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HOW CAN A RORTYAN VIEW OF MORAL IMAGINATION HELP TEACH SOLIDARITY?

By

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A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta for the degree of Master in Teaching and Learning in Ethics Education.

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Abstract

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Title: **How can a Rortyan view of Moral Imagination help teach Solidarity?**

As a neo-pragmatist, Rorty regards philosophy as a conversational and social practice. He argues that morality is based on sentiment rather than reason and believes that the essence of moral philosophy lies in human solidarity. According to Rorty, moral development can only be attained if communities exhibit solidarity. Therefore, he places greater importance on literary culture over philosophical culture, valuing narratives over theory. Rorty firmly believes that narratives can potentially reduce cruelty and hardship in societies and foster moral sensitivity and progress. This dissertation examines Rorty's perspective on solidarity as portrayed in his book *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989) and delves into its role, alongside moral imagination, in promoting social and moral progress. The moral imagination enables individuals to empathise with the pain and suffering of others. When people recognize that pain and humiliation are shared experiences among all beings, it becomes easier to overlook differences. Drawing upon Rorty's ideas on solidarity, this investigation explores crucial aspects of this core value, its significance, and how it can be effectively employed in an Ethics class.

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Richard Rorty - Solidarity - Moral Imagination- Moral Progress- Ethics Education - Narratives

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Abbreviations

CRE	Catholic Religious Education
DQSE	Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
EEP	Ethics Education Programme
LAPs	Learning Assessment Programme
LOFs	Learning Outcomes Framework
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
P4C	Philosophy for Children

Books by Richard Rorty

CIS	Contingency, Irony and Solidarity
PCP	Philosophy as Cultural Politics
PMN	Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature
PSH	Philosophy and Social Hope
TWO	Trotsky and the Wild Orchids

INTRODUCTION

As an introverted child, I did not particularly enjoy social events and found it challenging to make friends. I took solace in spending time alone, often immersing myself in a vast collection of books. Within the pages of those books, I found a sense of belonging, as I could become anyone and experience anything through the stories I read. Initially, I saw my passion for stories as a means of escaping my mundane reality. However, upon reflection, I realise that my reading experiences offered more than mere escapism. They helped mould my perspective, not only on myself but also on others and the world around me. I believe these narratives imparted valuable lessons that guided me, particularly when facing difficult decisions. Am I implying that there is an underlying power within the narratives we encounter in life? Is this power capable of leading us towards goodness? While this idea holds merit, it warrants further reflection.

As I looked to determine the focus of my research inquiry, this question kept resurfacing in my mind. It became evident that I wanted to investigate the impact of stories concerning moral and ethical thinking. Nevertheless, I was uncertain how to approach this topic within the philosophical and educational realm. Professor Wain recommended Richard Rorty, a philosopher known for his thought-provoking and, to a certain extent, radical ideas in ethical and political thought.

I encountered Rorty's philosophy of solidarity for the first time when I started reading his book *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989). In Malta, solidarity holds significant importance as a core value in education, and it is explicitly mentioned as one of the primary objectives in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2012). As I explored this concept from Rorty's perspective, I realised his insights could

significantly contribute to education, especially ethics education. This intrigued me further when I discovered that Rorty's solidarity project is grounded in the notions of moral imagination, described as "the ability to see people as fellow sufferers'' (1989, p.xvi) and the pivotal role of narratives in fostering moral progress. Consequently, I have embarked on a philosophical journey to explore the concept of solidarity as presented by Rorty in his work *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989) and to answer the question: "How can a Rortyan view of Moral Imagination help teach Solidarity?" The goal is to examine Rorty's thoughts about imagination and how this fosters solidarity as a means for moral progress. Moreover, through this research, I want to determine if his notions could influence or potentially benefit education, especially in the ethics classroom.

One aspect of Rorty that I find intriguing is his rejection of conventional philosophical methodologies to favour a pragmatic approach. As per Bernstein & Voparil (2010), Rorty favours the pragmatist worldview because it shifts the focus from arguably less impactful questions, such as 'what is real' or 'what is right,' to more useful ones that can extend the 'conversation'—a term he uses to redefine philosophy. This shift in focus is important because these practical questions make 'communication possible' (Bernstein & Voparil, 2010, p.13). Chapter I provides a brief overview of Rorty's philosophical journey and his pragmatic perspectives. It elucidates how and why his views transition from a quest for knowledge as an accurate depiction to understanding knowledge as a product of conversation and social practice.

This chapter will explore Rorty's perspectives on morality. What are Rorty's views on morality without the guidance of foundational moral principles? What insight does his concept of the 're-descriptive contingent language game' provide about his ethical stance? Rorty (1989) rejected the idea of moral foundations and any divine voice or divine self, proposing that morality is a contingent element of language, selfhood, and community. Consequently, he considered morality a social experiment influenced by time and chance.

Rorty speaks about contingency and its impact on our thought processes and behaviours, particularly those related to morality - a clear reflection of Dewey's influence on his work. However, Chapter I will also delve into several ideas from Rorty that do not directly stem from Dewey. It will briefly describe the concept of the private-public split, illustrates the creation of a significant character he terms the 'liberal ironist,' and explores his unique perspective on literature and literary criticism for moral progress.

Chapter II, titled *On Solidarity*, continues the conversation by focusing on public morality and how it can be achieved for social progress and democracy. Rorty (1989) focuses on redescriptions and narratives, which are more considerate towards pluralistic, diverse and historical perspectives. Fruitless philosophical disputes for him can be settled by creating new vocabularies. This is done through redescriptions and persuading others to take up new vocabularies. He states, "What matters is our loyalty to other human beings... and not of our hope of getting things right" (Bernstein & Voparil, 2010, p.115). According to Macarthur (2020), this type of redescription for Rorty reframes the conversation so that individuals are not just

spectators but significant participants. Thus, this participation requires searching for agreement and suitable mediation with others for a substantial democratic end.

Chapter II discusses the narrative's essential nature in shaping and promoting cultural exchange and pluralism. It brings us face-to-face with diversity and the unknown, even strangers and strange things. Narratives make us aware of the problems that our dominant cultural narratives and ideologies possess and thus assist us in challenging these for better cultural institutions and a better future with less pain and suffering. "Inspirational literature" and "inspired reading", according to Rorty (1998), "make people think there is more to this life than they ever imagined" (as cited in Hart, 2011, p.40). This, Rorty contends, leads to a better understanding of the world and a more tolerant and pluralistic society

The third chapter, *On Moral Imagination*, starts with a brief philosophical analysis of imagination and how it influences ethical thinking and decision-making. This chapter highlights potential influences on Rorty's philosophical developments on imagination. It then delves into Rorty's views on solidarity that cannot be discovered but created through the power of moral imagination. He says, "I think (Moral Imagination) is a matter of picturing ourselves in the shoes of others" (Rorty, 2006, p.413). Rorty puts pain and humiliation as the common factor shared among every being; thus, these have to be what we look at and reflect on in the narratives we experience. He argues that we should forget insignificant differences like race, gender and ethnicity.

This sets the stage for the dissertation's final chapter, titled *For Education*, where we delve into Rorty's idea of 'Sentimental Education' and his firm belief that an education rich in narratives—stories that reflect different perspectives and experiences—can reduce cruelty and hardship in societies. Chapter IV explores his ideas in the context of education and illuminates why Rorty's solidarity project is a vital element for our education. In particular, in the ethics class, which aims to foster a community that acknowledges and celebrates the richness of human diversity and plurality.

CHAPTER I

RORTY’S PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNEY

1.1 The Search for the Single Vision

Rorty's philosophical interest in bringing social justice and freedom together is described in his autobiography *Trotsky and the Wild Orchids* (*TWO*, 1999). In *TWO*, Rorty describes himself as a 12-year-old child in a Trotskyite family. At that tender age, he learnt that the most important thing in being human is to spend one's life fighting against social injustice. At the same time, he found that he had another interest, but unlike justice, this was private because it was only important to him - wild orchids. With his interest in justice on the one hand and private self-fulfilment on the other, Rorty tried to find a way to infuse these two goals together in a single vision. To do so, he plunged into Plato's philosophy but failed to find what he sought.

Engaging with various philosophers and philosophies made him doubt justifications in traditional philosophy. So he took a detour through Hegel and Proust, who attracted him because of the 'anti-Platonic elements in their work' (Rorty, 1999). Rediscovering Dewey, encountering Derrida and going back to Heidegger, Rorty put together the loose threads in his thinking by detecting similarities in their philosophies and fitting them all together to create "a quasi-Heideggarian story about the tensions within Platonism" (Rorty, 1999, p.12). This story was narrated in his first significant and controversial work, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (*PMN* 1980).

In this book, Rorty (1980) questions the claims of traditional philosophy. His attacks are on these three linked domains- mind, knowledge and philosophy. He criticises its epistemological approach, which he refers to as foundationalist. He describes its failures and unreliable claims (about the possibility of absolute truth, objectivity, and

certain knowledge), including its most recent version, analytic philosophy, and the image of philosophy they have created.

From Plato to Kant, Rorty gives a detailed historical account of how such perennial traditional philosophical problems became the central focus of philosophy and the basis for most philosophers' thinking. McGuinness (1997) notes how Rorty's historical venture shows readers that traditional philosophical questions are problematic, useless and optional. Correspondingly, Malachowski (2014) asserts that Rorty finds these 'problematic' and 'useless' because they amount to nothing and depend on representational assumptions of the mind. They are 'optional' because they are not determined by reason but rather by 'time and chance'- contingent socio-historical factors.

1.2 The Deception of a Single Vision

Even after the success of *PMN*, Rorty (1980) did not manage to find a way of "holding reality and justice in a single vision" (p.7), an endeavour he took up in his youth that got him into philosophy, with the hope of finding his answers there. The only way Rorty managed to get past this single vision that had haunted him for so long was to accept that it could not be done. Justice and reality cannot, he decided, be put together in a single vision. In *TWO*, Rorty (1999) maintains that this project had led him off track. His next step was understanding how an intellectual life would pan out without putting reality and justice together but holding them in separate realms instead. This led to his next creation - *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (*CIS*, 1989).

1.3 Contingency

In the introduction to *CIS*, Rorty (1989) wastes no time explaining why he rejects the ideas of "a common human nature" and "- that the springs of private fulfilment and of human solidarity are the same" (p.xiii). He joins with thinkers who reject these views, including Nietzsche, Hegel and Dewey, who, according to Rorty, have played an important role in accentuating the problems with theology and metaphysics and their impulse to avoid 'time and chance'. Rorty argues that this "has helped us substitute Freedom for Truth as the goal of thinking and of social progress" (Rorty, 1989, p.xiii).

In the modern metaphysical, philosophical tradition, "Metaphysics -in the sense of a search for theories which will get at real essence" (Rorty, 1989, p.88), he underscores that the Cartesian socialisation is seen "as antithetical to something deep within us" (p.xiii). Historicists, conversely, "insist that socialization, and thus historical circumstance, goes all the way down - that there is nothing 'beneath' socialization or prior to history which is definatory of the human" (p.xiii). There is no 'real', 'essential self' to contrast with the 'social self'.

Such historicists, for Rorty, can be divided into two distinct and irreconcilable thinkers. Though they speak the same language as historicists, they are driven by different aspirations (Topper, 1995). On one side, some prioritise private autonomy and self-creation, like Nietzsche and Heidegger. Conversely, there are those inclined toward a just and free society, such as Dewey, Rawls and Habermas. The latter see the quest for "private perfection as infected with 'irrationalism' and 'aestheticism'" (Rorty, 1989, p.xiv). Rorty urges us to give equal importance to the private and the

public spheres and to keep in mind that these two can never be joined together in a single project. The main aim of *CIS* (1989), he says, is

> to show how things look if we drop the demand for theory, which unifies the public and the private, and are content to treat demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable. (p.xv)

Rorty presents his reader with a historicist view that everything in life is a consequence or is influenced by time and chance. He discusses three areas significantly affected by time and chance- language, selfhood and community.

1.3.1 The Contingency of Language

Why is language so important? Rorty (1999) maintains that reality cannot be understood without a linguistic description, so he asserts that the Greek distinctions of appearance versus reality are suspicious. As he explains in *Philosophy for Social Hope* (henceforth *PSH*, 1999), the distinction should be between the "less useful description of the world and the more useful description of the world" (p48). More useful descriptions are needed because language is created through socio-historical forces and thus emphasises the point that language is a human creation and not something out there ready to be discovered.

Rorty (1989) reminds his reader of his pragmatic and anti-essentialist stance by renouncing the traditional ideas of truth, knowledge and 'the world' as "deep matter(s), ... of philosophical interest" (p.8). He highlights the difference between knowing things and using them instead and maintains that utility should be the

focus of the inquiry and not truth. He takes Wittgenstein's and Davidson's position of language as a tool to help us 'cope' with the world and not 'represent' it. It is not to be used as a medium but as a guide to asking the right questions - questions that look into whether the tools are "inefficient, (and) not... about whether our beliefs are contradictory" (Rorty, 1989, p.12)

If, as he claims, language is a product of 'time and chance' and, therefore, socially constructed, it is susceptible to change. Rorty makes a crucial remark here - the need for 'imagination' more than 'reason' to make this change in vocabulary a significant one. Malachowski (2014) notes that Rorty's philosophical change requires substituting arguments and rational deliberation for images and metaphors.

Creating compelling and attractive new metaphors puts individuals in a better position to influence others by using and creating a different language rather than trying to rationalise immutable definite arguments. Hence Rorty's appreciation and appraisals of poets who, he believes, should be the 'principal agents' for social change and his high regard for philosophers like Heidegger and Derrida, whose attractive and exotic metaphors contrast and contradict those of analytic philosophers.

1.3.2 The Contingency of Selfhood

Rorty's pragmatist stance goes against the traditional belief that there is an essence that belongs and is common to human nature. In this section of *CIS*, Rorty (1989) presents different issues about selfhood through a discussion that pays no attention

to the traditional stodgy questions, like 'What is to be a human being?' Instead, he starts his discussion by reflecting on the poem 'Continuing to Live' by Philip Larkin.

At first glance, Rorty (1989) seems to be discussing Larkin's fears about his work not being distinctive enough and the effect this would have on one's creation and identity if he finds out his life is a "copy or a replica" of others (p.24). He states that Larkin seems to be in search of a "blind impress" that can be applied to all human beings and not "only to one man once" (p.26). Rorty's discussion takes a turn at the poem's end when Larkin writes that it is 'hardly satisfying' to try and find one's distinctiveness- one's individuality, instead. What Rorty (1989) wants to accentuate here is not Larkin's doubt about his life's work but rather the "quarrel between poetry and philosophy, the tension between the effort to achieve self-creation by the recognition of contingency and an effort to achieve universality by the transcendence of contingency" (p25). This acts as a springboard for Rorty to introduce two influential thinkers, Nietzsche and Freud, who helped him further construct his views on selfhood.

Nietzsche and the Mobile Army of Metaphors

Nietzsche is the first to suggest abandoning the idea of truth and forgetting about finding "a single context for all human lives" (Rorty, 1989, p.27). Nietzsche defines *truth* as a "mobile army of metaphors" (p.27), meaning that there is no one true or timeless description we can find out there (or in here). Rorty discusses Nietzsche's thought and how he rejected the idea of discovery and instead believed that self-knowledge is a path that leads to self-creation and not truth. He takes up Nietzsche's views and his process of getting to know oneself - which involves facing

one's contingency, inventing a new language, and using new metaphors. Like Nietzsche, Rorty says that if she fails to create new metaphors and uses a 'copy or replicates' others' descriptions, she would have failed as a human being.

Freud and the De-divinised Self

Freud plays a vital role in Rorty's thinking about selfhood. Rorty is intrigued by how Freud alters the perception of human nature from that of Plato, Kant and even Nietzsche. He believes that Freud's conversation about the self is not just more exciting but useful. Freud de-universalises the moral consciousness by showing that it is "historically conditioned, a product as much of time and chance as of political or aesthetic consciousness" (Rorty, 1989, p.30). He paints a picture of the self as not a system of faculties but rather a web-like structure of contingencies that can adapt and be rewoven according to circumstance and past experiences. Like Nietzsche, Freud, too, has no intention of looking for a common human nature or a fixed sense of self.

Contrary to Nietzsche, though, Freud does not degrade humans to the level of dying animals because he believes that every individual, even the ones who seem dull on the outside, have an unconscious fantasy they use. Every individual can create her metaphors through fantasy because of this 'creative unconscious' (Rorty, 1989). Unlike the Romantics, Freud's imagination is not a faculty of expression but a faculty of creation. Such fantasies may become common and thus are picked up and used among the members of society- creating new ideas and views that can lead to progress. Others may remain too eccentric or perverse ideas for society. However,

according to Freud, they are still vital on an individual level since they are needed to get to know and create oneself.

