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Fitting religious life into the life of schools. James and Rorty in conversation

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Abstract: The article investigates which epistemological considerations justify how religious life fits into the school life, and examines the debate on the participation of religiosity in the education system. I do this, first, by addressing the pedagogical implications of the distinction between public and private as maintained by Richard Rorty and, second, by reconsidering the pluralist metaphysics held by William James as an alternative path to understanding and re-addressing the question of religious life in school life. The article analyzes how the strict separation of projects of individual self-creation and the public sphere, as defended by Rorty, poses problems in implementing pluralism in democratic societies and their educational institutions.

Key Words: religiousness; schooling; pluralism; Richard Rorty; William James.

1. Introduction

Discussions about school settings and curriculum contents are an important expression of how complex our contemporary democratic societies are, and of how challenging it can be to reach some kind of agreement in pluralist contexts. This challenge becomes a major issue when the discussion at hand is animated by moral issues. A typical case of such an issue concerns religious education. Two questions that arise and that concern the general public are: Should we include religious education as part of the school curriculum? And: Should we fund religious-based schools? The dilemma concerning religious education and the school system is rooted in conflicting views over what pluralism actually means and implies, and what is being addressed in this discussion is the very legitimacy of religious education in schools in liberal democratic societies. Many thinkers question the capacity of religious schools to cultivate the virtues of, for example, tolerance, autonomy, mutual respect, openness, and dialogue. Since these virtues are generally assumed to be a condition for stability in liberal democratic societies, and are such that the state can legitimately pursue them, some people see religious schools as intrinsically at risk of contradicting a core function of the liberal state. This suspicion or mistrust over the capacity of religious schools to promote the characteristic virtues of liberal democracies seems to imply that the state would better not support these schools. But the question, of course, is far more complicated. Following the same values of tolerance and openness, liberal democracies also embrace their duty to respect freedom of thought and religion. This would imply that the state has no right to impose its dominant ideology, that it has the duty to allow minority groups to ensure the survival of their own inheritance, and thus to allow them to found their own separate schools and contribute to their maintenance. It is this double duty of the liberal state that is at

the base of the political dimension of the dilemma over religious life and public schooling.

Although this article does not address any country in particular, the “transitional religious scenario” that Spain is currently undergoing was undeniably in the back of my mind while I wrote it. In Spain 70% of the population declares itself to be Catholic, but only 2-10% attend religious services on a weekly basis; and roughly 30% of Spanish children attend privately run schools (rising to 45% in the region of Madrid), of which 60% are Catholic schools. In addition to this structural dimension, there are at least two emerging concerns when it comes to addressing religiousness and education in Spain (Valle and Thoilliez 2017): (i) the usefulness of having a historically contextualized understanding of the reconstruction of a Spanish sense of citizenship which followed the transition to democracy in Spain and the abandonment of the moral assumptions from the national-Catholicism regime¹; and (ii) the possibility of making private and autonomously assumed senses of life (including those with a religious orientation) compatible with a democratic and public way of life acceptable to all².

However, the scope of this article is not limited to national considerations, nor to specific religious denominations. The main aim is to explore the philosophical underpinnings to the political and educational debate regarding religious education in a broad sense. The article investigates which epistemological considerations justify how religious life fits into the school life, and examines the debate on the participation of religiosity in the education system. I do this, first, by addressing the pedagogical implications of the distinction between public and private as maintained by Richard Rorty and, second, by reconsidering the pluralist metaphysics held by William James as an alternative path to understanding and re-addressing the question of religious life in school life. But, before doing so, I want to situate my argument against a broader discussion regarding the educational implications of the William James's thinking in Bredo (2002), Miedema (2002) and in my own previous work on this issue (Thoilliez, 2013).

