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JOHN DEWEY AND RICHARD RORTY ON THEISM AND RELIGION

Jude P. Dougherty, who wrote short but instructive article about Dewey's conception of religion thinks that „Dewey is one of those philosophers where the difference between the mature thinker and the youthful apprentice is almost the difference between men. It is the difference between two men because it is the difference between two schools of thought, an idealism in early years and materialistic naturalism in the later"[1]. Although this opinion seems to be naturally plausible – after all Dewey changed his views from Hegelian into pragmatic and from theistic to naturalistic (or from theism to naturalistic theism) – it does not do justice to a very surprising continuity of Deweyan views in general and his views about theism in particular.

In the early stage of his philosophical development (before 1892) Dewey who was raised in a Christian family seemed to be quite sympathetic to theism and religion. The title of his lecture (or rather homily) delivered at the University of Michigan in 1884 as a faculty advisor to the Student Christian Association was „The Obligation to Knowledge of God". He wrote: „[t]here is an obligation to know God, and to fail to meet this obligation is not to err intellectually, but to sin morally. Belief is not a privilege, but a duty [...]"[2]. There is, however, something which Jude Doughtery did not notice, or maybe did not take it as significant factor, namely that Dewey conceived God as wholly immanent to humanity:

> [...] God is neither far-away Being, nor a mere philosophic conception by which to explain the world. He is the bond of the family, the bond of society. He is love, the source of all growth, all sacrifice, and all unity. He has touched history, not from

[1] „Dewey on Religion", p. 174.

[2] *The Collected Works of John Dewey*, vol. 1, p. 61.

> without but has made Himself subjected to all limitations and sufferings of history; identified Himself absolutely with humanity, so that the love of humanity is henceforeward not for some term of years, but forever, the Life of God[3].

Even those who might question the immanentist reading of this passage should at least accept the conclusion that the early Dewey had a strong tendency to identify God and humanity. That is why he emphasized the social, and not the individual, dimension of religion – in his case, Christianity. The main role of Christianity was, according to Dewey, in stressing „union with humanity, and humanity's interests, and surrender of individual desire"[4]. This led him to put in the first place the moral dimension and to criticize the eschatological and institutional aspects of religion sharply.

In effect, even in his early views he conceived religion as totally „worldly" phenomenon and as something instrumental to the aims of humanity: „The chief danger after all, in our practical religious life, is the tendency for the religious life to become sphere by itself, apart from the interests of life and humanity"[5]. There is no sign here that Dewey thought of religion as contributing to modifying of the interests of life and humanity. If religion is to fulfill its role it has to be subordinated to those aims of life and humanity. From this perspective we can interpret what J. Dougherty tends to see as a second and totally different phase of Dewey's development as a natural consequence of his early views.

Around 1892 in a lecture *Christianity and Democracy*, Dewey identifies cultural conditions of religion which make it exclusively an expression of attitudes and customs of various peoples[6]. His criticism, however, is directed to institutional religion and to supernaturalism, and so to those dimensions of religion which were either absent or *expressis verbis* rejected in his earlier views. This process going in the direction of total naturalization of God and religion occurred gradually, but it was already completed in Dewey's works before 1900.

One could expect, then, that ultimately Dewey should accept an atheistic and anti-religious attitude (similarily to Marx or Comte). But, if we take purely

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[3] Ibid., vol. 17, p. 531. The title of the article is *The Value of Historical Christianity* and it was first published in *Monthly Bulletin* 11 (Nov. 1889), pp. 31-36.

[4] Ibidem, p. 532.

[5] Ibidem, p. 533.

[6] Cf. J. P. D o u g h e r t y, „Dewey on Religion", p. 176.

terminological declarations into account, nothing like this ever happened in the case of Dewey. In the address *Some Thoughts concerning Religion* delivered to the Philosophical Club at Columbia University in 1910 Dewey wrote:

> The root of the religious attitude of the future may lie immensly more in an improved state of science and of politics than in what have been termed religions. Doubtless there are certain constants, roughly speaking, in human nature. Doubtless these constants in their interaction with the natural and social environments have naturally produced, among other things, religions. But it would seem as if the „universal" was to be sought in these interactions rather than in any of the isolated strain, psychological or metaphysical. If so, democracy and the science, the art of to-day may be immensely more prophetic of the religion which we would have spread in the future than any phenomena we seek to isolate under the caption of religious phenomena. Obviously, what I have said is not a confession of religious faith. But it may properly be added that it is not necessarily a confession of irreligion[7].