1.3.3 The Contingency of a Liberal Community

Since language and self-creation are contingent, Rorty argues that so are the liberal communities we create and live in. In his view, a liberal society is only possible if the members hold contingency at the centre of their vocabularies and descriptions, as well as their consciences and beliefs (Marchetti, 2021). Thus he claims that such communities need to detach from foundational and universal vocabularies for new and better descriptions of democratic hope. Rorty (1989) states that a critical vocabulary which revolves around notions like 'rational', 'criteria', 'argument' 'foundation' and 'absolute' is badly suited to describe the relation between the old and the new" (p.49)... and therefore a "...liberal culture needs an improved self-description rather than a set of foundations" (p.52).

Though the Enlightenment was needed to introduce liberal democracy, Rorty (1989) suggests that it has now become "an impediment to the preservation and progress of democratic societies" (p.44). He speaks highly of philosophers, including Dewey, Oakeshott and Rawls, who have helped to diminish the attraction of 'philosophical foundations' of liberalism by trying to strengthen liberal institutions. Rorty believes that the activities of these and other philosophers have managed to re-describe political liberalism (Marchetti, 2021). Their pragmatic stance is contrary to Enlightenment rationalism, and thus in Rorty's (1989), language "can serve as the vocabulary of a mature (de-scientized, de-philosophised) Enlightenment liberalism" (p.57).

So what does the ideal liberal society look like to Rorty? He gives us a detailed account of his liberal society when he writes in *CIS* (1989):

> A liberal society is one whose ideals can be fulfilled by persuasion rather than force, by reform rather than revolution, and by the free and open encounters of present linguistic and other practices with suggestions for new practices. But this is to say that an ideal liberal society is one which has no purpose except freedom, no goal except a willingness to see how such encounters go and to abide by the outcome. It has no purpose except to make life easier for poets and revolutionaries while seeing to it that they make life harder for others only by words, and not deeds. It is a society whose hero is the strong poet and the revolutionary because it recognises that it is what it is, has the morality it has, speaks the language it does, not because it approximates the will of God or the nature of man but because certain poets and revolutionaries of the past spoke as they did. (pp60-61)

An important point here is the responsibility Rorty puts on the backs of strong poets and utopian revolutionaries. These individuals are, for him, the heroes of a liberal society, and such a society cannot be created without them. They are part of society, but at the same time, they are the ones most 'alienated' from it because they have to carry the burden of speaking or, instead, in Rorty's (1989) words, "protesting in the name of humanity against arbitrary and inhuman social restrictions" (p.60). These individuals are significant in Rorty's conversation, especially their connection to building a better society. They represent the ideal citizens of Rorty's (1989) liberal utopia- citizens he calls 'liberal ironists', as he explains,

> I borrow my definition of "liberal" from Judith Shklar, who says that liberals are the people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we do. I use "ironist" to name the sort of person who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires —someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the idea that those central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance. (p.xv)

As such citizens, Rorty (1989) remarks, they must have "a sense of the contingency of their language of moral deliberation, and thus of their consciences, and thus of their community" (p.61). Before exploring the liberal ironist in more detail, it is necessary to examine Rorty's views on morality and his intention with the language of moral deliberation.

1.4 Rorty's Ethics

As discussed earlier, Rorty rejects the idea of an essential feature common to all human beings. Much like Dewey, Rorty is influenced by Darwinism and Historicism, which is why he emphasises the sociological and historical contingency of the self. This Darwinian move aligns Rorty's with Dewyan's views of morality and, thus, closer to a social morality against individualistic Kantian ethics.

Freud is described by Rorty (1989) as "the moralist who helped de-divinise the self" (p.30). To emphasise this point, Rorty compares Freud and Kant, the latter of whom views moral consciousness as timeless and immune to random occurrences. Kant splits moral deliberation into reason, universal and common to all humans, and a

second inferior faculty led by passions and desires. He does not confine moral actions to a single central faculty but instead uses reason as an instrument to modulate and alter various circumstances. Freud challenges these widely accepted moral philosophy viewpoints, particularly Kant's description of morality and prudence.

1.4.1 The Moral and Prudence Distinction

Inspired by Freud and following Dewey's footsteps, Rorty opposes the separation between morality and prudence. This distinction conflicts with his beliefs of Darwinian naturalism as it cannot determine a point in the course of human evolution when humans put an end to acting prudentially and started acting morally. In his essay *Ethics without Principles,* embracing Dewey and Baier's thought, Rorty (1999) speaks about prudential actions as instinctive, requiring no introspection because they are inherent to human nature. These actions tend to target individuals with whom we share a connection. On the other hand, moral issues usually arise when there is conflict; thereby, decisions must be made because one cannot do things naturally in such circumstances. Rorty (1999) explains:

> "Prudence", "expediency", and "efficiency" are all terms which describe... routine and uncontroversial adjustments to circumstance... Morality and law, on the other hand, begin when controversy arises. We invent both when we can no longer just do what comes naturally, when routine is no longer good enough, or when habit and custom no longer suffice. These will no longer suffice when the individual's views begins to clash with those of her family, or her family's with those of the neighbors', or when economic strain begins to

> split her community into warring classes, or when that community must come to terms with an alien community. (p.73)

Rorty's argument, which is in common with other moral and legal philosophers, including Hegel and Baier, is that moral principles should be used as guiding principles, 'reminders' and not 'justifications', particularly when loyalties and commitments are jeopardised, hence why Rorty embraces Oakeshott's definition of morality. He conceptualises morality not as a divine command but as a collective voice representing us as "members of a community, speakers of a common language" (Rorty, 1989, p.59). This detail is crucial because it demonstrates that even though Rorty significantly decreases the importance of moral principles, he does not discard them completely but finds a way to utilise them in a contingent social context.

1.4.2 Reason and Sentiment Distinction

The roles that reason and emotion play in morality have been the subject of numerous philosophical conflicts and debates. Akin to Hume, Rorty believes morality is not a product of rationality but of sentiments. In *Ethics without Principles* (1999), Rorty discusses Baier, a feminist philosopher, who centres her philosophy on Hume's sentimentality and criticises Kant's perspective on moral obligation, much like Dewey and Hume. She argues that 'appropriate trust' should be considered the central moral concept, not 'obligations'. Critical of traditional views, all three philosophers argue that conventional philosophy depicts a picture of a psychopathic, individualistic person entirely disconnected from others. As Rorty (1999) describes, it appears like a "psychopath needing to be constrained to take account of other people's needs" (p.77). Both Baier and Dewey assert the necessity of reimagining this

self-concept; without such a transformation, the question, 'Why should I be moral?' remains unanswerable.

In Ethics without Principles (1999), Rorty supports Dewey's concept of selfhood, stating that it is "in (the) process of making and that any self is capable of including within itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonised dispositions" (pp.77–78). This perspective allows Rorty to draw connections between Dewey and Freud, mainly through Baier's emphasis on the role of the family and maternal love in particular. Baier, echoing Hume's views on human nature, argues that trust in the family is vital for a society to create people for whom caring for others comes naturally. Conversely, a lack of trust would create such said psychopaths. This trust, for Baier, is the secular faith that holds post-traditional societies together (Rorty, 1999). Rorty perceives a connection to Freud's analyses of individuals who exhibit psychopathic traits. Freud suggests that individuals raised without sufficient care, attachment, and love during childhood tend to develop into adults who lack empathy and care for others.

This line of thought aligns with the arguments presented by notable philosophers like Slote and Noddings regarding the ethics of care and its focus on relationships. In his book, *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* (2007), Slote, much like Rorty, challenges traditional ethical frameworks, arguing that the ethics of care can offer a comprehensive perspective on morality. He underscores how the ethics of care is more influential in particular topics such as social justice, respect and autonomy than what current Kantian theories present. The ethics of care shifts the moral focus towards fostering robust relationships that cultivate an ethical ideal, promoting a more just society.

Likewise, Noddings argues that Ethics in a patriarchal society are too universal and rational. Regrettably, this universality and rationality tend to exclude and marginalise individuals deemed different or inferior and fail to consider ethical situations from diverse perspectives, such as those of women (Bergman, 2004). As per Noddings, the ethics of care are grounded in personal experiences and relationships with others, leading to judgements on ethical decisions that are specific to the situation rather than universally applicable.

As discussed, a Rortyan perspective of morality moves away from the Platonic notion of the Good, True or Beautiful. It ignores the belief in a God who tells us what to do or what not to do. It rejects the concept of a fixed human nature that decides what true happiness should be. Furthermore, it also goes against a Kantian categorical imperative that uses reason to dictate our obligations.

Instead, Rorty encourages a dialogue where we question ourselves and our environment to determine the most appropriate action. It is crucial to consider our specific circumstances, including our historical and cultural context, to understand our identities better and cultivate improved societal conditions where solidarity can thrive. Therefore, for Rorty (1999), morality has nothing to do with enhancing rationality or intelligence, as Dewey suggests. Instead, moral progress is achievable only through heightened sensitivity, "increasing responsiveness to the needs of a larger and larger variety of people and things… a matter of being able to respond to the needs of ever more inclusive groups of people" (p.81). Rorty believes that moral progress is only possible with the extension of solidarity.

1.5 The Ironist's Private Morality

In Rorty's (1989) terminology, a person's 'final vocabulary' refers to "a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives… words in which we tell… the story of our lives" (p.73). In *CIS,* Rorty (1989) elucidates how private morality is best created by 'ironists'. These individuals perceive their beliefs, even those dearest and fundamental ones, as contingent, i.e., perpetually fallible. To qualify as an ironist, according to Rorty (1989), an individual must embody three distinct characteristics:

> …(1) radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses because she has been impressed by other vocabularies…(2) realises that arguments phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwire nor dissolve these doubts… (3) she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself (p.73).

In *CIS,* chapter four, Rorty (1989) introduces two categories with that of the ironist that, for him, represent society. The first is the 'common sensists' - those who oppose ironists because they refrain from questioning. Rorty (1989) explains that these individuals "unselfconsciously describe everything important in terms of the final vocabulary to which they and those around them are habituated" (p.74). Then there are the 'Metaphysicians', who pose questions but remain tethered to common sense. They contrast with ironists because they do not 're-describe' existing narratives; instead, they 'analyse' established ones in search of fundamental, absolute truths.

1.5.1 Literary Criticism as a Moral Advisor

The ironist is not searching for certainties because these do not exist for her. Rorty presents her as a nominalist and a historicist. She is never satisfied with her vocabulary; therefore, she is always looking for a better vocabulary making her a creator rather than a discoverer. She understands that descriptions of herself are always subject to change. What she creates is unique and belongs only to her. She is revising her own moral identity by rescripting her final vocabulary. Rorty (1989) continues to describe the ironist as a "dialectical" (p.78) thinker, as her methods are to re-describe and not to infer propositions from others.

Ironists experiment and compare with others' vocabularies to re-describe their best selves. Rorty (1989) identifies this with Hegel's "dialectic", which he describes as an "attempt to play off vocabularies against one another…" (p.78). Koopman (2020), in his essay *The Uses of Philosophy after the Collapse of Metaphysics*, argues that through his explanation of the dialectic approach, Rorty compromises expectations of finality for the ironist. The final vocabulary is not the one that will answer all the questions, and it is not the one that "satisfies our criteria of ultimacy, or adequacy, or optimality" (Rorty, 1989, p.75). Unlike the metaphysician, the ironist does not categorise; instead, she takes all the writings of people who were good at redescription and mixes it in her ever-growing dialectical encyclopaedia. This dialectical approach is thus the 'principle activity' that ironists must do to continue re-describing themselves and ultimately become strong poets.

Rorty's up-to-date- term to replace 'dialectic' is 'literary criticism', in which he sees a literary skill rather than an argumentative procedure. In *CIS*, Rorty (1989) discusses

the importance of literary criticism as it serves as the moral adviser for ironists. The more books an ironist reads, the more she will learn about other final vocabularies. Thus, she is in a better position to be suspicious of and question the final vocabularies that claim to be supreme. In *CIS,* Rorty (1989) writes

> Literary criticism does for ironists what the search for universal moral principles is supposed to do for metaphysicians... Ironists read literary critics and take them as moral advisers simply because such critics have an exceptionally large range of acquaintances (p.80).

1.5.2 On Liberal Ironists, Anti-liberal Ironists and Strong Poets.

In the first three chapters of *CIS*, Rorty (1989) introduces an irony befitting a liberal society since he believes irony is essential to buttress the liberal desire to circumvent cruelty and humiliation. However, in chapter four, Rorty (1989) presents a contrasting private ironist who is radical and persistently challenges existing vocabularies to develop new re-descriptions utilised solely for personal perfection. Rorty has been criticised for presenting two contradictory senses of irony in *CIS*. Voparil and Curtis suggest considering these distinctions when addressing the ironist in Rorty's works.

Liberal Ironists

In his book *Defending Rorty,* Curtis (2015) contends that Rorty "unintentionally suggests and merges two different and contrasting forms of irony" (p.93). The first form of irony, which he refers to as 'liberal irony' for clarity, is depicted as a crucial virtue that all liberal citizens could, and should, embody.

While Rorty favours this liberal form of irony, he suggests that individuals can embrace one form without necessarily adopting the other. The liberal ironist is not interested in destroying or eliminating metaphysics but rather in fostering a culture where metaphysics does not cause unnecessary harm. As Rorty (1989) states, liberal ironists and thinkers such as Dewey, Mill, Habermas, and Rawls are focused on creating "a more just and free human community" (p.xvi). This form of irony can be cultivated through critical historical analysis and embracing ethical pluralism.

Curtis (2015) posits that this kind of ironism demands "critical open-mindedness... a complex cognitive and emotional capacity that enables citizens to maintain the disposition of fallibilist balance" (p.96) and is best interpreted as "ethical and political adaptability" (p.97). The personal pursuit of autonomy is less important to liberal ironists, whose primary aim is "a shared social effort - the effort to make our institutions and practices more just and less cruel" (Rorty, 1989, p.xiv). Pluralistic societies allow individuals to adjust and adapt to different beliefs and practices. Therefore, individuals are more inclined to modify their vocabularies to suit their diverse surroundings.

Anti-liberal Ironists

Curtis (2015) contrasts the liberal ironist with the second type of ironist, whom he describes as "an intellectually restless, seemingly neurotic character" driven to "challenge and transform her ultimate vocabulary" (p.95). This kind of ironist, dubbed the anti-liberal ironist, strives to become a 'strong poet' through redescription.

Important figures in this category for Rorty (1989) include Nietzsche, Foucault, and Heidegger, as their primary focus lies in "the desire for self-creation, for private autonomy" (xiii). They are deemed 'anti-liberal' due to their frequent critique and suspicion of the socialization process, making them more prone to "irrationalism and aestheticism" (Rorty, 1989, xv). As a result, this form of irony is considered less applicable to public use. Moreover, according to Topper (1995), Rorty is cautious of this irony. If such redescription were applied in the public sphere, it could be "useless and dangerous" (p.68).

Strong Poets

Similarly, Wain (1993, 2007, 2017) notes the delineation between the private realm of the ironist poet and the publicly engaged Deweyan citizen. He posits that Rorty's thinking shifts from a Deweyan perspective of self-creation as socially-driven towards a Nietzschean view of self-creation as a private rather than a social endeavour.

The 'strong poet', a term borrowed from Bloom, emerges in Rorty's work as an influential figure who introduces a Nietzschean ethical (or aesthetic) dimension to his philosophy (Wain, 2017). As featured in Rorty's (1989) discussion of Larkin's poem, strong poets are not "copies or replicas" (p.24) but "products capable of narrating their own origin stories in unprecedented language" (p.28). Their journeys begin as ironist intellectuals, conversing with authors like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Proust, Heidegger, and Nabokov, who exemplify the ideal of private perfection. To pursue self-redescription and self-creation, strong poets must separate themselves from the political concerns of liberal citizens.

Wain (1993) maintains that Rorty insists on the exclusivity of irony or the ironist to the private realm, removed from public and political affairs, for two critical reasons. Firstly, irony's subversive or disruptive nature could undermine liberal institutions and the pursuit of solidarity. Secondly, Irony could cause pain, humiliation, and cruelty to other societal groups delineated by Rorty - the metaphysicians and the common sensists.

Topper (1995) asserts that in Rorty's work, a poeticized culture is acceptable as long as it remains a private matter that neither harms others nor uses resources needed by those less advantaged. Rorty (1989) regards this uninhibited freedom as "the aim of a just and free society" (p.xiv). Therefore, he is ethically obligated to oppose the public use of irony if it results in pain and cruelty.

1.6 Conclusion

For Rorty, irony is a practical tool for recognising humiliation and cruelty. By introducing the concept of the ironist, he underscores the need for a separation between one's private and public selves. This is primarily because the irony of the anti-liberal is incompatible with her political responsibilities as a citizen and should thus remain private. Consequently, Rorty asserts that a person's private final vocabulary does not need to align with their public final vocabulary. Instead of merging the two different types of ironists, Rorty (1989) encourages us to accept these "equally valid, yet irreconcilably different" forms of irony as "both separate parts" (p.xv; also p.68). They are both needed for self-creation and for the public endeavour of solidarity.