Bredo (2002) deals with the problem James had faced in trying to balance the individual dimension and the community or social dimension of human beings, and the educational implications thereof. His firm commitment to the struggle to make the individual and the social compatible would clearly set James apart from other 20th century writers. Here, Darwin's theories were of great help, as they allowed James to balance one of the most important tensions within his work: the one between the attitude of what James would call the “select temperament” that values individuality, and the attitude of the “rough temperament” that is more sensitive to the environment. This, too, had implications for his perspective on education. On the one hand, “his evolutionary vision of the mind, which he understood as a function capable of improving practical action, granted a very active role to intelligence” (Bredo 2002, 24). On the other hand, it led him to accentuate even more his individualistic perception of the educational process by “suggesting that the teacher should take into account the interests of the student and his previous experiences, so that the new learning would merge between emotion and comprehension” (Idem.).

Miedema (2002) has dealt with the issue of religion and its implication for education. More exactly, he offers an alternative reading of Rorty's extremely subjective and intimate approach, in which he emphasized the public/private division of the religiosity explored by James. Miedema argues that although James paid much attention to the individual's religious experience, this is an interest that should be interpreted, as Rorty does, in terms of the "privatization" of religion, i.e. of limiting the religious dimension to the sphere of intimacy and privacy. Miedema maintains that the metaphysics derived from James's work on religiousness does not necessarily imply a separation of religious education (a differentiation based on the public or private space it must occupy), but, on the contrary, the de-privatization of religious education precisely due to the transforming power of religious education regardless of the space in which it is cultivated.

In this article I will use the general term "school" for the entire range of formal, regulated educational institutions set up in liberal democracies (the differences between state and private schools and the limits and obligations imposed by the financing of education, although relevant, is a topic beyond the scope of the present work). Following the pragmatist tradition from which this article draws its main inspiration, schools are understood as extensions of the public sphere. The paper will offer an alternative interpretation to the issue of religious education in school with the help of William James, but which differs both from Bredo's and Miedema's readings.

2. Are 'public' and 'private' spheres really separable?

Richard Rorty's influence on contemporary philosophy is hard to deny. His obituary in the *New York Times* is a good indication: "Mr. Rorty's enormous body of work, which ranged from academic tomes to magazine and newspaper articles, provoked fervent praise, hostility and confusion. But no matter what even his severest critics thought of it, they could not ignore it." (Cohen 2007) The controversial nature of his contributions has led some to frown on any mention of Rorty and his work; while others take him quite seriously (Nielsen 2007, 127). Much of the criticism of his work³ concerns his persistent attempt to break away from the traditional ways of doing philosophy, and is redoubled by Rorty's deep mistrust of theory and his attempts to find the latest and newest ways of theorizing the reality that is thought to be "out there." Indeed, one of the results of this attempt at finding and reinforcing his arguments is to delve deeper into his study of the American pragmatic tradition. Saatkamp summed it up as follows:

He [Rorty] argues that philosophy cannot become a strict science and that the traditional view of philosophy as the pursuit of eternal truth must be abandoned in a temporalized world. To assume that philosophy is at the top of the hierarchy of disciplines is a mistake. Rather, philosophy should be understood from a pragmatic, interpretive, and historicist perspective that undermines the centrality of basic, foundational questions in philosophy of mind and epistemology (1995, ix).

Rorty takes the epistemological principle of pluralism to the extreme by defending a change in the traditional theories of truth. Attempts to articulate a theory of truth as such are said to be of no interest these days: to Rorty, “‘truth’ is just the name of a property which all true statements share.” (2003, xiii) This implies that it is meaningful to differentiate the truths from the falsehoods, but pointless to say what the property of goodness is in the things we believe are good to do. Influenced by Feyerabend, Kuhn, and Sellars, Rorty’s understanding of pluralism assumes that a change in the concepts involved in the activity of interpreting the world also causes changes in how we experience that world. Therefore, Rorty’s line of argument is that if it is true that accepting the principle of plurality implies acknowledging that different concepts offer us different worlds, then the very notion of “alternate conceptual schemes” must be abandoned.