Also in later works e.g. in his most comprehensive book about religion *A Common Faith* (1934) Dewey tries to preserve some balance between religious faith and a confession of irreligion. He excludes religious experience from his criticism but at the same time he gives it radically different interpretation than in traditional theism or in religion (e.g. Christianity). The object of this experience is not God but ideals: „Faith in the continued disclosing of truth through directed cooperative human endevour is more religious in quality than is any faith in a completed revelation"[8]. Besides the ideal of disclosing truth there can be also other ideals which deserve to be named religious, e.g. a commitment to the worth and dignity of the human person, commitment to science, or faith in intelligence[9]. In Dewey's conception they do not refer to any being other than humanity itself: they are simply aims and ideals of humanity designed by humanity itself (or rather by their enlightened elites).

Why does Dewey not want to give up the term „God" or „religious experience" and why does he wants to balance a religious with an irreligious attitude? Isn't it simply a manifestation of irrational attachment to the language game of his parents? This certainly could have some significance. It seems, however, that there was a much more important „pragmatic" element in it: Dewey saw clearly the important social role religion has played throughout

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[7] *The Collected Works of John Dewey*, vol. 17, p. 379.

[8] Ibidem, vol. 9, p. 18.

[9] Cf. J. P. D o u g h e r t y, „Dewey on Religion", p. 179.

history, and he knew also that this role is associated with certain specific notions, e.g. „God".

> It is this *active* relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name „God". I would not insist that the name *must* be given. There are those who hold that the associations of the term with the supernatural are so numerous and close that any use of the word „God" is sure to give rise to misconception and be taken as a concession of traditional ideas.
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> They may be correct in this view. But the facts to which I referred are there, and they need to be brought out with all possible clearness and force. There exist concretely and experimentally goods – the values of art in all its forms, of knowledge, of effort and of rest after striving, of education and fellowship, of friendship and love, of growth in mind and body [...]. A clear and intense conception of union of ideal ends with actual conditions is capable of arousing steady emotion [...]. Whether one gives the name of „God" to this union, operative in thought and action, is a matter of individual decision. But the *function* of such a working union of the ideal and actual seems to me to be identical with the force that has in fact been attached to the conception of God in all the religions that have a spiritual content[10].

And so Dewey thought that the essential role played by the notion of God is the role of unification of ideal ends with actual conditions in order to produce in people steady emotion for continuous action. What is the reason for calling it God? Well, one can say that Dewey's association of the function played by such a union with the function played by the traditional notion of God is a good enough reason.

I would, however, ask if Dewey's association is *historically* justified in our Western culture, i.e. if it is in agreement with the dominant tradition of using this term? I think it is not. Religious people, especially within Christianity (but also in Judaism and Islamic tradition) meant and mean by 'God' something separate (transcendent) from us and the world: personal, living, creator of heaven and earth, who loves people and takes care of them. They believe also that God is worthy of their total love and devotion. They want to realize what they believe are God's aims revealed in Holy Scriptures. Obviously, we have also our own ideals, as individuals, nations, cultures, or humanity in general. Some of them may be even exactly the same as what we believe God's ideals for us are. But usually we do *not* give the name of God to *our* ideals or to the union of those ideals with actual conditions of life. The term 'ideology' seems to be more appropriate here than 'religion'. (Religious people sometimes apply

[10] *The Collected Works of John Dewey*, vol. 9, p. 34-35. This quotation comes from his best known book on religion *A Common Faith*.

the term God to the ideals of various ideologies but they make important restriction by saying that they are „false" gods).

Now somebody may object here by questioning two things: my interpretation of Dewey's *intentions* as hostile to theism and religion, and my interpretation of his philosophy as ideology. But I am not questioning here that Dewey may have honestly believed that the true religion is a religion without God as a transcendent being, and that true object of religion is Humanity. What I claim here is that Dewey designed a theory which cannot be accepted by any theist or religious person in *my* (and I believe not only my) sense. As for the second thing, in many cases the border between philosophy and ideology is difficult to note. That was the case with Marx and Comte, who fulfilled both roles: of philosophers and of ideologues. I claim here only that Dewey's philosophy has a visible ideological side. He acted in the direction of diminishing theism and religion while at the same time projecting a new atheistic vision (which he himself called religion).

