

On the Connection Between Art and Philosophy:
An Envisioning of “Articized” Philosophy

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Introduction

Historically, art has often been treated as the antithesis of philosophy. Even Plato's vision for an ideal society evicts all poets. In an over-generalized analysis and non-philosophical opinion, art is often characterized by intuition and emotion, whereas philosophy is depicted as rational and logical, devoid of sentiments. However, we often see the two expressing similar ideas: George Oppen's poetry *Of being Numerous* illustrates what it is like to be alive, harking back to Heidegger's opus magnum *Being and Time*; Marcel Proust's masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time* seems to be an artistic reaction to Bergson's vitalism. How is this possible?

Scholars and philosophers have observed the split between arts and philosophy since the Hellenic era. Plato criticized poetry and tragic theatre in *Republic* books 3 and 10 and characterized art as mimêsis, an imitation of reality rather than an exploration of truth. For Plato, the physical reality is already an imperfect representation of the "forms" –the absolute perfection of a particular object. Art is an imitation of reality, and reality is an imitation of the forms. Plato argues that indulgence in art results in negligence of the "forms" and avoidance of truth. Moreover, Plato also views art as morally problematic. He declares that art appeals to passion and animalistic human nature, or "appetite." Indulgence in art can lead to appetite taking over rationality. In *Phaedrus*, Plato claims that a person may descend to madness if appetite takes over rationality: "But he who without the divine madness comes to the doors of the Muses, confident that he will be a good poet by art, meets with no success, and the poetry of the sane man vanishes into nothingness before that of the inspired madmen" (Plato, *Phaedrus*). The split here is evident. Plato thinks that a philosopher should be deprived of sentimentality to search for the ultimate Truth with rationality.

This paper aims to re-examine the connection between philosophy and art and to determine the extent to which the two are similar in their ways of producing knowledge. This paper will establish the legitimacy of an artistic mode of inquiry by demonstrating how artistically produced knowledge weighs the same as scientifically and mathematically produced knowledge. Specifically, I will focus on Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to highlight the limitations of using experiences and rationality to reveal the truth, emphasizing how metaphysics and art produce *synthetic a priori* judgment and how art can go beyond the experience to "unconceal" the truth in reality. Bergson's theory on duration, memory, and the creation of art will serve to establish the *synthetic a priori* nature of art. The second object of this paper is to argue that the artistic mode of inquiry is not only similar but essential to the philosophical mode of inquiry. Plato's argument regarding art as a detriment to philosophy is refuted. Philosophy and art both employ an intuitive method to propose innovative ways

to reveal the truth. Here, Bergson's idea of duration and intuition will help me to justify the intuitive method in philosophy and art. Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of artwork, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, will also provide a foundation for the similarity between metaphysics and art. I will further discuss the relationship between the artistic mode of inquiry, the knowledge it produces, and the truth it unconceals. The last object of this paper is to establish a vision of "articized" philosophy. Neo-pragmatic philosopher Richard Rorty will be the basis for this vision. I will primarily use his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* and his linguistic turn on literature to address the connection between art and philosophy and to construct how philosophy can be operated under an artistic framework. However, it should be noted that these three objects are not presented in a way that gives a comprehensive argument. Rather, these objects are presented as narratives of each philosopher, an intimate dialogue of philosophical ideas. The aim is not to convince the reader that an articulated philosophy is necessary, *a priori*, and universal but to give an account of this vision and assert that under this framework, we may avoid some of the problems in philosophy.

In addition to philosophical ideas, I will rely heavily on literary works as primary sources to analyze how each philosopher's visions are revealed in art. I will pair philosophical ideas with these literary works to discuss their similarities. This paper will be divided into three sections, each dedicated to one school of ideas and their corresponding literary works. The first section will discuss transcendentalism through the lens of Kant and Bergson. The two pairing artworks are Marcel Proust's selection from the collection *Pleasures and Days* and *Remembering Things Past*, as Proust's narrative is an implementation of Bergson's duration and memory theory. The second section deals with phenomenology, particularly Heidegger. The pairing artworks are George Oppen's poem *Of Being Numerous*, heavily influenced by *Being and Time* and addresses Heidegger's theory of otherness as well as discusses what it is like to be. The last section is the neo-pragmatic analysis of philosophy and art. Richard Rorty is the dominant philosopher, although his work is also paired with David Foster Wallace's short story "Philosophy and Mirror Nature," an homage paid to Richard Rorty's book of the same name.

Transcendental Analysis of Philosophy and Art

In 1781, Immanuel Kant published the first critique: *The Critique of Pure Reason*. He lays out his metaphysical system—transcendental idealism. This metaphysics system extensively discusses epistemology and seeks to solve the conflict between rationalism and empiricism. Kant addresses the following questions: what is the necessary precondition of understanding, the way to understanding, the tool to understanding, and the limitation of the tool to understanding?

Kant introduces his concept of *synthetic a priori* judgment to answer these questions. He thinks there are two kinds of judgment, independent or dependent upon experience. For Kant, a judgment is a logical assertion between a subject and a predicate that defines the subject. Kant's example is "all bodies are heavy." The ones independent of experience are called *analytic*, meaning that the statement's truth is in the virtue of its definition. The most famous example is Quine's characterization: "all bachelors are unmarried men." The condition of an unmarried man is entailed in the definition of a bachelor. The truth can be discerned by virtue of the statement alone. This source of knowledge is necessary: in no possible world is there a bachelor who is a married woman. Kant calls this type of knowledge "covertly" contained in the language (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*). The second kind of judgment of knowledge is called *synthetic*. This knowledge source depends on experience: "judgment of experience, as such, are all synthetic" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*). An example of this type of knowledge is "all crows are black." To verify this claim, we need to use the experience of seeing the crow to determine the truth of it. Kant also introduces two epistemological sources. The first source, *a priori*, is a source of knowledge that does not require external input. It is often recognized, prior to Kant, that *analytic* and *a priori* form a pair. The second source is *a posteriori*, the source of knowledge that requires external input. Again, this can be paired with *synthetic* judgment. It is thought that only two types of epistemic judgment can be made: *analytic a priori* necessary and *synthetic a posteriori* contingent. However, Kant argues that the third type of judgment exists: *synthetic a priori*.

In the "Transcendental Aesthetics" section, Kant argues for this third kind of judgment. It is important to clarify what Kant means by "transcendental." Its meaning is two-fold: one, transcendental implies that something is outside of the sensuous data; two, transcendental implies the necessary precondition for something to be anything. In this case, Kant is questioning the necessary precondition for one to experience the world. The answer is time and space, as they serve as the metaphysical frameworks of human existence. Time and space are a harbor that anchors one's existence. They are the presumptions of experience: "In space their form, magnitude, and relation to one another is determined" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*). However, space and time are nominal, outside our experience, as they are

necessary *a priori* representations that ground our experience. To interact with time and space, Kant argues, we must have a pure intuition of them: the intuition that separates us from the object to be observed and the intuition that carves out the object to be observed at this very given moment. The knowledge regarding space and time is what Kant calls *synthetic a priori* judgment. He claims that mathematics is a type of knowledge, specifically arithmetic and geometry. In the arithmetic equation $5+7=12$, there is a succession of events one follows another. We can deduce the truth of this equation without any experience *a-priorily*. The geometric theorem, furthermore, is a result of spatial intuition. The truth of the Pythagorean theorem does not come from Pythagoras measuring every right triangle to claim the truth of $a^2+b^2=c^2$ inductively. It results from spatial intuition and logical deduction that results in the necessary, universal, and eternal truth. Here we have the characterization of *synthetic a priori* judgment: the truth is in virtue of space and time, the truth is necessary and universal, and the invention of such truth is a result of spatial-temporal intuition.

Art operates similarly. Henri Bergson takes up Kant's conception of time, space, and intuition and argues that art also retains this *synthetic a priori* quality. Here, the paper presents two of Bergson's arguments regarding the nature of art and metaphysics. The first is an argument regarding the artistic mode of inquiry's ability to reveal the truth, and the second is on the *synthetic a priori* quality of artistic truth in its creation.

