

〈研究ノート〉

## Could Kant be classified in Meta-narrative?

— referred to Richard Rorty's philosophical view —

Takeo Age

### Introduction

A Meta - narrative is a story, a phrase used by post - modern philosophers where some being or something else reigns in a position of subject in place of a person . This story has been familiar in Western - Christian world since Plato, yet it is undeniable that this Pleenomenon has emerged most prominently in the modern age . In this sense, it is a phenomenon characteristic of the modern Enlightenment period which has experienced the Renaissance and the Reformation . A slogan to the Enlightenment was Humanism, ( human - centrist or logos - centrist ), so it is cynical for post - modern thinkers to have uncovered the paradox built in Enlightenment . Then, how do we think this paradox come about or what is the cause of it ?

The modern era is also usually defined as the epoch of reason in which we might find the answer to disclose this contradiction, for humanism and logos - centrist represent the other side of the coin .<sup>(1)</sup> In fact, main meta - narrative is in many cases a product of great thinkers who have shrewd intelligence and the idea, besides extravagant passion as in the case of Hegel and Marx and so on . In Hegel's Logic, the narrator Hegel is an agent of God ( The Absolute Spirit ), so he declares the work is a description of God's

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I thank Howard Williams for giving me a chance to know Rorty's works and a critical comment and advices . I also thank Mr. Huw Williams (graduate of LSE) for correcting this draft.

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consciousness . In Marx's case, the true agent is put on History, consequently human beings are laid under the necessary law of history which is independent of the consciousness of the period . Since the era of humanism has also been that of human liberty, it is surely paradoxical that a super - human entity like God or History stands in the position of the subject .

In the case of Kant, who is one of representative figures of the consigned to enlightenment era's, could he also be destined to thrown into the group of Meta - narrative philosophers ? "Yes", is the answer of Richard Rorty who is one of the representative figures of post modern philosophers in the USA .<sup>(2)</sup>

But it seems to me that Kant's work has no relevance to Meta - narrative philosophers, so for what reason does Rorty identify this to be the case ?

As is well known, Kant's philosophy began, from the outset, in opposition to subjective idealism, radical theological dogmatism and skepticism or agnosticism . The result of his attempt to avoid failures that these schools of thought contained was a contrivance of a Transcendental Method . By virtue of this insight, he could explain that an ontological testimony of God is fallible as far as it was demonstrated beyond a limit of reason . He also argued that relying on an innate ability of a priori intuition and applying categories, we could elucidate the mechanical laws of nature as cause - effect relations, without dropping into skepticism . But his resolution on this method caused a new problem . One is this: In dismissal of testimony of God with reason, he imposed on human being his ever lasting burden likewise the myth of Sisyphus . The result in Critique of Pure Practical Reason was Categorical Imperative — a postulate of Supreme Goodness to which an individual person owes a moral duty for its realization . Secondly, the Kantian resolution evoked more discrepancy between phenomenon and noumenon, spirit and nature, freedom (of will) and mechanical necessity, all of which were unpleasant or not permissible for the enlightened intellectuals . It might have been felt for them that Kant's enterprise was not the resolution but rather a regression back to a pre - modern state .<sup>(3)</sup>

These two issues refer with the Rorty's critique of Meta - narrative . Then, I shall

investigate the issues in the following order.

- 1) The implication of a Transcendental method and its relation to Meta - Narrative
- 2) An attitude towards ( or against) an ontological or ont - theological view or the testimony
- 3) The relations between freedom and necessity which refer to a teleology of nature
- 4) An assessment of the directness of history which contains an account of the French Revolution ( this item is omitted in this paper)

In a word, these issues relate themselves to a judgment about the essence or meaning of human - beings.