Nevertheless, Dewey is seen by many as somebody who tried to preserve the remains of religious worldview from, especially some parts of morality (usually associated with religion), a process of inevitable secularization. He himself seemed to see his role in just this way. In 1947 in a short article *Religion in Harvard*, he wrote:

> Our danger in having linked supernatural beliefs with moral standards is that the inevitable weakening of one gravely imperils the other. The remedy of endevouring to place the new wine of modern knowledge into the old bottles of the historic faiths promises little success. I propose to meet the issue squarely by fostering Humanism, a rationalistic religion based on science, centered in man, rejecting supernaturalism but retaining our cheriched moral values[11].

Now much depends on how one evaluates the process of secularization and where he locates its roots. Dewey thinks apparently that it is an inevitable process which is caused mainly by belief in a supernatural deity, which seems irrational for people in the age of science. If it were true, Dewey could be regarded as the last theologian (perhaps together with Nietzsche, Marx, and Comte). However, this diagnosis is far from being convincing. The process of secularization seemed to stopped at some point, and many people still believe in a transcendent deity, despite much more extensive knowledge in comparison with what was accessible to Dewey. Besides, atheistic humanism also does not

[11] Ibidem, vol. 17, p. 545.

have any spectacular succeses which would justify its superiority over traditional theism and religion. There is no reason then, in my view, to regard Dewey as the last theologian, i.e. as somebody who wants to preserve the remains of collapsing theism and religion. It is much more plausible to see his efforts as fostering in a very clever way this process of secularization. The originality of Dewey and his main contribution to this process is in designing a certain anesthetic device in the form of religious terminology that lacks, however, any properly theistic meaning.

And so e.g. Dewey suggested keeping the term „God" despite the fact that, in his sense, it did not refer to any thing other than humanity itself. He was equally generous with the term „religion". In the article quoted above, composed 5 years before his death, he writes:

> Indeed, it is the core of the present proposal that a Chair of Rationalism be established in the Divinity School, to be held by a well qualified rationalist, who would supervise the Humanist curriculum. Instruction or practice in prayer, ritual, or other technique of supernaturalism would have no meaning, being discarded for the scientific approach – controlled observation, experiment, and verifiable experience. The Humanist clergy would have a tremendous potential field of ministry, would preach religion in harmony with facts as now known, recognizing nature as impersonal and inexorable, fostering cooperation under the realization that men has but himself and his fellow men upon whom to rely[12].

Dewey uses the term „religion" to describe what I would rather call the ideology of humanism because he is convinced that one of the essential elements of christianity is universalism. So if it is not possible to maintain traditional belief in a transcendent deity, science – the only universal element in contemporary culture, as Dewey thought – can be the basis for the new faith on which morality has to be founded. That is why humanism „is in harmony with the new knowledge of science; indeed it *is* science and scientific method in religion. Thus it is the only religion that can hope to achieve universality"[13].

Now the central role of science in Deweyan philosophy seems to be in direct disagreement with Rortian relativism. Is Rorty simply wrong in claiming that his own philosophy is of the the Deweyan type?[14] I think not. And to see

[12] Ibidem, p. 546.

[13] Ibidem, p. 547.

[14] Cf. „Relativism – Finding and Making", p. 32. Also in one of the interviews he says that his own view do not add anything much to Dewey „it is just adapting what Dewey said for

why, we have to notice the influence of Darwin on Deweyan pragmatism. Out of the three classical pragmatists Dewey was the most decisively Darwinian thinker[15]. Despite his emphasis on science, he did not think of it as the ultimate unchangeable element. Science undergoes purely accidental changes, and its state tomorrow may be quite different than today. Deweyan rationalism isn't then a manifestation of his scientism or universalism. It is rather manifestation of his Darwinism. More precisely, it indicates that Dewey generalized the idea of evolutionary struggle for existence into the domain of human spirit. According to him „intellectual progress usually occurs through sheer abandonment of questions together with both of the alternatives they assume – an abandonment that results from their decreasing vitality and a change of urgent interest. We do not solve them: we get over them. Old questions are solved by disappearing, evaporating, while new questions corresponding to the changed attitude of endeavor and preference take their place"[16]. They evaporate, we could add, like those individuals and species which were not able to adjust themselves to the environment.

