

Returning to Laruelle's generic black universe and its relation to climate change, this conceptualization represents the most valuable nugget to be mined from this work. Laruelle's darkness represents not merely a world gone dark, but rather the complete blackness of a world without us (144). "Oil is the darkening of sunlight. Oil is thus literally dead: oil is death ... Oil is the shadow of black being—wh[ic]h annihilates societies by tear[ing] them apart ..." (145). According to Laruelle "oil is understood not simply as dark but as radical blackness" (145). Black is never defined in terms of its' relation to light. So when Galloway touts Laruelle as "the great thinker of radical equality" (47), in this respect he succeeds in making his point. Although some critics "view Laruelle[']s stance] as a license to do nothing," (85) Laruelle's attitude of indifference is often dismissed as too stubbornly rooted in indecision. Galloway defends this attitude as being equally assertive as it is passive, as disruptive as it is peaceful (86). For a supposed "non-philosophy [that] declines to reflect on things" (xxiv), Laruelle, like *Bartleby*, resolutely 'prefers not to.'

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All for Nothing: Hamlet's Negativity

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Andrew Cutrofello's *All for Nothing* retraces the trajectory that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (the play and the character) has taken across the Continental and Analytic philosophical traditions, and it is no small achievement that, despite the literally centuries of commentary and criticism on this Shakespearean play, Cutrofello has succeeded in shedding new light on its literary and philosophical significance. There are two ways of approaching Cutrofello's *All for Nothing*: 1) as an in-depth philosophical commentary on the concept of negativity, particularly as this concept comes to life against the backdrop of *Hamlet*; and 2), as a work of literary criticism that opens up new avenues of interpretation into the play *via* the longstanding philosophical rapprochement with the concept of negativity. Whether readers are coming to this book as scholars and students of Shakespeare and *Hamlet*, or as scholars and students of the history of philosophy and of the concept of negativity, they will surely not be disappointed in what they take away from *All for Nothing*.

Cutrofello begins by positioning *Hamlet* as a 'conceptual character,' the chief representative not only of Shakespearean thought (as Zarathustra is of Nietzsche's, for instance, or the Angelus Novus is of Benjamin's), but also a character that can be played and played differently by whichever philosopher happens to decide to step into the role. Cutrofello: "There are as many ways of playing *Hamlet* within the space of philosophical positions as there are of playing him on stage. Just as theatrical performance histories compare Garrick's, Schröder's, Kemble's, Siddons's, Kean's, Bernhard's, Oliver's, Gielgud's, and Branagh's *Hamlets*, so we may compare those of Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Russell, Heidegger, Arendt, Derrida, and Žižek" (2). Cutrofello's methodological innovation consists in converting a dramaturgical question into a philosophical one: *how has Hamlet been played?* becomes, in the hands of Cutrofello,

how has Hamlet been thought? From this methodological point of departure, Cutrofello zeroes in on what makes Hamlet so philosophically attractive to so wide a range of philosophical tastes. Insofar as philosophy deals with fundamental questions relating to ways of being, ways of thinking, and ways of experiencing the world(s) in which we live, the figure (the concept) of Hamlet is appealing by virtue of its capacity to never cease questioning how it is that Hamlet exists relative to its world (in the play). What does Hamlet know about Hamlet? What does the Self know about the Self? Cutrofello's overarching thesis is that Hamlet's interminable, irresolvable journey towards self-consciousness, Hamlet's "capacity for self-affection," is "rooted in a more fundamental power of negativity, and that it is this power that Hamlet personifies" (2). Hamlet is thus the first post-Cartesian conceptual persona not just because he expresses scepticism *vis-a-vis* the onto-epistemological certitude of his existence, but because he is sceptical about whether the entirety of what he knows about himself and his world will vanish or erode as time (the time of the play, time historical, time eternal) goes on: "Both 'To be or not to be' and 'I think, therefore I am' give voice to a distinctively modern experience of subjectivity," one that unravels in a multiplicity of directions and assumes a multiplicity of forms that Hamlet was perhaps the first conceptual character consciously and unrelentingly to suffer (5). The consequences of Hamlet's negativity (his melancholy) are gauged by Cutrofello according to their psychological, epistemological, ontological, political, and metaphysical significances. While dividing his reading of Hamlet's negativity according to these categories of critique, Cutrofello simultaneously unearths a conceptual history of negativity using Hamlet as multi-faceted exemplar of negativity's theoretical and practical diversity of expression.