Despite these contradictions, Voparil (2020) argues that a consistent ethical theme can be traced throughout Rorty's work. Rorty (1989) presents this ethical project as the "ethics of kindness" (p.51), which Voparil views as the heart of Rorty's philosophy. According to him, Rorty's liberal ironist is the hero who embarks on this ethical journey to diminish "cruelty and injustice" and to protect the "weak from the strong" (p.497). The liberal ironist, as Rorty (1989) initially introduces her in *CIS*, must be conscious of the potential harm that could arise from her failure to acknowledge and respect the diverse private fantasies of others. It can be argued, therefore, that the liberal ironist's moral motivation plays a significant public social role. Change is achievable through broadening personal networks, which enable the ironist to become aware of and re-describe forms of cruelty and suffering previously unnoticed, fostering a public environment promoting 'we-intentions' and expanding 'solidarity'.

Chapter II will delve into Rorty's (1989) ethical considerations regarding public morality and his ideas for moral progress as "increasing responsiveness to the needs of an increasingly diverse range of people and things… a matter of being able to respond to the needs of ever more inclusive groups of people" (p.81).

CHAPTER II

ON SOLIDARITY

Chapter 2:

Rorty (1989) makes a critical distinction between the private and public realms, underscoring the vital roles the 'ironist' must perform to accomplish private and public objectives. As was discussed in Chapter I, Rorty asserts that any efforts toward autonomy and self-creation must remain strictly within the private sphere. Seeking perfection and self-creation is essential; as Rorty tells us, we must always accommodate and find the balance between the two realms. Introducing private, transgressive, or ironist discourses or fantasies into the public sphere may jeopardise social solidarity. This chapter will delve deeper into Rorty's conception of public morality and its connection with solidarity. Additionally, it will explore Rorty's thoughts on why private discourses and fantasies should not penetrate public discourse if moral and social progress is to be achieved.

2.1 The Liberal Ironist A Liberal Aversion To Cruelty.

Much of Rorty's public discourse draws inspiration from Dewey, whom he regards as a philosophical hero. Consequently, it is no surprise that Rorty's vision of his utopia relies on his pragmatic stance and the importance of democracy. Similarly to Dewey, Rorty stresses that philosophers should prioritise democracy and the search for justice over philosophical, metaphysical and theoretical investigations. Nonetheless, philosophers are not the only ones who should devote themselves to democracy and social justice. Rorty places considerable responsibility on the liberal ironist in the public sphere, directing her public activities towards the "duty to others" (Rorty, 1989, p.120). Many ask, even Rorty himself in *CIS* (1989), why an ironist should exhibit any interest in the liberal aversion to cruelty others suffer (Wain, 2014; Miller, 2020).

Why should she keep her self-creation project private and abstain from cruelty herself? Rorty's answer to this question lies in 'solidarity'.

Rorty (1989) describes solidarity as "increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people" (p.xvi). According to him, this kind of solidarity is a goal to be achieved and cannot be discovered through reflection or reasoning. Instead, it can only be created through our moral imagination, which allows us to identify the suffering of unfamiliar members, including those with different linguistic repertoires. For Rorty, solidarity and increased sentimentality make individuals act against pain and cruelty, not abstract theories. Consequently, in his utopia, the extension of solidarity is the foundation upon which social morality and hope can be fostered. In the introduction of *CIS* (1989), he describes how solidarity is to be achieved…

> …not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers. Solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created. It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people… The process of coming to see other human beings as "one of us" rather than as "them" is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and of redescription of what we ourselves are like (p.xvi).

The sentiment of solidarity is a crucial element that the ironist needs to expand the 'we intentions,' while maintaining a consistent awareness of "the liberal aversion to cruelty" (Wain, 2017, p.2057). This widening of solidarity can be achieved by

identifying with the suffering of others and being able to perceive them as "one of us" rather than creating a divide between "us" and "them." Rorty narrows down the task assigned to ironists (and philosophers as intellectuals), who do not speak on behalf of all human beings. As Wain (2001) affirms, she must speak "for herself from her ethnocentric viewpoint or for the voiceless with whose pain and suffering she engages imaginatively" (p.172). Hence Rorty's (1989) definition of liberal ironists as individuals who

> have a sense of the contingency of their language of moral deliberation, and thus of their consciences, and thus of their community. They would be liberal ironists—people who meet Schumpeter's criterion of civilisation, people who combine commitment with a sense of the contingency of their own commitment. (p. 61) (… and) are people who include among these ungroundable desires their own hope that suffering will be diminished, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease. (p.xv).

Drawing from Dewey's thoughts in *Ethics Without Principles* (1999), Rorty suggests that "Moral development in the individual and moral progress in the human species as a whole is a matter of remarking human selves so as to enlarge the variety of the relationships which constitute those selves" (p.79). Public morality relies on the actions and individual morality of liberal ironists who need to cultivate a sensitivity towards suffering, humiliation and cruelty. The liberal ironist must concern herself with the harm that can be caused if she cannot recognise and respect the diverse private fantasies of others. Change is only possible through the expansion of acquaintances, which helps the ironist become aware of and redescribe the different

forms of cruelty and suffering she did not notice before. According to Rorty (1989), this can be achieved through solidarity, which he describes as a "matter of imaginative identification with the details of others' lives, rather than a recognition of something antecedently shared." (p.190). Thus, the liberal ironist must also understand that she needs to meet with others to fulfil her private projects and extend human solidarity. As Rorty (1989) argues,

> So the liberal ironist needs as much imaginative acquaintance with alternative final vocabularies as possible, not just for her own edification, but in order to understand the actual and possible humiliation of the people who use these alternative final vocabularies. (p.92)

2.2 Solidarity For a Liberal Democracy

Much of Rorty's (1989) work revolves around his vision of an ideal society featuring liberal culture and politics, which he terms "a liberal utopia" (p.xv). This ideal society's core is the delicate balance between cultivating an autonomous creative individuality and preventing cruelty. His description of a just society allows citizens to be as "privatistic, "irrationalist," and aestheticist as they please, as long as they do it on their own time - cause no harm to others and use no resources needed by those less advantaged" (p.xiv). This framework allows social progress because 'strong poets' can privately do their own thing (with the limits of causing no harm to others). While self-creation may not directly contribute to solidarity, Rorty envisions, as will be discussed further in this chapter, that such individuals develop a heightened sensitivity to the suffering of others. As a result, they would be motivated to fight for fairness and social justice. Thus institutions and procedures can be reformed and

continuously reviewed to be less cruel. Beyond this, Rorty does not offer theories for citizenship or ideal political procedures for this idealistic society.

For this reason, Rorty has been criticised as a liberal minimalist (Wain, 2014). In his defence, David Rondel recounts that Rorty's 'cultural politics' is not aimed at short-termed policy changes but requires a "long-term progressive evolution of our linguistic practices" (Curtis, 2015, p.403). Correspondingly, Curtis (2015) argues that the changes Rorty calls for are primarily cultural, which would gradually instil and cultivate liberal virtues. Achieving this would require considerable socialisation and education, equipping individuals to develop these liberal characteristics essential for a successful liberal democratic life.

Solidarity is crucial for liberal democracy; it acts as the social glue needed to unite the community around the moral values manifested through human social relationships and supported by liberal institutions and procedures. This public morality cultivates a sense of community and social justice, thus providing moral and social benefits. Wain (2014) observes that solidarity provides the social glue required in society by generating sentiments of pity and compassion, as it fosters and builds communities. When solidarity is weakened, communities disintegrate into individuals engrossed in their egoistic self-fulfilling projects.

Solidarity is a public good fostered and created gradually through agreements between fellow citizens and communities through participation and expanding their sense of a "we". Solidarity, however, cannot look to common ends. It is formulated through "common vocabularies and common hopes" (Schneiderhan, 2013, p.428). If

there is conflict or uncertainty, we can still take action; doubts and uncertainties should produce questions that assist in moving forward for the community to grow evermore democratically. Rorty (1989) recounts that "...it does not matter if everybody's final vocabulary is different, as long as there is enough overlap so that everybody has some words with which to express the desirability of entering into other people's fantasies as well as into one's own." (pp.92-93). If this overlap can be attained, then it can work as the social glue required in the hope that someday the utopian visions provided can be fulfilled (Miller, 2020; Smith, 2014). Consensus does not require universal standards; Rorty suggests engaging in redescription and persuasion when faced with conflict or disagreement.

Curtis (2015) argues that deliberative political activity in the public sphere is not always enough to stand up for the challenging nature of liberal polity. This is why participants must own unique liberal capacities and virtues that coincide with the specific ethos of a liberal polity. As Curtis (2015) states, its members "swim in a normative sea of liberal values" (p.404). Furthermore, the ongoing agonistic deliberation over these values' meaning "is a quintessentially liberal practice" (Curtis, 2015, p.404). Rorty accepts that democracy is never perfect but rather an ongoing endeavour. However, he acknowledges it as the best means to the greatest good we have experienced so far.

If there is freedom, there is plurality; if there is plurality, there is disagreement. Politics within a liberal society require the ongoing process of determining which practices are best enforced by the state, which are permitted and encouraged, which are permitted and only tolerated, and which are not permitted (Curtis, 2015).

Morality and ethical life are linked to political life, where the ethical becomes the subject of laws. Liberal citizens can reweave ethical identities and adapt to a changing liberal society because they can sensitise and generate solidarity in their communities.

2.2.1 Community Obligations for Moral Progress

Much like Dewey, Rorty argues that morality is a byproduct of circumstances that materialise through social relationships. In his work *Ethics Without Principles* (1999), he writes about ethics and justice in particular times when personal needs clash with family or neighbours, economic tension causes community class divisions, and when the community has to reconcile with an unknown group.

Rorty deviates from Dewey, however, with the introduction of moral sentiment and argues that it is not intelligence but sentiment that creates an adequate response to the demands of others. As mentioned earlier, Rorty embraces Hume and Baier's sentimental-based ethics. He argues in *Ethics Without Principles* (1999) that "it is not a matter of an increase of rationality…or an increase of intelligence… people can be very intelligent, in this sense, without having wide sympathies" (p.81). Thus, under Rorty's ethics of sensitivity, morality does not rely on unconditional, universal obligations found in humans simply because they have a human essence or believe in the same god. Instead, moral obligations, Rorty (2021) contends, rely on community obligations, which necessitate a response because one feels one is part of and a member of that group. He further elaborates on this in *CIS* (1989), stating that

> Solidarity is made rather than found, produced in the course of history rather than recognised as an ahistorical fact. We can have obligations by virtue of our sense of solidarity with any of these groups. For we can have we-intentions, intentions which we express in sentences of the form "We all want … ," intentions which contrast with those expressed by sentences beginning "I want…", by virtue of our membership in any of them, large or small." (p.195)

The widening sense of community to include more people once thought of as "them" requires a sense of sympathy, not of obligation. Upon recognising that this person is a fellow citizen or "one of us", we encounter a different type of obligation, a political one, distinct from the moral kind. This recognition, according to Rorty, obliges us to act with decency.

The development of solidarity with the other on this view as "one of us" is thus not the victory of reason over passions but the triumph of tolerance over distrust. During a lecture he delivered at Carleton College in 1990, Rorty suggests that history shows increased agreements are not the result of universal standards but rather an enhanced ability to tolerate diversity. He illustrates this point by comparing owners' attitudes towards enslaved people pre-Civil War to those of their descendants post-Civil Rights movement (Philosophy Overdose, 2021). He argues that the difference in the attitude of the descendants is not that they are more rational. Rather they belong to a community which describes white and blacks in more or less the same terms. They relate a story of how white people gradually started to notice the details of the life of the blacks and became aware of the suffering they endured.

In sum, Rorty advocates for an 'ethics of sensitivity' that aims at moral progress instead of an 'ethics of principle'. This ethical approach requires responding "to the needs of ever more inclusive groups of people" (Rorty, 1999, p.81). As previously discussed, Rorty shows no enthusiasm concerning the universal faculty of human reason being the basis for moral and political action. In abstaining from absolute principles and giving importance to sentiment rather than an inflated reason, Rorty prompts changes in citizens' characteristics, self-image, habits, and virtues. This leads to more favourable pluralistic and fallibilist democratic ways of life (Voparil, 2020). Thus Rorty (1989) advises us to "stay on the lookout for marginalized people – people whom we still instinctively think of as 'they' rather than 'us'" (p. 196).

2.2.2 Ethics of Kindness and Responsibility

Digging deeper into Rorty's concept of solidarity, one finds interesting ethical concerns that illustrate more than how one should live or what characteristics one should have in a postfoundationalist, liberal, pluralistic society. As Voparil (2020) observes, though Rorty emphasises being responsible for others, he moves further and demands an "ethics of kindness" (p.51). Specifically, he accords his ethics to the suffering, the marginalised and those who go unnoticed. Voparil (2020) suggests that *CIS* holds this ethical significance at its core. For giving up the authoritarian and foundationalist beliefs for an ethical life grounded in truth, one cannot remain a passive, dutiful respondent but must take responsibility.

Taking much from James' pragmatic thought, Rorty (1989) accentuates that one needs to know another 'person's chosen metaphoric'. This understanding is critical to achieving the goal of solidarity: "expanding the repertoire of alternative

descriptions rather than adhering to One Right Description" (Rorty, 1989, pp.39-40). Knowing other people's 'chosen metaphorics' is a priority in Rorty's ethics because it does not only require sight to rectify the 'blindness' we sometimes have towards others, but it also needs sympathetic interest. This interest necessitates a closer look at the details of the other's lives. Consequently, individuals must be active listeners and open to learning from them - becoming ethically oriented - as per James (1977) - so that the "cries of the wounded" can be heard (as cited in Voparil, 2020, p.499).

Another interesting resemblance seldom mentioned is between Rorty's sentiment of solidarity and Rousseau's idea of pity. Wain (2014) highlights this similarity in his book *Between Truth and Freedom.* According to Rousseau, humans have an instinctive capacity for empathy that makes them susceptible to feeling the pain and suffering of not only their fellow humans but all sentient beings. Though both thinkers seem inclined towards sentimental ethics, a notable difference is that Rorty, unlike Rousseau, does not subscribe to the belief that pity is innate to human beings.

Furthermore, Wain (2014) states that since it is contingent and relies on socialisation, Rorty remains sceptical about whether it could consistently "win through all the odds" (p.110). Interestingly, Rousseau shares this scepticism. Otherwise, how could one explain cruelty? An important point to mention is that both thinkers, including Wain (2014), agree that the sentiment needs to be educated, and this, for Rorty (1989), can be achieved through imagination and the power of narratives. Imagination will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter. However, before moving on, it is essential to delve into Rorty's views about the moral potential of literature and the narrative form.

2.3 From Philosophy to a Literary Culture

As discussed in previous sections, according to Rorty, one is more likely to care about the other if one can sense familiarity or a common factor with who they are and/ or their situation. He writes that "feelings of solidarity are necessarily a matter of which similarities strike us as salient" (1989, p.192). Rorty claims that similarities build strong bonds across races, cultures or nations. Nonetheless, for him, the "similarities with respect to pain and humiliation" (p.192) are the ones that trump differences related to nationality, race, ethnicity and culture. Ritivoi (2016) argues that in putting suffering at the centre of his moral concern, akin to all, Rorty urges for a type of politics- that of responding to the suffering of others because we can imagine it as our own.

Given this perspective, it becomes clear why Rorty favours literature and narratives as potent vehicles for fostering and expanding empathy towards others' pain and humiliation rather than relying on theoretical approaches. He envisages a literary culture where people draw upon narratives to reflect on moral dilemmas and issues. In such a culturally transformed society, as argued by Barreto (2011), "moral progress and creativity are possible by playing the diverse literary genres or 'mortal vocabularies' off against each other, instead of dealing with 'immortal propositions' through rigorous argumentation" (p.109).

Rorty is not the only one advocating literary power to promote moral progress. Miller (2020) cites James (1978), who claims that literature works- such as novels, poetry, drama, and books - are necessary for those who struggle with a moral life because they are "confessedly tentative and suggestive" in sensitising readers towards the

"cries of the wounded" (as cited in Miller, 2020, p.184). Rorty and James are part of a broader array of moral philosophers, including Martha Nussbaum, Iris Murdoch and Bernard Williams, who look to literary practice as a tool for ethical exploration. Similarly, two political theorists, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, like Rorty, are sceptical of the purposes of analytical philosophy and uphold a narrative view. Both thinkers consider narratives fundamental to human existence and thus cannot be optional. MacIntyre exemplifies this by stating that it is part of children's development to learn through stories about other different kinds of people, different lives and the possibilities they have in life. MacIntyre (1985) writes:

> Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words.... [Therefore] Man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. (as cited in McGuinness, 1997, p.32)

All philosophers mentioned here offer their own interpretations, and there are substantial differences should one compare them with Rorty's views on narrative. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss them here. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognise a common theme that runs through all their work. In essence, they all emphasise that engaging with narratives can facilitate self-understanding, comprehension of society, and the development of moral identities. Due to a distinct characteristic, engaging with narratives can assist in the augmentation of sentiments such as empathy, thereby stimulating the imagination to gradually identify with diverse, estranged characters. As a result, we become more susceptible to including them in our moral concerns.

