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Remnants of Representationalism: Rorty as Refined by Ramberg

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A remarkable philosophical shift within the pragmatist tradition occurred 25 years ago as a result of an exchange between Bjørn Ramberg and Richard Rorty. In several articles, Rorty had raised the suspicion that Donald Davidson, despite his anti-representationalist commitments, remains tethered to representationalism by privileging certain vocabularies as of particular philosophical interest and attaching particular significance to the concept of truth. In his paper "Post-ontological Philosophy of Mind: Rorty versus Davidson", Ramberg (2000) addresses these concerns. Ramberg not only defends Davidson's position but also the relevance of the vocabulary of intentionality. Davidson's anomalous monism serves to underwrite the distinctiveness of this vocabulary of agency, as Ramberg also refers to it, situating it as needful in understanding ourselves as agents and countering reductive tendencies. In his response to this paper, Rorty reorients his stance on truth and on the philosophical interest in vocabularies considerably, concluding that he was mistaken to take his criticism of representationalism to imply a denial of the view that true statements get things right.[1]

In the following, I examine the resulting position, Rorty's anti-representationalism as shaped by Ramberg's friendly criticism. Ramberg introduces a distinction between vocabularies—defined primarily by the purposes they serve—and the claims or theories articulated within those vo-

[1] Rorty's shift has confounded some of his readers to the extent they have argued he was prepared to relinquish his anti-representationalist views (see Huetter-Almerigi, 2020 for discussion of some examples).

cabularies. I argue that taking this vocabulary/theory distinction to its extremes leads to Rorty's revised stance, ultimately revealing the untenability of the distinction itself. The philosophical interest in the vocabulary of agency is to be sought elsewhere. I suggest that the real significance of that vocabulary lies in its normative dimension highlighted by Rorty's discussion. Beyond explaining intentional actions, the normative dimension of the vocabulary of agency enables us to detect certain causal patterns of our experience, something that Ramberg's discussion also appears to suggest, even if only in passing. These patterns were central to the classical pragmatists, who proposed an empirical and experimental approach to normative inquiry. This possibility, I argue, has been obscured by lingering elements of representationalism in Rorty's thought—specifically, the contention that if normative vocabulary is geared toward empirical inquiry, it loses its distinctiveness.

Two concerns with Davidson

In a number of papers, Rorty had raised two central concerns regarding Davidson's philosophy. First, he questioned why Davidson accords special significance to the concept of truth, rather than interpreting it as merely an empirical theory of truth-conditions in a language that predicts regularities in speakers' behaviour. Second, Rorty critiqued the position of particular interest Davidson gives to intentional vocabulary, descriptions that invoke intentionality or rationality in explaining human behaviour. According to Rorty, Davidson's anti-reductionist arguments about intentional vocabulary in particular remain, as Ramberg puts it, "a hangover from the days of ontology" (Ramberg, 2000, 367). If, as anti-representationalists hold, "adequacy to the world" cannot explain the success or failure of discursive practices (Ramberg, ibid., 354), then the vocabulary of intentionality is of no particular philosophical interest. More broadly, reductive efforts across different vocabularies hold little philosophical significance. Rorty attributed both concerns to Davidson's lingering adherence to representationalist commitments, in particular, Quine's "invidious distinction" between indeterminacy and underdetermination, a contrast that, Rorty argued, Davidson's critique of the notion of truth as a relation between words and the world and his rejection of the primacy of physicalist vocabulary should have dispelled.

Ramberg responds to Rorty's concerns by focusing primarily on the second issue, reframing Davidson's position in terms of choice between

different vocabularies. He first argues that Rorty mislocates the source of Davidson's reticence about the vocabulary of agency. Nevertheless, secondly, Ramberg acknowledges that even correcting this mislocation does little to alleviate Rorty's broader worry—that there is no particular philosophical interest in the intentional vocabulary or, more generally, in examining reductive attempts between vocabularies. Ramberg contends, however, that Rorty overlooks a reason Davidson finds the vocabulary of intentionality distinctive. This oversight opens the way to a third theme: a pragmatist vision of where the philosophical interest in vocabularies may lie, particularly in relation to intentional vocabulary.