Rorty states that “the notion of alternative conceptual frameworks thus contains the seeds of doubt about the root notion of ‘conceptual framework,’ and so of its own destruction.” (2003, 4) This, according to Rorty, would involve making use of three complementary strategies: first, acknowledging that no global belief system is coherent; then, seeing human cultural output as (simple) attempts at solving problems; and finally, equating the truth with what he calls “warranted assertibility.” Let us briefly analyze each strategy here. Starting with the first, Rorty asserts that there are no global systems of coherent beliefs, since he sees the difference between necessary truths (the Given, or a priori knowledge) and contingent truths (which are at the base of such belief systems) as boiling down to the difference between whatever we find relatively easy and, respectively, relatively difficult to give up. This reduction makes the difference so watered-down as to be worthless. This feeling is reinforced by the idea that we cannot acknowledge people who use a conceptual framework different from our own: nothing can be acknowledged as a “language” unless it can be translated into our own. The idea is that there is no difference so wide between people and their body of beliefs as the one developed in the idea of “alternative conceptual schemes.” The second strategy reinforces the first. For Rorty, human cultural outputs such as art, morality, or social institutions do not try to embody truth, good, or justice, but instead are formulated as attempts at problem-solving, at changing what we believe and desire so as to contribute to our happiness. Cultural trappings stop being theoretical entelechies and become useful for meeting human needs. The third strategy is at the same time a consequence of using the first two: if we first acknowledge that no global belief system is coherent, and then we accept that cultural productions are attempts at solving problems, we can then equate the truth with nothing more than warranted assertibility. Doing so lets us dodge the fundamental problem of traditional theories on truth: namely, the difficulty in determining what “reality” it is supposed to correspond to.

What are the implications of these three strategies as regards the dilemma of pluralism in schools? And how are they made manifest in the particular case at hand, namely religious education? First, defending a change in the traditional theories of truth as Rorty proposes it conflicts head-on with practicing and teaching religion in a traditional sense at school. Proof of this is, for example, the widespread trend in curricula for teaching a collection of “the best of” a representative number of religions instead of teaching specific religious creeds

through the school curriculum. Rorty gives the political derivation of these ideas by means of the distinction between public space and private space. The same distinction can be brought to bear on the contemporary problem of pluralism and religion in schools, as encompassed in Rorty's political philosophy (which is a continuation of his criticism of analytic philosophy and the attack on traditional theories of truth, as we have just mentioned). He goes into this in considerable depth in his *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, in which he presents "the contingency of language" as one of the core concepts of his political philosophy, based on the idea that we cannot have an external or higher criterion of validity to help us determine whether a particular vocabulary is any better than another. Science, literature, and psychology are all constituted as different languages in which each one has its own particular criteria for establishing the truth value of a specific statement. The contingent nature of these languages makes them immeasurably vast. Similarly, as an alternative to the traditional attempt at finding external criteria for truth in particular discourses, Rorty suggests we adopt the Nietzschean idea of "a mobile army of metaphors," in which "the whole idea of 'representing' reality by means of language, and thus the idea of finding a single context for all human lives, should be abandoned," (1993, 27) privileging instead the musings of poets⁴ such as Galileo, Hegel, and Yeats, "in whose minds new vocabularies developed, thereby equipping them with tools for doing things which could not even have been envisaged before these tools were available." (1993, 17) The strong political dimension Rorty ascribes to the contingency of languages also deeply affects the construction of the self as well as the political community. The languages corresponding to each of these two projects (first, self-creation as private perfection, and, second, justice as human solidarity), are likewise vast, and their coexistence will be ensured by separating the spaces where they take place: the private sphere for creating the self and the public sphere for constructing the political community. Rorty argues that "there is no way to bring self-creation together with justice at the level of theory. The vocabulary of self-creation is necessarily private, unshared, unsuited to argument. The vocabulary of justice is necessarily public and shared, a medium for argumentative exchange." (1993, xiv)