Rorty writes about this concept in various essays; however, it is mainly refined in *CIS* (1989), where he asserts that novels, rather than philosophy, are better suited for shaping citizens in a liberal democracy (Mahon & O'Brien, 2018). Rorty (1989) argues that "detailed descriptions of particular varieties of pain and humiliation (in, e.g., novels or ethnographies), rather than philosophical or religious treatises, were the modern intellectual's principle contributions to moral progress" (p. 192).

When asked why literature is more important than philosophy, Rorty used equivalent words in an interview with Wolfgang & Helmut (2006). He emphasised that literature (narratives) can expand moral imagination, a sensitisation towards understanding differences between human beings. Philosophy is uncreative in this manner, as it only outlines previous moral insights and reflections. It tries to fix things already there or aspires towards an 'agreeable' and 'harmonious arrangement' of known structures and procedures. Literature creates new things and "wants to say things never said before " (Rorty, Wolfgang & Helmut, 2006, p.69). Unlike philosophy, it delves into the unknown, making it possible to recreate and expand "our languages using metaphors that later on became established in usage" (Rorty, Wolfgang & Helmut, 2006, p.70). To support his argument, Rorty points out that philosophical reflections alone were insufficient to halt the institution of slavery. In contrast, narratives depicting the enslaved lives played a significant role in effecting change and contributing to its abolition.

2.3.1 Particularly, the Novel

Rorty (1989) utilises Proust's insights to elucidate why the novel surpasses other forms in fostering a sympathetic understanding of others. Proust's work, according

to Rorty, suggests that novels focusing on temporal, contingent human characters are better than theoretical texts for conveying the relativity of authority figures. Bound by time and chance, these characters reflect life's finitude, preventing us from assuming a universal perspective on all possible individuals. Novels serve as accounts of specific individuals and their stories, enabling us to recognize that people's "final vocabularies are largely contingent, shaped by chance encounters and the circumstances of their lives" (Rorty, 1989, p. 107).

Rorty's emphasis on the particular and the inclination of 'unnecessary detail' triumph over that which is general. Hence his move from philosophy to literary criticism as the most effective way to cultivate and extend solidarity (Mahon & O'Brien, 2018). In *CIS* (1989), Rorty turns to the works of novelists Nabokov and Orwell to illustrate his point. In his writing, he shows his admiration at how these two writers managed to sensitise their readers through their characters' cruel and humiliating experiences, both from individualistic and group perspectives.

Rorty finds inspiration in Kundera and his thought-provoking work, *The Art of the Novel*. Kundera's ideas of how the novel counters philosophy align with Rorty's vision of a democratic utopia shaped by narratives (Rorty, 2010). In his essay *Heidegger, Kundera, and Dickens* (2010), Rorty writes in more detail about why he employs literature in the service of solidarity. He argues that literature's focus on the particular, accentuated by its unnecessary details and creative characterizations, sets it apart. He is particularly fond of Dickens, who, in Kundera's phrase, manages to create a "paradise of individuals" (Rorty, 2010, p.317) with characteristics that cannot be combined with moral typologies. Instead, Rorty argues, their names can be listed

as virtues and vices and easily replace moral principles. Should society take the moral vocabulary from novels, it would ask itself different, more relevant questions, not questions about human existence, nature or the meaning of life. As Rorty (2010) writes,

> It would ask itself what we can do so as to get along with each other, how we can arrange things so as to be comfortable with one another, how institutions can be changed so that everyone's right to be understood has a better chance of being gratified (p.317).

Rorty's fondness for Dickens stems from the author's ability to evoke a sense of comfort and hope for human beings (Rorty, 2010). Dickens' talents do not only lie in the fact that he can create great characters with delightful names, but he also illustrates problems in his society without actually attacking anyone or anything in it. As a result, Rorty (2010) claims no one harboured hostility towards Dickens or his novels because he spoke: "as 'one of us' - the voice of someone who happened to notice something that would elicit a similar sense of outrage from the rest of us once we became aware of it" (p.318). Dickens adeptly offered creative re-description of the experiences and suffering of specific individuals caused by others who remained oblivious to their plight. Hence Rorty's inclination towards novels, which tell a story better than theory, and his preference for narrative because they are more 'fruitful' than theory for social change.

It is noteworthy that while Rorty (1989) mentions other forms of narratives," ethnography, the journalist report, the comic book, the docudrama" (p.xvi), his focus

is 'especially' on the novel as the most effective source for ethical and moral progress. As discussed earlier, he argues that novels can foster moral advancement through readers' identification and emotional connection with the depicted characters. Unfortunately, with his emphasis on the novel, little is said about other narrative forms, such as self-narratives and autobiographies. These genres are notably absent from *CIS* (1989). Perhaps Rorty views these narratives as too subjective or thinks that the type of genre is limited to people who like to read such books; thus, they could limit the readers' ability to cultivate empathy compared to novels.

Although Rorty does not mention such narratives, other thinkers, such as Derrida, shed light on their importance in this endeavour. In his book *Of Grammatology* (1998), Derrida emphasises the significance of self-narratives and their unique value for ethical reflection, stemming from their inherently unstable and contested nature. He believes such works disclose significant innate contradictions and various complexities of human experiences that help readers question and re-examine their assumptions and values. While Rorty focuses on the novel and its role in moral progress, Derrida shifts his attention to language, emphasising its instability and plurality. He argues that 'true' meaning is elusive because it constantly evolves within the text. However, like Rorty, Derrida maintains that fixed experiences or beliefs are unattainable. According to Derrida, self-reflection plays a vital role in exposing the intricacies and contradictions of our own experiences, rendering it a valuable source for self-creation and serving social purposes if these works are published.

In his essay *Autobiography: Between Literature and Philosophy* (2014), Wain examines the perspectives of Derrida and Foucault on the true meaning of autobiographical texts. He remarks that autobiographies cannot be classified under the headings of fiction or philosophical due to their subjectivity and their claim of truth about the self. Nevertheless, he writes about Rorty's conclusion that there cannot exist a "voice of a universal humanity" (p.28). For Rorty and Wain, the collective voice of a 'we' depends on the individual's identification with specific views, such as a "Dewyan, American, bourgeois or liberal voice" (Wain, 2014, p.28). Considering this, Rorty's choice suggests that perhaps he may not have been able to engage with such works and thus could not offer meaningful insights about them, making his minimal choice for the novel open to interpretation. However, although he might not explicitly address other narratives, his ideas about literature and morality remain valuable, and his vision for moral progress could be widened to encompass self-reflection, autobiography, and other forms of narrative that offer insights into ethical reflection, self-education and understanding the complexities of ethics and morality.

2.3.2 Narratives for Social Virtue and Flexibility for Diversity and Plurality.

According to Rorty (1989), tolerance is the social virtue, while flexibility is the primary private virtue that narratives foster. They play an essential role in private and public realms, where they can be used in various ways, not just for solidarity. Some narratives, like Nietzsche's and Derrida's, should be read to invent a new self and enrich one's poetic existence. Other narratives that help one to become a better person and a fellow citizen of a more liberal democracy can read Rawls, Mill, Dickens, Orwell and Stowe.

In an interview with Wolfgang & Helmut (2006), Rorty suggested that there are other functions for narratives in life, including entertainment, 'Weltanschauung', and to meet differences. In whether one should distinguish between edification and social interests, Rorty argued that there is no fine line separating the two functions; instead, they are represented as a spectrum. "Zola is more likely to be placed on the public end, and Proust on the private" (Wolfgang & Helmut, 2006, p.67). Rorty compares the process to natural selection found in biological evolution in selecting the most important books. He recounts that cultural evolution follows a similar pattern though it is impossible to predict. Rorty views it as an exciting process one should observe. Books are chosen for specific purposes depending on the people using them. As some books are preferred over others, some will continue to be used and reproduced while others will be forgotten. It is up to the individual what types to read; however, what makes a novel better than philosophical books, Rorty claims, is that novels are more relative, ambiguous and in touch with the real world.

2.4 Conclusion:

This chapter explores Rorty's views of solidarity in relation to moral progress. It describes how Rorty's moral and political agenda revolves around expanding solidarity and blurring distinctions between 'us' and 'them' to foster progress and strengthen liberal democracy. As described by Rorty, solidarity requires the gradual expansion of the 'we intentions', achieved through educating the sympathies rather than reason or following a set of principles. This education involves engaging with the suffering of others, including those we may have overlooked, and utilising narratives, particularly novels, to connect with and empathise with their pain. Details in narratives can assist with the formation of individual and social structures

to act against cruelty. Liberal ironists are the ones who cannot refrain from doubting their cultural beliefs and themselves. They employ imaginative new vocabularies to broaden their understanding and sensitivity towards the suffering of others. Rorty argues that public morality should be rooted in this creative imagination rather than philosophy. The next chapter will delve further into Rorty's exploration of moral imagination.

CHAPTER III

ON MORAL IMAGINATION

Chapter 3

The novel, for Rorty, represents the fundamental genre of democracy due to its cultivation of a quintessential ability that the ideal member of a democratic society should possess: a natural inclination towards solidarity. If, for Rorty, narratives represent the gateway to embracing morality and allow solidarity to flourish and moral progress to ensue, imagination is the key to unlocking it. This chapter will elaborate on some of his developing ideas and suggestions in different excerpts of his work, hoping one can better understand his unconventional views and ideas on imagination. It will delve into the second research question: What is Rorty's approach to Narratives, and why do we need Moral Imagination? Given its multifaceted nature, this chapter will begin with a brief philosophical analysis of imagination to gain a deeper understanding of its complexities from a philosophical point of view.

3.1 Two Dominant Views

It is difficult to summarise the philosophical treatment of imagination. Imagination appears in many conversations, including philosophical ones which date back to ancient Greece. Plato's and Aristotle's works are perhaps the earliest examples of philosophical discussion on imagination (Kearney, 2002). It would require a lengthy essay to explore their views thoroughly here. Nonetheless, a brief sketch of some essential aspects put forward by these foundational thinkers would be beneficial to comprehend the nature and role of imagination across time.

There are two dominant philosophical views. The classical view considers imagination as a faculty producing only a copy or replica of sensible objects -

"imaging". Classical thinkers like Plato and Aristotle deemed imagination as a defective source that produces errors due to its inferior condition of thought. The Romantic view perceives it as an irrational, creative power that can invent or construct new concepts, symbols or objects (Alexander, 2013). In contrast to the classical, the romantic thinkers glorified it as the ultimate source of creativity and insight into an almost spiritual reality that exceeds convention and reason.

3.1.1 Classical Imagination: Plato

Plato's work has influenced the world significantly for over two thousand years. He believed that the pinnacle of human achievement lies in reason, which is crucial in obtaining knowledge about the world's true nature and human experience. A distinction which Plato conveyed to the Western culture is that of the faculty of reason *(nous)* and imagination (*eikasia* and *phantasia*) (Kearney, 2002). Reason is, for Plato, the only way to truth, while imagination could only deceive by producing copies of this truth. Hence his perceived notion in the *Republic* that Art and poetry are not meaningful forms of creative expression (Egan, 1992). Instead, they are lesser activities engrossed with appearances and thus inept at moving forward to abstract ideas that could find the truth. He argues that Art has nothing to offer about truth and reality. Plato writes that such images can only be imitations *(mimēsis)* of the original acts of the gods and thus are deceptive because they may "misrepresent the nature of gods" (Republic as cited in Egan, 1992, p.14). Works of Art would lead to false beliefs about reality, and due to their false nature, they can influence and corrupt character.

Moreover, Plato argues that should one empathise with immoral characters presented in such works, one is susceptible to being influenced by irrational *pathos*, where one becomes enslaved to the passions and thus is more inclined to violate the principles of rationality. With this perception in mind, Plato critiques the mimetic imagination in Book X of the *Republic* (Kearney, 2002). Here he contends that works of the imagination have no purpose in the realm of the *polis,* leading to the censorship of such works and the banishment of all artists.

3.1.2 Classical Imagination: Aristotle

Aristotle's influential work shows a revised Platonic theory of imagining, though he takes a different perspective from his teacher, Plato. His argument refuses Plato's notion that imagination only illustrates copies or replicas of objects. Conversely, Aristotle suggests that the artist attempts to exhibit the universal aspect of human experience. Thus the objective is not to replicate but to uncover a broader applicable meaning to bring us closer to the truth (Egan, 1992). According to him, mental images are the link between our experiences of the world and the faculty of reason. The Aristotelian paradigm of the image is not an external copy but an internal activity of the mind mediating between sensation and reason. This indicates that reason cannot function properly without the mental image (*phantasma noētikon*) (Kearney, 2002). In his work, *De Anima* asserts, "Every time one thinks, one must at the same time contemplate some image" (as cited in Egan, 1992, p.15). This view implies that the imagination must constantly work through our intellect, and therefore it would need to be present in our perception. Aristotle's thinking posits that imagination can contribute to rational thinking, contrasting Plato's perspective that it steers the mind away from rational thought. Egan (1992) notes that although

both philosophers held somewhat different views, they regarded imagination as a faculty that imitates or copies what already exists. Thus imagination was pictured not as a creative activity but as a reproductive one. This notion of a mimetic faculty persisted until the Enlightenment.

3.1.3 The Enlightenment: Kant

Egan (1992) remarks how the dominance of aggressive rationalism and the onset of modern scientific inquiry during the Enlightenment left no room for imagination to evolve more than the mimetic and decorative faculty of the previous eras. Immanuel Kant is the transitional figure who, even though he considered imagination mysterious, thought it was a necessary property to link concepts to percepts. He also conceded that imagination could modify or create concepts (Alexander, 2013). Through his extensive work, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant freed the imagination from its extended philosophical imprisonment. Due to his insightful implications, imagination started to be viewed as more than just an intermediary action. It shifted from a mimetic paradigm to a productive one (Kearney, 2002). The productive paradigm showed how imagination could invent and create a world of its own, a result brought forward by the human mind, not by a divine entity.

Following David Hume's work on imagination, Kant initiated a new understanding that gave imagination greater credibility. Kant expanded on Hume's findings, declaring that perceptions are not incomplete but already organised through our imagination. To do this, the imagination's vital role is predetermining what we perceive and know. As Egan (1992) writes, "What we experience is the world already structured by the imagination; ... at the most basic level of meaning-making, the

imagination is active" (p. 21). Furthermore, Kant also differentiated between two types of imagination, productive imagination - when mental images are created- and reproductive images - when images are retained and recalled when necessary (Kearney, 2002).

Both Hume and Kant provided essential insights into the imagination by identifying key characteristics of its connection to reason and sensation. On account of their input, it came to light that imagination can significantly influence perception and how one interprets the world. This breaks away from the simple concept of imagination as a replica of the outside world. Instead, Kant presented it as a more complex, creative and productive entity that constantly forms our perceptions, linking mind and body. Nonetheless, as Fesmire (2003) affirms, Kant was still suspicious and weary of it. He confined it only to aesthetic judgement and not to moral judgement.

3.1.4 Romantic Imagination

The Romantic era emerged during the 18th and 19th centuries bringing new creative and emotional notions to the faculty of imagination. The Enlightenment bequeathed this era with three essential interconnected functions, according to Egan (1992). The first implication is that it is decisive in organising perception and making our experience intelligible. Secondly, mental images can be recollected from past perceptions or created anew with the help of combining elements from previous experiences. Thirdly, it established a connection to emotions, enabling art to evoke emotions even without a specific stimulus that initially triggered them. These insights led the Romantics to attribute a distinct role to art and imagination,

emphasising their significance alongside, and sometimes in contrast to, the faculty of reason.

According to this view, imagination is not simply a passive entity that copies the world but an active, dynamic and creative one that shapes perception and utilises emotions while doing so. It is a process that enables one to see a new and different perspective of the world. It thus requires not only cognition but creativity and sources of inspiration and artistic expression to generate new art forms that reflect man's innermost thoughts and feelings. Egan (1992) highlights how Romanticism brought about a revised conception of the mind by expanding the understanding of imagination.

The Romantics viewed art differently from their ancestors. They emphasised the importance of beauty and artistic creation because now, they thought, art could aid in the search for truth just as much as science could. Though some confuse Rorty's claim of imagination with that of Romantic thinkers, this should not be the case. In *CIS*, Rorty (1989) refers to this type of imagination as the "Romantic theory of human nature" (p.36). He describes how this imagination was a faculty of expression, "a link with something, not ourselves, a proof that we were here as from another world" (p.36). This clashes with his views about imagination, especially his Freud-inspired view as a faculty for creating metaphors which belong and are shared among all language users.

In his book *The Wake of Imagination* (2002), Kearney describes how imagination seemed to have peaked in Romanticism, but its elevation was followed by a drastic

fall. He argues that romantic imagination could not fulfil its pledges as society started to move in an era of modernity. The Modern era evolved with the rise of markets and capitalism. As they swelled, realities of destruction in political revolutions, the industrialisation's effect on the environment, and increased bureaucratisation penetrated society, while humanist aspirations from both Enlightenment and Romanticism gradually faded out. As a result, Kearney (2002) states, imagination, too, started to fade away and withdraw, acting more like a hermit since it could only form images but could not transform reality. As the imagination's dream succumbed to the approaching reality of historical existence, Romanticism ceased, and existentialism began.