## I

Kant is counted as a part of Meta - narrative tradition and accused by Rorty because of his Transcendental ( a priori) syntheses . He claims this by identifying Kant's method with Plato's Idee, Hegel's Absolute Sprit, Marx's Class Struggle<sup>(4)</sup>or early Wittgenstein's and later Heidigger's language, Derrida's Difference, so on .<sup>(5)</sup>

It is an apparent fact that Kant divided the world into two spheres of an appearance (phenomena) and an essence ( things in themselves) But Kant's primary concern lay to examine the scale of reason ( intelligence) and that trying to investigate an invisible entity is out of interest . By employing a Transcendental method ( a priori intuition and pure categories) Kant left noumenon intact as inexplicable, so this concept had no controlling power on the appearance world . Saying by using the favorite criteria of pragmatism, it has no harmful character . Kant's Critique of pure reason belongs to episteme ( discipline of cognition) , thereby his philosophy does not touch with ontological metaphysics, that is, the Meta - narrative story.

But we must listen to Rorty's reasoning, for he identifies Kant's episteme with the foundation of a Meta - narrative . The issue addressed in this respect is a concept of "synthetic a priori intuition" in Critique of Pure Reason and the Categorical Imperative in Critique of Pure Practical Reason.

It is true that his time - space concept through "a priori intuition" — that is a result or

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the component of a Transcendental method — has been an issue criticized because this procedure amounts to the assertion that we could have a representation without an object of a sensual intuition . It is not difficult for us to see in this proposition that it breaks the law of contradiction in a formal logic . But he assuredly would claim that the dimension being questioned here stands before the application of a category, so the check from the formal logic is irrelevant and invalid . If we could have a representation of something a time - space without having tan an object of sensual intuition — representation — , then the concept of this item could not aptly be named other than the object of a pure a priori intuition.

Thus, since the core of Kant's philosophy consists of the following proposition that we could not learn from experience but it is a cognition that should constitute or make experience possible, and yet it is pure a priori intuition ( and categories) that makes the condition of probability of experience reliable, it is natural his philosophy is classified as a specific kind of an epistemology, that is a Transcendental philosophy or metaphysics.

But here again we have to insist on the difference Kat's metaphysics and the ontology like Hegel, Marx and early Heidigger . Although they claim that they have grasped the essence of an object, that is, the form ( voice) of entity ( Sein) or the form of substance, it is a pseudo - assertion <sup>(6)</sup>, because it is a proposition not only disprovable but also contains one beyond the limit of reason, in another word, a logical contradiction . Kant demands that a form of entity is not discovered directly in things but should be acquired ( or interpreted) by way of intuition and a cognitive ability . Therefore a representation is necessarily filtered by a reference of recognition and that the form of entity should owe its identity to the form of cognition . Saying without fearing to be misunderstood, the form doesn't originally being distributed to a thing or an entity (substance) but is identified intrinsic to a subjective side . Yet it should not be neglected here that Kant has stressed a differentiation from the Subjectivist . So we should remind us Kant's saying here that Transcendental Idealism is combined with his "empirical realism".

By the way, it is a necessary result that a Transcendental method generates a dichotomy of appearance and things themselves.<sup>(7)</sup> This point is exemplified in time - space concept in the following way. As having been argued in his Aesthetic Deduction, we could not judge whether time - space could have an original and a final point, because our reason falls into antinomy if we support either. Since this conclusion of a time space was drawn out by exalting a power of reason, it is clear that this argument couldn't keep in touch with a thing in itself or things as they are. In this respect, many criticism or questions have also been raised. For example, the distinction of physical (Euclidian) space and mathematical one are ignored<sup>(8)</sup> or why could he determine an un - cognizable object as thing itself?<sup>(9)</sup> so on.

Here, presupposing my brief summary about the structure of Kant's episteme, I wish to answer pragmatically as to what Rorty has addressed to Kant's episteme.

What is the practical effect resulting from his Transcendental - episteme? I could argue this point as follows.