Ramón del Castillo (2015) noted that when Rorty applies this epistemological framework to the role religion should play in a liberal society⁵, he does so on two main theses. In the first (and the most radical) thesis, Rorty sees religion as a political conversation-stopper. To Rorty, religious people should live their religion much like an atheist reading poetry at home: "Atheists who read poems alone do not feel that they are doing trivial things, even if they do not believe that those things are relevant to politics and the rest of humanity." (2015, 124, *my translation*). Religion should thus cease to influence public life, but instead remain restricted to the sphere of private life, in which religious people would take their faith in a different way (not unlike how one would cultivate a hobby or private passion). In the second thesis, which is his mild version, forced in part by the difficulty/impossibility for a religious person to accept religious worship as equivalent to the practice of reading poetry (as Rorty initially proposes), all citizens of a democracy should refrain from invoking any authority that might stop the conversation. The problem, of course (and one that will be brought up again further on), is that religious people are religious because they live their beliefs as

something more (or much more) than mere beliefs: they believe that they are truths that have value and meaning beyond their private lives. Rorty's partial observation of this fact led him to address the separation between Church and State. He pointed out sources that justify the restrictions that the liberal value of tolerance should impose on religious beliefs in the public sphere. His proposal was to rid the debate of principles, whether philosophical or, of course, religious: "both parties, the Enlightened and the religious, should get used to not appealing to the sources of the premises of their arguments when they are defending them" (2015, 125, *my translation*). Rorty's lack of foresight in hazarding that religion would become less and less important in politics is indicative that he may have been overly cavalier when it came to what is at stake in this problem. Furthermore, his way of arguing was based on the premise of the progressive loss of public relevance of religion, when in fact this has not been the case (especially and manifestly in the United States)⁶. The limitations of his approach also have much to do with Rorty's own public-private distinction referred to above.

Although this distinction acknowledges the existence of private hopes and fears, it also tends to cancel and expel them from debates meant to solve the problems of the community. The main difficulty is that a religious person cannot suspend his view of life whenever "going out" into the public sphere, and even if he could, it would clearly be unfair to require him to do so. Doing so would turn the public space into a more uncomfortable place for some than for others.

The solution I am thinking of is not one of going back to enforcing religion onto the public sphere, schools included. Rather, I suggest that we move forward along the lines of pluralism, which implies fully accepting the fact that there are different stances for every public issue, and that many are inseparable from the language of self-creation and the private projects of constructing the self. The works of William James, from whom Rorty himself took inspiration, may shed some light on what such an effort at pluralism may consist of. Therefore, in the following section I will set out some important elements of James's work that call into question Rorty's account of the public/private distinction.

3. Is there a *will to believe*?

William James has been rightly portrayed as "an edifying philosopher, a lucid and provocative intellectual" who was himself "intentionally peripheral in respecting the major systems of thought." (Castillo 2007, 7, *my translation*) It is unlikely that William James's philosophy gives any systematic answer to the big questions about the nature of God, Truth, and Freedom. Instead, his works are more like essays on the meaning of religious experiences, the different ways through which the word "truth" operates in the course of our actions, and the affirmation of free will as the bedrock for understanding human conscience and human agency. In fact, as John Dewey said after James's passing, he characteristically "took things as he found them, and if things were not simple, or consistent, or systematized, his philosophy did not consist in forcing system upon them." (1910, 99) Consistent with Dewey's opinion, James's works also helped make philosophical thought "more hospitable to fact, more sensitive to the

complex difficulties of situations, less complacently content with merely schematic unities.” (1910, 100)

James’s sensitivity to the variety and plurality of worldly manifestations undermines Rorty’s movement to “privatize” projects of personal fulfillment, especially for most religious believers who publicly live and justify their faith. As Reece points out:

It is just not the case that religious beliefs are always individualized and that there is no community to which the religious believer is engaged in justification and to which she has intellectual responsibility. Religious believers justify their religious beliefs to other people all the time. They appeal to scripture to support their beliefs, they appeal to personal experiences, they appeal to visions and visitations, they appeal to the Wesleyan quadrilateral – scripture, tradition, experience and reason. Religious people are engaged in such communal justification of what they believe. Very few religious people say “I believe it just because I believe it.” Almost always they appeal to some standard of justification. (2001, 213, 214)