3.2 A Pragmatist Implication

Various modern philosophers explored and criticised the traditional and limited views of imagination as expressed in previous philosophical works. Pragmatism describes imagination as the ability to comprehend the actual in relation to what is possible. Dewey (1934), in his work *Art as Experience,* states, "only imaginative vision elicits the possibilities that are interwoven within the texture of the actual" (as cited in Fesmire, 2003, p.68). Alexander (2013) contends that this intrinsic link led the pragmatists to understand that temporally ongoing experiences and actions are transformative events. Dewey suggests that since we are active beings, we are constantly aware of the possibilities surrounding us. Consequently, he defines *intelligence* as the ability "to see the actual in light of the possible" (Alexander, 2013, p.194), giving it the exact definition he uses for imagination.

Our lives are constantly dealing with unique situations. Imagination can creatively explore past experiences to guide present and future actions, creating new possibilities of action through the growth and continuity of meaning. Pragmatist imagination goes beyond a copy or a radical creation from scratch. It is represented as a transformation or a reconstruction of our experiences in a constantly changing world (Fesmire, 2003). This implication brought forth profound consequences for any theory of 'knowledge', so much so that it was transformed into a 'theory of learning' (Alexander, 2013). As a result, this also fundamentally influenced what constitutes moral reasoning and the objective of ethical theory.

3.3 Imagination in the Ethical Life

Although they had different views of what good entails, Plato and Aristotle believed that moral action was a successful *mimēsis* of a homogenous good, a higher ideal (Alexander, 2013). As discussed earlier, Plato associated imagination with the sensory and physical realm making it an inferior form of knowledge to the realm of contemplation and reasoning. If imagination is not guided by reason, it will lead to erroneous beliefs and ethical degradation. Plato emphasises educating the imagination to foster moral reasoning to imitate the ideal Forms of goodness, justice and beauty. He believed that such habits and beliefs shape a person's moral character and are influenced by the images and stories that a person encounters in life. Hence, his urgency in the *Republic* to censor images or stories that might bring moral corruption.

On similar grounds, Aristotle saw moral reason as the only way to develop the *psychē* for a person to act in a good way. His type of good and emphasis was the conception

of *eudaimonia,* which could be achieved through virtue (*aretē),* the activity that perfected character. Moral reasoning for Aristotle was a deliberative skill that relied heavily on well-trained habits, and thus the ethical importance of action rested on the character that motivated it (Alexander, 2013). This implies that morality and happiness cannot be determined unless one considers the overall life experience of a human being.

Aristotelian teleology is rejected in the modern era, as ethics looks to uncover universal abstract laws for the right moral action and human happiness. Alexander (2013) points out that Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* was the most influential work for this paradigm shift. It departed from this classical ethical theory to establish itself as a universal moral principle to specific theories such as deontology and utilitarianism. This shift focused on the act, isolating it from the human character or *psychē*. A moral life would only be possible through a succession of actions that obeyed universal rules, dismissing any moral feeling or imagination altogether.

Considering that utilitarian and deontological aspects of practical reason are determined through the correct use of rules for specific actions against what Aristotle proposed, there can be no continuous moral aspect to human life and experience. Thus, as Alexander (2013) contends, imagination, in this case, has no role to play except maybe to assist "utilitarian calculations or rational intuition" (p.185). Though Aristotle does not say much about it either, he does emphasise the importance of practical experience and the education of desire to build a virtuous character. Moreover, he suggests that literature is a good source for moral education precisely because it allows readers to understand the meaning of human life through

the various characters it portrays. As Alexander (2013) argues, the rule-oriented approach does not allow one to focus on character, imagination or stories for moral purposes. In Fesmire's (2003) view, they also neglect wisdom and intelligence if rules are taken as absolutes.

For this reason, some ethicists rose against this view. Alasdair MacIntyre and Nussbaum, for example, reject this modern ethical framework. Instead, they look to virtue theory bringing back the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Nevertheless, according to Fesmire (2003), MacIntyre still "locates a moral bedrock in the human telos" (p.56). Other thinkers, mostly pragmatists such as Dewey from the classical pragmatist tradition and, to a certain extent, Nel Noddings, a feminist ethicist, suggest a more radically reconstructed understanding of ethics. For such ethicists, principles cannot "on their own do justice to the ambiguity and complexity of the situation" (Fesmire, 2003, p.57). So they look to people's everyday experiences and actions in particular situations rather than inflexible abstract ideas. As Alexander (2013) contends, it was a pragmatic moral theory that started to view moral imagination as an essential feature of ethical reasoning and behaviour, even though, in his view, it is still underdeveloped in temporary Ethics.

3.4 Dewey, Johnson and Arendt on Imaginative Morality

Applying the notion that morality is only about adhering to rules undermines imagination's potential significance. Alexander (2013) notes that moral theory, until recently, ignored imagination. Only a little was said about its influence on morality until John Dewey. Drawing from Aristotelian philosophy, Dewey emphasises the significance of habit. Rather than being passive, habits need to be organised and flexible to be used whenever needed. These activities are inclined towards growth

and eventually make up the self. Dewey believed that imagination is essential to create a better life as it is central to all human experiences. Specifically, he writes, "imaginative experience exemplifies more fully than any other kind of experience what experience itself is in its very movement and structure." (1922, cited in Zembylas & Schutz, 2009, p.183). Thus, for Dewey, imagination had a moral dimension because it is required to create an ideal vision of human existence.

Fesmire (2003) argues that Dewey (1932) shows two roles of imagination that must work simultaneously: empathetic projection and creatively tapping for possibilities. The former is "the animating mold of moral judgement" (as cited in Fesmire, 2003, p.65). He contends that we expand our moral imagination through empathy, but even if it is necessary for moral judgement, Dewey thinks it is insufficient on its own. It needs the second type, which requires the ability to use creativity to find a situation's possibilities. This is achieved through socialisation, listening to other people's stories and deliberating and reflecting on how others feel and react to our actions. This process determines the character's continuity by identifying new values as the character manifests, and therefore it is part and parcel with our everyday life and learning.

Rorty's views about moral imagination are a continuation of Dewey's works. Dewey believed imagination is vital for exploring new possibilities and creating new values, ideas and concepts (Raeber, 2013). In correspondence to Dewey's thought, Rorty shifts the centre of gravity of ethics from foundational principles to that of imagination. In *CIS* (1989), he quotes Dewey,

> imagination is the chief instrument of the good… Art is more moral than moralities. For the latter either are, or tend to become, consecrations of the status quo… The moral prophets of humanity have always been poets even though they spoke in free verse or by parable. (p.69)

Johnson's (1993) views in *The Moral Imagination* align with Dewey's ideas. Johnson (1993) illustrates that new findings in cognitive science show that bodily experiences and imaginative processes shape our concepts and reasoning. According to him, this is significant because moral reasoning relies on cognitive capacities that require imagination. Hence, the efficacy of moral understanding and deliberation heavily depends on developing and cultivating one's moral imagination. It is a misconception, argues Johnson (1993), to think that strict moral rules can be replaced by something else to be used as moral guidance. Alternatively, he says focusing on imaginative aspects would open up new possibilities for moral understanding that were previously inaccessible. The imaginative nature of morality thus requires acknowledgement and appreciation towards the diverse views and metaphorical concepts that shape our moral ideas. Moral understanding would no longer be discovering moral laws but cultivating moral imagination.

Arendt's work, *The Life of the Mind,* and the lectures she presented on Kant's *Critique of Judgement* show essential aspects of "the gift called imagination" (Arendt, 1978 as cited in Spector, 2017, p.42) that I think are relevant to this conversation. She links imagination with thinking and states that without it, "no thought process or train of thought would be possible at all" (Spector, 2017, p.42). Unlike Kantian ethics, she implies that reason alone cannot answer the question of what is good or bad; instead,

she argues that the faculty of thinking gives rise to morality. This faculty helps us decide right from wrong because it can 'condition' us against evil-doing (Arendt, 1978; Zembylas, 2021). Interestingly, Arendt does not refer to this thinking as rationality. She distinguishes between rationality and thinking in that the latter should not be mistaken for a superior, idealised human faculty. Like Socrates, she perceives thinking as an activity, a habit of reflecting on and examining everyday life. Arendt links thinking with conscience since it can act as the pause button for the faculty of judgement. When we pass judgement, our deliberation is done through the process of thinking, which requires imagination, not general codes of conduct or best practices. Arendt believes we should exercise thinking because only with practice can we achieve it (Zembylas, 2021). Hence her belief that following a code or best practice can engage us with thoughtlessness.

3.5 Solidarity, a Goal to be Achieved

Rorty (1989) presents a new, transformative role for the imagination in *CIS,* a central concept of his solidarity project. In the book's introduction, he writes that solidarity

> cannot be recognised by clearing away "prejudice" or burrowing down to previously hidden depths but, rather, as a goal to be achieved. It is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers. Solidarity is not discovered by reflection, but created (p. xvi).

Rorty contends that solidarity cannot be attainable through inquiry; instead, it is a goal that can only be achieved through imagination. In *CIS* (1989), he defines

imagination as "the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers" (p.xvi). In Rorty's terms, imagination could be depicted as a necessary skill needed to notice the pain and suffering of others, even if they are unfamiliar, 'strange' individuals because they share a similar struggle- pain- that can be shared by all kinds of people.

Rorty contends that narratives, rather than ideologies or theories are the best sources for creating solidarity and moral progress. He believes moral progress is achievable through solidarity by expanding the 'we'. Rorty (1989) states that no amount of argumentation or reason can make people *care* about the suffering of different or unknown others. His aim in *CIS* is to show the true influence of solidarity that motivates people's behaviour to be more 'kind', respectful, moral and empathetic towards their fellow human beings (Mendieta, 2006). He looks to the sentiment on par with Dewey and Hume, collaborating with the cultivation of and trained imagination "as the cutting edge of cultural evolution, the power which- given peace and prosperity- constantly operates so as to make the human future richer than the human past" (Rorty, 1999, p.87).

3.5.1 Working through Emotions

Our search for perfection and autonomy can make us blind to the suffering of others. Rorty (1989) speaks of this repeatedly in *CIS*. On Nabakov, he states that "He knows quite well that the pursuit of autonomy is at odds with feelings of solidarity" (p.159). Still, Rorty (1989) believes there can be a balance between the imagination needed for self-creation and its role in solidarity through "increasing our sensitivity" (p.xvi). Rorty's notion of moral imagination goes beyond using intellect or reason because it

requires an acute awareness and a heightened sensitivity towards others' suffering. The emotional component cannot be excluded from the imaginative act. So, what is the mechanism behind Rorty's imagination, and how does it work?

Rorty does not go into much detail to explain how this is done, but we can look to other works and follow up on his thoughts. As Raeber (2013) observes, Dewey and Martha Nussbaum share similar ideas with Rorty about how literature (in the case of Nussbaum) and Art (in the case of Dewey) can enhance our ability to perceive. It was also established by Jerome Bruner (1986) that narratives play a crucial role in shaping cognition. Nonetheless, as Ritivoi (2016) rightly contends, there is a need to explore further how this perception or cognition can contribute to the sense of empathy.

According to Hart (2011), to use moral imagination, one must experience the story with the mind and heart. 'Imaginative power' enables individuals to experience the characters' full range of emotions as if they are themselves, the characters they identify with. From their ambitions and hopes to their shame, guilt, remorse, and uncertainty. Rorty (1989) suggests this process "is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and of redescriptions of what we ourselves are like" (p.xvi). Details of suffering and cruelty in narratives can evoke individuals to reflect on their behaviour and consider what good is all about. For this reason, he argues that "the novel, the movie and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress" (p.xvi). He believes that through this imaginative medium, readers (or audiences) can encounter and become aware and familiar with the lives and experiences of other individuals.

In the same vein, Ritivoi (2016) argues that narratives can promote the understanding of characters that are not relatable and who are very different from us. This results from empathy arising from an experience of deeper understanding rather than just identifying with something or someone familiar. In her work *Reading Stories Reading (Others') Lives,* Ritivoi (2016) explains how specific stories do not give this experience and thus promote passivity rather than empathy—leading to helplessness and inability to act among spectators even though they witness a spectacle of suffering. She writes,

> The collective character of the victims, as a conglomerate of human misery, is often one of the reasons we, the spectators, feel so unable to do anything. The fact that there are millions of victims makes it hard to imagine how one person's help, yours or mine, could ever make a difference. (p.55)

Ritivoi (2016) contends that this would not be the case if the story had a particular protagonist, an individualised character, with a plot that revolves around themes of suffering and anguish. Readers and spectators can, alas, not only identify with the character but also perceive and experience his or her suffering because now he or she has a face and a story. Through detail, abstract concepts are transformed into tangible realities that people can relate to. In doing so, readers project and transition themselves to become protagonists encouraging them to participate in the storyline by taking action and rescuing individuals even if they have never met them in person. This process goes beyond identification because it requires a deep imaginative experience to become a participant instead of a spectator.

One can follow a similar trail of thought in Nussbaum, who argues that to be able to engage fully with literary works, attentiveness is vital. This attentiveness, she compares to the attentiveness necessary for moral behaviour. Correspondingly, Dewey distinguishes between recognition, which involves a superficial identification with a pre-existing concept and "perception (which) involves truly "taking in" the object of perception, realising that we had not previously comprehended it in a meaningful sense." (Raeber, 2013, p.186). Greene (2007) also warns about the 'numbness' of getting used to something - a story or a picture. One must be aware of this numbness so that action can be taken.

3.5.2 Attention to Detail

Through the works of Nabokov and Orwell, Rorty (1989) cleverly shows that narratives and real-life encounters through history demonstrate that no rule, principle or inherent human nature can prevent people from exhibiting cruelty towards others. Rorty's emphasis on detail and his urge to *notice* are significant in his writing. He states that through deep personal identification with characters, like "Mr Causaubon in *Middlemarch* or with Mrs Jellyby in *Bleak House,* for example, we may come to notice what we ourselves have been doing" (p.141). Another is Rorty's (1989) argument that the moral of Nabokov's stories "is to notice what one is doing, and in particular to notice what people are saying. For it might turn out, it very often does turn out, that people are trying to tell you that they are suffering" (p.164). Concerning the liberal ironist, Rorty states that she needs to make sure "she notices suffering when it occurs (p.93). Only when we are curious and attentive can we hear what people are saying and thus notice and empathise with them.

Through the reader's encounter with these characters, their experiences and particularly their suffering, the "skill at imaginative identification" (Rorty, 1989, p.93) can allow one to inhabit and experience the perspectives of others. Imagination is key, for it can widen the capacity for readers to notice and reflect on their feelings, intentions and actions. This is why Rorty (1989) looks to narratives with thick details in the hope that readers abandon their private projects to the "desire to avoid cruelty and pain" (p.197). Mahon and O'Brien (2018) highlight Rorty's emphasis on the character and his interpretation of skilled authors such as Orwell and Nabokov, who can effectively convince their readers through detailed descriptions that such characters, even the most ruthless and complex, can exist in real life.

In *Ethics without Principle*, Rorty (1999) identifies moral progress with increasing sensitivity so that one can "respond to the needs of ever more inclusive groups of people." (p.81). He describes "intellectual and moral progress not as a matter of getting closer to the True or the Good or the Right, but as an increase in imaginative power" (Rorty, 1999, p.87). This power makes things new and continuously enriches the future by enabling individuals "to redescribe the familiar in unfamiliar terms" (p.87), fostering self-awareness and broader sympathy. As a result, one starts to identify more with the problems of others by gaining a broader and deeper understanding of their perspectives. Correspondingly good narratives, states Ritivoi (2016), manage to combine with interpretations that form part of a habitual pattern of action that one instinctively follows. She states, through these connections, "(you suffer, I help), these interpretive moves are based on a particular kind of solidarity: relating to others in a way that frames social action in what we might call a dynamic

of call-and-response" (p.57). Ritivoi (2016) argues that through a shared experience of pain, Rorty subscribes to a 'political ontology' and a politics of intervention to respond to and end suffering.

3.5.3 Building Communities

The desire to belong is a fundamental aspect of human nature. This is evident across cultures and societies. Humans are social creatures, and thus interactions are fundamental not only because a community can provide one with a sense of purpose but also because it can provide opportunities for personal growth and a chance to contribute to something larger than oneself. Imagination is indispensable in this endeavour. It helps us form cultures because it can help us develop new ways of thinking and speaking about new things.

Hart (2011) points out that Rorty's usage of sympathy extends beyond "feeling sorry for or pitying another" (p.39). He argues that Rorty's view of genuine sympathy goes deeper than this because it is based on a profound similarity between individuals that naturally evokes actions from such affinities. Rorty (1989) accentuates that through this personal identification and enhanced awareness of empathy, we would gradually build an expanded sense of 'we' and an 'expanded loyalty' that builds solid and diverse communities. Imagination, not reason, is the most impactful factor in building and establishing good communities. In his work *Truth and Progress* (1998), Rorty is consistent with his previous writings, highlighting the pivotal role of imagination, which helps form these diverse communities. He writes

> …the ability to sympathise with those different from ourselves is not usefully seen as an index of better use of a truth-seeking faculty called reason. I argue in others (those about feminism and about cultural difference) that it is imagination, rather than a clearer grasp of our moral obligations that does most for the creation and stability of such communities. (pg12)

This enhanced perspective encompassing expanded loyalties will enable us to achieve greater justice by creatively envisioning new possibilities for ethical and social change.