Bergson begins his famous essay on comedy *Le Rire* (The Laughter) as follows "if we could enter into immediate communication with things and with ourselves, I think that art would be pointless, or rather that we would all be artists, for our soul would vibrate forever in unison with nature" (Bergson, *Le Rire*). This passage harks back on Kant's idea of phenomenal and noumenal as we cannot interact with *ding an sich* without mediation. Bergson offers two instances of such mediation. First, sensory data is unreliable in revealing the truth about the world: "what I see and what I hear of the external world is simply what my senses extract from it to guide my conduct" (Bergson, *Le Rire*). Deleuze interprets this as "sense only directs what we are looking for," and the whole image is obscured (Deleuze, *Bergsonism*). Kant's influence is readily apparent. Kant suggests that one's understanding mechanism is built upon craving an object outside of the *continuum* of time and space. To understand a leaf, we must crave it out from the tree (space) it belongs to and the state (time) it is at. Thus, sensuous data is only useful for pragmatic reasons but not metaphysical accounts. The second critique is regarding language. For Bergson, another primary way to interact with the world is through language and, specifically, the process of conceptualization. Again, Kant is present. He ranks concept as an *a priori* way of knowing. Suppose a polygon that has one thousand sides. It would be incredibly difficult to precept its shape but relatively easy to conceptualize such a shape. Kant thinks that conceptualization is the key to understanding. However, Bergson's critique of language suggests

otherwise. Concepts seem to be generalized and unspecific. When we talk about the concept of a leaf, the specific qualities of any particular leaf are obscured, and “the thousand fugitive nuances and the thousand deep resonances” of the state escape us (Bergson, *Le Rire*).

Bergson believes that art “brings us face to face with reality itself” (Bergson, *Le Rire*). For Bergson, art brings forth the singularity of reality that language and senses fail to capture. Poetry, for example, is doing the impossible of language. Language is generalized and conceptualized, whereas poetry is specific and inventive. In poetry, a specific emotion, a detailed feeling, or even an alternative reality is created. Take the famous opening of T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*: “April is the cruellest month, breeding/ Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing/ Memory and desire, stirring/ Dull roots with spring rain” (lines 1-4). Here, T.S. Eliot creates a specific sense of nostalgia and despair. Yet, this feeling is difficult to describe using language since it is so specific and detailed. One can point to the specific enjambment that separates the present participle from the noun, the alliteration of “mixing” and “memory,” or the diction of “lilacs,” “April,” and “cruelness.” However, none of these formal analyses are enough to capture the entirety of this feeling. Bergson argues that artistic invention is a result of an individual’s memory, the singular experience “that is constitutive of the singularity of things, and thus our reality is one haunted by our personal history” (Sinclair, 93).

For Bergson, art is both revelatory and inventive. It is revelatory in the sense that it reveals the latent content in reality that is obscured by sense and language. It is also inventive in the sense that it provides a perspective that has not been known to any man but the artist himself, deeply entranced in the memory. Think of Claude Monet’s *Impression, Sunrise*. It reveals a special relationship between light and shadow and provides a new interpretation of the sunrise as an event. Bergson discusses the similarities between metaphysics and artwork. He argues that, following the same logic as Kant, metaphysics or philosophy, in general, relies on intuition. The logical succession of an argument or a sudden burst of *eureka* is the result of special-temporal intuition: “intuition which attains the fundamental truth of reality veiled to analysis” and “[the] same intuition, diversely employed, that produces the profound philosopher and the great artist” (Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*). Since both philosophy and art are the product of intuition, their mode of inquiry is transcendental.

Bergson’s second argument is regarding the creation of a piece of artwork and the *synthetic a priori* quality of the artwork. This idea can be first found in the third critique of Kant, *Critique of Judgement*. He argues that artwork, “unlike the craft product, is not wholly the realization of a conceptual intention.” The creation of a piece of art does not rely on concept or precept. Bergson introduces another concept called *duration* (*durée*). For him, existence implies a duration. To exist also implies change: to change from one state to another and to pass from one idea to another. This change, again,

presupposes temporal intuition. To exist is to endure, and to endure is to change: "qualitative multiplicity, with no likeness to number; an organic evolution which is yet not an increasing quantity; a pure heterogeneity within which there are no distinct qualities" (Bergson, *Time and Freewill*). The consequence of this pure heterogeneity is that "duration can be predicated only on a process which emerges continuously in the absolutely new" (Cunningham). Bergson himself also insists upon this: "the more we study the nature of time," we are told, "the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new" (Bergson, *Creative Evolution*). The second consequence of pure heterogeneity is that the reality is unforeseeable. Since the duration is always inventive, each of the present moments is added to the last moment. "For to foresee consists of projecting into the future what has been perceived in the past, or of imagining for a later time a new grouping, in a new order, of elements already perceived. But that which has never been perceived, and which is at the same time simple, is necessarily unforeseeable" (Cunningham). This is Bergson's argument for free will, and this argument will extend to art's *ex nihilo* quality.

The concept of duration can also be applied to a piece of artwork and its creation. Bergson counter-argues the notion that art is merely putting different existing elements together. "Such an approach, he argues, would reduce creation to mere making and fail to recognize the extent to which there is a novelty in the course of life" (Sinclair, 95). Mushing existing different elements together implies a finite number of artworks to be produced. If artworks are finite, all of them are foreseeable. Foreseeing "consists of projecting into the future what has been perceived in the past" (Bergson, *Creative Evolution*). Bergson treats creation and evolution as synonyms: a piece of artwork must be in absolute novelty, but its creation is more a process of "maturation." Bergson further argues that for even to be possible before they occur, "they would be able to be represented in advance; they could be thought before being realized" (Bergson, *The Possible and the Real*). Artwork cannot be represented before they occur. The piece of art is only conceivable and possible because of its author. Soon as the author conceives the artwork, the artwork is made. However, this does not mean that the author gradually realizes the artwork after having the idea of it. It denotes the fact that the artwork is not a representation of an idea or concept. Bergson, along with Kant, argues that a piece of art is only possible to exist as a concept or an idea after its completion. The creative process only depends on "the way in which the product is possible" (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*). Thus the artwork is *a priori* which is conceivable and possible prior to the experience of it, but not an *analytic a priori* judgment since it cannot be represented prior to its occurrence. It is rather *synthetic a priori*. The judgment depends on the intuition of time and space, as well as what renders the artwork possible. It does not follow a certain aesthetic rule or intentionally try to capture a concept. The creative process only renders the artwork possible in spatial-temporal intuition.

Marcel Proust, Transcendentalism, and Truth in Art

Marcel Proust published his monumental seven-volume novel *In Search of Lost Time* between 1913 and 1927, around the time Bergson's influence was at its peak. *In Search of Lost Time* seems to be largely a reaction to Bergson's theory of memory, time, and duration.

As we have left off in the previous section, creation is the process that renders the artwork possible. In this section, I will apply close reading techniques to examine what are the forms that render a piece of artwork possible. Here, the literary analysis deals less with the philosophical content of the story but more with the forms and devices. The analysis will follow that of Bergson and Kant, displaying the ability of art to reveal the truth in reality and establish the fact that this way of revealing the truth is *synthetic a priori*.

The first passage comes from the closing section of the short story "The Death of Baldassare Silvanide Viscount of Sylvania." The story deals with the last two years of Baldassare, Viscount of Sylvania, his final love affair, his connection to his family, and his attitude toward facing death. This section tellingly describes the moment of Baldassare's death.

Proust emphasizes physicality at the beginning of the passage in a scene in which a boat leaves the harbour: "sailors were hauling it along by rope"; the boy with "sturdy leg, holding out the net with which he would catch the fish, and a lit pipe was clamped between his lips that could taste the salty tang of the sea"; and "a three-master was setting sail." Not only is this scene physical, it is also lively and vivid, almost optimistic.. This scene seems to contrast with the diminishing physicality of the viscount, causing thematic tension and ambiguity. This tension is suggested by the reluctance of viscount: "He turned away his head from the happy image of the pleasures that he had passionately loved and would never enjoy again." It is evident that the viscount does not want to die. An argument can also be made that the viscount is content to embark on a journey of the afterlife, as suggested in the positive atmosphere and paralleled by the young boy who "stood firm on his sturdy legs." The boat venturing off to India further implies the potentiality of this scene. The ambiguity here infuses the text with meaning: the resolution in the interpretation is not one or the other but both. The viscount's inability to bid farewell to his physical life is merged with the desire to unleash the potential in the afterlife. It is not the viscount, nor the reader, that could choose to adopt either the optimistic or pessimistic interpretation. The feeling is specific, mixed, and resists conceptualization in one adjective. This kind of ambiguity in the interpretation is one example of Bergson's argument that art reveals the latent content in reality. An ordinary adjective or discursive language is unable to capture the ambiguous

feeling. It seems that ambiguity is forcing the reader to perform the dialectics in the text: a synthesis of a novel idea must be reached as the conclusion of an interpretation.