To begin with the first topic, Rorty had long criticised Quine's distinction as rooted in Quine's privileging of physicalist vocabulary, arguing that the indeterminacy of translation is merely an instance of the underdetermination of theories by observational evidence. Ramberg, however, argues that Davidson uses the same terminology when pointing to a different distinction, one that he then recasts in terms of vocabularies rather than ontological commitments. On Ramberg's account, underdetermination is what we could call an intra-vocabulary matter, where "within some vocabulary, two theories may comport equally well with the statements that capture some body of what we regard as relevant evidence" (Ramberg, ibid., 361). Indeterminacy, by contrast, is an inter-vocabulary phenomenon that obtains "when we settle on a theory within one vocabulary" so that "this will not necessarily mandate a choice of theory in another, even though we want to say that we are, in the two vocabularies, in some sense talking about the same things or events" (Ramberg, ibid., 361). In other words, indeterminacy obtains when two vocabularies are used to discuss the same subject matter and are nevertheless irreducible to one another. To these conditions, we might wish to add a third: that this predicament is not taken to imply that either vocabulary is mistaken—for example, in the context of the "mental", we need not side with either physicalism or psychicalism. Recast in this way, Davidson's distinction can be made without appealing to representational privilege of any vocabulary.

However, Ramberg argues, Rorty's main concern remains unaddressed. Conditions of indeterminacy do not, by themselves, render any particular vocabulary of philosophical interest. Indeed, Ramberg argues, Davidson later maintains that vocabularies of different physical sciences may enter into conditions of indeterminacy with respect to the vocabulary of physics: "Davidson grants that the relevant kind of law—that is, the strict kind—is no more likely to link special sciences to physics than it is to link psy-

chology to physics" (Ramberg, ibid., 362). However, Ramberg argues that the vocabulary of intentionality is a point of philosophical interest as the vocabulary of *agency*. Its distinctiveness lies not merely in its inclusion of norms embodied in the predicates of agency. It lies in "the particular way in which the normative element gives structure to the vocabulary" (Ramberg, ibid., 362). The vocabulary of agency highlights the normative similarities sought when describing creatures as agents: "To say what it is a language user does, we invoke normative notions", notions which "perform their function by depicting us as error-makers, and thus also knowers of some truths, and hence also capable, by producing new descriptions, of modifying our causal dispositions" (Ramberg, ibid., 364). In this way, the vocabulary of agency is required for us to identify ourselves and one another as describing anything, for describing "is an ability we have only because it is possible for others to see us as in general conforming to the norms that the predicates of agency embody" (Ramberg, ibid., 362). This is why, Ramberg explains, Davidson places such importance on the concept of truth despite his anti-representationalism. Rather than providing a predictive model for speaker behaviour, the vocabulary of agency makes Davidson's principle of charity indispensable for language users, establishing the ideal interpreter's theory of behaviour as a theory of truth—or, Ramberg suggests, "perhaps of error" (Ramberg, ibid., 362). Namely, it is the concept of error that "marks our ability to get our noises and (the rest of the) world prized locally apart to a sufficient extent to allow for intentionality, for there being meaning and mind, that is to say, for there being a point to treating some things as thinkers, with a point of view on the world" (Ramberg, ibid., 363).

Nevertheless, this remains insufficient to demonstrate that there is anything of philosophical interest in a particular vocabulary, even one as distinctive as that of agency. Ramberg notes that the conception of philosophical interest Rorty "sometimes works with" implies that "there is nothing which would be of philosophical interest in particular" (Ramberg, ibid., 365). However, Ramberg suggests that Rorty's "areductivist" stance, which removes the "success or failure of the reduction of one vocabulary to another of all ontological significance" (Ramberg, ibid., 365), does not entail that the failure reductive efforts are devoid of philosophical interest. Rather, different vocabularies serve as ways of "bringing salience to different causal patterns in the world, patterns with which we engage" (Ramberg, ibid., 363). Moreover, vocabularies can be evaluated based on their capacity to serve various human purposes and interests

that provide "the ultimate terms of any evaluation" (Ramberg, ibid., 365). The vocabulary of agency serves as a case in point:

> What links special sciences together, if anything does, into a single contrastive entity with respect to the vocabulary of agency, is not an alleged reducibility of any bona fide natural science to a purely structural vocabulary (basic science, ideal physics, what have you). Rather it is a certain homogeneity of interest; that it can be characterized in terms of a purely predictive aspect. [...] With agency-vocabulary, by contrast, we are characterizing a domain of kinds of objects (language-users) with a vocabulary not just geared toward prediction of the behavior of that kind. Or perhaps we should rather say that the predictive interests that are expressed in the dynamics of agency-vocabulary are of a very peculiar sort—they turn on our revealing the kinds of traits that allow us to recognize ourselves in what we are talking about, and to bring to bear all those complicated considerations that we gesture at with the moral notion of a person. Ramberg, 2000, 366

The vocabulary of agency serves an important purpose, Ramberg argues, by being "designed to keep us from trying to pursue the purposes for which we use it with vocabularies built for prediction and control of manipulable objects" (Ramberg, ibid., 367). It leaves us better off, Ramberg proposes, in the sense of "politically more free", by resisting the "steady spread of dehumanizing, homogenizing management of human existence that is the real threat of scientism" (Ramberg, ibid., 367).

