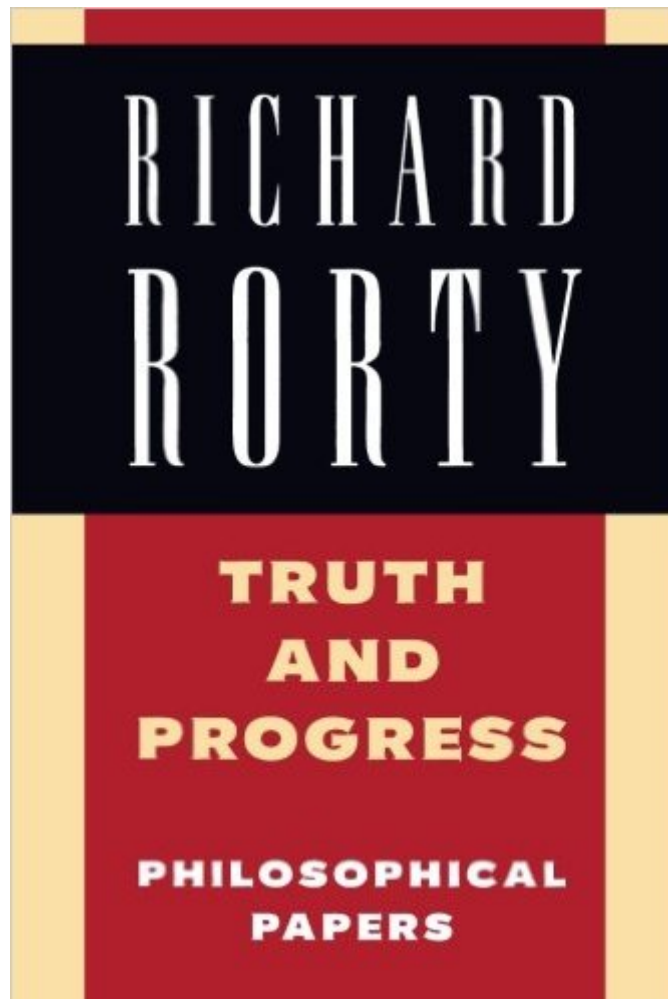


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Truth And Progress: Philosophical Papers (Philosophical Papers (Cambridge)) (Volume 3)



Synopsis

This eagerly awaited book complements two highly successful previously published volumes of Richard Rorty's philosophical papers: *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, and *Essays on Heidegger and Others*. In this new, provocative collection, Rorty continues to defend a pragmatist view of truth and deny that truth is a goal of inquiry. In these dynamic essays, Rorty also engages with the work of many of today's most innovative thinkers including Robert Brandom, Donald Davidson, Daniel Dennett, Jacques Derrida, J  rgen Habermas, John McDowell, Hilary Putnam, John Searle, and Charles Taylor. The collection also touches on problems in contemporary feminism raised by Annette Baier, Marilyn Frye, and Catherine MacKinnon, and considers issues connected with human rights and cultural differences. Challenging, stimulating and controversial, this book will appeal to thoughtful readers around the world. Richard Rorty was an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, completed his graduate work at Yale, and taught at Princeton from 1961 until 1982. His first ground-breaking book, an attack on traditional epistemology, was *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979). His previous books with Cambridge have been *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), a book that sold over 46,000 copies since publication and has been translated into seventeen different languages, and two volumes of philosophical papers: *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, and *Essays on Heidegger and Others*. A recipient of a MacArthur Foundation grant, Rorty has lectured throughout the world. Also available *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers: Volume 1* 0-521-35877-9 Paperback *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers: Volume 2* 0-521-35878-7 Paperback

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Customer Reviews

Rorty's Introduction is excellent, but short. The chapters are organized into three sections. The first eight articles deal with some fairly technical philosophical disputes, though often beginning and ending with more general comments. The next four address respectively human rights, cultural diversity, feminism, and the end of Leninism. These provide the most new material for a reader familiar with Rorty's other books. The last five are a rather strange mix, providing some interesting thoughts on history and on Derrida, while carrying Rorty's dubious dichotomy of "private" and "public" (developed in previous works) to what seem to this reader ever absurder and more tangled conclusions. Readers familiar with Rorty's work will find more wonderful examples of it in this volume. New ideas can be found throughout, and some old ideas are here better developed. Some bad old ideas (such as some found in the final chapter of "Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity," criticized by Norman Geras in "Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind; The Ungroundable Liberalism of Richard Rorty,") seem to have been dropped or developed into good ideas. And Rorty is unlikely to create many new opponents with this book, though he'll probably keep many of his old ones. But old-hands at learning from Rorty may find the first section of this book a somewhat tiresome, if admirable and patient, reply to the same moral weakness in eight slightly different varieties. And newcomers may not find this book a good introduction to Rorty's thinking. For that purpose I am always inclined to recommend "Consequences of Pragmatism," even though Rorty has changed his mind on many points in it - or perhaps partly for that very reason: it is easier to begin with the earlier Rorty and follow his progress chronologically.

"Truth and Progress" is divided into three sections, the first part a sequence of essays on analytic philosophers, the second two consisting of essays on various topics, often addressed to the academic Left. It isn't too much to say that all of these essays might very well be thought of as scoldings of these two groups. I don't have much familiarity with analytic philosophy, however, so I won't say anything about that section, other than to say that if you ARE an analytic philosopher, you probably aren't going to like what Rorty says, but you probably knew that already. On then to the second two parts. These sections are identical in some respects, for in them Rorty berates academic Leftism. This is not as banal as it might appear, for what is motivating Rorty is this question: "What is behind the regret we [he means intellectuals] feel when we are forced to conclude that bourgeois democratic welfare states are the best we can hope for?" ("The End of

Leninism" 231). What he means is, the role of the "intellectual" in the West seems to have come to an end after the events of 1989, because afterwards the idea of Revolution, on Lenin's model, has become laughable. So the intellectual, who has always thought to have done better in that sort of regime than in a democratic one, has lost a cherished fantasy--a fantasy that is not just a leftist one, but one shared, one supposes, by virtually anyone who has ever had a brain, because a great sustaining thought for most of these people is the idea that at some point, history will redeem them. But that fantasy is over, Rorty says, and so what his question means is, "what now?"

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