Following the ambiguity of the boat leaving, Proust's beautiful dialectics of "life in death and death in life," Baldassare is struck by the sound of the church bell: "he heard a faint silvery sound, imperceptible and profound like a beating heart." This silvery sound is "both present and very ancient; now he could hear his heart beating with the bells' melodious flight, hanging on the moment when they seemed to breathe the sound in, and then breathing out a long slow breath with them." Proust describes hearing the church bell as "involuntarily remembered the gentle sound they made in the evening air." Another Bergsonian idea is present here: memory as a continuum. The temporal nature of the bell is coupled with the temporality of memory. The effect of the church bell is not felt only at the moment it rings: the effect resonates every moment after the bell has rung. This is why sound is both present and very ancient since memory carries the sound across temporal boundaries. The "involuntary remembering" suggests that the invocation of memory does not come as a result of rational choice but a natural, *a priori* consequence of being human. Baldassare is merged with his memory as his "heart beating with the bells' melodious flight." The memory of the past invokes the feeling of the present and harks at the near future.

The bell's sound continues. "Baldassare was resting, his eyes closed, and his heart listening to the sound of the bells that his ears, paralysed by the approach of death, could no longer hear." Here, Proust directly addresses the *a priori* nature of memory, for it can be realized without the actual experience. Memory is actually a form of imagination, not a re-creation. Baldassare proceeds to remember his past life and relive the life once again in his memory. Time, here, becomes relative. Duration is not the objective description of time but an internal intuition of temporality. Memory is the result of such temporal intuition. The jumbling of past, present, and future creates a *continuum* of memory, the defining feature of an individual. Such memory is only accessible to the individual, and the effort to carve out an instance of the memory in a fixed space and time obscures the continuum of the memory. The duration cannot be divided. However, art is able to present the most personal knowledge to the reader. The knowledge is suddenly accessible and presented as a continuum that is otherwise impossible to access. Proust emphasizes this: "He saw all of this, and yet two seconds had not elapsed since the doctor, listening to his heart, had said: "It's the end!" The subjective nature of intuition is demonstrated. In the *a priori* memory, the person is able to relive his full life in two seconds. We can see how the narrative voice brings forth the memory through free indirect discourse. For example, the sentence "he saw his mother again – the way she would give him a kiss when she got home, and then put him to bed at night and warm his feet in her hands, staying at his side if he couldn't get to sleep." Proust not only describes the physical scene in which Baldassare's mother warms his feet, but he also

invokes feeling and emotion. Proust does this in two ways: one, the association of diction and feeling. The choice of “mother,” “kiss,” and “warm” all solicit the amiable feeling. The reader’s *a priori* association with the diction brings out the feeling. Two, the narrative voice allows the reader to access the thoughts of characters; their past, present thinking, and their prediction of the future are revealed simultaneously.

The second passage to be analyzed here is the famous madeleine scene in the first book of *In Search of Lost Time*. In this passage, the narrator, Marcel, drinks tea-dipped madeleine cake, invoking the memory of his childhood town Combray.

Proust opens the passage with a discussion on the Celtic belief that an inanimate object captures part of the soul. These parts of us never seem to be unconcealed and are only revealed: “as soon as we have recognized their voice, the spell is broken.” Proust claims that these spirited objects “overcome death and return to share our life.” This metaphor of a spirited object is further extended in the following argument. The voluntary capturing of past memory is futile to Proust. He insists that the past is stored “somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object.” It seems that Proust is claiming that past memory is inaccessible voluntarily as it exists as a transcendental faculty. Proust sets his mission in this passage: giving an instance of involuntary memory by using the power of language.

The narrative begins with the narrator’s accounts that he has not remembered his hometown Combray. It should be noted Proust’s usage of long wordy sentences that are composed of short appositives, such as the opening of the narrative: “Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, save what was comprised in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me, when one day in winter, as I came home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take.” It seems that Proust is imitating what it is like to think, letting the thought unfold itself continuously without interruptions. Such thought might be coherent or disruptive. Here, the author also offers a description of madeleine cake as a “fluted scallop of a pilgrim’s shell.” The detailing of the cake serves as a gateway to memory. The scallop shell points the pilgrim to Santiago just as much as the cake directs the narrator to his past memory. The narrator proceeds to soak the cake in his tea and taste it. Here, we have found a beautiful depiction of a *eureka* moment: “No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place.” Note Proust’s precise use of the verb that encapsulates the physicality of such action: “touch,” “ran,” “stop,” and “intent upon.” With the combination of the short appositives, these verbs create a flow of action. Such feelings cannot be broken up into parts; they must happen in a continuum. The narrator

describes such feelings as “an exquisite pleasure” that invades his senses. The physicality of the action is directly contrasted with the transcendental memory called up by the tea. This feeling is indescribable through general language, and it is only accessible to an individual. In the creative process, the artist is able to bring forth such feelings by using literary techniques. The result is the breathtaking sentence: “and at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory— this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself.” What this sentence ultimately reveals is a Bergsonian attitude to the creation of art. Memory is deeply individualistic, and art also originates from memory. The emphasis on “myself” reveals how the essence of oneself is only supplied by oneself. The continuous flow of memory further points to Bergson’s argument that artwork is the knowledge of time and space.

The narrator proceeds to reclaim the memory by drinking the second and third mouthful but finds the “potion is losing its magic” and finds the memory along with the initial *eureka* fading. He describes the experience of trying to relive the feeling not as seek but create. “It is face to face with something which does not so far exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day.” For both Proust and Bergson, memory is not a complete recollection of past experiences awaiting to be reclaimed or discovered; it is rather an accumulation of passion and imagination that brings forth feeling. Memory, along with its imagination, creates a reality. Art and philosophy, similarly, attempt to create reality out of imagination. For Proust, every moment of recollecting is a moment of creation and invention.

The narrator attempts to describe the difficulty in accounting for a particular feeling: “But its struggles are too far off, too much confused; scarcely can I perceive the colourless reflection in which are blended the uncapturable whirling medley of radiant hues, and I cannot distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate to me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste of cake soaked in tea.” In this example, Proust uses the metaphor of colour to convey the impossibility of carving the memory out of a *continuum*. However, metaphor is not the only tool employed here. The phrase “whirling medley” gives a sense of movement, a constant jumbling, and synthesizing of elements. The diction of “interpreter” and “translate” seems to be another hidden metaphor that gives the experience a linguistic property. The word choice “paramour” denotes an archaic yet amiable tone. The short appositive formulates a long sentence. In this one sentence, Proust employs a visual metaphor of colour, the duration of movement, the linguistic incommensurability between memory and recollection, archaic feeling, and musical rhythm.

Suddenly, the complete memory returns to the narrator. The taste of the cake resembles the narrator's aunt Léonie's cake, dipped in her lime tea. The narrator marvels at his own memory, claiming that the memory "from a long distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection." It seems that for Proust, the memory and the object that triggers the memory remain transcendental. Their existence constitutes human souls that persist regardless of time. They are fueled by our essence and waiting to be realized. We can see Proust's involuntary memory here. He seems to be adopting a quasi-mystical view of the inanimate object carrying our spirits.

Towards the end of this passage, the full memory is retrieved through the revitalization of the taste of madeleine cake. The narrator describes how the taste solicits the memory of the lime flower and the old grey house on the street. Gradually, the scenery expands to a theatre attached to the pavilion, an opening to his parent's garden, and the squares he used to roam. He describes the process of remembering "as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognizable." Proust presents another beautiful metaphor here; he adds to the Bergson theory of memory. The recollection is in a way that gradually fuses the memory with creative detail. Memory is a form of creation, like the creation of porcelain. The gradual elucidation can be compared to that of the creation of an art piece.

Philosopher Deleuze has an interesting view of this novel. He argues that this work "is found not on the exposition of memory but on the learning of signs." These signs can be foiled down to four phases of learning the meaning: "materials support, the devices which permit interpretations, the characteristic emotional response, and the type of meaning they yield" (Culler). The full realization of these four criteria helps to situate the novelist in reality and reveal the truth. In this sense, an artist is necessarily a philosopher since they both commit to revealing the truth.