It will come as no surprise to readers familiar with *Hamlet* that Hamlet's honour at being widely regarded as a pioneer of modern subjectivity is not without its burdens. Deeply melancholic over the murder of his father and his mother's subsequent marriage to Claudius, Hamlet proceeds through the play deprived of the vengeful enthusiasm required for securing redemption and justice by the time of the play's end. Against critics who have been quick to chastise Hamlet for his inability (or unwillingness) to avenge the death of his father, Cutrofello is more patient in asking "what is the *psychological* nature of Hamlet's melancholy? Is the negativity of melancholy something that ought to be embraced or overcome?" (13). Cutrofello's response to this second question hinges on a revaluation of the Hegelian capacity for *tarrying* with negativity and of facilitating negativity's revolutionary promises. One of the dimensions of *Hamlet* that makes it a remarkable play is precisely Hamlet's refusal to act, Hamlet's indecisiveness in the face of what to do with the knowledge of the circumstances surrounding his father's untimely death. Cutrofello demonstrates the error in viewing Hamlet's negativity as an obstacle that the play seeks to overcome rather than the very core of the problematic that Shakespeare used *Hamlet* in order to pose. Put otherwise, Hamlet's refusal to act mimics an ethic of theoretical contemplation and practical action whereby the greatest achievements of thinking and acting alike stem from a refusal to compromise on one's scepticism and passivity. But such an achievement is not easily celebrated, as an ethic of scepticism and passivity thereby becomes indistinguishable from nihilism and cowardice. Cutrofello sees in Hamlet the capacity to tarry *between* scepticism and nihilism in a way and with a determination unmatched in the history of literature. Hamlet's melancholy is the psychological price to be paid for this ambivalent distinction. In representing Hamlet's melancholy as one of several discrete expressions of Hamlet's negativity, Cutrofello's opening chapter stages a reciprocally illuminating dialogue between

Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault, and Derrida around ways of philosophical escape from Cartesian rationalism, thereby enabling Cutrofello to track the migration of negativity's multiple representations across the expansive post-Cartesian landscape of contemporary critical theory. This is indeed an impressive, intelligently-conceived and executed study, and the balancing act Cutrofello performs between literary and philosophical criticism is maintained with excitement and complexity until the very end of his journey through *Hamlet* and the history of negativity.

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Mind, Language, and Metaphilosophy: Early Philosophical Papers

RICHARD RORTY

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Many of us are familiar with the four previous collections of Rorty's essays. This book completes the set and is unique in that it contains Rorty's first published articles in the 1960s and early 1970s. Treated merely as a stepping stone to the *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, the collection has historical interest. But this is not its only virtue. One can already see a developing interest in metaphilosophy. The book contains 16 essays, along with a useful introduction by the editors. In what follows, I will rehearse four articles that I take to be the strongest or most influential.

Rorty's first published article, entitled "Pragmatism, Categories, and Language," is both historical and syncretic. His aim is to show that Peirce anticipates logical positivism, and even repudiates it in advance. In this way, Peirce is quite close to the later Wittgenstein. The analysis depends upon Peirce's notoriously obscure concept of thirdness. What is this concept? According to Peirce, thirds are whatever cannot be reduced to entities with sharp edges. Examples include "intelligence, intention, signs... meaning, rules and habits" (18). Rorty's illustrative example is 'giving' – meaning is distorted when I translate 'giving' in a sentence like, 'I give a present' to 'I thrust a present toward you and you take it.' Rorty connects Peirce's notion of thirdness to the then current antireductionist argument that there is a difference between the meaning of something like a word and the reasons given when employing it in a particular case. Peirce's main argument against reductionism, however, is akin to the one employed by Wittgenstein, which is that it generates an infinite regress. Wittgenstein uses this argument in the context of the vagueness of linguistic rules; Peirce uses it against Cartesian intuitionism. For Peirce, the appeal to an intuition demands a superintuition to judge the original, and so on *ad infinitum*. What is especially remarkable in this first work is Rorty's defense and elucidation of Peirce. He was to become Rorty's least favourite pragmatist.

One of the most influential articles in the collection is "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy and Categories," which radicalizes the Identity Theory proposed by J.J.C. Smart. Instead of identifying sensations with physical states, Rorty proposes eliminating sensations altogether. This position was eventually christened 'eliminative materialism.'