According to Dewey there is no need to suppose, as Hegel, Marx or Comte did that there is any fixed final stage of human history[17] or even some final remote aim described as the disclosure of full truth (as Peirce seemed to think). Rationalism in the Deweyan sense is just an unlimited experimentalism within the domain of social matters and within the world of ideas, which assumes that there is no „fixed form", „final cause" or „human nature". Science is also only one of the results of unlimited change. The philosopher who looks for unchanging and universal elements can point not to this particular stage of science but rather to a certain underlying „logic" of change which produces this and any other results (including religion and morality). For Hegel such „logic" was his famous dialectics: everything passes through three stages:

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a different audience, for people with different expectations" (G. B o r r a d o r i, *The American Philosopher*, p. 106).

[15] Dewey's year of birth (1859) is almost symbolic: it is the same year in which *The Origin of Species* was printed in the the United States. J. P. Diggins draws our attention to this symbolism. Cf. his *The Promise of Pragmatism*, p. 212.

[16] *The Collected Works of John Dewey*, vol. 4, p. 14. The article is entitled *The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy*.

[17] Hegel thought that in the institutions of Prussian state and in his own philosophy God acquires full self-knowledge. Comte was convinced (and it is the Hegelian element in his philosophy) that the positive (scientific) stage of human development which comes after the more primitive theological and metaphysical is the last one. Marx believed that communism is in a sense the end of struggle.

thesis, antithesis and synthesis. In the case of Dewey this underlying „logic" is the logic of problem-solving. If we look closer, however, this „logic" – is not far away from Hegelian struggle of opposites. The important difference is that according to Dewey this logic does not serve any God. In a sense it *is* God[18]. As such this logic can be regarded as generalization of Darwinian idea of struggle for life in a very unpleasenst conditions of all-embracing chance. The religion of rationalism is then simply religion of the „logic of universal change", which in the case of our human world acquires the name of problem-solving or experimenting. We can believe that our way of solving problems is much better than that of our predecessors but it is quite certain that our grandsons will not even share our questions.

Some philosophers tend to see Dewey as a scientistic type of thinker. However, if we look at Dewey and Rorty from the perspective of the generalization of the Darwinian evolutionism they both accepted, the main characteristic of Rortian romantic or anti-rationalist pragmatism is perfectly in line with Deweyan rationalism. What misleads many people is a Deweyan use of the term „rationalism". It does not have anything in common with traditional *ratio* as somehow described by classical logic and its extensions. It is rather a new embodiment of Hegelian dialectics or better Darwinian insight of changes occuring accidentally in the course of the struggle for survival[19].

It is very likely that if Dewey had lived today, he would recommend Richard Rorty to the Chair of Rationalism at Harvard Divinity School, despite the fact that Rorty himself would probably prefer a different name for the chair, e.g. the Chair of Anti-rationalism. Although it seems to be a big difference, it is in fact only terminological since both Dewey and Rorty accept Luck or Chance as the ultimate basis for every idea. It is a problem of tactics to emphasize reason or feeling as the most valuable (for the time being) result of totally accidental changes in the world, including the world of ideas. From the theistic

[18] We can see that Dewey did not escape Hegel very much. Like his development in the problem of theism, his whole metaphysics is continuous rather than discontinuous with the first, Hegelian, stage of his development.

[19] Another common element in Dewey and Rorty which is somehow mediated by Darwinism of both of them is their emphasis on genetic method as the only one able to explain the meaning and role of various human ideas. Dewey stressed the influence of Darwin on the genetic way of thinking about ideas; „The influence of Darwin upon philosophy resides in his having conquered the phenomena of life for the principle of transition, and therby freed new logic for application to mind and morals and life. When he said of species what Galileo had said of the earth, *e pur si muove*, he emancipated, once for all, genetic and experimantal ideas as an organon of asking questions and looking for explanations". Ibidem, vol. 4, pp. 7-8.

perspective the result is the same: rejection of the notion of God. Still, this rejection can be announced in opposing terms. Dewey hides it under theistic terminology and Rorty under a relativistic vocabulary allegedly tolerant of theism and religion.