Ramberg, building on Davidson, opens a pathway that Rorty not only appreciates but pursues. To begin with the second concern, Ramberg, Rorty contends, has shown how the vocabulary of agency is of particular note:

> There are many descriptive vocabularies (many "ways of bringing salience to different causal patterns in the world," as Ramberg puts it) and many different communities of language-users, but we must always both pick some such pattern and belong to some such community. We cannot stop prescribing, and just describe, because the describing counts as describing only if rule-governed, only if conducted by people who talk about each other in the vocabulary of agency.
>
> Rorty, 2000, 372

Despite agreement over this general point, however, we may note two significant differences between Ramberg's arguments and their restatement by Rorty who aspires to "strengthen them rather than weaken them" (Rorty, ibid., 370). Firstly, while Ramberg suggested that the vocabulary of agency is needful for the purpose of recognising ourselves and one another as describing anything, Rorty maintains that the vocabulary of agency "is privileged, not by irreducibility, but by inescapability" (Rorty, ibid., 373). Secondly, Ramberg focuses on the vocabulary of intentionality, or as he terms it toward the end of his discussion, the vocabulary of agency. By contrast, Rorty shifts the discussion from "the descriptive vocabulary of intentionality" to the "prescriptive vocabulary of normativity" (Rorty, ibid., 373). In Rorty's rendering, it seems the vocabulary of normativity may be applicable on creatures describable in the vocabulary of intentionality, in line with the distinction he proposes between the (intentional) concept of a mind and the (moral or normative) concept of a person.[2]

Turning to the first issue, the renewed relevance of the vocabulary of agency prompts Rorty to articulate what appears, at first glance, to be a significant revision of his position: a realisation that he has relinquished the concept of truth, giving it away to the representationalists. "It was a mistake on my part to go from criticism of attempts to define truth as accurate representation of the intrinsic nature of reality to a denial that true statements get things right" (Rorty, ibid., 374), Rorty now claims, elaborating further on the implications of this shift: "*What is true in pragmatism is that what you talk about depends not on what is real but on what it pays you to talk about. What is true in realism is that most of what you talk about you get right*" (Rorty, ibid., 374, emphasis in the original). Nevertheless, Rorty carefully distinguishes his revised stance from a return to representationalism. Qualifying the ramifications of this change of heart, Rorty argues that he can still "maintain that there is no such thing as the search for truth, as distinct from the search for happiness" (Rorty, ibid., 376).

> "Happiness," in the relevant sense, means "getting more of the things we keep developing new descriptive vocabularies in or-

[2] However, we can detect some wavering in Rorty's view. At points, he suggests that the mastery of the vocabulary of normativity is a prerequisite for deploying a descriptive vocabulary: "We could not deploy the descriptive vocabulary unless we could also deploy the normative one" (Rorty,ibid., 372). Ramberg's point appears subtler. He suggests that recognising someone as *using* a descriptive vocabulary requires the vocabulary of agency, but this does not preclude the possibility of creatures using descriptive vocabularies without themselves mastering philosophical logic, or the intricacies of Davidson's notion of coherence, and consequently without recognising themselves in these terms.

> der to get." [...] Intellectual progress is not progress toward better and better representations of what is out there. It is not a matter of separating apparent patterns from real patterns. It is, in Ramberg's terms, finding more and more useful ways of "bringing salience to different causal patterns in the world." No such pattern (for instance, the pattern made salient by positron-talk as opposed to the pattern made salient by Zeus-talk) is more "real" than any other such pattern. Utility for human happiness is all that distinguishes them.
>
> Rorty 2000, 376

Invidious distinctions

Rorty's position represents a striking shift, both as a modification of his philosophical stance and as a response to Ramberg's amicable critique. The resulting vision, however, warrants critical consideration. Ramberg's criticism relies on a distinction between vocabularies—distinguished primarily by the purposes they fulfil—and the claims or theories articulated within those vocabularies. Taking this vocabulary/theory distinction to its extremes leads to Rorty's revised stance: much of what we say is broadly correct, though an alternative vocabulary might serve us better. The implications of this extreme version of the distinction ultimately reveal its untenability.

