

## Pepper and Recent Metaphilosophy

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Pepper's major contributions to metaphilosophy are his root metaphor theory and his theory of structural corroboration as the epistemological foundations of metaphysical systems, allowing for a plurality of rival systems. These contributions are elucidated, and esteemed to have been influential in later metaphilosophical thought even when not explicitly recognized. Rorty's and Nozick's recent contributions to metaphilosophy are examined by reference to Pepper's works and to each other's. Although these recent metaphilosophers are criticized for falling short of Pepper's achievement, they are seen to be reconfirming fundamental Pepperian insights. Philosophy has as much in common with art as with science, and its finest gift is the liberation of our capacity to think, feel, and sense, in all its multivariety, the world in which we live.

In the Preface to *World Hypotheses*, Stephen Pepper's classic contribution to metaphilosophy, he attributed his work "to a consuming personal desire to know the truth" (1948, p. vii). Pepper confessed: "As a boy I sought it in what was nearest at hand in the doctrines of a church and struggled with what I later found were the perennial issues of theology. Then for a time I sought it in physics" (1948, p. vii). When physics failed him, he "discovered philosophy" (1948, p. vii). After he had tried, under the guidance of George Herbert Palmer at Harvard, and through a study of the writings of T.H. Green, to commit himself to philosophical idealism, he experienced so severe a revulsion that he "turned to a dogmatic materialism" (1948, p. vii). Only pragmatism and Gestalt psychology shook Pepper free from the grip of dogmatic materialism. Just as his intellectual principles underwent crisis after crisis, so his values, caught up in the violent changes that were sweeping the world, faced challenge and disruption. Pepper remarked: "Individualistic democracy, which through the first quarter of the century I naively accepted as the unquestionable social ideal, met with severe jars, and became subject to criticism" (1948, pp. vii-viii).

Theory and practice converged to compel Pepper to establish the grounds and evidences of his beliefs. Neither dogmatic idealism nor dogmatic materialism would do. For a time, however, Pepper admitted: "I tried to find an adjustment of the evidences of both of these theories in a third, pragmatism. But I soon came to the conclusion that pragmatism was just one more theory, probably no better nor any worse than the other two" (1948, p. viii). But the drive for truth persisted, pressing him "toward the study of evidence and hypothesis—toward a reliable method rather than a reliable creed" (1948, p.

viii). But at that time, during the 1930's and 1940's, the logical positivists were ascendant, and toward them Pepper's immediate reaction was, in his own words, "suspicious and hostile" (1948, p. viii). He amplified:

I felt from their attitude and the tone of their statements, even before studying them, that they were not meeting the problem that needed to be met. I doubted if many of them had ever fully felt the problem. This was a question of truth and of the justification of human values. To think that this question could be met in the manner of a puzzle and in terms of correlations, statistics, mathematics, and language struck me as fantastic. Here was a method running away with issue, evidence, and value itself. It was . . . methodolatry. (1948, pp. viii-ix)

In the 1930's and 1940's Pepper faced the epistemological strictures of the logical positivists who denied the possibility of metaphysics as a cognitively significant enterprise. In part, he proposed the metaphilosophy in *World Hypotheses* as a defense of metaphysics against the positivists' negations. At the same time he conceded a most crucial point in epistemology to the positivists, when he wrote ". . . the attack of the positivists on world theories [metaphysics] did bring out the fact that there was more in physics which stood on its own feet without support of theory than I had previously been willing to allow" (1948, p. ix).

The explicit context of Pepper's metaphilosophy is, therefore, the state of metaphysics in mid-century when it was battered by the epistemological strictures of logical positivism. Thus *World Hypotheses* presents a theory of metaphysics, not a metaphysics; it offers a metaphilosophy—that is to say, a theory of philosophy. Now, according to Pepper's metaphilosophy, metaphysics is a specific kind of belief that attempts to embrace all facts and to organize them within a coherent system. A metaphysics is, in Pepper's phrase, "a world hypothesis." A world hypothesis, moreover, is an unrestricted hypothesis, as distinct from the restricted hypotheses characteristic of the special sciences. For Pepper there is no basic difference between an empirical scientific hypothesis and an empirical world hypothesis—only a difference in scope. *World Hypotheses* is, according to its subtitle, "a study in evidence." An essay on philosophical method, it examines the source, the nature, and the grounds of metaphysics.