In a sense the source of this difference in terminological preferences between Dewey and Rorty (especially in relation to the problem of theism) can be traced to their biographies. Unlike Dewey, Rorty was raised in an antireligious or areligious environment:

> When I was twelve, the most salient books on my parent's shelves were two red-bound volumes – *The Case of Leon Trotsky* and *Not Guilty*. These made up the report of the Dewey Commision of the Inquiry into the Moscow Trials. I never read them with the wide-eyed fascination I brought to books like Kraft-Ebbings' *Psychopatia Sexualis*, but I thought of them in the way in which other children thought of their family's Bible: they were books that radiated redemptive truth and moral splendor. If I were a really *good* boy, I would say to myself, I should have read not only the Dewey Commision reports, but also Trotsky'a *History of the Russian Revolution*, a book I started many times but never managed to finish. For in the 1940s, the Russian Revolution and its betrayal by Stalin were, for me, what the Incarnation and its betrayal by the Catholics had been to precocious little Lutherans four hundred years before[20].

Rorty simply does not have any biographical reasons to defend theistic vocabulary, even in Deweyan sense, or to be (or pretend to be) a religious person. This does not automatically mean hostility to religion. The very fact that Rorty compares the Dewey Commision report to the Bible and the Russian revolution to the Incarnation suggests even some sympathy to religious terminology. But it had to be quite different kind of sympathy than in case of Dewey, without strong emotions and memories. From the very beginning theism and religion simply did not matter to him at all.

Rorty was, however, a religious type of person in another sense. In his autobiography he describes his search for some ground for what he felt as moral imperative inherited from Trotsky: the struggle for social justice. He started to read great philosophers, and noticed that Plato and platonists (who – in his view – cover almost the whole history of philosophy) wanted to do exactly the same thing he himself was looking for: they tried to find metaphysical foundations for their ethical convictions. It does not matter for us here if this is plausible description of what philosophers wanted to do. What is of our interest is

[20] „Trotsky and the Wild Orchids", p. 87-88.

the result of Rorty's inquiries. The following passage can serve as a summary of it:

> I gradually decided that the whole idea of holding reality and justice in a single vision had been a mistake – that a pursuit of such vision had been precisely what led Plato astray. *More specifically, I decided that only religion – only a nonargumentative faith in a surrogate parent who, unlike any real parent, embodied love, power, and justice in equal measure – could do the trick Plato wanted done. Since I couldn't imagine becoming religious, and indeed had gotten more and more raucusly secularist, I decided that the hope of getting a single vision by becoming a philosopher had been a self-deceptive atheist way out*[21]. (Italics mine).

It is intriguing why, according to Rorty, only religion and not any philosophy (like Platonism) „could do the trick". He does not give an answer for this, but we may suppose that one of the reasons was quite similar to that given by Dewey to preserve theistic terminology: only a clear and intense conception of the union of ideal ends with actual conditions is capable of arousing steady emotion. Unlike any philosophical system, theism offers such a conception. But this conclusion isn't for Rorty any encouragement to become a theist. Quite the contrary, it is encouragement to give up the whole search. Rorty does not offer any other reasons for the unacceptability of theism. Aguments did not seem to play any significant role, simply because Rorty does not believe in arguments at all. What is really important to human life and to all decisions we make is, according to him, determined by extra-rational means. That is why he tries to justify his views by „telling stories", „sketching pictures" rather than by strict arguments. And that is why the only reason he gives for not accepting theism is the impossibility of imagining becoming religious.

Now, theists could answer that it is simply because of restricted imagination that Rorty cannot accept theism, and although such response sounds offensive, it should not be regarded as such on Rorty's ground. After all, his neopragmatic philosophy is directed towards broadening our imagination and undermining the value of arguments. The following example given by Rorty is a good illustration of this:

> Consider a famous court case in Canada: The women of Canada noticed in 1927 that the Constitution of Canada says „any person may be elected to the senate who..." without mentioning sex. So they said „Okay, so *we* can be elected to the Senate". The Supreme Court of Canada was asked whether „person" meant „man or woman"

[21] Ibidem, p. 94.

