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THE PRACTICE OF EDUCATION AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE:

RICHARD RORTY'S PRAGMATIC AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Doctoral dissertation prepared under the supervision of

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Abstract

The doctoral dissertation, *The Practice of Education and the Politics of Culture: Richard Rorty's Pragmatic and Cultural Landscapes*, explores and evaluates Rorty's unique view on the cultural and educational landscape. As a pragmatist, Rorty understands education as the process of socialization and individualization. The socialization takes place in lower, individualization in higher education. This distinction is motivated by the role education plays in the development of an individual and society. Lower education needs to concentrate on educating proud and respectful citizens, and higher education on developing well-informed and open to democratic progress and cultural challenges students. Acculturation, as the process toward an edification, happens through communication. Edification supports fluency in the art of conversation. Therefore, the imperative of education is personal freedom and dedicated care of oneself and the Other. Communication in the edification process requires a value-free language, which creates the vocabulary without rules and restrictions. Rorty assigns a vital role to irony. The ironists see themselves as living in the constant contingency that allows them to readdress their personal and social identity. Communication is crucial in achieving the redescription and recreating their vocabulary. Ironists are aware of the contingency and fragility of their vocabularies. This awareness leads them to realize their fragility. With that knowledge, they respect other vocabularies, which makes them open to learning from others. The primary role of education is not to find the truth or determine the intrinsic nature of the world but to create a harmonious, solidarity, and cooperating "communicative society." Rorty's neo-pragmatic approach helps understand the cultural diversity of communities worldwide and seeks an intercultural imperative. This intercultural approach is based on democracy to build a more livable world where differences are not stumbling blocks but stepping stones in the coexistence of people and diverse communities living harmoniously and peacefully. The cross-cultural and inter-cultural conversation contributes to living in harmony. The

capability of dialogue reflects the understanding of “rationality.” The best response to the very divided and antagonistic world with nationalistic and chauvinistic tendencies is to be a rational human being able to coexist and enter the dialogue. Even if this is a utopian wish, reaching higher makes it possible to achieve more. Because of the communicative character of social life, we grow into obligations toward various groups by practicing solidarity. By replacing subject-centered reason with communicative rationality, truth emerges from a free and imaginative conversation. Knowledge is achieved by consensus. With abandoning analytic philosophy, Rorty also gives up on the traditional frameworks that philosophy used to find truth and reality. Instead, Rorty brings hermeneutics as a better and more effective model for a new philosophy. It is not a mere replacement of epistemology with hermeneutics. Its focus is on understanding rather than agreement to set truth or realities, resulting in less confrontation and more conversation. The Platonic ascetic education as the journey toward the true self can be substituted with social criticism. What the political right considers the triumph of reason, the left describes as the accomplishment of acculturation. Eliminating the truth from education makes it free from the obstruction from politics and socioeconomics.