It is of this type of (public) justification of experiences and of (private) individual stances and beliefs that James speaks when he states that on some occasions our reasons of faith outweigh the available evidence when we justify our own personal positions and beliefs. With his “will to believe” doctrine,⁷ James attacks the pre-eminence of the evidence principle as a key requirement for philosophic rationality and respectability (which in Rorty’s public-approved schema would be deemed acceptable within the community construction project). To James, given the lack of certainty regarding fundamental truths (on which he would coincide with Rorty), what remains is the will to believe in them (but unlike Rorty, it is not a will that can be “privatized”). As to the problem of the truth of our beliefs, the way to proceed in justifying them publicly does not necessarily entail gathering enough proof from empirical evidence in support of a few. This stance is summarized in the following thesis: “*Our passionate nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds.*” (1897, 20, emphasis in original) James notes different occasions in which it is better to follow our beliefs than to wait until we have gathered enough evidence to justify our positions. These are the situations when we make real decisions, and we can talk of *genuine options*. They are genuine because they are characterized by being spur-of-the moment and demanding an answer without delay (*live*), as well as by our being forced to decide (*forced*), and by containing a certain importance (*momentous*). On the fact of genuine options fulfilling these conditions, James explains that, regarding the first, a *living* option implies that we choose between two hypotheses that in some way connect with our deepest beliefs, which give the decision a unique “liveness”: “If I say: ‘Be an Agnostic or be a Christian’ ... trained as you are, each hypothesis makes some appeal, however small, to your belief” (1897, 14). Regarding the second condition, a *forced* implies that we decide between two hypotheses, two possibilities in which “no reply” is not an option, since doing so would be an answer as well”. James says: “if I say: ‘Either

accept this truth or go without it,' I put on you a forced option, for there is no standing place outside of the alternative." (1897, 15) Lastly, the *momentousness* of the genuine decisions or dilemmas implies not being faced with a trivial option that is neither unique in some way nor reversible up to some point. Thus James states: "if I were Dr. Nansen and proposed you to join my North Pole expedition, your option would be momentous; for this would probably be your only similar opportunity, and your choice now would either exclude you from the North Pole sort of immortality altogether or put at least the chance of it out of your hands." (Idem.) When people find themselves in a situation that can be considered a "genuine option" as defined above, it is justifiable that before enough evidence is in, they draw on a belief when making their decision. Furthermore, that belief must be "intellectually unspeakable," or in other words, the subject, faced with the "genuine option" does not and cannot have (at first, or in the time he has) enough evidence on which to support any statement he decides to believe in. Similarly, religious beliefs are paradigmatic of such "intellectually unspeakable" beliefs in the course of which we find ourselves facing a "genuine option" dilemma.

James's theses on the will to believe open the door to the pluralism he advocated and may prove useful as a guide today for several reasons. First, the will to believe acknowledges the existence of a set of beliefs of a different quality; and that while they may be spoken of, in the end they appeal to something deep within us as people that is inevitably lacking in agreement or consensus. It is something that becomes manifest when we are faced with a "genuine option." Second, acknowledgment of the existence of these beliefs also implies living a way of life that is especially tolerant of the differences among people, thereby breaking away from the traditional dichotomy of rational versus emotional. And thirdly, it implies that, while being tolerant of differences in this way, it gives hope for everyone to get along in social harmony.