Recently, however, it has come to light, (what some of us have long suspected) that Pepper's metaphilosophy was engendered and nurtured in an aesthetic context. In a report on the *Pepper Papers*, reposing in the Morris Library at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Hahn writes:

One of Pepper's favorite manuscripts was "The Philosophy of Criticism," a volume of more than 550 pages on which he worked between 1928 and 1938. Its plan, in his words: consists of giving the world hypothesis that serves as the broad empirical support of each major type of aesthetic criticism, following that with a description of the aesthetic theory that comes out of the world theory, and

following the aesthetic theory with the study of the critic of recognized prestige who employed critical criteria based on the aesthetic theory.

The manuscript follows fairly closely the format of a seminar on aesthetics I had with him in 1931-32, taking up in turn anamistic, mystic, Platonic, idealistic or organistic, mechanistic, and contextualistic criticism. (Hahn, 1980, p. 77)

Out of this manuscript Pepper took those parts that were later published, with expansion and revision, as *Aesthetic Quality* (1937) and *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (1945). Most pertinently, as Hahn relates, Pepper "lifted the metaphysics sections from each chapter and expanded them into *World Hypotheses . . .*" (Hahn, 1980, p. 77). Later Pepper expressed regret that the manuscript had not been published as a single book because "its form as an aesthetic structure never came into public view" (Hahn, 1980, p. 78). While Pepper's epistemology was developed within the context of a prevailing positivism, his root metaphor theory surely was inspired by aesthetic considerations. To these two cornerstones of his metaphilosophy—epistemology and root metaphor—we now turn.

Pepper's epistemology focusses on belief. Knowledge, he held, consists of beliefs supported by criticized evidence. It is the work of corroboration. Pepper distinguished two types of corroboration: multiplicative and structural. By "multiplicative corroboration" he meant "the corroboration of man with man"; by "structural corroboration" he meant "the corroboration of fact with fact" (Pepper, 1948, p. 47). To illustrate the distinction, Pepper considered the problem of determining the strength of a chair to support the weight of a man. Multiplicative corroboration occurs when from the observations of many persons the strength of the chair is confirmed; structural corroboration occurs when from an examination of the parts—nails, glue, wood—of the chair, it is inferred that the chair is strong enough. Pepper terms the products of multiplicative corroboration "data" and the products of structural corroboration "danda" (Pepper, 1948, p. 48).

The concept of danda, unlike the concept of data, is an unfamiliar one. Data are discovered by the instruments of the empirical sciences and by the formal rules of logic and mathematics; they are elements of invariant evidence. Danda, on the other hand, are variable evidence; they are the products of hypotheses. As Pepper (1948) elucidated:

Danda are the facts that seem to be given as we note the extended corroboration of fact by fact. Or, better, danda are facts that *ought* to be given if the hypothesis which describes an extended mass of structural corroboration were true. (Pepper, 1948, p. 70)

A dandum is what ought to be the precise determination of the evidence presented if it has the structural relationships with the other items of evidence which confirm it; or, abstractly stated, if the theory of the structure of the evidence is true. (Pepper, 1948, p. 324)

Pepper located the issue between positivism and metaphysics in the rejection or acceptance of danda. Positivism is that type of philosophy which

restrictively identifies knowledge with beliefs founded on data. While positivism is permissible as a method that rightly stresses the role of data in science, Pepper condemned it for becoming dictatorial and dismissing danda and the beliefs dependent on danda. As Pepper insisted, positivism inconsistently requires the very sort of evidence and beliefs it denies.