The overall reasons this distinction ultimately fails are tied to what Quine called the first dogma of empiricism. The vocabulary/theory distinction is not identical to the analytic/synthetic distinction. In different vocabularies, we may expect Ramberg and Rorty to agree, there is no sharp divide between matters resolved through conceptual or linguistic analysis and others that cannot be so resolved. However, the two distinctions share a common vulnerability. Just like the first dogma, the vocabulary/theory distinction relies on a separation of "pragmatic" considerations, which guide vocabulary choice, from the empirical considerations that influence theory choice. This recalls Quine's critique of C. I. Lewis and Rudolf Carnap in the closing lines of *Two Dogmas*:

> Carnap, Lewis, and others take a pragmatic stand on the question of choosing between language forms, scientific frameworks; but their pragmatism leaves off at the imagined boundary between the analytic and the synthetic. In repudiating

> such a boundary I espouse a more thorough pragmatism. Each man is given a scientific heritage plus a continuing barrage of sensory stimulation; and the considerations which guide him in warping his scientific heritage to fit his continuing sensory promptings are, where rational, pragmatic. Quine, 1951, 43

In this instance, Quine's position is perfectly in line with that of the classics of the pragmatist tradition. Peirce, James and Dewey made no attempt to separate empirical and pragmatic questions but, rather, sought to elucidate the former through the latter. "Pragmatic" considerations concerning how effectively our theories allow us to navigate experience are to be seen as an indicator of truth. However, these considerations are inseparable from considerations of predictive success. Realising that such success varies significantly across different fields—and much to the irritation of many of their readers—James and Dewey framed their ideas in somewhat vague and flexible terms. This was a deliberate effort, as James makes clear, for example in his discussion on truth and "satisfaction":

> Ordinary epistemology contents itself with the vague statement that the ideas must 'correspond' or 'agree'; the pragmatist insists on being more concrete, and asks what such 'agreement' may mean in detail. He finds first that the ideas must point to or lead towards that reality and no other, and then that the pointings and leadings must yield satisfaction as their result. So far the pragmatist is hardly less abstract than the ordinary slouchy epistemologist; but as he defines himself farther, he grows more concrete. James, 1909, 191

The classical pragmatists' view of the "pragmatic" threatens the possibility of neatly distinguishing between choices between vocabularies and theories, or separating inter-vocabulary issues from intra-vocabulary affairs.[3] Quine's remark on precisely the kind of Zeus-talk that Rorty invokes puts the point succinctly enough:

> Let me interject that for my part I do, qua lay physicist, believe in physical objects and not in Homer's gods; and I consider it

[3] These vague formulations are not intended to imply that is simply "what works", as the critics of pragmatism have misrepresented this stance (see Rydenfelt 2021). James contributed to this misconception by engaging in definitional debates with Russell, even titling his 1909 collection *The Meaning of Truth*. But by such "meaning", he meant the "pragmatist" interpretation in terms of our practices of inquiry.

> a scientific error to believe otherwise. But in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits. The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience. Quine, 1951, 41

"Pragmatic" assessment, it turns out, is nothing other than the kind of broadly empirical assessment of vocabularies, in terms of whether the causal chains they highlight are ultimately useful. The vocabulary/theory distinction is yet another invidious one.

To frame these points differently, it seems we have come full circle. The positivist programme began with a scrutiny of the privileged vocabulary of our time: that of physical science, archetypically physics. Philosophers then sought to understand what this meant ontologically—how this vocabulary, as opposed to others, managed to represent Reality. Ultimately it became abundantly clear that no non-circular case could be made. Indeed, according to anti-representationalists of Rorty's and Ramberg's stripe, there is *nothing* of philosophical interest to say about how vocabularies connect to reality. This realisation evokes the image of the anti-representationalist philosopher as a quietist, or at best a therapist sitting silently in their chair while their client on the sofa—another philosopher, or perhaps someone exposed to Descartes at an impressionable age—arrives at the same conclusions.