3.5.4 Language and Social Novelties

In the *Contingency of Language*, Rorty (1989) speaks about the need for imagination in our use of language to create possibilities for ourselves and construct an understanding of the world around us to build a future better than our past.

Language and the world are not separate for Rorty. He believes that the world can change when things are interpreted differently in new ways. Language is part of our behaviour; there is a connection between how we use language and the physical and social events that happen around us (Peters & Ghiraldelli Jr, 2001). Imagination is represented as an active and creative faculty, which we use to shape our understanding of the world and construct new ways of speaking, thinking and acting with others. In *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (*PCP*, 2007), Rorty continuously emphasises that "We should try to think of imagination 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" (p.107).

Rorty (2007) emphasises the importance of imagination as it is necessary to create a new language. Without imagination, language cannot exist, and without language, it becomes impossible to persuade others to embrace innovative ideas for societal improvement. Rorty (2007) highlights in *PCP* that imagination surpasses reason because while rational thinking remains essential in language games to ensure their proper usage, the imagination gives birth to these language games. As he writes,

> Imagination, in the sense in which I am using the term, is not a distinctively human capacity. It is, as I said earlier, the ability to come up with socially useful novelties… But you cannot use persuasion if you cannot talk. No imagination, no language. No linguistic change, no moral or intellectual progress. Rationality is a matter of making allowed moves within language games. Imagination creates the games that reason proceeds to play. Then, exemplified by people like Plato and Newton, it keeps modifying those games so that playing them is more interesting and profitable. Reason cannot get outside the latest circle that imagination has drawn. In this sense, imagination has priority over reason. (p.115)

Plato and Newton, says Rorty, are two examples of successful people modifying the language game. This is why he emphasised poets and novelists, who, through their works, manage to redescribe the world in 'new' and 'wonderful' ways. Redescriptions are transformational, and words carry a deeper meaning in that they can be instruments for change.

Rorty and Dewey are not the only thinkers who believe imagination can help develop new democracies through new and innovative ways. Greene's work *Releasing the Imagination* (1995) is very much in line with Rorty's views. She believes accessing and educating one's imaginative capacities can foster empathetic responses to real and fictional others. She also states that imagination inspires "visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society" (as cited in Spector, 2017, p.40). Through imagination, individuals can create worlds that do not exist, that are "always in the making... that may someday be called a democracy" (as cited in Spector, 2017, p.40). In correspondence with both Dewey and Rorty, Greene (1995) contends that currently, societies are not as just and democratic as they should be, and only imagination can assist in creating new, better realities.

3.6. The Dark Side of Imagination

Up to this point, the dissertation has explored the impact of narratives on moral imagination, highlighting their ability to shape our understanding of social possibilities and contribute to moral deliberation and social change. While much of the focus has been on the positive aspects of this faculty, it is also noteworthy to discuss potentially dangerous ones. If moral imagination can be harnessed for good, can it also be used for bad and evil actions?

Plato's insistence on censorship in the *Republic* looks into the negative aspects of stories when he describes Socrates's point of view that the stories about gods engage in "warring, fighting, or plotting against one another" and thus can set a poor example to the young (378cd/380c as cited in Fesmire, 2003, p.107). According to Socrates in this excerpt, the soul can be penetrated through musical and poetic

harmony and grace, producing a virtuous, good character. Conversely, "gracelessness, bad rhythm, and disharmony are akin to … bad character… if someone is properly educated in music and poetry, it makes him graceful, but if not, then the opposite" (401a as cited in Fesmire, 2003, p.107).

Spector (2017) writes about the destructive force of imagination by interpreting Arendt's work on totalitarianism and death camps. She discusses how Arendt draws on Kant, who argues that imagination is not inherently ethical and operates independently of moral purpose. The faculty "provides schemata for cognition", and therefore, it "provides a pathway to reveal the world" (Arendt, 1982, as cited in Spector, 2017, p.43). Arendt defines *Kant's productive imagination* as "the artistic faculty that produces something it has never seen" (1982 as cited in Spector p.45). Applying her argument concerning the Nazis, they would be considered "geniuses" because, through their imagination, they managed to create something unprecedented. Knowing the history and the atrocities the Nazis committed against the Jews and the world, the word 'genius' sounds dissonant and seems misplaced. Still, it is a good prompt to remind us that creative powers can be used for virtuous and malevolent purposes.

Hare briefly warns about imagination's power in his work *Freedom and Reason*. He believes that imagination is a good tool to use so that liberal values can be promoted instead of fanaticism. As Rorty believes, this can be done by educating the public's sympathies through literature. However, Hare also acknowledges that fanatics can employ imagination; thus, he restricts fiction to truth conditions shown by

experience. Writing about his experience as a Japanese prisoner in World War II, Hare (1965) expresses his views in this way,

> For story-books, though they help to stimulate our imagination, do not by themselves help us very much, to separate what is really likely to happen from what is not, nor to assess the probable frequency of its occurrence. For this, some experience of actual moral perplexities, and of actual consequences of certain moral choices, is a necessity. A few months spent as a coolie building the Burma railway is worth more to one's moral thinking than the reading of a great many novels or even factual reports about underdeveloped countries. (as cited in Alexander, 2013, p.187)

Alexander (2013) argues that "Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, and others have vividly trained people, especially children, to hate individuals they previously would not have noticed or known" (p.192). He criticises Rorty for not discussing the potential misuse of imagination. He contends there is no reference in Rorty's writing to Hare's observation that adversaries of peace can also use imagination. To my knowledge, Alexander is right because Rorty does not directly address negative imagination or its misuse in his writings. Still, it is worth emphasising that Rorty does stress the importance of educating and training it to develop moral imagination. He acknowledges that the imagination has to be cultivated through critical and self-reflective methods to promote social and moral progress. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how Rorty envisions a moral imagination as a means to transform the world. Imagination inspires new and innovative ways for individuals to redescribe themselves and the world around them to reduce pain and suffering and build a better world. Liberal, educated imagination, Rorty hopes, would make our societies less cruel, more humane and progressive. In the face of ethical pluralism brought about by globalisation, Rorty argues that cultivating imagination creates a diverse yet inclusive, just society for all (Curtis, 2015). This process is as educational as much as it is political. Training our moral imagination would assist in the move away from an individualistic and narrow conception of morality to the ability to perceive the connection of oneself to and part of a larger community. This would result in a more inclusive and just form of social organisation and action. Moral imagination is especially important for moral progress in today's culturally and morally diverse world. It is necessary to learn how to recognise and describe "the different sorts of little things around which individuals or communities centre their fantasies and their lives" (Rorty, 1989, p.93). This can be achieved through sentimental education. As Hart (2011) points out, what Rorty suggests is a long-term process, not a revolutionary one. Enhancing sympathy, cultivating moral sentiments, expanding loyalty, and pursuing greater justice are impossible without educating and training the imagination.

CHAPTER IV

FOR EDUCATION

Chapter 4

Rorty's philosophical journey has taken him beyond philosophy to explore various fields and disciplines, including politics, literature, religion, science and education. Although solidarity is a central theme in Rorty's philosophy, its academic purpose is not always apparent in his writings. Nevertheless, this chapter will attempt to integrate Rorty's perspectives discussed in the previous chapters, *On Solidarity* and *Moral Imagination*, *For Education*. It will answer the last research question; How and Why should a Rortyan view of solidarity be learned in the Ethics Classroom? First, this chapter will explore Rorty's writing about the Philosophy of Education. It will then provide a brief overview of Ethics Education in Malta and examine Rorty's solidarity project from an educational perspective, specifically in the context of the Ethics class.

4.1 A Philosophy of Education

Rorty's main work about education is *Education as Socialization and Individualization,* found in his book *PSH* (1999). This text was written earlier as an article under a different title, *Education without Dogmas*, published in *Dissent* (1989). This article does not reflect on the educational process; instead, it is a political, educational analysis of the US at the time. Here, Rorty (1999) argues that the philosophy of education has made things unclear about specific educational issues for modern societies. More specifically, Rorty mentions the division between two groups with different aims for education. The conservative group's (political right) goal of education is to discover the truth, while the progressive group (political left) prioritise freedom. According to Rorty, this conflict is not resolved through theoretical or philosophical means but through a practical compromise (Wain, 2014). In *PSH* (1999), he states that

> education covers two entirely distinct, and equally necessary, processes- socialization and individualization… there is only the shaping of an animal into a human being by a process of socialization, followed (with luck) by the self-individualization and self-creation of that human being through his or her own later revolt against that very process. (pp.117-118)

Primary and secondary schooling is responsible for acquiring correct and indisputable knowledge, described by Rorty (1999) as socialisation or acculturation, "of getting the students to take over the moral and political common sense of the society as it is" (p.116) and thus focuses on truth and cultural values. On the other hand, individualisation and the pursuit of freedom concern non-vocational universities. In this process, the focus is on self-creation and intellectual independence against indoctrination. Rorty (1999) says that individualisation is "to help students realize that they can reshape themselves - that they can rework the self-image foisted on them by their past, the self-image that makes them competent citizens, into a new self-image, one that they themselves have helped to create" (p.118). This approach to education is also consistent with Rorty's private and public split mentioned in Chapter I. Although he refers to Dewey's theory of education, Rorty does not provide much detail on how socialisation and individualisation should be envisaged in this article.

In reading Rorty (1999), one may argue that he places less significance on pre-college education, namely socialisation, than the subsequent phase in higher education, individualisation. In this article, he emphasises how "socialization has to come

before individuation, and education of freedom cannot begin before some constraints have been imposed" (p.118). However, as Ghiraldelli Jr. (2001) accentuates in Rorty's Philosophy of Education, "the social function of education is not the promotion of the truth, in a specific sense" (p.67). It is not one or the other, but both processes are required, according to Rorty. Socialisation involves accepting a consensus, while individualisation represents the freedom to doubt this consensus. Socialisation need not be exclusively aligned with the values of the political right. Individualisation need not solely focus on adopting authors and theorists endorsed by the cultural left. Drawing upon Dewey and illustrating a Deweyan dream, Rorty (1999) writes,

> For Dewey, this socialization consisted in acquiring an image of themselves as heirs to tradition of increasing liberty and rising hope. Updating Dewey a bit, think of him as wanting the children to come to think of themselves as proud and loyal citizens of a country that, slowly and painfully, threw off a foreign yoke, freed its slaves, enfranchised its women, restrained its robber barons and licensed its trade unions, liberalized its religious practices, broadened its religious and moral tolerance, and built colleges in which 50 per cent of its population could enrol… Dewey wanted the inculcation of this narrative of freedom and hope to be the core of the socialization process. (pp.121-122)

Utilising Dewey's concepts, Rorty explains the importance of the socialisation process through historical narratives of freedom and hope. Through this process, children can learn and understand how past generations passed on increasing hope and liberty traditions. Socialisation and individualisation should be utilised and

promote mutual trust - solidarity. So hope and freedom can follow, building from early years a strong core for democratic social life.

4.1.1 Education for Hope and Democracy

Apart from *Education as Socialization and Individualization*, Peters and Ghiraldelli Jr (2001) mention two other significant works where Rorty addresses education. The first is *Feminism and Pragmatism,* initially presented by Rorty as a Tanner Lecture and *The Contingency of Language,* a section from his famous book *CIS* (1989), which has already been discussed in this dissertation in the first chapter. Peters and Ghiraldelli Jr (2001) make an interesting observation about these two writings linking them with the one mentioned above. In the first piece, they argue that Rorty writes about education's historical and contemporary dimensions through a neo pragmatist perspective. The latter two look beyond the situation as it is and offer strategies to reshape and imagine a different, hopefully better, future of education. These three works combined provide insight into what *education is*, *what it could be* and *what it should do*.

4.1.2 What Education Should Do

In *CIS* (1989), when writing about *The Contingency of Language*, Rorty shows but a glimpse of what is possible in education. He draws on Davidson's metaphor theory to suggest that using metaphors in our conversation breaks traditional discourse to create new innovative ideas (Ghiraldelli Jr, 2001). The invention of novel metaphors requires developing and expanding our imaginative capacity to promote creativity and innovation and construct alternative narratives. Its expansion and the creation of metaphors allow for envisioning new possibilities, creating paths for progress and

social change through new ways of thinking. Thus Rorty's main educational aim would be to inspire students to venture beyond the usual to create their own narratives and contribute to the evolution of a larger civic experience.

Wain (2001) explains in more detail where Rorty's Philosophy of Education can take us. He concludes his essay *Richard Rorty and the End of Philosophy of Education* by stating that Rorty's conversation about the relevance of philosophy to politics (and education) shifts when he recognises that "Only a society without politics... a society run by tyrants who prevent social and cultural change from occurring- would no longer require philosophers" (p.172). Wain (2001) observes that through his work, especially in *CIS,* Rorty admits that philosophy has a vital role to play in politics because "it can be engaged not in speculation but in the articulation of the political aspirations of one's society and, more especially, those of its weakest members: the voiceless" (p.177). Since these people lack the means to express themselves because "they do not have much in the way of language" (Rorty, 1989, p.94), they need someone to voice their concerns, opinions, and aspirations for a better future. In this regard, liberal intellectuals do not look to create their own utopias. Instead, they look to give hope to the powerless, oppressed and voiceless individuals, victims of cruelty and suffering. Liberal intellectuals, or in Rorty's term, liberal ironists, have the tools required, language and imagination, to fulfil this purpose.

Rorty gives a different moral and political education goal in rejecting essentialism and choosing contingency. Since moral and ethical beliefs cannot be found in objective truths or universal principles, he looks to stories, the narratives created by oneself for the self and others. Such narratives are created and influenced by one's

experiences, culture, and social and historical perspectives, giving hope that people can improve themselves to improve the world around them. As Mendieta (2006) affirms, "it is clear that Rorty's work is motivated by the hope and utopia of social justice. There is a heroic dimension to Rorty's nominalist historicism. He wants to hold on to hope for social transformation" (p.xxviii). Rorty's significant insight, as conveyed through his writing, is that the essence of moral education extends beyond the mere continuous accumulation of knowledge. Instead, it is an imaginative, exploratory, and transformative process that employs dynamic narratives, which evolve to foster social change toward an increasingly utopian society.

4.2 Ethics Education in Malta

Across Europe, schools have been experiencing a growing cultural and religious diversity, and Malta is no exception. Over the last few years, the composition of Maltese schools has been highly impacted by a large influx of economic immigrants and asylum seekers, resulting in a significant increase of international students in our classes (Mizzi & Mercieca, 2020). According to the Maltese National Statistics Office (NSO), international student numbers in primary and secondary schools have doubled in just five years. Even though most of these international students come from EU Member States, Mizzi and Mercieca (2020) note a notable increase among Asian and African students.

The National Curriculum Framework (NFC), which originated in 2012, was the initial policy document to address the matter of non-religious (or non-Catholic) students' participation in learning Catholic Religious Education (CRE). It was intended both for Maltese and international students who chose to opt out of CRE and was also

welcomed by the Humanist Society (Wain, 2016). This led to the developing and initiating of an Ethics Education Programme (EEP) in Maltese State Schools. The programme would offer moral teaching of values from a secular point of view, offering an alternative to all students regardless of faith, religious beliefs and background.

4.2.1 The Ethics Curriculum

The EEP addresses different moral beliefs and cultures, both secular and religious. One can notice that it is rooted in Western philosophy and takes a philosophical approach that teaches students about moral behaviour and values (Żammit, 2019). It aims to help students develop their moral perspectives and sensibility and thus is not set on a code of conduct or doctrinal principles. The EEP looks away from the devotion to religious or denominational biases to focus on positive values that most people agree on and are widely accepted in society (Wain, 2014). As written in the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) documented by Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE, 2015), the values targeted for the EEP are essential for moral (ethical) and political (democratic) outlooks. It thus develops both the collective and individual qualities of students.

Ethics promotes key values such as "truth, honesty, fairness and a sense of justice, compassion, solidarity with the pain of others, tolerance, understanding, loyalty, courage, generosity, and so on" (DQSE, 2015, p.28). In learning such virtues, the EEP aims to help students build character to make well-informed moral decisions. In addition, it also portrays ethics as a reflective process that requires thinking and practice to cultivate ethical inquiry and action skills. Students learn essential skills

such as negotiating and arguing with others while respecting differences and different views (Wain, 2014). According to Wain, this approach is influenced by the Aristotelian phronêsis referring to practical wisdom that involves making the right decisions for oneself through the care of the self, taking the right actions for the care of others and striving for excellence for the common good.