Pepper's confidence in the possibility of metaphysics rested epistemologically upon the validity of structural corroboration and of beliefs supported by danda. Structural corroboration is what supports epistemologically the metaphysical enterprise of constructing world hypotheses that reach beyond the limits of science. A world hypothesis "is one that all the facts will corroborate, a hypothesis of unlimited scope" (Pepper, 1948, p. 77). By "unlimited scope" is meant the capacity of the hypothesis to explain every fact, permitting no isolated fact to fall outside it. Besides unlimited scope, a world hypothesis claims to be precise, to fit exactly, to conform to, to apply to, to describe or refer to the facts under consideration. The adequacy of a world hypothesis depends upon its scope and precision, and world hypotheses are evaluated according to their adequacy. World hypotheses are objects in the world, comprising a class of objects whose peculiarity is that its members "cannot reject anything as irrelevant" (1948, p. 1). Thus Pepper sought "to study world hypotheses as objects existing in the world, to examine them empirically as a zoologist studies species of animals, a psychologist varieties of perception, a mathematician geometrical systems" (1948, p. 2).

Pepper's root metaphor theory, inspired (see Reck, 1972) by aesthetic considerations, was his original hypothesis to explain the origin of world hypotheses and to illuminate the systematic character and interrelatedness of their categories. According to the root metaphor theory, the key to the construction of a world hypothesis is some area of common sense fact in terms of which all areas of fact are interpreted. This original area of experience becomes, therefore, the "basic analogy or root metaphor" of the world hypothesis (1948, p. 91). By means of the root metaphor theory Pepper classified and described the principal types of world hypotheses. Briefly, in *World Hypotheses* four principal world systems generated from root metaphors are elaborated: formism from the root metaphor of similarity of form, mechanism from the root metaphor of the machine, organicism from the root metaphor of the biological organism, and contextualism from the root metaphor of the act in its context. Later, Pepper proposed a fifth world hypothesis, his own, in *Concept and Quality* (1967, p. 18); he called it "selectivism," and its root metaphor was the purposive act.

Pepper's bequest to future metaphilosophy has consisted of two major contributions: his root metaphor theory and his theory of structural corroboration as the epistemological foundation for metaphysical systems. This bequest has been influential even among heirs who ignore their benefactor and who squander their inheritance upon projects he might have criticized. Two

contemporary metaphilosophers provoke our examination in regard to the crucial points that Pepper made decades ago. They are Richard Rorty and Rober Nozick.

Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) is an extraordinary essay in metaphilosophy. It offers a remarkable interpretation of the history of philosophy, a provocative diagnosis of the condition of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, and a redefinition of the role of the philosopher in the future. Rorty is brilliant in his scholarly exegeses, exposing obscure or forgotten passages containing images and metaphors that light up tangled webs of abstract thought. Indeed, the very title of his book contains a metaphor—"the mirror of nature." And his text interweaves metaphors and analogies collected from his prodigious and sensitive readings of philosophy, literature, history, and science. Thus Part One of his book is entitled "Our Glassy Essence," and Part Two "Mirroring." So in a sense he uncovers and elucidates critically "the root metaphor" that allegedly underlies the history of Western philosophy from the Greeks to the present. While Rorty develops his argument by uncovering the ramifications of a root metaphor in a manner that Pepper might have applauded, his attacks on epistemology and systematic philosophy would surely have earned Pepper's condemnation.