Phenomenological Analysis of Philosophy and Art

Martin Heidegger published his paper *The Origin of the Work of Art* in 1960. Here, he is not discussing “art” in the sense of our everyday engagement with it or even talking about what is “great art.” Rather, he is engaging in the phenomenological analysis of the work of art. We can think of the phenomenological analysis as an extension of Kant’s transcendental analysis. Transcendental analysis questions the “conditions of its possibility.” That is, what is necessary *a priori* condition of a phenomenon. The phenomenological analysis takes the method one step further: Heidegger describes the phenomenon of art in as much detail as possible, showing how the happening of such a phenomenon is possible and what that possibility entails. Therefore, a more fitting title for Heidegger’s essay is “What do artworks do to originate.”

Before we discuss the body of the essay, we must understand what Heidegger means by “truth.” He calls the truth *Aletheia* “unconcealment” in Greek. For him, the truth is always hidden and has to be revealed; more specifically, the unconcealment of Being (sein).

In the first section of the essay, Heidegger examines the “thingly” property of art. He asks us to consider the concept of a “thing” in the phenomenological understanding of it and if such understanding is appropriate. He calls this process *Destruktion*. There are three definitions of “thing” in Heidegger’s conception:

1. Bearer of traits
2. “Objective unity of a manifold of sensations”
3. Formed Matter

However, Heidegger demonstrates that all three definitions are inadequate to establish the thingly character of art. The first definition interprets a thing as what is present. Think Descartes’ wax argument: The wax “has been taken quite freshly from the hive, and it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey which it contains; it still retains somewhat of the odour of the flowers from which it has been culled; its colour, its figure, its size are apparent; it is hard, cold, easily handled, and if you strike it with the finger, it will emit a sound” (Descartes, *Meditations*). The Heideggerian term of such definition is viewing a thing as *present-at-hand*. However, we can only know what thing it is; its context is obscured. Heidegger argues that no unconcealment of being is taking place under this definition. The second definition is strictly Kantian, as argued in the first critique, that the unity of percept and concept form the experience and understanding. Heidegger realizes the subjectivism in Kant’s

argument: the definition is based on an entirely inadequate description of perception, according to which we first experience subjective sensations and only subsequently physical objects. The third definition can be traced back to Aristotle. This definition is only useful for equipment as it is produced by an artisan as the preexistent matter is shaped into the appropriate form. This definition refers to the *ready-at-hand* property of all equipment. None of these definitions seem to capture the essence of art, nor can they unconceal Being as art can. Heidegger invites us to consider Van Gogh's painting of the peasant shoes. The peasant shoe is a piece of equipment, formed matter, that is made with an intended purpose. The depiction of it in art serves a different purpose.

“From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death” (Heidegger *Basic Writing*)

Heidegger argues that just by looking at the painting, a whole world opens up. The essence of such peasant shoes is unconcealed. This specific feeling only belongs to the woman but is brought forth by the painting. The Being of the shoe is unconcealed. Heidegger regards this as the essence of a work of art: to unconceal truth of Being.

In the next section, entitled “Work and Truth,” Heidegger discusses the concepts of “world” and “earth” extensively. He states, “Truth happens in Van Gogh's painting. This does not mean that something is correctly portrayed, but rather that in the revelation of the equipmental being of the shoes, that which is as a whole, world and earth, in their counterplay—attains to unconcealedness” (Heidegger, *Basic Writing*).

Heidegger first discusses the Aegina sculptures. He argues that no matter how they are preserved, they are still displaced from their original world. Even though they are not displaced, when we visit them, they still do not belong to our world. A living artwork keeps a relationship with an alive world. Heidegger further claims that “world-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone. The works are no longer the works they were. It is they themselves, to be sure, that we encounter there, but they themselves are gone by. As bygone works they stand over against us in the realm of tradition and

conservation. Henceforth they remain merely such objects” (Heidegger, *Basic Writing*). An artwork degrades to a *present-at-hand* object in this sense.

In using the example of the Greek temple, Heidegger discusses two functions of artwork: *set up a world* and *set forth the earth*. For Heidegger, “setting up” means “erecting in the sense of dedication and praise” (Heidegger, *Basic Writing*). The temple, however, *brought about* a world. “The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves” (Heidegger, *Basic Writing*). The Greek temple set up a world that organized the lives of the Greeks; it was that by which they made sense of their existence. The formal definition of the world is “the self-opening openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people” (Heidegger *Basic Writing*). It is one’s world that guides and situates the person in their mode of being. The temple demonstrates the kind of being that the Greeks take a stance on. This kind of *setup a world* provides the essence of the mode of being of historical people, which is otherwise inaccessible. Art is able to *set up a world* that is alienated and unfamiliar to the viewer, and it is only through art that viewers are able to access it.

The second function of art is to *set forth the earth*. Here Heidegger first distinguishes artwork and equipment. A piece of equipment is a thing whose materiality is both used and used up, whereas a piece of artwork’s materiality is merely used and not used up. Materiality can be understood as the ability to be useful. By using up, Heidegger means that materiality has withdrawn in two senses: 1) The said being’s form fuses with the use of it, and 2) The said becomes part of Dasein’s skillful coping. For example, the hammer’s very essence becomes its ability to hammer nails, and when an individual uses this piece of equipment, they can use it naturally without thinking about how a hammer should hammer a nail. Heidegger declares that rather than using up its materiality, a piece of artwork declares its materiality.

Now, we can deal with the concept of the earth. The earth designates the materiality: “[T]he temple-work, in setting up a world, does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time and to come into the open region of the work’s world... That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of itself we call the earth” (Heidegger, *Basic Writing*). Here, one can recognize that the earth is the opposite of the world. The world opens up or unconceals the being, but the earth sets the being back: “The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing” (Heidegger, *Basic Writing*). The world is best associated with unconcealment, clearing, and intelligibility, and earth is best described in terms of concealment, hiddenness, and unintelligibility. The earth would resist any attempt to penetrate it. Heidegger is engaging in dialectics here. He calls the

opposition between the earth and the world strife and the work of art “in setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth” (Heidegger, *Basic Writing*).

The last section of this essay is titled “Truth and Art.” Heidegger further extends the discussion of earth and world here. While the world is opening up the being, the earth is a “self-secluding mystery” that gets set forth. Earth is responsible for the presencing of a world in the work of art. To achieve this, the earth would “break down.” Again, think of equipment. When it breaks down, there is a shift in perspective. It shifts from *ready-at-hand* to *present-at-hand* until such equipment is fixed. The earth operates similarly, but it refuses to be “fixed” as it resists all attempts to shatter it. Yet the earth is that in the work of art that makes the work stand out or become present to us. The world is usually invisible or transparent to us in our everyday activities, and a breakdown is usually a breakdown in our own little world. It becomes visible through the opacity of the earth in an artwork. The strife between the world and earth results in the happening of truth. Earth is that opaque and perplexing element that makes the world present itself, but it is “unfixable” — it makes us take notice of the work of art precisely because it lacks the transparent intelligibility which characterizes our everyday world. However, it is only through the transparency of the world that earth can strike us as unintelligible, perplexing, and mysterious.

Heidegger proceeds to discuss the strife in greater detail:

“World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world. Yet the relation between world and each does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives to surmount it. As self-opening it cannot endure anything closed. The earth, however, as sheltering and concealing, tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there” (Heidegger, *Basic Writing*)

Through strife, unconcealment highlights itself in the clearing of Dasein. The great work of art establishes and sustains an epochal understanding of Being. The work of art is a happening-repose or a reposed-happening in the sense that the work simultaneously opens up a world (happening) and keeps that world open across a period of time in a stable form (repose).

George Oppen, Phenomenology, and Truth of Being

George Oppen is often seen as a Heideggerian poet who exemplifies Heidegger's poetic imagination of philosophy: unconcealing truth by revealing the world of a specific epoch, which creates strife in the the "earth," the quotidian. Two facets must be considered in Oppen's poetry: 1) he is a "philosophical poet" influenced deeply by the "objectifying metaphysics" and the criticism of it. 2) Oppen is a prominent Marxist and activist and invested a great deal of his thinking in human solidarity and happiness. In this section, I will examine key sections from Oppen's opus magnum *Of Being Numerous* regarding its conventions and the Heideggerian phenomenological analysis of poetry.