No one of us ought to issue vetoes to the other, nor should we bandy words of abuse. We ought, on the contrary, delicately and profoundly to respect one another's mental freedom: then only shall we bring about the intellectual republic; then only shall we have that spirit of inner tolerance without which all our outer tolerance is soulless, and which is empiricism's glory; then only shall we live and let live, in speculative as well as in practical things. (James 1897, 33)

Affirming the will to believe, as James has it, does not lead to totalitarian impositions of these beliefs we have "genuinely" chosen. Quite the contrary, we understand that other people may also "genuinely" choose other ways, that there is no way to show a priori who is right and who is wrong, and that we will never agree. And that living with this is not impossible. In this comprehensive framework, unlike how Rorty would have it, the lines between public and private justification are very blurry⁸. This perspective can also be seen, perhaps even more sharply, in later works such as "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" (James 1899) and "What Makes Life Significant." (James 1900) Throughout both works, James urges us to take into consideration the perspectives that others may have on things, to make the most of the opportunities that this brings for learning from other people, and to be careful of the judgments we pass on other

people's perspectives. The will to believe is not an affirmation of the self and one's own beliefs. Rather, it is an affirmation of the different options that may exist in the "intellectually unspeakable" beliefs. It assumes a certain tragic humility to the idea and possibility of attaining the truth, even though it clashes with Rorty's distinction between public and private.

4. Concluding thoughts

The matter of fitting religious life into the life of schools is much more complex than this article could hope to cover. A great deal remains to be said. In fact, along with the two prototypical questions I posed at the start of the chapter (Should we include religious education as part of the school curriculum? Should we fund religious-based schools?) we could ask several more of greater importance to pedagogy, for example those set out by Paul Standish:

Can a religious upbringing provide the conditions for the growth of autonomy? Does such an upbringing enable an experience of a religious way of life from the inside, the absence of which will leave the young person blind to this possibility of thought and meaning – and hence, ironically perhaps, restricted in their autonomy? Or is this bought at the price of inculcation into a way of life that those committed to principles of freedom of choice must find too much to pay? (2012, 186)

Here I have focused on analyzing how the strict separation of projects of individual self-creation and the public sphere, as defended by Rorty, poses problems in implementing pluralism in democratic societies and their educational institutions. Intending to foster the construction of a community project for the purpose of developing solidarity, Rorty does not take into account the clearly unjust situations and experiences to which such a line of thinking may lead. He considers that the political project of solidarity does not consist of "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." (1993, 192) Rorty maintains that moral progress towards solidarity transcends the limitations of one's own community, and guides us in the search for the largest inter-subjective agreement possible and the maximum referential extension of "us." (Rorty 1984, 424) However, this great "we" is woven from smaller communities with their own traditions, customs, and codes, which make the subjective experience of living in the world more pleasant and amicable. Participating in the great "we" from these communities (including religious-based communities) does not prevent us from working to reach broader and more lasting agreements. Moreover, failure to acknowledge in the public sphere the individual differences that follow from belonging to a particular community opens the door to experiences of humiliation and pain, despite what Rorty may have imagined. This is what schools, as extensions of the public sphere, must be sensitive to and suitably address. Pluralism in the classroom is incompatible with stifling any discourse referring to projects of individual happiness. Reece sums up well what the believer would go through if he had to live with Rorty's political project: "One can hold religious beliefs and be intellectually responsible only if one is prepared to treat those beliefs as completely individualized and

intellectually cut off from the communities in which they have their home.” (2001, 214) Is that fair? If we requested this of every student who entered the classroom on a Monday morning, would we be acknowledging the plural condition of modern society? I believe that we would not. It may be that Rorty’s precautions with respect to the public role of religion owe more to his misunderstanding of what “religious” is than of what “public” is.