Rorty traces the main tradition in the history of philosophy, identified with epistemology, back to Plato, and he targets this tradition for deconstruction. According to Rorty's interpretation of Plato, the task of the philosopher is to discover truth: truth consists in the correspondence of our knowledge with reality, and knowledge is composed of accurate representations. Viewed as a kind of eye, the mind apprehends reality in images; it looks on as a spectator. Plato's doctrine took a turn inwards when Descartes introduced the mind as the private inner stage where knowledge occurs. Mind, the inner mirror, possesses knowledge as the inward representation of reality. In mentalizing the Platonic doctrine, Descartes bequeathed to modern philosophy its main preoccupation—epistemology. Rorty credits (or discredits) Kant for setting the third theme of traditional philosophy—namely, that philosophy as epistemology establishes the standards for all knowledge. Claiming to furnish the foundations of knowledge, philosophy as epistemology arrogates to itself the dominant role of grounding the sciences, the arts, religion, culture, politics, and morality, and of estimating their ranges and limits. For Rorty the two dominant movements of contemporary philosophy—continental phenomenology and Anglo-American analytic philosophy—are variations on the Kantian theme.

Rorty, the editor of the distinguished anthology *The Linguistic Turn* (1967), and a self-confessed "analytic philosopher," is especially provocative in his critique of analytic philosophy. It merits recalling that his presidency of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association was marked by the heated public conflict between the analysts and the pluralists, sympto-

matic of the decline of analytic philosophy in America during the last decade. To the dismay of his analytic colleagues, Rorty treats analytic philosophy and its issue, linguistic philosophy, as a recent expression of the tradition that, flowing through Kant, had enthroned epistemology. If Rorty's diagnosis is correct, then analytic philosophy is bankrupt. Normally it involves two theses: (1) that there are necessary propositions as distinguishable from contingent, empirical, factual propositions, although the necessity of the former stems from their analyticity, which precludes that they furnish any information about the world; and (2) that there is a bedrock of empirical data, the given, which constitutes the foundations of all knowledge. Now, according to Rorty, Quine has demonstrated that the distinction between necessary and contingent propositions is indefensible since there are no purely analytic statements; Sellars has shown that the given is a myth. Hence the continuance of analytic philosophy is due to the fact that its adherents have failed to combine the separate findings of Quine (1951) and Sellars (1956).

Holistic considerations underlie Rorty's allegation of the collapse of the distinction between analytic necessities and contingent factualities and of the demolition of the given. They culminate in Rorty's gravamen against the theory of reference which, as developed by Putnam (1975), for example, would link language to extra-linguistic realities. They also relate internally to Rorty's acceptance of and generalization from Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, a theory interpreted to signify that science displays no progressive advance in the discovery of objective truth but rather a succession of scientific systems. Each scientific system is constructed in consonance with the paradigm that inspires it; each determines its own criteria as to what counts as evidence and what is the test of truth; and each, in the last analysis, rests on its acceptance by the community of scientists during the epoch in which it holds sway. Thus Rorty applies the Kuhnian theory to philosophy.

The application of the Kuhnian theory to philosophy is ironic. Efron once raised the question whether

'paradigm' as Kuhn means that term was not partly a result of Pepper's influence in the first place . . . He recalls first reading *World Hypotheses* in 1945, while working under James Conant. Kuhn's training originally was in physics; he seems to have had his first full-time position in philosophy at Berkeley, where Pepper was chairman of the department (following on his art department chairmanship). Pepper, Kuhn told me, was largely responsible for bringing him out there. After reading Pepper's discussion of him in "Metaphor in Philosophy" Kuhn was unable to say whether he drew any direct influence from Pepper, though he grants the appropriateness of the question. (1980, pp. 23-24)

In "Metaphor in Philosophy" (1980) Pepper had cited Kuhn's work, and had observed that "there is practically no difference between the function of the paradigm as a guiding conceptual pattern in scientific procedure and that of the root metaphor as a guiding conceptual pattern in world hypotheses except the restricted scope of the former" (1980, p. 61). When writing *World*

*Hypotheses* Pepper esteemed science to be secure in its epistemological foundation; he seems to have accepted the positivist theory of science as securely hooked to data. Kuhn demolished this conception of science. Rorty, who was apparently acquainted with Pepper's work sufficiently to list seven items, including *World Hypotheses*, in his bibliography to *The Linguistic Turn*, never mentions Pepper in his recent work, but taking off from Kuhn, he extends the theory to philosophy, with the result that epistemological foundationalism is abolished.