But it emerges that vocabularies serve various purposes and respond to distinct human needs. The task of philosophy may be one of redescription, the invention of new vocabularies. This vision casts the philosopher as a liberal poet—a figure well exemplified by the literary ingenuity of Rorty and Ramberg—who steps in when scientism tightens its grip on cherished concepts, or (what is often the same condition) when discursive transformation becomes necessary to combat cruelty and oppression. With Ramberg's aid, however, Rorty is sprinting towards the end of the poetic road. Ramberg introduces the notion of a pragmatic assessment of vocabularies to underscore this renewed philosophical interest in discursive interventions. However, the pragmatic assessment of vocabularies in terms of whether the causal chains they foreground are ultimately useful, as suggested here, is not neatly separable from the broadly empirical assessment of theories. Moreover, if vocabularies with predictive

success emerge as useful in achieving human happiness—more efficacious than our "other myths"—we easily find ourselves back where we started: a kind of scientism, or at least a strong preference for the hugely successful vocabularies of the physical sciences.

The normative and philosophical interests

Ramberg draws from Davidson's anomalous monism to argue for the pragmatic needfulness of engaging with the vocabulary of agency. Does the collapse of the vocabulary/theory distinction mean that the vocabulary of agency is devoid of philosophical interest? Not necessarily. However, it suggests that the focus on having the vocabulary at our disposal in the first place is, in itself, a misleading way of assessing its relevance. For a vocabulary to hold philosophical interest, it must trace a causal pattern that is salient, as Ramberg nicely puts it, with respect to our "ability to reprogram our causal dispositions through salience-alteration" (Ramberg, 2000, 363). The relevance of a vocabulary is not merely its availability but rather the causal patterns it enables us to trace, in turn leading to action and differing outcomes. The question then becomes: what are these causal patterns?

There is, of course, a causal pattern that, in Davidson's view, the vocabulary of agency uniquely illuminates. It is the causal pattern between the "mental" or intentional states and ensuing events or changes in our physical environment. Because of the anomalism of the mental, this pattern is not governed by strict laws; the vocabulary that traces it remains irreducible to those of physical sciences. Instead, tracing the patterns highlighted by the vocabulary of agency requires an assumption of rationality—a notion Davidson attempts to articulate through his concept of truth and the principle of charity.

However, these Davidsonian starting points fix our attention to the dual descriptions of a single event—such as cases of "mental-physical" causation—that are irreducible to one another, that is, indeterminate in the sense Ramberg outlines. This focus draws our attention from *other* salient causal patterns marked by the vocabulary of agency. Rorty's substantial shift from intentionality to the normative dimension of this vocabulary could be used as a stepping stone toward an alternative perspective, one that concentrates on the content of claims made in the normative vocabulary of agency—couched in terms such as "good", "evil", "right" and "wrong"—and the causal patterns that they aspire to highlight.

Indeed, Ramberg hints at such an alternative picture of the relevance of the vocabulary of agency. Three elements of such a picture emerge from the lengthy quotation already discussed. First, Ramberg (ibid., 366) observes that Davidson's later views imply no expectation that the vocabulary of physical sciences could be reduced to a "purely structural vocabulary" of "basic science" or "ideal physics, what have you". Second, describing the contrast between the vocabulary of agency with those of the physical sciences, Ramberg notes that "perhaps we should rather say that the predictive interests that are expressed in the dynamics of agency-vocabulary are of a very peculiar sort". This opens the possibility that the vocabulary of agency, too, might engage in prediction, albeit of a "peculiar" nature. Third, Ramberg hints at linking such predictions to the kinds of considerations we "gesture at with the moral notion of a person".

Taking these suggestions further enables us to develop an alternative perspective on the causal patterns traced by the claims made in the normative vocabulary, beginning with the third element, the moral notion of a person. Consider an individual who is utterly insensitive to cruelty and its consequences, indifferent even when directly witnessing its results. Such a person may still possess rights—remain a person in the moral sense. However, they could no longer be seen as capable of making moral commitments. Similar considerations apply to coherence, truth, and other normative concepts that guide how we make sense of others. These notions shape our understanding of the moral person or the logical person—despite the fact that our assessment of ourselves and others always takes place from our own, fallible perspective. However, when we describe others through the moral concept of a person—one who is both responsible for their actions and a bearer of both rights and duties—we not only assume that their intentional actions are governed by coherence and so on. We also imply that they are *sensitive* to certain patterns in our experience.

