes the principle of holistic analysis in understanding cultural practices. In order to explain one or more cultural customs, according to Boas, it is necessary to analyze them in three basic respects: environmental conditions, psychological factors, and related history, with the historical factors playing the most important role. (See Boas, Franz, 1940, pp. 3 – 17).

in their cultural context. Each evaluation is always personal. That is, each individual has the right to comment and re-describe the object according to his/her cognitive ability, data, and perspective.

In conclusion, an individual's cognitive process begins with the self-awareness of the knowing subject's reflection on others (based on the assumption of similarity of language and frame of reference), through which subjectivity is transformed into intersubjectivity. When private experience extends itself beyond the subject to a common consensus, the standards for perception and behavior are established as a guarantee of community stability. Justification acts as the nucleus of the cognitive process in which the replacement of old standards by new ones, or the reinterpretation of the foundations, is a feasible way to address a common conversation: a common conversation in which respect for individual values is an important criterion for creating tolerance and humanity.

Summary and Conclusion

We began our research by questioning the existence of the self as an empirical entity. The phenomenological approach of Strawson and Zahavi places the self in a specific interactive space where the interpretation is associated with the particular context and the self presents its characteristics; that is, more than one self exists in a subject. However, the default that the existence of the self is a certain premise has been criticized by the analysis of Kym Maclaren and Tran Duc Thao. The self forms when the subject realizes he/she is an entity that exists separately from others. Furthermore, the self forms its image network in which it sees itself in others so that it can shape a process of awareness and experience itself in reality.

The neuroscientific findings, especially the mechanisms of mirror neurons, have proved that the self cannot be separated from biological functions, from the ability of children to point at objects that are out of reach of the child's original consciousness to the mechanisms that replicate and simulate movements and emotions.

When subjectivity expands its interactive space beyond its own dimension towards inter-subjectivity to build unity within the community, the problem of conflict between personal and community values becomes a big obstacle. Wittgenstein emphasizes that private experiences are private but disagree with private language. Language must be the language of the community in order for it to be meaningful. Therefore, expanding the similar concepts between subjectivities will create the standards according to which unity is established.

Moral orientation links individuals with social and traditional conditions and the use of justification as a means of seeking consensus in inter-subjectivity provide new perspectives and understandings regarding the relationship between personal life and community benefits.

Every individual is inevitably affected and influenced by the linguistic and social premises he/she inherits. The problem with a private irony is that he/she questions whether his/her final vocabulary can accurately understand and explain the others' vocabulary or different objects and contexts. This spurs a private irony, which involves looking for a new way to describe reality. New vocabulary should not be construed as a whole new vocabulary system that never appeared, but to understand in a Freudian way of unconscious cognitive interpretation is a new way of describing and explaining past objects and events in order to find useful values for the present.

In order to form solidarity between subjectivities to create the inter-subjectivity, a standard system, as a system of opinions, reasons and/or beliefs that serve as a point of reference for justification or orientation, must be shaped. To be a standard, the reference must satisfy three conditions: it must be a true statement; if these statements cannot be substantiated by reality, they must promote an engine of truth; a consensus of most participants in a particular narrative must be formed as the most important element of the solidarity. When subjectivity transforms into inter-subjectivity and continue to increase in scope towards inter-inter-subjectivity, the content of a standard cannot be saved as the way it was when that standard was first established and validated in the community. The enlargement of subjectivity

to the form of inter-inter-subjectivity is inversely proportional to the particularity of a standard. Standard features will need to be more straightforward, more abstract, and more universal. To the extent that a standard is wider, it is more likely to agree than local, community-based constraints.

Standards cannot be interpreted or inferred from outside the socio-historical context where the narrative are produced. The measurement and evaluation of a narrative must be decided not from metaphysics or an external reference system, but within the sphere of conversation. Justification is used for the seeking of the solidarity between differences in conversation here and now, while truth is a goal for “future justifiability.”¹³³ The future here is not a transcendent form above all that is right and wrong that forms the basis of our beliefs or reasons in our cognitive process and cognitive unconscious also. The ultimate truth is just justification in another conversation when participants return to the same topic but in a different context. What is thought to be true in the first conversation may be rejected and proven to be false in the second conversation.

When an inquirer assumes that one or more propositions are true, based on evidence and real data, and those propositions, together with the community’s consensus, aggregate into the beliefs of individuals, the perceiver must also acknowledge the possibility that events and evidence in the future will prove that those propositions would be wrong in another context.

The three philosophers, Richard Rorty, Robert Brandom, and Richard Bernstein, recognize the practicality of standards, as well as the fact that if they

¹³³ See Misak, Cheryl (2013), pp. 236.

form the basis of justification and the process of creating truth, then the basis of standards is formed from the daily life experience of human beings. The three forms of representation of standards, “conceptual, moral, and political”¹³⁴ are only valid when practiced in social practice.

The analysis of the self occurs not only in the realm of philosophical and religious interpretations; it is an everyday cognitive act that the knowing subject questions his/her own existence. It is not a question of asking the self itself to establish conceptual epistemological systems that play a fundamental role in rational cognition but rather to make everyday life meaningful.

Rorty’s proposal of “private irony” and “liberal hope” regarding the interpretation of the self is the subject of criticism and debate as well as approval and praise. The most important thing about this interpretation is that each individual sees himself/herself in others, and individuals carry the image and mark of others within them. When you see yourself in others and recognize that others are the image network that form and identify your “selves,” you have enough reason to respect other people’s lives because others are yourself.

As a citizen in a country with a legal system, we must acknowledge and follow a standard code of conduct as part of a social contract governing behavior. This acknowledgment is to ensure the existence of private operating space and to avoid causing harm to others. The legalization of human behavior in society is designed to limit conflict and facilitate movement towards a common consensus. To ensure consensus and stability in the community, each individual must enter his or her

¹³⁴ See Bernstein, Richard (2010), pp. 213.

“second-person” into this social contract and accept its terms. The re-engagement from the “third-person” provides not only opportunities but also limitations – the freedom of the other limits the freedom of one person.

The multidimensional interaction between individuals and the community towards a consensus value is not aimed at eliminating individual creativity, nor to abolishing community standards, but rather the understanding and sharing unique and vivid values.

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