Simon Blackburn: Pragmatism, All or Some?

Henrik Rydenfelt

3. A definition of pragmatism

- Three features:
  - Poses the *external* question about a discourse ("how does it come about that we go in for this kind of discourse and thought?")
  - In answering, "eschews any use of the referring expressions of the discourse", and
  - Explains the discourse by "talking in different terms of what is *done* by so talking"

1. *Everyday representation*

- Blackburn's Rorty: no good use for "representation" from the point of view of the external question -> no good use for "representation" internal to our discourse/vocabulary
  - Blackburn: fails to distinguish the everyday and the philosophical (Quine)
- One way of reading the paper: Blackburn: good everyday (*internal*) use for "representation" -> good use for "representation" in considering the external question:
  - 1) "Moorean priority of the everyday"
  - 2) Kraut's No Exit problem

2. *Practices*

- Two points:
- 1) Criticism of Rorty's assimilating truth/representation with a norm of solidarity
    - "My Wittgenstein, trained as an engineer, was far more prone to emphasize norms of *technique* or *practice*, than purely conversational norms"
        - Rorty would probably argue that this distinction cannot be maintained; and/or that he is in any case suggesting a new way of talking
        - But even if Rorty is vulnerable, the less revisionary pragmatist is not
- 2) Autological vs. heterological: sincere vs. accurate
    - But verges on confusing the fact that disagreement matters with some robust notion of "accuracy"

4. Local or global?

- Expressivism cannot be global because of the No Exit problem (Kraut): the pragmatist answer to the external question has to "start somewhere"

- Resulting dilemma:
  - Either quietism, "or the rejection altogether of at least some external questions"
  - Or the "flat-footed stutter or self-pat on the back", which "amounts to a victory for representationalism over pragmatism"

5. Rolling pragmatism?

- Blackburn's proposal, "rolling pragmatism": keep asking the external question about each external response
  - But for what purpose?
- Rather, choosing the first horn (quietism)
  - We can refuse to ask/answer *further* external questions about our subject naturalist (external) account
    - We still get to answer external questions!
  - Although perhaps the object naturalist can withdraw to similar (external) quietism about whether "refer" refers (compare Price's Boghossian argument against ON)