
Richard Rorty at Princeton: Personal Recollections

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WHEN I ARRIVED in Princeton during the 1970s my addiction to tea was already long-standing and very well entrenched, but I was so concerned about the quality of the water in town that I used to buy large containers of allegedly “pure” water at Davidson’s—the local supermarket, which seems now to have gone out of business. I didn’t, of course, have a car, and given the amount of tea I consumed, the transport of adequate supplies of water was a highly labor-intensive and inconvenient matter. Dick and Mary Rorty must have noticed me lugging canisters of water home, because, with characteristic generosity, they developed the habit of calling around at my rooms in 120 Prospect, often on Sunday mornings, offering to take me by car to fill my water bottles at a hugely primitive and highly suspicious-looking outdoor water tap on the side of a pumphouse which was operated by the Elizabethtown Water Company on a piece of waste land near the Institute Woods. This pumphouse with its copiously dripping tap was like something out of Tarkhovski’s film about Russia after a nuclear accident, *Stalker*, and the surrounding area was a place so sinister one half expected to be attacked by packs of dogs in the final stages of radiation sickness or by troops of feral children who had been left by their parents to fend for themselves while the parents went off to the library to finish their dissertations. On one of those Sunday mornings in that insalubrious, but somehow appropriate,

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landscape, Dick happened to mention that he had just finished reading Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. My heart sank at this news because the way he reported it seemed to me to indicate, correctly as it turned out, that he had been positively impressed by this book. I had a premonition, which also turned out to be correct, that it would not be possible for me to disabuse him of his admiration for the work of a man, whom I knew rather well as a former colleague at Heidelberg and whom I held to be a reactionary, distended windbag. Over the years, I did my best to set Dick right about Gadamer, even resorting to the rather low blow of describing to him the talk Gadamer had given at the German embassy in occupied Paris in 1942, in which Gadamer discussed the positive role Herder could play in sweeping away the remnants of such corrupt and degenerate phenomena as individualism, liberalism, and democracy from the New Europe arising under National Socialism. All this had no effect on Dick. His response to this story was that Gadamer had probably wanted to finance a trip to Paris—a perfectly understandable, indeed self-evidently laudable aspiration—and, under the circumstances, getting himself invited to the German embassy was the only way to do this. As I persisted in pointing out that this in itself might “under the circumstances” not exactly constitute an exculpation, I came up against that familiar shrug of the shoulders which could *look* as if it meant that Dick had turned his receiving apparatus off. In this case, the shrug also made me feel that I was being hysterically aggressive in pursuing a harmless old gent for what was, after all, no more than a youthful indiscretion. In retrospect, I am not sure but that I don't now think Dick was right about this last point, but that was not my reaction at the time.

What Dick found interesting in Gadamer was the idea that philosophy was a “conversation.” The immediate source Gadamer cites for this idea is one of the preliminary drafts of a hymn by the early nineteenth-century German poet Hölderlin, entitled *Friedensfeier*:

Viel hat erfahren der Mensch. Der Himmlischen viele genannt.
 Seit ein Gespräch wir sind
 Und hören können voneinander.

Man has learnt much. Has named many heavenly beings
 since we have become a conversation
 and can hear from each other.

When Hölderlin writes that we “have become a conversation,” this is obviously a very different kind of claim from the traditional one that speech is part of the essence of man. Dick would not have been able to accept a view that attributed to man an essence, especially a timeless essence, so it is important that Hölderlin does not speak of man as being essentially conversational (at all times and places) but of humans as having *become* “a conversation” at a particular time (*seit*). Second, to speak of a “conversation” is to be very explicit about the inherently social nature of what makes us human, and finally, the informality of the use of the word “conversation” (a connotation which is perhaps stronger in the German *Gespräch*) directs attention away from trying to understand this activity as the activation of pre-given formal rules, or as aspiring to satisfy some antecedently given canons of cogency, relevance, or accuracy. If to be human (“now,” at any rate) is to take part in a, or this, conversation, then it seems but a short step from that to the claim that philosophy is important because it is a way in which the conversation maintains itself.

Despite this, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that someone as deeply influenced by pragmatism as Dick was would find this idea congenial. If pragmatism means not only that actions speak louder than words—and one doesn’t have to be a pragmatist to think that—but that they are finally the only thing that counts, the pragmatist might be expected to prefer to Hölderlin’s “definition” of humanity as “conversation” the counterclaim by Faust when he refuses to translate the first sentence of the Gospel according to John as “In the beginning was the *Word*” and insists on translating it “In the

beginning was the *deed*”:

Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen . . .
Am Anfang war die Tat.