We human beings image our outer - world according to our time - space concept and categories, so its paintings should have a specific character. In other words, as Kant stresses everywhere in his work, we a reasoned - entity, could not know how a reasoned alien paint their world. Kant's view would coincide with the endeavor of astronomers who are sending messages aimed into universe expecting a response someday. Of course, it presupposes that both sides could transform strange pulse to a readable.

Thus Kant's aim is much in modesty manner and in this sense it is differentiated from metaphysical philosopher listed before.

## II

A Meta - Narrative story has initially been used to indicate the modern Enlightenment by post - modern thinkers. But since the principal view point of the Enlightenment is a human - centralism, a liberation from a theology as seen in the Renaissance, it seems to be an apparent contradiction that an enlightenment doctrine has been accused of on

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the grounds that it employs a "God - eye view" . If this claim has to be considered valid, we could envisage two reasons .( 1) It would be one case that they assert their doctrine as true beyond the limit of positive proposition enthusiastically, so that it caused the opposite effect against they intended .( 2) It is the second that they made a sincere effort to transcend theology but they had not fully escaped from the mighty of God . The former would be applied to Marx and the latter is suitable for Hegel . But in this respect, it would be rather correct to think that their human - centralism does not stand on rejecting God but provides for a more reliable testimony which could satisfy reason or intelligence ( In this context, I shall count atheism like Marx's as a doctrine having a relation to religion . Apart from atheism in Oriental like Zen, Marx's doctrine could not be sustainable unless presupposing the existence of religion . In this sense, we could define atheism in Occidental as theism named atheism .<sup>(10)</sup>

In the first case as Marx, his attempt in fact has a relation to God ( religion) because he endeavored to construct the world where human being have no need to desire for God (religion). Even if the Garden of Eden were to emerge in this world as Marx anticipated, it is a question whether the inhabitant living in a state of dreamed fraternity could have bidden farewell to religion . Certainly we might expect that if we question "why don't you need religion", they would probably answer that they could not understand what we say . This condition looks like a certification where the generation not infected with religion has emerged in this world for the first time and that the prophecy of Marx was also entitled .

In this context, it is not the issue whether is this kind of Utopia truly realized or whether his prescription for the goal has an actuality . Is it true they have completely become innocent of religious mind ? If so, we have to judge whether they have become a different person from us . How we can define these strangers ? If someone answered to this question in such a way that they swept away the concept of God because they themselves had become like God, could we have a right to reject it ? If someone objected this question in such a way that "you should have no right to define the alien as God, because this judgment requires super - power beyond your status quo", what

should we do ?

Logically viewed, it is coherent to say that the inhabitant who no longer needs to desire God might be a God - type - person, for it satisfies the definition of God proposed . Of course, if God had been defined as having character of eternal life or super - entity beyond time and space, the answer should be different . Consequently, the answer depends on the definition of God.

Then, who define it ? Of course, the normal answer would reply that it is a Man . But it is said to be invalid and blamed as atheism from a point of theology.

In this context, the enterprise to prove the entity of God beyond a miracle or revelation. — from Descartes to Hegel — shall have a character not free from religion but a reconstruction or completion of it . But in a crucial point, the dimension to be defined is altered . Because God should be co - existent with a free human spirit, its character might be comparable to the institution of monarchy whose power has been restricted by Parliament.

We could still address a question what is the meaning of verifying the entity of God ? Who judges the correctness of its procedure ? We could anticipate in advance that the more God is explained in terms of reason, the more God, thus illustrated, becomes the figure of a reasoned entity, that is, human beings . But is this venture viewed from another perspective a trial for a reasoned entity to become like God ? ( And if we follow Kant's saying that an institution like law invented by human beings could be changed, this trial would effectuate the claims of atheism in parity. )

Incidentally, as understood from explanation so far, the interpretation of God has close relation to that of human beings, in particular, that of freedom . So it is also suspected that the definition of God depends on that of freedom . Thus the investigation of God manifest itself has been a turn - around project about that of human beings, a suitable task to the modern philosophy. But when we return again to this sphere, the troublesome object waits for us . That is Nature . How could we deal with this task ? In this area, is there no longer room for God to operate freely or still to reign ?