As Rorty puts the issue, there are only two ways of thinking of knowledge.

... we can think of knowledge as a relation to propositions, and thus of justification as a relation between the propositions in question and other propositions from which the former may be inferred. Or we may think of both knowledge and justification as privileged relations to the objects those propositions are about. (1979, p. 159)

Rorty rejects the second way; it is the way of realism, of the correspondence theory of truth, of faith in reference, of the foundationalist doctrine that there are data to which concepts conform or tend to conform when adequate. Sellars and Quine had respectively led the way in philosophy to the recognition that the given is a myth and that necessary knowledge is non-existent; Kuhn had assaulted the bastion of science itself, undermining the positivist confidence in the security of scientific knowledge rooted in hard empirical data.

Efron, citing Frederick Suppes, has commented on the idealism in Kuhn's work. He has observed: "There are formulations in Thomas S. Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, that seems to be asking to be read as instances of the willful extension of paradigm over helpless fact" (Efron, 1980, p. 23). The same sort of stricture could be applied to Rorty, except that for him there is no longer a sure distinction to be drawn between theory and fact. It is wholly a matter of relations between propositions. Are we to be entangled, then, in "the potentially infinite regress of propositions-brought-forward-in-defense-of-other propositions"? Not necessarily, says Rorty. "It would be foolish to keep conversation on the subject going once everyone, or the majority, or the wise, are satisfied, but of course we can" (Rorty, 1979, p. 159). So holistic idealism yields to historicism. The satisfaction of peer approval within any given community of scholars and scientists during any given epoch replaces objective truth and validity. But since there is consensus among peers during any given epoch, there is no likelihood of there being several equally acceptable philosophical systems. On the contrary, there will always be one dominant group with its own distinctive style, although at the same time there are incommensurable universes of discourse, of which science and literature designate two major types.

Hence Rorty rejects the program of philosophy as systematic, and he affirms philosophy not only as the scholarly study of the historic masterpieces

of human thought from the pre-Socratics to the present, but also as edification. As historian of philosophy Rorty surpasses Pepper, but in denigrating system, he separates himself from any logical structure of concepts that prescribes coherence and adequacy. The method of philosophy as edification is hermeneutics, its purpose to understand and interpret the various discourses and disciplines that make up culture. Of course Rorty's conception of philosophy as edification promises much. His adherents would live their lives engaged in sympathetic, insightful, penetrating, bookish conversation.

Contextualism is the philosophical type which Rorty's thought exemplifies. So Rorty has contended that the American pragmatists, particularly James and Dewey, are the founders of his method. Yet it is pertinent to observe that philosophy as hermeneutics dissociates philosophy from encounter and immersion in immediate experience and action, as the pragmatists were wont to recommend. Philosophy as hermeneutics eschews inquiry into the concrete problems of men for learned conversation about books and articles. It perpetuates, to use Peirce's terms, the "seminary" habit of mind instead of advancing the "laboratory" habit of mind (1931, pp. 50-52). It lacks adhesion to a logical system of categories and anchorage in a bed of empirical facts. It floats the way cocktail conversation does, fueled by alcohol, passing wit, and social amiability.

While Pepper's metaphilosophy rose in response to the positivist assault on metaphysics, and Rorty's stemmed from a desire to transcend the malaise of analytic philosophy drowning in its own secretions, Robert Nozick's seems to have been invented to furnish an over arching framework for a disparate set of lecture notes spun out by an earnest instructor who undertook to teach different courses each year to meet perhaps the needs of students neglected by the senior faculty bent on making their careers as members of a prestigious university in decline. For Nozick's metaphilosophy is presented in the introduction and the concluding chapter in his recent book, *Philosophical Explanations* (1980), the body of which explores metaphysics, epistemology, and value. Of this work Bernard Williams (1982) has remarked that it is "an attempt at the Great American Novel of philosophy," and that, in spite of its brilliance, and suggestiveness, its defects are attributable to "the Great American Novel syndrome," a feature of which is "the disposition to take the size of the attempt for success itself" (p. 32). Although Nozick does not make use of the root metaphor theory and lacks the literary style of Rorty, who is keenly sensitive to the use of metaphors and other figures of speech in the development of philosophical discourse, Nozick recognizes in a manner that Pepper would have approved the features of philosophy as an art form. As he says in the concluding section of his huge book:

The key . . . [to whether philosophy is an art form] lies in the degree of shaping and molding that takes place, the self-conscious choice about the nature and details of the

work produced, the degree to which the work is *created*. As the composer works with musical themes, harmonic structures, and meter, the painter with forms, colors, represented things, and perimeters, the novelist with plot, themes, characters, actions, and words, so the material of the philosopher is ideas, questions, tensions, concepts. He molds and shapes these, develops, revises, and reformulates them, and places them in various relations and juxtapositions. In the medium of ideas, he sculpts a view. (Nozick, 1981, p. 645)

And unlike Rorty, who derogates epistemology and repudiates foundationalism, Nozick espouses an epistemology in which tracking truth is the fundamental strategy of knowing. Ultimately a belief is held because the believer believes there is a factual link between a belief and its object—namely, the truth. Here, of course, inconsistency surfaces in Nozick's metaphilosophy. For it seems that he is providing a realistic or empirical contextualistic theory of truth in which data are prescriptive for belief.

However, the cornerstone of Nozick's metaphilosophy is his theory of philosophical explanation. He introduces his theory of philosophical explanation by way of a distinction drawn between proof and explanation. Proof is inference from premises believed as true to conclusions that are compulsory. Proof is coercive. Philosophical explanation, by contrast, is non-coercive. The premises in philosophy are accepted tentatively, so that the conclusions may be entertained not as coercive but as possibilities that illuminate experience, discussion, reality. Thus Nozick advocates philosophical pluralism. With a citation to the closing chapter of Pepper's *World Hypotheses*, (Nozick, 1981, pp. 14 and 654) Nozick elaborates his perception of the condition of philosophy, summing it up as follows:

There are various philosophical views, mutually incompatible, which cannot be dismissed or simply rejected. Philosophy's output is the basketful of these admissible views, all together. One's delimiting strategy would be to modify and shave these views, capturing what is true in each, to make them compatible parts of one new view. While I know of no reason in principle why this cannot be done, neither has anyone yet done it satisfactorily. Perhaps, as knowing a subject (such as logic or physics) involves seeing the different ways it can be organized and viewed, the different ways around it, so too (only this time the views are incompatible so the analogy is imperfect) knowing the world involves seeing the different ways it can be viewed. (1981, p. 21)

In espousing this doctrine Nozick does not succumb to relativism, for he holds that the multitude of views can be ranked. Lacking Pepper's root metaphor theory, however, he fails to provide a typology of philosophical systems, offering instead ad hoc rankings of particular hypotheses explaining philosophical issues in piecemeal fashion, although in each case his argument is informed by the most influential recent discussions of the topics under consideration.

As we survey these current works in metaphilosophy, we can, I think, better appreciate the achievement of Stephen Pepper. His root metaphor

theory (or some equivalent), his epistemology of corroboration with the distinction between data and danda, and his doctrine of world hypotheses saves him from the relativistic historicism into which Rorty's metaphilosophy with its sociology of knowledge leaps and the loose-jointed and even inconsistent pluralism of Nozick. It merits the speculation that if Rorty and Nozick had been nurtured in an intellectual climate benign in regard to philosophical system or had resisted the seductions of the passing fashions and reputations in academic philosophy they might have contrived a metaphilosophy akin to Pepper's. Be that as it may, their efforts reconfirm the fundamental Pepperian insights that philosophy has as much in common with art as with science and that its finest gift is the liberation of our capacity to think, feel, and sense, in all its multivariety, the world in which we live.

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