In the NCF (2012), the Ethics class is presented as a space where students are encouraged to listen to each other, experience different ideas and views and reflect critically and creatively. It should be a space where students feel safe and comfortable to speak. Thus, Wain (2014) accentuates the importance that the Ethics class grows and evolves into a moral community so that the values are learned and practised. In Wain's (2016) words, a community is,

> [...] one that values discussion, dialogue, debate, the exchange of ideas and outlooks in social environment which is free and safe and where participants feel that they and their views are respected; it is, therefore, a community of friends. The community is a place where understanding is built and consensus valued, but also a place of non-violent struggle where arguments are owned, if at all, by persuasion. (para.4)

As Wain (2014) clearly states, one must remember that, in a pluralistic society, judgements are bound to be contested and controversial. If not, the values of a democratic society, such as freedom, justice and tolerance, would suffer. The Ethics programme is vital in teaching students how to handle ethical disagreements. It recognises that ethical perspectives are shaped by personal opinions and beliefs,

influenced by the cultural norms of one's upbringing (Żammit, 2019). It mostly looks to Western ethical theories such as Utilitarianism (Consequentialism), Virtue Ethics and Kantian Ethics to support moral judgements. Though the EEP utilises conventional philosophy tools, including Socratic questioning and logic, to educate learners on critical thinking, reading, and argumentation, Mizzi & Mercieca (2020) contend that it also acknowledges creative thinking and caring thinking since it is based on the methodology called Philosophy for Children (P4C), a program developed by Matthew Lipman.

4.2.2 Learning and Assessment

The Ethics programme employs a spiral syllabus that allows students to revisit themes, issues and concepts multiple times over the years. This approach enables students to reinforce their understanding by questioning their perspectives and ideas throughout the various stages of the programme. From primary years, the programme is designed to offer gradual and progressive stages that adjust to students' cognitive, emotional and social development. The program then progresses towards the latter stages, requiring students to critically discuss complex and controversial issues (Wain, 2014).

Like other academic subjects, Ethics utilises the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOFs) for learning and assessment. These are heavily drawn from the practice of P4C, making it possible to deviate from a traditional form of assessment to focus more on a learner-centred approach and to promote critical thinking as an alternative to memorisation and recitation (DQSE, 2015). According to Żammit (2019), the Ethics assessments prioritise higher-order skills, "such as analysis,

evaluation and synthesis" (p.12). Assessments would require students to consider multiple viewpoints and argue for or against controversial issues, ethical dilemmas or political views presented through various methods, including case scenarios and stories. This shows they are using their thinking skills and learning to think for themselves, becoming more autonomous. Students must delve deeply into the concept; to do this, they must use and develop good thinking skills. They may not need to arrive at a conclusion or a consensus. Still, it is required to back up decisions or answers with reasonable arguments, thus showing deep understanding and developing good communication and problem-solving skills.

The EEP shares similarities with Rorty's educational analysis in *Education as Socialisation and Individualisation.* At the primary level, the focus is on socialisation. However, even though socialisation remains a core element at the secondary level, students are encouraged to adopt a more autonomous political stance. As was discussed, this shift demands the application of cognitive skills to foster critical thinking skills and nurture autonomy among learners. In light of this understanding of the Ethics Curriculum, it is essential to view the approaches for incorporating imagination in the ethics classroom. This exploration can reveal valuable guidance for Ethics educators who seek to utilise imagination in their pedagogy while at the same time cultivating moral imagination among their students.

4.2.3 Imagination in the Ethics Curriculum

The Learning and Assessment Programmes (LAPs), as stated in DQSE (2015), emphasise the importance of learner-oriented learning and thus encourage various learning activities that stimulate creativity and imagination skills. This document

does not define or emphasise a particular method of engaging the imagination. Nonetheless, it acknowledges that creativity is innate in young people and is viewed as part of a person's thinking process, which unfortunately often remains underdeveloped. It also describes creativity as a skill accessible to everyone and can be taught to unlock an entrepreneurial mindset. As described in the DQSE (2015), creativity aims to use the individual's imagination, knowledge and other skills to approach familiar things with fresh eyes. To do so, educators must create or utilise engaging, culturally embedded and cognitively stimulating resources to enhance the learners' overall learning experience. This aligns with Rorty's argument about using imagination for innovative ideas.

More specifically, in the Ethics classroom, the LOFs point out that the resources used need to be varied and cater to two different approaches - that of the imagination and that of reason. The DQSE (2015) emphasises stimulating the imagination at the primary level. Reason is the dominant faculty at the secondary level. Hence to facilitate this, there needs to be the utilisation of a diverse range of resources prepared and used in the Ethics class. Some examples mentioned in DQSE (2015) include "visual materials, e.g. stories, documentaries and dramatisations, and written materials, e.g. short stories, plays, novels, poems, case studies, reports" (p29). The material used and their emphasis throughout the Ethics course must be adjusted accordingly as the learners progress. The initial idea for creativity, according to the DQSE (2015), is "to develop the imagination, which in turn helps to develop the sentiment of empathy with others so as to be able to use reason as a tool to develop the imagination." (p.29). This partly aligns with Rorty's use of imagination when he

argues that imagination is needed to develop a greater sense of empathy and understanding. However, Rorty does not link imagination with reason.

4.2.4 Philosophy for Children: A Comparison

Should Lipman's educational approach be contrasted with Rorty's, one can notice some key differences. In Lipman's P4C programme, it is evident that the primary influence is rationalism, which emphasises reason and logical thinking to acquire knowledge, understanding and truth (Lipman, 2003). Conversely, Rorty is influenced by pragmatism, thus echoing Dewey; he emphasises practical experience, action and contingency. Concerning the role of imagination then, Lipman prescribes it to fostering critical and ethical reasoning. Although he also values narrative, in P4C, it is mainly considered a method for engaging students in ethical thinking and reflection.

Rorty (1989) does not ascribe imagination to reason or as a tool for critical thinking. He views it more as a means for creating narratives and alternative perspectives. Narratives are thus vital for Rorty because they assist individuals in creating an ethical perspective, asserting that moral beliefs are constructed by the narratives created by oneself and the community. Such views have important social and political implications, showing Rorty's concern with promoting social justice and inclusivity through education, keeping in line with his belief that education should not illuminate the truth but rather inspire change. Lipman's approach focuses on developing individual critical thinking and ethical reasoning abilities. However, it is worth noting that Lipman's community of inquiry, also influenced by Dewey, is

conceived as politically democratic. Incorporating Rorty's notion of solidarity can further transform it into a socially just community.

Lipman comprehensively analyses how his approach to P4C can be applied in the classroom. Teachers in training are instructed and encouraged to utilise the methods and techniques presented in the Ethics classroom to facilitate philosophical inquiry (Żammit, 2019). However, there is limited information or guidance within the curriculum and educational documents, such as the DQSE (2015), regarding incorporating imagination or specific techniques for fostering moral imagination. This situation grants educators a certain level of flexibility, but it also places the responsibility on them to explore and develop methods that promote moral imagination through their pedagogy.

4.3 A Rortyan Solidarity Project in the Ethics Classroom

Rorty did not explicitly prescribe a pedagogical approach or technique for imaginative education. As seen throughout this dissertation, his work focused on the broader implications of imagination, narrative and ethics for promoting solidarity. Nonetheless, his ideas are most prominently discussed in his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989) can inspire educators to develop their approaches to cultivating imagination to promote solidarity. Since Dewey's pragmatic philosophy influenced Rorty, he shares the same ideas on practical experience, student-centred learning and developing critical thinking skills. They both believe education should be valued because it is a means for social improvement and personal growth. Rorty's emphasis on imagination, narrative and fostering empathy aligns with Dewey's student-centred, experiential learning approach. Thus educators who might be

inspired by Rorty's views on education and imagination would find Dewey's pedagogical approach relevant, especially for cultivating imagination in the classroom.

4.3.1 Taking Imagination More Seriously

As discussed in Chapter III, Romantic Imagination was a counterattack against the dry intellectualism that boomed in the Enlightenment. These two eras brought forth an opposing understanding of the world- the one in the Enlightenment, which uses the 'mind' and the one from the Romantic Period, which utilises 'emotion'. By now, one might expect that we have moved beyond this dichotomy. However, there still seems to be a tension between the 'factual' and 'artistic' manifesting in educational theory and practice. Fitzgerald & Nielsen (2008) argue that this is evident through the emergence of prefixes used persistently with education, such as 'imaginative education, emotional intelligence education and multiple intelligences education'. As John Dewey emphasised, prefixes would not be needed to describe education if it addresses all its aspects effectively.

Regrettably, mainstream education in most European countries, including Malta, uses a system that demonstrates a preference for 'academic' ability, with subjects such as mathematics and sciences consistently receiving more attention than arts and humanities (Fitzgerald & Nielsen, 2008). This does not suggest that imagination and emotions should be restricted only to arts or humanities subjects. Still, a hierarchical educational system pushes forward academic subjects leaving little room for imaginative and creative learning. This issue is significant because Ethics falls under the humanities umbrella. Despite being assessed in secondary education,

other educators and parents often regard it as a 'soft' subject. This is given less priority compared to other seemingly more relevant academic subjects. This trend was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when subjects like Ethics and Art were discontinued due to shortages of educators, highlighting the need for greater emphasis on the importance of such subjects.

The 'academic' concept stems from the idea of schooling driven by the demand for industrial work, which aligns differently from the social and technological reality we live in today. Rapid technological changes in the last few years have made predicting skills and attributes needed for the near future challenging (Egan, 1992). Thus we need to educate for jobs that still need to be created. As Fitzgerald and Nielsen (2008) accentuate, these uncertainties show how much the education system needs a more holistic approach to encompass all aspects of the human experience. Thinking and learning should extend beyond the conventional concept of academic subjects so that imaginative approaches to thinking and learning can be explored by integrating body and imagination with the mind and rationality.

4.3.2 Education and Conventional Thinking

Prominent education thinkers like Plato, Rousseau and Dewey view education as successful when students acquire knowledge and are liberated from the constraints of conventional beliefs and thus become autonomous thinkers. According to these education thinkers, education fails not when there is a lack of knowledge but rather when conventional ideas imprison the mind (Egan, 1992). This makes imagination a big deal in education since it is the only capacity to overcome the hindrance to thinking imposed by conventional beliefs, ideas and other concepts. However, little

focus has been given to exploring imagination or its value for moral education. Spector (2017) says that Egan, an educational theorist, is perhaps one of the few who tries to make educators aware when he says, "grasp on what imagination is" (p.39).

Why is the break away from conventional thinking so important? As discussed in Chapter III, philosophers like Rorty, mostly pragmatic, as well as educators like Egan and Greene, have acknowledged the significant role that the imagination plays in education due to its 'possible' thinking that enables the exploration of new perspectives, experimenting with innovative ideas and the move beyond realities towards better alternatives (Rosiek & Beghetto, 2009). Nonetheless, Spector (2017) highlights a vital point that "imagination and spontaneity... can blossom under conditions of freedom and, conversely, are prone to decay within highly controlled societies" (p.42). As Egan (1992) and other thinkers, such as Arendt and Greene, argue, independent thinking equates to the freedom of the mind and ideas that arise from such freedom are vital for sustaining democracies.

4.3.3 Competitiveness, Individualism and a Free Market

It has been the talk of the town in various research, especially in Philosophy of Education articles, that the education-industrial complex is increasingly exerting control over curriculum and pedagogy while financially capitalising on it (Spector, 2017). Neoliberalism brought forth policies that intensified the influence of the free-market economy on education. This, unfortunately, led to a narrow focus on practical skills limiting other essential qualities, traits and attitudes required for a democratic society. Hare and Portelli (2013) have written extensively about this. They argue that the economic and social landscape that neoliberalism created gives

the illusion that realities cannot be changed because they are fixed. Such illusions diminish the significance of human agency, critical education beyond skills, and the creation of diverse perspectives. Democracy would suffer in such a situation because of the constraints put on democratic rights and freedoms for both teachers and students, limiting democratic learning and educational institutions.

This idea of education transforms young people into commodities, used as a means to financial ends—employment training and anticipated future job opportunities. As Greene (1995) contends, "certain children are conceived of as human resources rather than persons… as if they were raw material to be shaped to market demands" (p.32). This instrumental ideology, referred to as economism, has the potential to dissuade or even incapacitate young people from envisioning alternative life paths beyond those predetermined for them. The pervasive influence of economics on all aspects of life, sanctioned and controlled by powerful corporate elites, has been a critical factor in fostering apathy among those who lack the power to initiate change (Spector, 2017; Greene, 1995).

The imagination, says Greene (1995), a statement Rorty would likely concur with, can help fight against capitalism, individualism and the apathy taking over our societies. Since it can decrease "the social paralysis we see around us… (it) brings an ethical concern to the fore, a concern that again has to do with community that ought to be in the making and the values that give it color and significance" (Greene, 1995, p.35). Greene, among others who wrote on moral imagination, including Dewey, Rorty, Nassbaum and Mary Warnock, to mention but a few, focus on imagination and its

role in cultivating empathy and a sense of goodness to counteract the prevailing technocratic meaninglessness.

4.3.4 Make Room for Sentimental Education

As previously mentioned, Rorty is not the only philosopher to criticise the over-glorified realm of intellectual- rationality. Rousseau, in his writing of *Emile*, could be considered one of the first philosophers to articulate an educational approach that aims to develop the whole person, including the emotional and affective capacities, rather than simply focusing on intellectual development. In criticising rationality, it is essential to note that Rorty's work on emotion does not imply that it should be the only focus of education.

Rorty (1989) greatly contributes to ethical education by discussing cultivating moral imagination to foster the sentiment- against cruelty to foster a sense of solidarity and expand moral horizons. If done correctly, he believes this sentiment can translate into a commitment to fostering social virtues such as justice that ultimately contribute to moral progress. As discussed in Chapter III, this can be done by instilling a sense of social responsibility through sentimental education, which teaches students to notice the suffering of others. It utilises narrative and fosters the skill of literary criticism to teach students to notice the small trivial details. Thus, students start utilising their skills to notice the flow of their emotions as they learn more about the experience of others.

Instead of using universal principles like Human Rights, Rorty (2010), in his essay *Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality* proposes sentimental stories such as

Uncle Tom's Cabin to 'manipulate', as he says, students' feelings "in such a way that they imagine themselves in the shoes of the despised and oppressed" (p.360). This would compel them to commit strongly to promoting social justice and the well-being of all individuals. He argues that stories work because they create sympathy for those who suffer through their imaginative abilities to feel what it is like for that person. Rationality has nothing to do with it. Thinking of bad people or their beliefs as irrational is not morally relevant.

Their problem, Rorty (2010) says, "is that they were not so lucky in the circumstances of their upbringing as we were. Instead of treating them as irrational… we should treat them as deprived… from two more concrete things: security and sympathy" (p.361). Rorty goes on to say that Annette Beiner is one of the contemporary philosophers who is on the right track when she says that Hume is "the woman's moral philosopher because Hume held that corrected (sometimes rule-corrected) sympathy, not law-discerning reason, is the fundamental moral capacity" (Rorty, 2010, p.361). Baier looks away from obligations as fundamental moral notions and suggests 'trust' instead removing the need to be aware of the moral law, having "a progress of sentiments" (Rorty, 2010, p.361). Rorty (2010) explains how this progress involves recognising minor, superficial similarities that do not differentiate us from non-human animals.

> This progress consists in an increasing ability to see the similarities between ourselves and people very unlike us as outweighing the differences. It is the result of what I have been calling "sentimental education". The relevant similarities are not a matter of sharing deep true self, which instantiates true

> humanity, but are such little, superficial similarities as cherishing our parents and our children - similarities that do not interestingly distinguish us from many nonhuman animals. (p.362)

Rorty's preposition of advancing the sentimental education of individuals and societies is thus not a revolutionary change. Instead, it requires a long-term process, so it should be utilised in education. Zembylas (2017) notes that "For Rorty, then sentimental education becomes a cultural, historical and political project aimed at modifying the way individuals feel by cultivating moral feelings" (p.8). Rorty's sentimental education goes beyond just recognising the suffering experiences of others because it requires our understanding of the range of human vulnerabilities. A 'global moral sentiment' is an idea cultivated by Rorty, putting sympathy and solidarity as the core of human rights culture.

4.3.5 Make Use of Stories that Transform

Moral Theories or Ideologies should not be extracted while interpreting novels or narrative text, says Rorty (2010) in his essay The *Priority of Democracy to Philosophy*, for this does not enhance moral perception. Novels (narratives) should be considered tools for moral and political education and thus be interpreted in complexity. They contain a significant role as instruments to expand personal experience and influence future action. However, they do not convey a universal moral principle. As such, Raeber (2013), echoing Rorty's concern, emphasises that trying to derive moral lessons from the novel by simplifying the complex and subtle situations depicted in them with multiple perspectives is not a good idea. This would narrow down the

complex, ambiguous multiple voices in such works, simplifying them to a single moral principle.

Mendieta (2006) argues that Rorty encourages us to read transformative stories that turn us into agents of social change. Thus, educators must be selective when choosing narratives for their lessons. The exemplary narratives must encompass environmental and global awareness, with culturally diverse characters who struggle together and show a passion for a 'greater justice' - pursuing fairness, improved living conditions, or equitable treatment. Although Rorty's concept of moral progress is shown to apply to specific authors or texts, as Hart (2011) contends, his approach can be extended to various narratives from diverse periods, styles and locations. The most important thing is to check for the power of language and social realities within the chosen narrative works and ensure they fall under Rorty's category as the 'literature of social hope'. Hart (2011) emphasises that one must consider the writer's skills. Only skilled writers can turn the ordinary person into a heroic character making a narrative engaging by connecting readers and viewers on a profound emotional level, thus eliciting empathy, making readers or audiences share their pain and envision an 'expanded we'.