Of Being Numerous, as its title suggests, revolves around a conflict between being singular and numerous and its ramifications for individuality and community. Not only is Oppen trying to capture the conflict between the two, but he also tries to describe what it is like to "be." Heidegger defines "Being" as one that "cannot indeed be conceived as an entity...nor can it acquire such a character as to have the term "entity" applied to it" (Being and Time). Scholar Paul Naylor argues that this definition allows humans to use spatial prepositional phrases to locate the "Being." In this manner, Heidegger coins the "Dasein" (being there). Naylor argues that the preposition phrases and deictic pronouns are essential to Oppen's poetry as they locate and direct the reader to the "Being." I want to add the analysis of imagery and motifs as well as Oppen's romanticism.

Due to the limited length of this paper, I will examine the first 26 sections of this poem with selective emphasis on individual parts.

Section 1 opens with a calm declaration:

There are things
We live among 'and to know them'
Is to know ourselves'.

Already, there is a Heideggerian landscape being established. Oppen invites his reader to consider the world as things, and his "worldliness" is a composition of "things." Moreover, he points out the necessity of connecting with the world (to know). Notice the absence of a fixed space in this opening, "there" is a "deictic pronoun that has no apparent antecedent and seems to only mark out a space, and assumption, necessary to begin" (Naylor). It seems that Oppen has "set forth" a vaguely unfamiliar world that already attempts to unconceal the truth of "Being." Oppen proceeds to present a "fallen

Eden” world in which “the ruined window” is present, yet there is an infinite oxymoron in this world “It is dead and it is not dead, and you cannot imagine either its life or its / death.” Oppen seems to be trying to capture the paradoxical nature of the “earth” that tries to evade the “world” he has set forth as “the Spring comes and only obscures it—” Scholar Hanson points out a central concern for Oppen and Heidegger: both consider the world as “things,” but the modern age has converted all things into objects that cannot undergo *Aletheia*. Hanson calls this conversation a result of the “objectifying metaphysics” that contrasts with a poetics seeking “of sight, of 'vision.'”

This “objectifying metaphysics” is extended to the modern world imagery in section two, in which Oppen describes the world as “unmanageable,” seemingly cannot be comprehended. Yet, the natural Edenic world in section one is replaced by “A city of the corporations,” in which the objectification of “things” happens as a result of the commodification of things and a growing consumerism. “Glassed / In Dreams/” seems to suggest that both human physical senses and mental images have been colonized by vulgar consumerism, and the essence of consumerism builds the city. Yet, there is another layer to the understanding of the city. Oppen views the world and the city with awe: “And the pure joy / Of the mineral fact.” The *mineral fact* seems to return to the thingy character of the world. There is a Heideggerean question in this awe: “why is there Being at all and not rather Nothing?” However, the city itself is an “impenetrable” world on which the inexplicable awe dwells.

With this understanding of the world, Oppen introduces a reaction towards this world, the city: “The emotions are engaged/Entering the city/As entering any city.” One is “thrown” into the world. In this thrown world, one finds that one does not “coeval,” yet one imagines others are. This suggests that Dasein cannot form a relationship with others since they are fundamentally different. Others are mere objects, not beings or things. This nihilistic negation of humanity is also shown in the phrase, “A populace flows/Thru the city.” The word “populace” suggests the oneness of others; they are a mass of static objects rather than differentiated individuals. Humanity seems to be a fake concept to Oppen. The deictic pronoun is present again. “Them” seems to be an overly simplistic objectification of everyone else. Oppen presents the dilemma: is it possible to form a connection yet remain an individual?

This question is further explored through the revision of the image “flow.” The flow seems to suggest an influx of sameness toward “new.” Oppen negates the “dwelling” of the flow. Dwelling is defined by Heidegger as the “mode of being.” To dwell is to live in a place and form a relationship with the earth. Dasein, as being-in-the-world, dwells. The flow of people has no such relationship. Their dwelling is merely physical “tarred roofs/And the stoops and doors— / A world of stoops—” and is mere satirical wit that cannot serve as a mode of being. Oppen reveals that there is a rootlessness in the city and in the

populace. They are merely attracted by the “new.” Oppen restates his central dilemma: modern mass production and objectification are a symptom of “objectifying metaphysics.” In the same vein as Heidegger, Oppen criticizes the Cartesian subject: “consciousness / Which has nothing to gain, which awaits nothing, / Which loves itself.” Oppen will attempt to steer us away from Cartesian solipsism.

Section six deals with an essential human condition “We are pressed, pressed on each other.” To be pressed—or attempt to form a connection—is to be human. Yet there is an ambiguity:

Crusoe

We say was

‘Rescued’.

So we have chosen.

Notice that Crusoe is physically alienated from the rest of the stanza. The quotation mark seems to suggest a reluctance in this “rescue.” Crusoe is reluctant to abandon his singularity and “rescued” by numerousness and oneness with humanity. As suggested above, to desire connection and relationship is to be human, but we also desire to be different and singular. However, to use the word “humanity” implies numerousness; thus, we have chosen numerousness. This conflict between singularity and numerousness continues in section seven, in which Oppen declares that we are “Obsessed, bewildered // By the shipwreck / Of the singular.” The shipwreck of the singular is a dominant motif throughout this poem. It suggests an obsession over the singularity, yet such yearning is dangerous and nihilistic as no connection with humanity can be formed. Oppen is engaging in dialectics here: to be alone and to be different from others (Heideggerean *Das Man* and Lacanian *L’autre*) construct one’s subjectivity, yet to be different from others implies the existence of others and our concern for our relative position to the other.

To avoid dissolving into numerousness, Oppen offers an alternative route to practice Nietzsche’s “Amor Fati.” Oppen resigns to fate and history. Whether a “city” or “island,” all reigns to the “change // In the thin sky” and to the “the force / Of days.” The first part of the poem ends with a sign of Oppen seeing the fallen modern world on which a rootless populace flows, and the desire for singularity merely results in a shipwreck, awaiting to be eroded by fate and time.

Part two begins with a quote, “Whether, as the intensity of seeing increases, one’s distance from Them, / the people, does not also increase.” Hanson calls this quote a poignant misapplication of Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle. Oppen here is claiming that numerousness does not exist; as “we

approach the sea of the Them, we find only individuals.” (Naylor) Oppen’s response relies on his identity as a poet: “The absolute singular // The unearthly bonds / Of the singular.” There is a sublimation of the poet here who writes, “For the sake of an instant in the eyes.” Oppen desires singularity as a poet; he searches for a vision that is obscured by numerousness. Such vision is the “bright light of shipwreck.” Oppen extends the imagery of the light to the whole city. Such light “Seeps anywhere.” There is the loneliness that seeps through along with the light into the immobile and empty building. The singular light is not enough; there must also be a connection. This connection comes through a cry: “Speak // If you can // Speak.” Oppen introduces a character, Phyllis, who is “suddenly tight with happiness.” The light is present. Oppen says this light cannot demean us, and he simultaneously declares that it is not “art.” Art is not the light. The “speak” is the light.

Oppen then compares two modes of being: one in ancient, primitive times and one in the modern era. Notice the difference in the verb Oppen uses in section twelve and thirteen. He uses “made,” “talked,” and “spoke” for the primitives and “shop,” “chose,” and “judge” for the capitalist world. Again, he is commenting on the objectifying nature of modern society. There is sadness in Oppen’s insistence that the innocent and primitive era “will never return, never.” Oppen desires this dialogue which cannot be achieved in the modern era where “They develop / Argument in order to speak.” Dialogue and talking seem to be an authentic concern for Oppen, who suggests that talking is the way to overcome the objectification of things. Notice Oppen’s passionate and indignant tone coupled with the paradoxical image “baseball is not a game/but an argument and difference of opinion.” In the modern era, language, talking, and speaking are corrupted by the “city of corporation,” and Oppen is calling for an “end/ of an era.” He asks us to distance ourselves from this.

Yet, part 2 ends with section 14, a negation of this distance. Oppen, again, reflects on the nature of numerousness. He questions, “Who are that force / Within the walls / Of cities?” There seems to be a metaphysical force emerging as “the People” that forbids one’s desire to speak. Part 2 also ends with a resignation to history and to this metaphysical force. Without a resolution, Oppen’s reflection on the nature of singular and numerous continues.