III

The modern spirit has two tasks . One is an endeavor to liberate itself from a slavish relation to theology and the other is the liberation from the control of the nature . In the latter case, we could use a term "free", not free from the control of natural law but to understand it and utilize it for human expediency . So it could be said that we could get free through many inventions — from a law of gravitation, in botany, chemicals, to bio - technology . The newly development of a genetic engineering accompanied by the analysis of DNA is so fundamental that it becomes controversial whether or not the creation of an artificial replica of a person might clinches with the dignity of human beings, though genetic treatments for intractable disease are the expected result .<sup>(11)</sup>

But the wonder, mystery or ferocity has not disappeared from our mind . It is natural despite how far our natural science has progressed, needless to refer to the evolutionism, the independent existence of nature stands as a restriction to human being . It is apparent considering the situation that spirit doesn't work without a body. If so, where is the room to submit a question in relation to freedom or human will ? What answer could a man expect to receive ? I assure that in this question there is same one which was proposed at the inquiry into God — that is a question of what is essence of nature . Where from ? To where ? That is an authentically metaphysical question which positive, pragmatic scientists or engineers should not posit . For instance, engineers in the manufacturing industry investigate the further function of magnetic electricity in various conditions and discover the unknown character — for example, super - electric conductivity under the absolute zero temperature — , but they have never conceived to ask what essence of it is.

Incidentally, human mind in a pre - modern history presupposed the super - human entity to explain the *raison d'être* of the natural world including human being . Modern radical mind has endeavored to understand it as *casua sui*, that is, a mechanical relation of cause and effect. But it could not have explained the origin and its infinite future, So a teleological view point has necessarily emerged to satisfy human intelligence . In that



case, two options appeared as possible . 1) A first view takes a stance which uses teleology as an analogy to apply where the explanation based on the cause and effect could not attain . This was utilized by Kant . 2) A second option clings to an idea that so long as nature stands independent of human beings, we mankind are not free . So they also employ teleology but in this case as not an analogy but as reality . It amounts to not hypothesizing but verifying the purposiveness of nature, in other words, this means authentic teleology of nature . But who has the ability to do this ? This must be a Man who could hear the voice of a universe or a creator of nature . This was practiced by Hegel . This method fully deserves to be classified as a true Meta - narrative story. The word "we" which appears in Hegel's encyclopedia is not a term used in an ordinary sense . It represents the agent of Absolute Spirit which underlies all entities of universe including nature and a human world . Hegel's logic holds a first and a basic position in his triad system — logic, natural philosophy and spiritual philosophy . The following message in it is a good example.

"Logic is a description of consciousness of a Creator at the pre - stage from which this world emerges . "That is nothing but the identity of "we".

Well, it is clear that two philosopher stand an opposite side . One is modesty and the other is adventure . Which option could, we say, represents more aptly the Modern spirit ? Which did commit a sin beyond the given territory of mankind ? Who or what entity could give a tribunal ? Kant used teleology as an explanation for our aspiration for nature, in other words, defended it as an analogy . Hegel saw nature as a restriction for human freedom and he designed an unified system where discrepancy between a reasoned entity and nature . I was lifted (auf hebend ) To achieve this, he demanded the status which transcended an antagonism . That is the "we" or "God ? eye ? view", Meta - narrative metaphysics.

### conclusion

Modern spirit requires a stance whereby stands on its own feet . It represents itself in such a slogan as "Suspect all things" . That is an expression of logos - centralism in

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respect that a reason doesn't approve anything which it can't understand . In other words, it does not recognize any authority except itself . That is allegedly not anything but a freedom of human beings and also a belief announced in *What is an enlightenment* by Kant . So far as the issues are in this sense raised , it seems there is no room for Meta - Narrative to intrude upon this sphere.