4.3.6 Cheap Sentimentality and Uniqueness of Experience

While Rorty took sentimental education on as a political project, others contest its use in politics. Arendt would argue against Rorty's political project of sensitising to the suffering of others because she deems it irrelevant to political action. Arendt is sceptical of sentiments, especially compassion, in politics (Ritivoi, 2016). She speaks about the dangers of the inflation of moral emotions that give the illusion that they

are political virtues and thus have the potential to conceal factual truth or, worse, destroy it. She mainly discusses pity and compassion that, for her, are politically irrelevant and tend to hijack important political talks that destroy solidarity because pity does not lead to action. Superior rationality can lead to misguidance - similar to what happened to the NAZIs. Idealising emotions too much may open doors for 'cheap sentimentality' (Zembylas, 2021).

Arendt raises a valid concern regarding the potential issues that can arise when emotions, particularly cheap sentimentality, are exploited in the political sphere. However, by grounding Rorty's sentimentality approach in education, educating the emotions and teaching students how to politicise them becomes vital. Given the prevalence of emotion-invoking discourse, especially in today's digital era and with the rise of extremism, educators must be aware of the culture wars surrounding them. Teachers must acknowledge the ongoing culture wars in our society. Those who seek to instigate them constantly seek ways to fuel them. So what are young people listening to, and how is this affecting them emotionally? If we want education to be effective, teachers must keep themselves updated so they can be able to tackle such topics in class.

Emotions should not be ignored, nor should students be sheltered from discomfort. As an inherently uncomfortable pedagogy, ethics involves exposing students to suffering and traumatic experiences to help them politicise their emotions on such matters. What can they do about this suffering? How can they make a difference in the sufferer's life? This pragmatic approach can capture the aspects at play inside the classroom. Everyone must navigate this emotional terrain, especially students

who will be the voting citizens of tomorrow. Political emotion is thus a vital educational prospect that must be implemented in our schools so that students learn how to politicise emotions for a better democratic way of life.

On similar terms, Mizzi and Mercieca (2020), in their research, argue that it is not a lack of knowledge or intellect that makes it difficult to empathise with the characters in a story. Instead, it is the uniqueness of the experience that makes empathy incomprehensible. Even though they do not exclude the process for endorsing empathy in the Ethics classroom, Mizzi and Mercieca contend that teachers find it challenging to do so. Teachers understand that they have a curriculum that provides ample space to incorporate empathic understanding. However, they still find it challenging. According to this study, the problem outlined by the researchers is that students are being influenced by neoliberalism attitude - individualism.

Spector (2017) also mentions this concern in her work. She borrows the term "culture of narcissism" (p.47) from Larsch (1991) to describe American culture. This cultural phenomenon is seen to have rapidly spread throughout Western societies and is not limited to America alone. It is a culture that hinders individuals from living in a way that benefits and involves their community. She quotes Taylor's (1991) work as she explains it as "the malaise of modernity" (as cited in Spector, 2017, p.47), which prioritises self-fulfilment as the most significant value in life. This attitude tends to disregard moral obligations to others and diminish the importance of serious commitments to them. This culture makes our students evermore individualistic and apathetic, argue Mizzi & Mercieca (2020), making it challenging to understand and connect with others.

Reading such research verifies how much an educational approach like Rorty's is needed. Students require more exposure to these kinds of stories and, with the help of imagination, move away from this individualistic, capitalistic mentality that our students are exposed to day and night. As mentioned, this process requires time; more than one sentimental story will make students budge. As Rorty (1989) contends, we must start by helping our students escape that indifference and make them 'notice'. Starting this process early on and implementing it effectively enables Rorty's concept of solidarity to thrive. Even if it begins modestly by cultivating a sense of community in the ethics classrooms, this approach can significantly impact the education system and society as a whole. Though it might require time, building communities can counter the overly capitalistic, individualistic and self-centred ideology. Ethics educators must dedicate themselves to the challenging responsibility of addressing the emotional foundations behind these practices. They should promote social change by modelling and encouraging small pragmatic actions within the classroom. By teaching this way, students can learn how to contribute meaningfully to social justice efforts.

4.3.7 Responsibility, Building Bridges and Expanding Communities

As Mizzi and Mercieca (2020) note in their research, even though the curriculum officially recognizes Malta's increasing cultural diversity and appreciates its people's history and traditions, one must keep in mind that the Ethics syllabus is mostly rooted in a Westernised tradition and heavily reliant on rationality. Ethics educators especially need to be aware and cautious in their pedagogy and resources so that they do not make religious or culturally diverse individuals move beyond their unique

identities to adopt a Westernised value system. This can result in a Eurocentric cultural dominance where students' identities are scrutinised.

Due to cultural differences, students who do not conform to the norms outlined in the ethics curriculum may feel excluded or marginalised unless they assimilate. In this context, ethics lessons would benefit students who identify with a Western lifestyle while alienating or oppressing those with different cultural backgrounds. Such students may experience discomfort and potential disruption to their sense of self since their deeply held beliefs and practices are subject to evaluation by a prevailing moral standard. Moreover, as Mizzi and Mercieca (2020) state, teachers pushing students to reach outcomes successfully might focus less on establishing educational environments where students and teachers can interact beyond predetermined boundaries. They quote Ruitenberg (2010) to accentuate this point, "outcomes-based education is, by design, inhospitable" (as cited in Mizzi & Mercieca, 2020, p.9).

This is also reflected in Greene's (1995) essay *Releasing the Imagination*, where she highlights the responsibility to ensure that compassionate communities support children's identities. Individual identity is shaped through relationships and dialogue, so educators must create environments that foster a sense of worthiness and empowerment for all children. Despite the limitations that educational systems may impose on young people by labelling them as disabled, impoverished, or having low cognitive abilities or IQ, these individuals can still use their imagination to choose and act based on their perspective of potential possibilities.

As discussed in Chapter II, Rorty concerns himself with questions of responsibility- when one fosters social connections that encourage individuals to take responsibility for one another. Responsibility is the ultimate key to moving individuals to take action and, thus, what makes it vital to build bridges and extend communities. In *CIS*, Rorty (1989) states that "we can have we-intentions, intentions which we express in sentences of the form 'We all want…,' intentions which contrast with those expressed by sentences beginning 'J want…,' by virtue of our membership in any of them (groups), large or small" (p.195). He also notes an important idea by Sellars, who says that moral obligation arises from intersubjective agreement among groups. Benevolence, however, arises from an individual's or group's emotions. According to Rorty, this agreement does not have an inherent condition; rather, it stems from a particular historical circumstance and thus is also grounded in human experience and relations.

In a 2006 interview titled *There is a Crisis Coming*, Rorty describes his view on solidarity and offers a compelling illustration of what community means to him. Solidarity is when individuals identify as members of a group working together for a common goal. In this sense, the individual is affected if the group fails too. Rorty acknowledges that solidarity is morally neutral and can be used by groups for evil purposes. He compares it to self-respect for individualism and notes that America once had a sense of solidarity, but he affirms it is no longer present.

> As to the very concept of solidarity, I see it as people thinking of themselves first and foremost as members of a trade union or citizens of a country, or members of an army, people engaged in a common effort, so that if the effort

> fails, identity is in trouble. If the revolution doesn't succeed, if the union can't be organised, if the country doesn't survive, if the war isn't won, then the individual is crushed. Solidarity is just what exists in such movements. It is accepting reciprocal responsibility to other members of the group for the sake of a common purpose. In that sense the Nazis had solidarity, Mao's cultural revolutionaries had solidarity. The bad guys can have solidarity too. Solidarity is morally neutral, so to speak. It's like self-respect. It's for groups what self-respect is for individuals. America once had a sense of solidarity. At the time of the victory over Hitler, for example, there was a sense of America as a coherent nation with a purpose in the world and a meaning. That's what we don't have anymore. (p.61)

Rorty's approach to solidarity encourages the need for this motion through imaginative action so that teachers and students can become evermore conscious of the potential for collective well-being. *CIS* also represents this when Rorty (1989) explains how solidarity results from focusing on the similarities in pain and humiliation rather than insignificant differences. He writes,

> The view I am offering says that there is such a thing as moral progress, and that this progress is indeed in the direction of greater human solidarity. But that solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and

> humiliation —the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of "us." (p.192)

Wain (2104) makes a similar point when he accentuates that the Ethics class should be a place where communities can be built. The concept of friendship in the community, which Wain speaks of, is not simply a matter of making friends. However, through dialogue, one creates a space where young people can experience similarities and differences with their neighbours and discover common ground in building communities based on mutual trust- solidarity. Such communities may extend beyond the classroom to form foundations for broader social engagement.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has put forward Rorty's idea that education should prioritise teaching to reduce or prevent humiliation by teaching students to *notice* the vulnerabilities of different identities. The moral imagination Rorty speaks of does not look to promote universalistic principles or human rights but instead challenges these and other existing norms and values. This does not align with the Ethics syllabus, which is more rooted in a Westernised tradition. However, this is advantageous because it can help students understand that meanings and values differ from person to person. After all, as Rorty contends, they are contingent and subjective. While some may argue that politics and ethics should not be mixed with literature, Rorty believes that narratives open the imagination to forge connections between people. Rorty's approach to using literature as a tool for education gives way to exploring new perspectives and developing more flexible ethical perspectives leading to the creation of rights never thought of before, thus enlarging the scope of democracy.

Rortyan educators would thus look to cultivating and enhancing their students' moral imagination, engaging with emotions to advance social virtues such as tolerance, equality, freedom and justice, making the classroom evermore diverse and pluralistic.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

While Rorty did not extensively discuss education, his early statements on the relationship between philosophy and education may lead to confusion. As Wain (2001) asserts, "Rorty himself denied... that his philosophy could have any relevance in tackling issues in education" (p.163). Nevertheless, as suggested by Wain (2001, 2014) and other scholars, Rorty's viewpoints, particularly those expressed in his later works, illustrate the importance of his philosophy and its potential to contribute uniquely to educational concerns. One of the aims of this dissertation was to shed light on this aspect.

Rorty does not want to 'finish the game' (Ghiraldelli Jr, 2001). He argues that humans are mere pawns in an infinite construction- an endless puzzle perpetuated through the recreation of language games. Ghiraldelli (2001) describes Rorty's philosophy of education as a "powerful process: our conversation can transform the featherless biped into something entirely different—fantastically so—because history is limitless and the biped lacks a human core" (p.75). Throughout this dissertation, we have examined the transformative nature of Rorty's educational philosophy. Echoing Ghiraldelli's sentiments, I think that Rorty's inventive perspectives and optimistic outlook add a compelling dimension to the discourse, enriching the education field with invaluable contributions. Education is not a process of discovering the human core or truth but an ongoing, unrestricted exploration. Furthermore, it is also connected to our ability to speak about ourselves, others, and the world differently, ultimately leading to a transformative effect on human behaviour to resemble that of heroes.

This dissertation illustrates how Rorty's approach to moral imagination can serve a dual purpose. It fosters the thinking skills necessary for self-development among students and cultivates a sense of solidarity, a core value in our education system. Such solidarity is vital for harmonious living within a diverse, multicultural, democratic society and for the moral progress discussed in Chapter II. The bonds formed in Ethics classes act as a bridge, acknowledging and celebrating human diversity. Rorty (1999) emphasises this, stating, "people set aside religious and ethnic identities in favour of an image of themselves as part of a great human adventure, one carried out on a global scale… to let the imagination play upon the possibilities of a utopian future" (p.238-239).

The syllabus's flexibility allows for various ways teachers can implement it. While this versatility is advantageous, it is essential to note that it also places considerable responsibility on teachers. Cultivating moral imagination in our classrooms requires teachers to harness this skill. How can teachers tap into imaginative resources if they are incapable of thinking imaginatively or unaware of the implications of using imagination? As Greene (1995) contends, and as this dissertation illustrates, imagination is crucial to fostering sentimentality. Thus, teachers lacking this skill may also fall short in empathy.

Furthermore, in *The Humanistic Intellectual: Eleven Theses*, Rorty (1999) proposes a distinct approach to teaching. He advocates for teachers who perceive teaching not as mere knowledge acquisition but to 'stir up' students (p.127). He suggests that teachers should not approach books with a thirst for knowledge alone. Instead, they should foster a thirst for imagination as it cultivates their individuality, making them

better people and, consequently, better teachers. If their teaching is to serve a social function, Rorty (1999) argues that they should

> instil doubts in the students about the students' own self-image, and about the society to which they belong. These people are the teachers who help ensure that the moral consciousness of each new generation is slightly different from that of the previous generation. (p.127)

While developing critical thinking abilities remains important in addressing more profound issues such as the ones mentioned in Chapter IV (individualism, western privileges, capitalism), educators must concern themselves with diversity and pluralism and utilise teaching methods to promote these. Imaginative pedagogical techniques such as engaging with and interpreting narratives and using experiential narratives and pragmatic activities that emphasise real and imagined encounters with others are essential within the Ethics class. These methods enhance the educational dimension of human experience and help forge connections between diverse communities.

This dissertation proposes using a 'pedagogy of imagination,' drawing on Rorty's notions of imagination, narratives, and ethical implications. While some educational theorists have crafted specific methodologies for such a pedagogy, Rorty's work does not explicitly reference any particular pedagogical approach or technique. There exist pedagogies, for example, 'imaginative education' developed by Egan (1992), which employs storytelling, metaphor, and other imaginative tools to engage learners. Highlighting Rorty's approach in this dissertation does not suggest that

only his views should be utilised in teaching. Instead, it advocates incorporating his views into our educational practices to foster solidarity and moral progress. Rorty encourages us to take imagination more seriously and to accommodate sentimental education by stressing the importance of skillfully constructed narratives from a pragmatic standpoint. The selection of a story is based on its utility for moral and social progress and, therefore, cannot be confined to specific theories or ideologies. Consequently, it seems likely that Rorty would agree with Fesmire's (2003) views—which echo those of Dewey—that the divide between ideal and actual deliberations could be narrowed if "culture shifts its focus from established moral criteria to the education of aesthetic virtues such as sensitivity, perceptiveness, discernment, creativity, expressiveness, courage, foresight, communicativeness, and experimental intelligence" (p.128)

Critics may contend that Rorty demonstrates a notable selectivity in his choice of authors and texts, revealing a preference for his favoured works. Consequently, due to this selection, Rorty has faced criticism for elitism and for primarily catering to white academics. However, this does not accurately encapsulate Rorty's exhortation to readers of narratives, as he argues that this could be a transformative tool for individuals and societies. In fact, Rorty (1999) addresses this in his book *PSH*, where he laments the decline of reading social novels and expresses his aspiration to reignite the significance of shared reading experiences and storytelling in educational environments.

In this dissertation, I have tried to keep the field open by employing the term 'narratives' instead of narrowing it down to novels or literature. I believe that Rorty's

approach could be extended to literary texts and, in alignment with Dewey, to all forms of Art, including Digital Art because they are valuable means for public debate. This is especially important in an educational setting where teachers must cater for students with different learning abilities and diverse backgrounds. With the constant pressure to cover extensive syllabi and achieve outcomes, teachers often discard time-consuming resources, highlighting the importance of thoughtful resource selection.

Rorty's approach could be critiqued for predominantly endorsing the novel, and even though he mentions other types of sources, reading is his go-to method for advocating the ethical function of literature. Nevertheless, in the wake of technological advances, could it be that this approach risks becoming irrelevant or outdated? Should we adjust our conversations to consider the ethical implications of the digital era, or should we move back, revive literary criticism and further explore literature's ethical role? Furthermore, what about the influence this digital shift has on our self-perception, our emotions and our understanding of others?

These questions underscore the potential limitations one might encounter when engaging with this dissertation. While I do not possess definitive answers, having been deeply engaged with Rorty's work—and possibly being influenced by my bias for literature and the Arts—I am inclined to conclude that history has demonstrated how imagination, storytelling, and art can foster a sense of connection among diverse individuals and instigate social change. Truly, we can never know our full potential unless we venture to try.

In conclusion, Ethics education can allow students to express themselves, tell their stories, and listen to other stories. This can be done through various approaches, including dialogue, music and art, thus fostering imagination and creativity. Technology should not be perceived as an obstacle but as a tool that enables students and teachers to transform these narratives further. They can be shared collectively to connect people and foster a sense of solidarity, thereby building communities that expand their perspectives. Rorty envisions that such students grow into *liberal ironists*- individuals who are ready to challenge injustice, stereotypes and rights violations. People with the right tools to fight for the weak and the voiceless while simultaneously understanding that their conversation is unfinished, as there is always more to learn and discuss. This keeps the conversation alive, ever-evolving, pushing boundaries to reach new horizons and bringing to life novel ideas and concepts that were previously nonexistent - creating an infinite canvas for fostering social change.

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