Part 3 begins with a “Chorus (androgynous)” in section fifteen. The force of people also cries to “find me.” Not myself in the metaphorical sense but in the physics of the human body. The cry for loneliness is not metaphor or artistic, it is possible and real; it is the voice of Oppen. Oppen then presents three allusions in section sixteen that seem to lead his reader to an irrational and religious solution to the cry. There is a biblical allusion to Jesus and Abraham sacrificing his son Issac to God. There is the Greek myth of Orpheus. Naylor claims that the Orphic journey to rescue love is at the heart of Oppen’s poetry. Oppen then embarks on the journey to rescue love in section seventeen, yet he finds again the

difficulty in speaking and using language. The image of the subway carrying the “root of words” in the dim underground light again suggests a modern alienation of language. This underground vision is further explored in “anti-ontology.” This phrase contains two meanings: 1) it is the reverse of Berkeley’s “to be is to be perceived” as no one can be perceived underground and in the city; 2) the anti-ontology is a refutation of the existence of God. Both meanings suggest a nihilistic outlook. The lack of “Being” is further expressed as “He wants to say / His life is real, / No one can say why.” There is a lack of clarity in the confrontation of to be. Language is corrupted; there is no saying but “A ferocious mumbling, in public / Of rootless speech.”

The next three sections are Oppen’s political reflection on the war in Vietnam. The reader first senses numerous wills as “atrocious.” Yet, such atrocity is only in “distance.” Again, there is a lack of connection. Even in this numerousness, though, there is an instance of singular will. The man in a helicopter is coupled with the fly in a bottle, an allusion to Wittgenstein’s saying that philosophy is “To show the fly the way out of the fly bottle.” The image light in the shipwreck returns here, seemingly to signal a triumph of the singular, yet it is still atrocious. Section twenty opens with another deictic pronoun, “They.” Again, Oppen is portraying the populace as a herd of mindlessness. The previous religious call for connection is negated here. The Hardy Christmas poem signifies a pessimistic revision of the nativity scene in which the animals kneel to the young Jesus. We may as well hope the animals would kneel on Christmas Eve, but it is also likely that they would not, and “[t]hat we do not altogether matter.”

However, this religious call returns in section twenty-four, declaring a “new covenant,” and this covenant is “there shall be people.” Again, we are thrown to the numerousness in the world. Still, the young yearn for connection and root. They fill the old buildings but are oblivious to their predicament — their thrownness, their lack of connection, their absence of vision. Oppen claims they are “The Pure Product of America” who “invest” into the city financially. They may become the giver of value to transform the half-forgotten buildings into something new. Nevertheless, The Chinese Wall, a symbol of separation and lack of connection, stands.

Section twenty-six is the central section of the whole poem that summarizes all the previous discussions. Oppen first outlines the problem: nihilism and objectifying metaphysics may potentially lead to suicide. Even more importantly, the poet has “lost their metaphysical sense / Of the future, they feel themselves / The end of a chain.” One in their singularity becomes a single chain that cannot form any connection. Poets themselves are lost in this metaphysics. In the end, one is fixated on one’s own boundaries, and even “common sense” has lost its certainty and function. Oppen also sees that “denial / of death that paved the cities,” that rejects the problem at hand. Each generation of metaphysics is

merely adding to the already flawed system. Oppen questions how one can form any meaningful connection to one's generation. How could one embrace singularity yet not be engulfed by the numerousness? All that has been done is to supply "irrelevant objects." "And the single mind, the consciousness that floats above it all, can do nothing against the natural world. Our singularity too is conceived as part of a traditional negative objectification of the natural world, in which the single mind plays hero in the tragedy that is his world" (Naylor). The single mind cannot hold enough weight, and it cannot make a single heaven. There must be a connection. The section closes with a vision of clear water. To experience the world through its minute particulars, to reside (dwell) within it as opposed to over and against it, to attempt finally to see.

Neo-pragmatic Analysis of Philosophy and Art

Richard Rorty's view on metaphysics and philosophy contrasts with what has been discussed so far. In a broader sense, he is anti-metaphysics. Nevertheless, his position on literature and literary criticism are very valuable. This paper's discussion is centered around Rorty's book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, in which he offers a critique on what we perceive as necessary but is actually contingent. This contingency helps Rorty to coin his philosophical hero—"liberal ironist." Rorty maintains that literature has a priority over philosophy. This section briefly introduces some of the Rortian terminologies and discusses his revolt against traditional metaphysics, his concept of Ironism, and the necessary way to be an "ironist."

Rorty distinguishes between two spheres: the private sphere and the public sphere. The private sphere is personal. The public sphere is interpersonal. Rorty argues that a lot of philosophical problems result from wrongly applying private to the public. He proceeds to argue that traditional metaphysics is such an instance.

The possibility of a "liberal ironist" lies in Rorty's argument on the contingency of language and the contingency of truth. Rorty adopts a post-modern position that "truth is made, not found." First, Rorty rejects the notion of linguistic realism—the position that there is necessary essence in language; the meaning of certain words is necessary. Rorty argues that this is not the case, as our language is a product of history. He offers the example of French Revolutionaries, German Idealists, and English Romantics who realized "anything could be made to look good or bad, important or unimportant, useful or useless, by being redescribed" (Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*) Language is actually the product of history, a man-made product. Rorty rejects the fact that there is a linguistic structure out there in the world, waiting to be discovered and mirrored by our language. Language is contingent

on humans, not on a necessary superstructure. This critique of linguistic realism informs Rorty's critique of truth. It seems that humans are unable to come up with the truth that is outside of our language. Language always mediates our expression. Rorty's critique extends to the fact that since a language is a man-made object and there is no truth outside of language, truth itself is also a man-made concept.

Rorty's second critique on the contingency of truth regards his concept of vocabulary. Vocabulary is not the vocabulary of French or English but the psychoanalytic jargon of Jacques Lacan or the statistical language. These vocabularies are "incommensurable" according to Rorty. There can only be truth contingent on certain narratives but not a universal truth that applies to all circumstances. However, it should be noted that Rorty is not a truth denier. He only argues that there are different talking systems contingent on the creation of truth; for example, in my Deleuzian schizoanalysis vocabulary, unconsciousness is a productive factory, whereas, in Jungian psychoanalysis, unconsciousness is a theatre of myth and archetypes.

Rorty proceeds to give a historical narrative on the creation of language. Rorty takes up Nietzsche's criticism of language as a metaphor. Metaphors are those uses of language that have not yet achieved constancy. They are "ways of producing effects... but not ways of conveying a message" (Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*) Metaphors initially have no fixed meaning, one is using familiar words in unfamiliar ways; some of these new senses catch on, and are taken up and become common currency, absorbed into the existing language games. Since language is a metaphor, its creation can drive language on into ever more varied and novel patterns of meaning, producing almost limitless semantic possibilities. Language first is a metaphor, and then, after using it "unironically," it becomes part of organized language games, dead metaphors. Language is irredeemably figurative. It is subject to "redescription" contingent on historicism and cultural change.

Through Rorty's criticism of language and truth, he creates his "ironist." He offers the following definition:

1. She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered;
2. She realizes that the argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts;

3. Insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with power, not herself. (Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*)

Rorty calls those who confront the contingency of language an “ironist” who has not fixated conception on truth, belief, or ideology. An ironist is open to a change of vocabulary or way of thinking since the final vocabulary is a historical-informed grand narrative. An ironist looks forward to adapting her vocabulary and is aware of the contingency of truth. Rorty compares an ironist to a “strong poet” who is aware of the limitation of language but uses it to their advantage. Because the language is contingent and is open to metaphor, an ironist can construct new metaphors and new narratives to describe and re-describe themselves and others. Rorty classifies this process as “redescription.” One can infinitely redescribe their narrative and tell different stories. Ironism is inevitably a private theory, as the redescription can only apply at an individual level.

The counterpart of an ironist is the metaphysician. Rorty categorizes traditional philosophers in this category and the majority of the living analytic philosophers. Rorty calls them “unironic” as they believe in a fixed final vocabulary. These metaphysicians would prioritize reason and rationality over the imagination. They believe in the necessity of their vocabulary and the necessity of the truth in these vocabularies. However, there is a third group of people between ironists and metaphysicians. Rorty calls them “ironist theorists.” Philosophers like Bergson, Nietzsche, and Heidegger belong to this category. These ironist theorists are the ones who have been previously discussed. They rejected the traditional metaphysics and recognized the contingency in language and truth, but eventually, they themselves went back to engaging in a metaphysical argument. Whether it is the duration, will to power, or Dasein, they have all become another metaphysical endeavor. Rorty characterizes the failure of ironist theorists as they recognize the problem in traditional metaphysics as “unironic” and “absolute” but create theories that supposedly end metaphysics with ironist theory that claims to be the only acceptable vocabulary. This discussion can extend to the tension between private and public. An ironist can only be private because they can only redescribe themselves. An attempt to redescribe the public becomes “at best vapid, and at worst sadistic.” The fault of ironist theorists is that they extend a private conversation to a public one.