But if we review concretely the origin of an aspiration to freedom, we can find two different types of it . One is connected with social conditions which surround an ordinary life of an individual person, their ways of living, fortune or misfortune and the other is related to a grand perspective which inquiries into the position or destiny of human beings as a species . The former is summarized as the request for the establishment of human rights — freedom of religion, property right, safety from an injury so on, so it overlaps with the confirmation of justice, right and duty or ( a little ambiguous, controversial concept happiness . These make up the main themes of modern social science — jurisprudence, political economy, sociology, and so on.

In this area, so called positive, "disprovable" science, is there possibilities for a Meta - narrative story to exist ? It could arise if one asks the possibility about not tolerance of religion but instead a probability of liberation from religion itself . Or how about if one demonstrates the abolition of a spontaneous order such as money system, private property or still in market economy ? In this respect, if the proposition is submitted to not by virtue of God but instead in terms of historical necessity, we comes to the verdict it as Meta Narrative History with Rorty.

Note

- (1) As to the danger that the control of reason causes a standardized human image, many views has been disclosed. For example, see Hauke Brunkhorst, *Adorno and critical Theory*, Wales Uni . 1999 ( Chief Editor of Series . Howard Williams).
- (2) I haven't read all his many articles and books yet . I think that it is not an easy task to understand and criticize his philosophical foundation named "holism" which owes to Donald Davidson and Quine . So, this paper is still a research note . (Refer to ; Alex Orenstein , *W. V. Quire*, Princeton Uni. Press, 2002)
- (3) We could here anticipate the reaction such figures like Hegel (and Marx), for they should have held in mind that dismantlement of these antagonism was a mission of the modern enlightenment spirit. We could not refrain here to reference with young Marx's ever charitable phrase — Communism is a last resort of conflict between human beings and nature. It could be represented as naturalization of human parallel to humanization of nature. Assuredly this announcement corresponds to another phrase that capitalism is a last social system which contains a class struggle. The judgment about which camps had addressed a true question, not a true resolution of the puzzlement of human beings, depends on an individual consideration so long as we now couldn't resort in God or History. A man of Nietzsche would say that the thought relying on History is a that of the weak and determine as a variant of Christianity. We also remind us that Keynes looked the newly emerged USSR just after the revolution as the state commanding a religion called Leninism.
- (4) I agree with Roty's criticism about Marx's Meta-narrative (cf. " The End of Leninism and History as Comic Frame" in *History and Idea of Progress*, ed. A. M. Melzer et.al, Cornell Uni. Press, 1995. Also refer the review article "The End of History" by Howard Williams, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 1998.)
- But I wish to add one comment here. The term - Class Struggle is not original to him but rather belongs to historical facts and a historical view of class struggle itself is a

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proposition of disproof, so it is an overestimation grouping it in Meta-narrative. The legitimacy to specify his view as Meta - narrative might lie in the next three points, as Marx declared, (1) a class struggle is a necessary phenomenon in history (2) One in the capitalist era is a last form of it (3) Coup d'Etat by labor class is a historically necessary but also an only way towards classless society.

Incidentally, as a staunch pragmatist, a defender of Western-American civilization, a man of Ethno-centrism, Rorty is liable to be a target from critics of market economy. Though I don't necessarily take part in this accusation, I shall give a serious example here. (Jeffery C. Isaac, "Is the Revival of Pragmatism Practical, or What are the Consequences of Pragmatism ?" *Constellations* Vol. 6, No 4, 1999)

(5) See Richard Rorty, *Philosophical Papers I, II*, Cambridge University Press 1991

