



An Ethics for Today: Finding Common Ground Between Philosophy and Religion

By Richard Rorty

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Richard Rorty is famous, maybe even infamous, for his philosophical nonchalance. His groundbreaking work not only rejects all theories of truth but also dismisses modern epistemology and its preoccupation with knowledge and representation. At the same time, the celebrated pragmatist believed there could be no universally valid answers to moral questions, which led him to a complex view of religion rarely expressed in his writings.

In this posthumous publication, Rorty, a strict secularist, finds in the pragmatic thought of John Dewey, John Stuart Mill, William James, and George Santayana, among others, a political imagination shared by religious traditions. His intent is not to promote belief over nonbelief or to blur the distinction between religious and public domains. Rorty seeks only to locate patterns of similarity and difference so an ethics of decency and a politics of solidarity can rise. He particularly responds to Pope Benedict XVI and his campaign against the relativist vision. Whether holding theologians, metaphysicians, or political ideologues to account, Rorty remains steadfast in his opposition to absolute uniformity and its exploitation of political strength.

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Editorial Review

Review

This striking presentation of Rorty's influential thoughts will be of value to those grounded in the study of philosophy, religion, and their interaction.

(*Library Journal*)

...concise but none the less immensely thoughtful...

(Roman Madzia *Pragmatism Today*)

This book makes for fascinating reading. It is a rare philosophy book that is a page-turner that can be read in one or two sittings.

(Daniel Dombrowski *Sophia*)

Review

Richard Rorty's argument rather clearly and succinctly brings the claims of pragmatism to issues at the heart of Catholic politics—a clash between relativism and fundamentalism that is in many ways emblematic of the larger struggles between religious and secular traditions across the globe.

(Robert T. Valgenti, Lebanon Valley College)

Contrary to Richard Rorty's previous writings on religion, this book engages in a critical debate with the dogmatic and metaphysical affirmations of Pope Benedict XVI on human nature, relativism, and homosexuality. Commenting on the progressive philosophies of John Stuart Mill, George Santayana, Martin Heidegger, John Dewey, Jürgen Habermas, and Peter Singer, Rorty shows how the pope belongs to those fundamentalist intellectuals who still believe that truth is greater than any other value, including democracy.

(Santiago Zabala, ICREA Research Professor at the University of Barcelona, author of *The Remains of Being*)

About the Author

Richard Rorty (1931-2007) was professor of comparative literature and philosophy at Stanford University. His Columbia University Press books are *The Future of Religion* (with Gianni Vattimo) and *What's the Use of Truth?*

Gianni Vattimo is emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of Turin and a member of the European Parliament. His books include *The Responsibility of the Philosopher; Christianity, Truth, and Weakening Faith: A Dialogue* (with René Girard); *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*; and *After Christianity*.

G. Elijah Dann teaches philosophy and religion for Simon Fraser University and is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Culture at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. His books include *After Rorty: The Possibilities for Ethics and Religious Belief*; *God and the Public Square*; *Leaving Fundamentalism: Personal Stories*; and *Philosophy: A New Introduction*.

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