> or „man". The argument of the feminist lawyers was that, in reading every other statute and constitutional provision, „person" had always been constructed to mean „man or woman". The Supreme Court of Canada decided that that was true but that it would be so ridiculous to let woman be a senator that in *this* case the word „person" just *had* to mean „men".
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> The feminist lawyers had an absolutely airtight argument, and it did not do them the slightest bit of good. Reason and argument were certainly valued in the Canadian judicial system, but the imagination of judges was insufficient to let them change the practices of the society[22].

Now, this is a very good example of the force of broadening imagination and the weakness of argument in social matters. But in the context of this example it is even harder to understand why the judgment of Rorty's own imagination was good enough reason for not becoming a theist if, as he says, only theism could solve the problem he wanted to solve. Shouldn't he simply make a shift in his own imagination?

To understand why he could not, we have to return to Darwin, who is one of Rorty's heroes. Not every broadening of imagination is good and desirable. Rorty simply looks at theism in such a manner that to become a theist would be going back to some primitive stages of the evolution of human mind. So in his view there is no comparison between the broadening of imagination of Canadian judges and the broadening of imagination a theist suggests. Accepting theism would be, from his perspective, restricting imagination, it would be like going back from the age of industrial civilizations to the age of primitive agricultural production.

Let us look now at the way Rorty describes the secularist position he eventually accepted:

> Dewey thought, as I now do, that there was nothing bigger, more permanent, and more reliable, behind our sense of moral obligation to those in pain than a certain contingent historical phenomenon – the gradual spread of the sense of the pain of others matters, regardless of whether they are of the same family, tribe color, religion, nation, or intelligence as oneself. This idea, Dewey thought, cannot be shown to be true by science, or religion, or philosophy [...] .
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> This Deweyan claim entails a picture of human beings as children of our time and place, without any significant metaphysical or biological limitations on their plasticity. It means that a sense of moral obligation is a matter of conditioning rather than of insight. It also entails that the notion of insight (in any area, physics as well as ethics) as a glimpse of what is *there*, apart from any human needs and desires, cannot be made coherent. [...] more specifically, our conscience and our aesthetic

[22] „Comments", p. 123.

> tastes are, equally, products of the cultural environment in which we grew up. We decent, liberal humanitarian types [...] are just luckier, not more insightful, than the bullies with whom we struggle[23].

Rorty states here his own *credo*: We are children of our time and place, which means that we are *not* the children of any God. There are *no* limits to our plasticity, i. e. we do not have any other nature or conscience than that shaped by our culture. Institutions we are proud of, like democracy, and results we should preserve, like our moral sensitivity, are results of great *Luck*, which means that they are purely accidental results of blind evolutionary process. Here we have an application of Darwinism in full display. By Darwinian elements in Rorty I mean here only evolutionary naturalism (but not necessarily reductive biologism) combined with the thesis that physical processess, even as sophisticated as those occurring in human brains, occur by chance (without any intelligent direction).

Rorty applies this kind of Darwinism to epistemology expressed in linguistic terms. According to him our present language of Western culture „took shape as a result of great number of sheer contingencies", and „genuine novelty can [...] occur in a world of blind, contingent, mechanical forces"[24]. We shuold note again that there is no argument here to support this claim. However, instead of accusing Rorty of not giving arguments, it would be good to remember that his aim is not to provide another philosophical system within what we used to call Western culture. He wants to radically redefine this culture, and to convince us to accept a completely new faith, which could be properly called the religion (or ideology) of Luck or Contingency.

This interpretation may seem to be exaggerated. In Rorty's writings there are quite extensive passages where he gives interesting and solid arguments, e. g., against foundationalism or realism. So it seems that broadening our imagination or redefining our culture is not the only and maybe even not the most important aim Rorty has. Yet this is quite easy to explain. Rorty simply treats the community of philosophers in a way similar to how grown-ups treat children, using their language and their way of thinking to make certain ideas appealing. But he believes that as they „grow older" the previous worldview and previous habits of looking for arguments will disappear. So in a sense, Rorty speaks to us as a Nietzschean superman could speak to men. If he some-

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[23] „Trotski and the Wild Orchids", pp. 95-96.