Who is the ironist-proper, then? Rorty’s answer is unsurprisingly the novelist, poet, and artist. They can never be fixated on their work; they are trying to constantly redescribe what their work could be like. Literature, particularly, holds a priority to Rorty. He briefly summarizes the progression of Western thought as follows:

I can now state my thesis. It is that the intellectuals of the West have, since the Renaissance, progressed through three stages: they have hoped for redemption first from God, then from philosophy, and now from literature. Monotheistic religion offers hope for redemption through entering into a new relationship with a supremely powerful non-human person. Belief in the articles of a creed may be only incidental to such a relationship. In philosophy, however, true belief is of the essence: redemption by philosophy would consist in acquiring a set of beliefs that represent things in the one way they truly are. Literature, finally, offers redemption through making the acquaintance of as great a variety of human beings as possible. Here again, as with religion, true belief may be of little importance (Rorty, *Philosophy as a transitional genre*)

Rorty discusses what it is like to be an ironist novelist. He uses Marcel Proust as an example of this type of figure. Rorty calls *In Search of Lost Time* a “web of contingencies,” the nature of language itself. Rorty argues that Proust reveals the nature of language through literature. Proust’s realization of the impermanence of things forces him to both realize his finitude and yet conquer it by observing others as fellow sufferers. The novel becomes a replacement for the task traditionally carved out for philosophical inquiry. Rorty argues that Proust successfully restricts the ironist discussion to the private realm since the novel is entirely about Proust himself. There is no didactic intention or grand metaphysical statement to be made. The novel is about Proust’s fractional persona’s memory and experience. In the process of doing so, Proust is engaging in philosophy but as the most personal and private. The novel acts as a moral force in its capacity to enhance empathy and sensitize us to the pain of others. Ironism fails in the realm of the public because of its cruelty in redescription; how cruel it is to tell Heidegger that his poetic philosophy still falls into the trap of metaphysics. Instead, ironism and redescription should not operate at a private level that accumulates human sympathies by breaking down alterities. Rorty hopes that by doing that, we are able to reduce “them-s” and increase “us-s.” Imaginative literature assists in the work of building up these solidarities. Rorty argues that the novelist essentially redescribes himself and invites the reader to redescribe with him. These redescriptions are imaginative as opposed to rational; there is infinite possibility in the reader, and breaks down their “final vocabularies.” “We should try to think of imagination, he says ‘not as a faculty that generates mental images but as the ability to change social practices by proposing advantageous new uses of marks and noises.’” In this way, Rorty sets up his literary priority over metaphysics.

It would be quite pessimistic of Rorty to argue that philosophy is inferior to literature without providing what philosophy should look like. This paper will also fail in its task to envision an “articized” philosophy if philosophy is already inferior in philosophizing to literature. Rorty points to his hero who saves philosophy from metaphysics: Jacques Derrida. Rorty talks at great length about

Derrida's book, *The Postcards*. Rorty argues that Derrida abandons the ironist theory and goes to the private realm, imbuing the book with his feelings, obsessions, and idiosyncrasy. This results in a text that is personal and does not make a claim to generality, but it may philosophically inspire his readers. Rorty draws a comparison from Proust. Proust writes about all the people he met in his life and reimagines them. Derrida also writes about all the people he met in his life, but these people are scholars, philosophers, and ideas. Essentially, Derrida turns ideas into people and has a private conversation with them. The title *The Postcards*, Rorty argues, is Derrida turning different philosophical ideas into people and having conversations with them. In this way, the writing is idiosyncratic and private. Derrida is able to tell stories of these ideas.

Rorty uses an analogy of having children. It was recognized, in medieval times, that it is necessary to have a child to make a person immortal, leaving one's trace in the world. Rorty compares this immortality of children to the desire of metaphysicians that is to bring forth truths that are universal and eternal. Rorty comments that Derrida's postcards are a rejection of the public, transcendental truth; he is in favor of the free association and personal conversation of the ideas.

Another example Rorty draws on the Derridean way of doing philosophy is his book *Limited Inc*, a response to John Searle's criticism of Derrida's misunderstanding of British philosopher Austin's serious and non-serious use of language. This book is intentionally vague and ambiguous. Essentially, Derrida is writing the book as an example to show Searle that the distinction is impossible, to which Rorty comments, "I take it that Derrida does not want to make a single move within the language game which distinguishes between fantasy and argument, philosophy and literature, serious writing and playful writing - the language game of la grande époque. He is not going to play by the rules of somebody else's final vocabulary. He refuses not because he is "irrational," or "lost in fantasy," or too dumb to understand what Austin and Searle are up to but because he is trying to create himself by creating his own language game, trying to avoid bearing another child by Socrates, being another footnote to Plato"(Rorty *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*), Derrida is actively revolting against the vocabularies of Searle. Derrida is trying to be the "Proust" of philosophy, according to Rorty, whatever one is philosophizing is an idiosyncratic re-imagining of the philosophical tradition.

David Foster Wallace, Neo-pragmatism, and Cruelty

In this section, I will provide a Rortian reading of David Foster Wallace's short story *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature*. The name of this story is a direct quote from Rorty's most influential work of the same name, in which Rorty lays out his theory of contingency and rejection of metaphysical realism. However, this story seems to be much more concerned with *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, as opposed to what its name suggests. Again, I will analyze forms of writing over the content of the story.

This story is an eight-page, one-paragraph-long monologue of the protagonist telling the reader his life on a bus ride with his mother. His mother had two "botched" plastic surgeries, the result of which were unfavorable as "her face was a *chronic mask of insane terror*." The narrator is a rather strange-looking man who "physically *towers over* all others in the crowd," wearing goggles and "specially constructed gloves." It is later revealed that these protection measures are used since the narrator kept a population of black widow spiders in his garage. At the time of the bus ride, he was on probation due to negligence: a child fell through the roof of his garage, crashed into the spider's habitat, and died from their bites. His mother is referred to as a "custodian" by whom the narrator must be accompanied.

The interpretation of the story this paper utilizes largely follows Wallace scholar Antonia Aguilar Vazquez's reading. Her interpretation centers around the mother's phobia of the black widow spiders: "Her fear of the phylum arthropodae is long-standing, which is why she never ventured in the garage." It seems that the narrator fails to acknowledge her mother's phobia. He merely dismisses his mother's bringing a can of insecticide with her as an "exaggeration." We can see this in the narrative voice; it is almost arrogant and wholeheartedly committed to his vocabulary. The narrator does not shy away from any emotional expression: "Also I have never liked direct sunlight and burn with great ease." Instead of an alienating or ironic attitude many ironist writers adopt, Wallace depicts a character who is not ironic at all; he seems to be overtly investing in his own vocabulary. The narrator's style of narration is very recognizable; it is a combination of scientific jargon and pop culture references; for example, he spends a great deal of time describing her mother's fear and her use of insecticide but seems to be unmoved by this fear:

Her fear of the phylum *arthropodae* is long-standing which is why she never ventured in the garage and could contend *ignorantia facti excusat*, a point of law. Ironically also hence her constant spraying of R - - d© despite my repeatedly advising her that these species are

long-resistant to resmethrin and trans-d allethrin. The active ingredients in R - - d©. Granted widow bites are a bad way to go because of the potent neurotoxin involved prompting one physician all the way in 1935 to comment, *I do not recall having seen more abject pain manifested in any other medical or surgical condition* whereas the painless loxosceles or recluse toxin only causes necrosis and severe sloughing of the area.

The narrator uses very scientific vocabulary here. He is not afraid of using terms that his mother would not be able to understand, nor can he recognize the incommensurability between his vocabulary and the vocabulary of others, even the readers. There is an underpinning of hubris built into the narrator's vocabulary.

We can also note the narrator's mention of Hitchcock as a pop-culture reference throughout the story: One when he describes the death of the child, "[w]hereas Hitchcock and other classics used only primitive *special effects* but to more terrifying results" and again when he describes his mother's "insanely frightened" look, "[i]t turns out that it only takes a minuscule slip of the knife one way or the other in this procedure and now you look like someone in the shower scene of Hitchcock." In addition to an "unironic" usage of language, we cannot but notice cruelty in this sort of vocabulary. The narrator acknowledges the suffering but fails to understand it. His language treats the suffering either as a matter-of-fact, taxonomic description or a Hitchcockian, entertaining "special effect."