As per Barthol, Rorty would subscribe to the following set of statements: first, that religion, “given its tendency to refuse argumentative justification for itself, is a ‘conversation-stopper’”; second, that “the private purposes of the self are ultimately irrelevant to one’s public actions”; third, that “public practices of religion tend to be based on an Enlightenment attempt to ground the political self and its public engagements in a metaphysical (i.e. universal and essential) conception of humanity”; and, last, that religion “in its ecclesiastically organized form is dangerous.” (2012, 863). It is this latter suspicion of Rorty’s that I find most problematic from a pedagogical perspective, but one that James’s philosophy may help unravel. For him, beliefs have psychological and epistemological implications in public discussions, and trivializing or discarding all reasoning that takes them into account only blurs the boundaries of the individual:

James is making an important connection between truth and his respect for the viewpoints of others while insisting on our awareness of our ignorance. We may not be able to see all, but we can know that we are unseeing. We can realize our own limitations, and we can rely on a certain intersubjective reciprocity. And this reciprocity then becomes, in his view, the basis of further opinions about what is true and what isn’t. Our acknowledgment of the perspectives of others is thus crucial for James – if we are to increase our understanding. (White 2010, 1)

James’s pluralist metaphysics⁹ offers a chance to understand diversity and plurality and put them into practice in educational contexts. It holds that, no matter how clearly things seem to be defined, there is always a chance of an alternative interpretation, of something we failed to see. The quest for the definitive meaning of a person, a place, or a thing is called off forever in a pluralist universe. Nothing has a closed, perfect identity. The individual in James’s pluralist metaphysics is taken as a sufficiently unified reality: this individual feels unique but incomplete, so that she remains open to possible connections and change. This happens through the practice of exchange and the search for agreement in the community. To Garrison, James’s pluralist metaphysics “exposes the dangers of assuming ultimate foundations, absolute standards, and indubitable norms. Instead, it demands intelligent action to create morally acceptable connections that are esthetically harmonious.” (2002, 41) Maybe this will allow for a mutual and thus authentic and fruitful acknowledgment of religious life (in all its possible manifestations) in the life of our schools.

Notes

¹ The history of Spanish philosophy from the 1980s and 1990s was especially concerned with matters of public ethics, and can only be understood from that concern, expressed in writers such as Fernando Savater, Adela Cortina, and Javier Muguerza.

² To get acquaintance with this discussion in Spain, I would suggest the reading of Trilla (2018), Ibáñez-Martín (2017), and Gracia and Gozávez (2016).

³ In relation to the study of the main criticism Rorty's work sparked, it is worth mentioning a collection published by his disciple and fellow-in-controversy, Brandom (2002). In it, twelve similarly minded philosophers (although to different extents) present and discuss the main characteristics of Rorty's work. Brandom gives a rebuttal to each. Close reading of these rebuttals make Rorty difficult to fit into the "superficial philosopher" category into which some of his detractors have attempted to put him. One may or may not agree with his statements, which at times may seem quite eccentric, but not taking him seriously would be a mistake.

⁴ " ... a 'poet' in my wide sense of the term – the sense of 'one who makes things new,'" (Rorty 1993, 12)

⁵ See, "Religion as Conversation-stopper" (Rorty, 1994), "Anticlericalism and atheism" (Rorty, 2001), or "Religion in the Public Sphere: A Reconsideration" (Rorty, 2003).

⁶ Simon Critchley (2012) in *The Faith of the Faithless*, questions the very possibility of having a discussion on these matters without appealing to any principles of some kind.

⁷ His essay "The Will to Believe" appeared in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* published in 1897. It was given as a paper at the philosophy clubs at Yale and Brown University, and was initially published in 1896 in the journal *New World*.

⁸ As Castillo rightly puts it (2016, 63), James tried his best to show agnostics how there were no acceptable reasons for opposing other peoples' rights to hold on religious beliefs.

⁹ The reference to "James' pluralist metaphysics" is taken from Garrison (2002). However, James works are filled with a deep preoccupation towards metaphysics. Philosophy is essentially an intellectual attempt to come to grips with reality, as he says on the first page of *Pragmatism*. James intended *Some Problems of Philosophy* to be largely a textbook in metaphysics, which he defines in terms of the ultimate principles of reality, both within and beyond our human experience. Much of it concerns the issue of the one and the many, which is arguably the oldest problem of Western philosophy and represents the split between collective monism (such as Hegel's) and distributive pluralism (such as James himself advocates).

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