[24] *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 16-17.

times uses old images and old argumentation and engages himself in philosophical disputes, it is because of his compassion to slaves of the old religion whom he want to help.

I intentionally tried to emphasize the similarity between Rorty and Nietzsche (Rorty himself often stresses this similarity) while writing about the Darwinian elements in his neopragmatism. It has to be remembered that the Nietzschean conception of Superman was achieved by a quite direct application of evolutionary insight (very similar to that of Darwin although not Darwinian) into the relam of the history of ideas. And so avoiding Nietzschean terms and putting it in Darwinian ones, we would have to say that Rorty's philosophy is like a message from the next stage of evolution given to creatures still at the lower stage. How did Rorty manage to achieve this new stage of evolution? The only answer which is possible from his own perspective is exactly the same as the answer to the question about every novelty and every achievement. It is „the result of cosmic rays scrambling the fine structure of some crucial neurons in [...] respective brain" or the result of „some odd episodes in infancy"[25]. In general, it is the result of pure Contingency, pure Luck or pure Chance.

I have no doubt that we have here one of the most anti-theistic and anti-religious pictures of the world. What sometimes misleads people is that Rorty does not criticize theism and religion as openly and aggresively as, e. g., Nietzsche. Moreover, in line with his relativism, he seems to admit various languages (even theistic ones) as equally useful as any other languages (e. g., atheistic). After all the very fact that they survived justifies their utility. In that Rorty seems to be much more open-minded than many contemporary naturalists. This, however, does not rule out our hypothesis that for Rorty theistic language is a relic of an earlier stage of evolution, which some people still find useful because of their narrow imagination.

However, even if Rorty would not see theism as a passing way of thinking and even if he admitted that sometime in the future theistic language might appear the winner of evolutionary competition, his philosophy has to be regarded as anti-theistic. In my view, in his heart Rorty is not a relativist. Like Dewey, he believes in generalized and ontologized Darwinian Chance as a kind of an Absolute. And if he admits possibility of failure of atheistic language in the future it is not because theistic language may appear to be true but because god (or goddess) Chance may have such caprice. And this core belief of both

[25] Ibidem, p. 17.

Dewey and Rorty is clearly opposed to the theistic claim, which does not concern the utility of religious language but the truth of the belief in God's existence. Rorty is not at bottom a relativist, just as Dewey is not a rationalist. He also believes in god(dess) Chance or Luck. The difference between Dewey and Rorty is only on the level of *expression* of this common faith. One urges us to acquire it by reason the other one by sentiment and imagination.

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STANOWISKO JOHNA DEWEYA I RICHARDA RORTY'EGO W KWESTII RELIGII I TEIZMU

Streszczenie

W artykule *Stanowisko Johna Deweya i Richarda Rorty'ego w kwestii religii i teizmu* przedstawiono najpierw rozwój poglądów Deweya na ten temat. Wychowany w rodzinie chrześcijańskiej, był on z początku pozytywnie nastawiony do teizmu i religii, ale już wówczas pojmował Boga jako wcielonego w Ludzkość i praktycznie z nią się utożsamiającego. Z biegiem czasu humanistyczny naturalizm, uzupełniony o deklarowany przez Deweya racjonalizm, wziął górę nad teizmem. Dewey zachował jednak terminologię teistyczną, która sprawia, że niekiedy błędnie bierze się go za obrońcę teizmu i religii. Rorty uważa siebie za kontynuatora myśli Deweya, ale zdaje się zasadniczo od niego różnić, ponieważ odrzuca racjonalizm i wprost głosi relatywizm. Racjonalizm Deweya niewiele jednak ma wspólnego z klasyczną logiką. Jest on raczej generalizacją na wszelkie procesy społeczne Darwinowskiej idei przypadkowych zmian w walce o przetrwanie. Rorty akceptuje tę samą ideę, lecz słusznie odrzuca dla niej nazwę „racjonalizm". Podobnie jest w kwestii religii i teizmu. Mimo różnic terminologicznych Rorty zasadniczo nie wychodzi poza Deweyowski kult Ludzkości, który w głębszej warstwie jest u obu tych filozofów kultem wszechobecnego Przypadku.