(6) As well known, the method is "Geist" or "function" of object (in the terms of Absolute Spirit) by Hegel and is also distributed to a thing itself by materialism. For example, in *Kapital* Marx argued that a commodity had intrinsic essence or substance that consisted of the embodied labor. It was also alleged that a commodity, distinct from a mere thing, now was pronounced as a value - thing. Then, according to Hegelian method, a category — substance, — had a power to exhibit itself up to the phenomenal figure, so it represents itself up to a moneyed price, necessary form of a commodity. Once this method being presupposed, it is easy for us to anticipate that money could be defined as "a crystal of value" and a capital-money as "a self-multiplying value". This is the essence of an argument in the Capital story. This shows clearly the characteristic feature of Meta-narrative, because the process of synthetic description (narration), that is, the form of cognition completely melted down in that of the object (form-substance formula of object). In this context, we could assuredly say by using parody that (historical) materialism is a band of "a transcendental realism" and "an empirical idealism".

Incidentally, as for the practical result from imitating Hegel's method, see my recent paper ("Is it possible to reverse Hegel's system using his system ?" in *Journal of Department of Economics*, vol.27 at Osaka University of Economics and Law,

August, 2003)

- (7) Resulting from Kant's dichotomy, The Almighty ( of God) was secured, because he is an entity of beyond time-space dimension.cf. Takesi Kitaoka , *Kant and Metaphysics — about thing itself and freedom* (in Japanese), sekaisousya, 2001
- (8) See Michael Friedman, "Kant on Concepts and Intuition in the Mathematical Science" *Synthese* 84, 1990) Philip Kitcher, "Kant and the foundation of mathematics", *The Philosophical Review*, 84 (H. F. Klemme ed. *Immanuel Kant* Volume I , Dartmouth Publishing Ltd. 1999
- (9) See J Michael Young, "Functions of thought and the synthesis of intuition", *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer C.U.P 1992  
Patricia Kitcher, "Revisiting Kant's Epistemology: *Skepticism, Apriority, and Psychologism*" *Noûs* 29, (H.F Klemme ed.ibid)
- (10) See Fransis Fukuyama, *Our Post Human Future — consequences of the biotechnology revolution*, New York 1999
- (11) If it has once been discovered that God is not creature but the products of the worried people, could we say with Fuerbach and Marx that we have had a free condition from religion ? The correctness of this proposition depends not only on the probability whether a society full of fraternity could be realized, but also on the definition of religion as before mentioned.Though Marx has convinced that he had un - veiled the myth of religion, we could not determine that what he said were true. Same dogmatic logic was used when he proclaimed that enigma of history at last disclosed by his *Kapital* — the true answer being "communism", but this is nothing but Meta - Narrative.

A supplement

So far as epistemology levies the task to itself in a way that it inquiries into not the nature or essence of human beings (super human) but the constitution or mental conditions of cognitive ability, its theory in general, I think, is saved from accusation of Meta-narrative.Assuredly it is probable the case which yet starting from

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epistemology like Des Carte by Cogito, results in Meta — theory of ont-theological proof and having intention of conquering the ontology like Heidegger has been trapped in it. Contrast these cases, it is necessary that Hegel, who intended to overcome epistemological dual stance including Kant, has fallen into an Ontology of Meta - narrative.

Rorty is suspicious of views that not only the procedure of synthetic a priori intuition peculiar to Transcendental philosophy but also epistemology in general (and advocating not using the term — truth, he assigns as only task of philosopher to indicate better selection among the language games) , then it could be probable to judge that the latter have a character of metaphysics but that doesn't necessarily conclude it as Meta - narrative. All metaphysics not always be Meta-narrative. It is the evidence that Ueber - Mensch by Nietzsche might be an agent in metaphysics but even Rorty would include it in Meta - narrative.

As for the critique of Transcendental a priori theory because of its unrevisable character by Quineian, the critique itself, I think, is righteous, ( although there is Kant's defenders who anticipate its development by virtue of progress of psychology or cognition science ), for applying the Popper's disproof proposition with this theory, it could be judged as dogma not scientific proposition. But here I would plead again that all metaphysics are not a Meta - narrative.