Such considerations did not escape the early pragmatist thinkers, who proposed an empirical approach to normative inquiry. They rejected both an *a priori* approach to ethics and the reduction of normativity to the descriptive issues within social sciences, psychology or similar fields. While acknowledging the distinctiveness of the questions and problems addressed by normative and descriptive inquiries, they argued that both could be approached through the same scientific methodology. Peirce envisioned such inquiry as encompassing a triad of normative sciences, logic, ethics, and aesthetics. Dewey, particularly in his writings from the 1920s

and 1930s on ethics, logic, epistemology and the philosophy of science, offered perhaps the most thorough articulation of an empirical and experimental approach to ethics. He proposed that values could be revised and ethical norms empirically confirmed by examining their observable consequences. Dewey's vision suggests that claims made in the normative vocabulary can be transformed into a topic of experimental inquiry characterised with an interest in prediction—focusing on the predictive interests peculiar to that vocabulary as gestured at by the second element that emerges in Ramberg's discussion.

The details of these proposals need not concern us here.[4] Instead, more pressing is the absence of this vision from the trajectory of pragmatist thought as it moves from Quine to Davidson and from Rorty to Ramberg. Three explanations suggest themselves. First, the omission stems from one of Quine's (at least one-time) commitments, articulated in *Epistemology Naturalized* (1969): that questions of normativity belong within psychology, conceived as a branch of the natural sciences. Second, although Rorty rejects Quine's vision, he—largely following Ramberg—accepts another assumption: that normative vocabulary ought not be invested with the predictive ambitions central to the physical sciences. Davidson (1995) had explored the idea of a "science of rationality" concerned with the description, prediction, and explanation of intentional actions and associated attitudes—intention, belief, desire, linguistic meaning. This might well explain why Rorty decides to frame his discussion as one on the normative vocabulary instead of the vocabulary of intentionality to shield the normative vocabulary from predictive use and thus from becoming an instrument of control. By implicitly distinguishing it from the vocabulary of intentionality, Rorty succeeds in bringing the normative vocabulary into focus; however, he—along with Ramberg—remains entangled in the worry that its predictive use would reduce it to a tool of control. What remains unexplored, however, is how this concern might lose its grip if we shift focus from what such vocabulary reveals about human conduct to the features of life, experience, and world that terms like "good" and "wrong" bring salience to.

Finally, the third explanation are the remnants of representationalism which continue to obscure the potential of such a shift, despite how it is prefigured by the classics of the pragmatist tradition: we may *learn* how the issues we address with normative vocabulary can be transformed into topics of scientific—empirical, even experimental—inquiry without first having to ascertain, by way of Ontology, that the relevant "facts" obtain,

[4] For those details, see Rydenfelt (2023a; 2023b; 2025).

or confirm, in terms defined by Epistemology, that they can be traced by empirical means.

Conclusion

Rorty's concern was that Davidson remains mired in the representationalist view in finding the vocabulary of intentionality and the notion of truth of particular philosophical interest. Alleviating these concerns, Ramberg argues that the vocabulary of agency and the notion of truth occupy a special place for Davidson because of the way in which they enable us to recognise ourselves and others as creatures able to make the kind of commitments required for counting as "describing" anything. Moreover, the vocabulary of agency remains of philosophical interest as it resists attempts to understand human life and action in terms of prediction and control.

In Rorty's hands, Ramberg's proposal evolves into a distinction between vocabularies and theories—another distinction that, I have argued, proves invidious. The philosophical interest in the vocabulary of agency arises not merely because we prefer to use it to describe ourselves but because of the salience of the causal patterns it may trace. In the end, it is not our type of talk but the truths that our vocabularies may enable us to trace that should set us free. Rather than concentrating on explaining events through the vocabulary of intentionality, we should—as suggested by Ramberg's concept of the moral person and Rorty's shift to discussing the normative vocabulary—focus on the causal patterns of salience that normative claims and notions enable us to trace. The classical pragmatists embraced this perspective naturally; Ramberg also anticipates it in his analysis of Davidson's later work, which rejects the presumption that the vocabularies of the physical sciences are reducible to that of a basic science. However, Davidson—in Ramberg's portrayal—and Rorty are not inclined to explore this possibility. This reluctance, I have argued, arises from lingering representationalist assumptions—particularly the contention that normative vocabulary is not to be directed toward prediction, lest it lose its distinctiveness and risk becoming an instrument of control and oppression. This outcome can be avoided, however, by embracing a more thorough pragmatism.[5]

[5] I'm heavily indebted to Yvonne Huetter-Almerigi, Jonathan Knowles, Robert Kraut, Sami Pihlström and Robert Sinclair for comments and discussions. This research has

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