We should further notice the use of italics here. They either occur as jargon like "arthropodae," a pop-culture reference like "special effects," or a direct description in the narrator's unique vocabulary like "insanely frightened." It seems that Wallace is helping the readers to recognize the narrator's fixation on his "final vocabulary." This is what Rorty criticizes in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. The narrator fails to recognize the contingency of language, embraces ironism, and has no solidarity with his mother. A more radical interpretation can be taken as the mother's "chronic mask" is not physically caused by the botched surgery but a literalization of her phobia upon her face. The narrator cannot comprehend his mother's fear of the black widows, and he cannot comprehend that the child dies of his negligence. Rorty comments as follows: "works of fiction which exhibit the blindness of a certain kind of person to the pain of another kind of person." Wallace seems to be directly echoing Rorty here: it is the blindness of the narrator and the fixation on his "final vocabulary" that results in cruelty. Rorty argues that a novelist and an ironist are very concerned about cruelty. As mentioned, public redescription is cruel as it forces another person to change their way of talking. The artist, fully absorbed in art, is unaware of their surroundings and can easily hurt others. Therefore, to avoid being a public ironist, Rorty advocates for the adoption of a public liberal and private ironist stance. Artists often communicate the awareness of cruelty in their art.

Rorty's ethical stance can also be observed in this regard. In Rorty's rejection of metaphysical realism and truth, he is eager to search for a method that replaces this system that maintains human solidarity. He specifically criticized Kant's categorical imperative, claiming it cannot oblige one to behave ethically. With or without the imperative, we would treat others more or less the same. Rorty argues that private redescription can serve the function of human solidarity. Instead of engaging in grand metaphysical narratives, we should avoid the cause of pain or cruelty. This avoidance of cruelty is what makes literary works special, as it allows us to see the pain or feel the cruelty. Solidarity is formed when one reads the same story and tells the same story. In Wallace's story, cruelty is inflicted by the narrator, and he cannot "mak[e] sure that he *notices* suffering when it occurs." "Notice" is the keyword. Rorty invites us to "notice" the cruelty when it occurs, not deductively reject the cruelty or make a normative claim. Rorty only asks us to notice the cruelty. Rorty argues that we could avoid cruelty by only noticing it since notice allows for "imaginative identification" in place of "a specifically moral motivation." "In other words, a re-description allows for the creation of an empathy that allows us to understand the contingent causes for another person's suffering, rather than responding with Kantian-like imperatives that don't require much human conversation to resolve a moral dilemma, or how to respond to a cry for help" (Vazquez).

Wallace also explores another side of redescription, that is, redescription in the public sphere. Rorty's states that "redescription often humiliates." By redescribing her mother's suffering, the narrator distances himself from the cruelty and fails to notice it. His reaction toward the death of the child tells the same story. He blames the child, arguing "that if he had not been up fiddling around on the roof of someone else's garage there is no way he could have come in contact with [the spiders] in any form." Rorty asks his reader to consider the pragmatic question: "what purpose does this book serve?" The answer is clear: Wallace's story depicts the narrator's fixation on vocabulary and its role in our failure to notice cruelty.

For both Rorty and Wallace, cruelty is the failure to notice the pain, either caused by physical damage or metaphorical insistence on a set of vocabulary. Human solidarity, ways in which we can connect and understand each other, cannot be achieved due to the cruelty. Wallace's short story can be seen as implementing the Rortian project in the realm of literature to help the readers "notice" cruelty. The end goal of this project, for Rorty, is to maintain human solidarity in the absence of metaphysics and normative ethics. His answer is to reduce "them-s" and increase "us-s." Rather than relativism or moral nihilism, Rorty is constructing a new way of talking that allows us to rebuild solidarity when the grand narratives are deconstructed. Literature, for both Rorty and Wallace, is able to take on this task because it is filled with private idiosyncrasy, helps the reader to notice cruelty, and unifies its readers by

inventing new ways of talking. Literary criticism is also valuable because every new interpretation of the story is a redescription, a creation of new vocabulary. The redescription component of literary works allows solidarity among mankind. In this sense, philosophy and metaphysics should resemble literature; they should embrace the literary way of doing philosophy, accepting ironism.

Conclusion: Take on Rorty's Task, Envisioning an Articized Philosophy

It would be hard not to notice that this paper takes a chronological approach from Kant (German Idealism) to Heidegger (Phenomenology) and to Rorty (neo-pragmatic). Interestingly, the selection of these philosophers also coincides with Rorty's analysis of the progression of philosophy: from metaphysics to irony theory and to ironism. Further, we can see that each school of philosophers is trying to approach the connection between art and philosophy differently: Kant and Bergson try to establish a necessary and universal connection between the two, Heidegger attempts to use art as a remedy to metaphysics, whereas Rorty sees art as the next step in philosophy.

Reflect on the three objectives. One, establish the legitimacy of the artistic mode of inquiry by demonstrating that the content and method of inquiry are similar. This is demonstrated in the Transcendental analysis section. Kant argues for the *synthetic a priori* judgment that renders metaphysics possible, and Bergson argues that the artist's intuition in time and space allows for envisioning the artwork pre-experience yet produces in a way that accommodates passion. The two both reveal Truth in reality, the truth that is obscured by senses and language. This is why the section titled transcendental analysis: art and metaphysics allows us to go beyond the experience and search for the Truth. There is one problem that remains: how is it possible that the two are able to produce Truth, though it is pointed to the intuition that the problem of "how" remains. The second section of the phenomenological analysis answers this question. Heidegger seeks to describe the artistic mode of inquiry in as detail as possible. In Heidegger's argument, the artwork is not the same as the metaphysical mode of inquiry; it is complementary to metaphysics. The means to produce knowledge is presented as a conflict between the world and earth. The poetics in the artwork is able to bring forth the truth that it is not possible to set forth in metaphysics. Hence, art is essential to philosophical inquiry because it adds to the unconcealment of Being in Heidegger's project. There is still a problem left off by Heidegger. Though he criticized traditional metaphysics and called for a poetic philosophy, Heidegger inevitably falls into what he criticized. Art, for him, is not a philosophical step to take but a tool that completes his metaphysics. This is only resolved by Rorty's theory on the irony that treats literature as the next step to philosophy. The articized philosophy is created: philosophy should not be a grand argument regarding the Truth of Being or special temporal intuition, it should be a private

dialogue between different ideas, full of idiosyncrasy. There is still a problem to resolve here. Though Rorty has envisioned artcized philosophy, his rejection of truth/Truth does not seem to serve as a strong basis for his argument. He rejects the metaphysical Truth, which is adequate for his argument. Yet, he also rejects truth in a normal, non-philosophical sense. Namely, if I say it is raining. We can check if it is indeed raining. If it is, I am telling the truth. There seems to be no need to reject this kind of truth for his project. One can go as far as to make the argument that truth itself is private and idiosyncratic. This can be a stronger justification for the artcized philosophy. This paper has accomplished the three objectives that it set out to do.

Yet, there is still more to accomplish along the same vein as Richard Rorty. He suggests that philosophical works would become more like literature and avoid public and grand claims and focusing on private dialogue. He even demonstrates how this is possible by using the example of Derrida. His own work also seems to be a reflection of this. However, how can we move forward? How can a philosopher write about the philosophy of mind, language, or science in this way? These traditional metaphysical realms need a Rortian “re-description” that allows for the artcized philosophy to take place. There is another question to resolve here. This paper has to devote a large amount of literary analysis regarding the forms of different works: the devices in novels, short stories, and poetry. It would be interesting to ask the question: what exactly is the connection between the artistic content and forms? So far, each of the works seems to answer this question differently. Proust uses “signs” that evoke emotions. This is different in Oppen’s case, who uses conflict and poetic dialectics to present the dilemma in modern life. Lastly, Wallace uses an insincere narrative voice that alienates the reader and the speaker, causing an ironic feeling. It is hard to pinpoint what is common among them, but they are able to produce philosophical content.

This paper concludes that the connection between philosophy and art is that of dependency. The two share their mode of inquiry. The two supply each other with content. The two depend on each other to generate knowledge.

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