It is, of course, possible to construe “conversation” as an etiolated form of action, and Gadamer holds that anything that can be understood can be construed as “language.” “Sein das verstanden werden kann, ist Sprache.” It is hard to imagine a philosophy not embodied in language, despite Rabelais’ fantasy (2.19) about a philosophical disputation conducted exclusively through gestures. Still, I wonder in general whether there is not in Rorty a kind of overvaluation of the word, and a consequent undervaluation of such forms of human endeavor as politics, music, design, and the visual arts, and various forms of physical discipline. Serious music, for instance, doesn’t figure very visibly in Rorty’s work, perhaps because he was himself completely unmusical. His ideal is the “bookish intellectual,” not, for instance, the Hellenic youth trained in γυμναστική and μουσική, the man or woman who aspires to come closer to the Divine by prayer and fasting, the Goethean or Humboldtian life devoted to voracious consumption of *all* the different kinds of human experience, or the political activist whose life is inextricable from his or her contribution to social change. As Dick was well aware, there is an elective affinity between this ideal and the possible life-prospects of a comfortable member of the bourgeoisie in a wealthy, powerful, and depoliticized country. Against Gadamer’s view of the primacy of “conversation,” one can also cite the *final (printed) version* of the very poem by Hölderlin which served to introduce this notion:

Viel hat von Morgen an,
Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören voneinander,
erfahren der Mensch, bald sind wir aber Gesang

Starting from the morning

when we became a conversation, and hear from each other
 much have we experienced but soon we shall be song.

Of course, one could try to remain unimpressed by this, and insist that this is, after all, just poetic hyperbole. The idea that song could replace conversation is a Romantic conceit, not something to be taken too seriously. If one is going to take this tack at the point, though, why start by appealing to poetry in the first place?

That there is no philosophy without language might not mean that the only thing, or even the most important thing, one had to understand in the history of philosophy was its language. Song is not speech, and political action, even if it “can be understood,” can take place *without a word being spoken*. Think of Frans van der Waal’s observations about political action among non-human primates, or recall that one of the most interesting aspects of the events of 11 September 2001 was that the actions were carried out wordlessly as far as the international media were concerned. There was no reading out of a set of demands in front of television cameras, no explanations, no public political announcements of any kind; no group immediately fell all over itself to try to lay claim to these actions. The leadership of Al-Qaida did not disclaim the responsibility, but also made no special attempt to issue any particular discursive statement explaining them. These actions spoke for themselves, and through them the perpetrators expressed a rather clear political judgment. Is, however, flying an airplane into a building best understood as a contribution to a conversation? If students lynch their lecturer because of his heretical opinions, as seems occasionally to have happened in the Middle Ages, is that a contribution to the conversation of humanity?

On another one of our visits to the Elizabethtown Water Company, Dick described to me a new undergraduate course he wanted to give. It was to be called “An Alternative History of Modern Philosophy” and would sketch a continuous conversation from the end of the Middle Ages to the begin-

ning of the twentieth century without once naming any of the standard canonical figures. This would be a history of philosophy without any reference to Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Hume, or J. S. Mill. I don't recall in all detail how the alternative story was to run, but I do remember very vividly that it was to start from Petrus Ramus. Dick had an extremely low opinion of Descartes as a philosopher, thinking of him as no more than a minor disciple of Petrus Ramus. I also remember that some of the high points were to be Paracelsus, the Cambridge Platonists, Thomas Reid, Fichte, and Hegel. I think the course was to end with Dewey, although I may be making that up. I thought this was a wonderful suggestion, for reasons, to be sure, that were probably rather different from those that motivated Dick, but there was one aspect of his prospective course that slightly bothered me, although I don't think I would at that time have been able to formulate my disquiet at all clearly.

There was, as I would now formulate it, a slight unclarity in the conception of the course in that it conjoined two different views of the history of philosophy that Dick had not yet fully dissociated. On the one hand, there was a kind of debunking view of the canon as an unwarranted form of hero worship, singling out some *one* philosopher, often for highly adventitious reasons, and inappropriately attributing to him certain ideas, theses, arguments, or methods as his unique, original contribution, when these were actually invented by someone else, were minor variations of well known motifs, or were ideas that weren't in fact invented by anyone because they were "in the air" at the time. Descartes didn't "invent" the idea that the analytic method was the key to philosophy; Petrus Ramus did that (or perhaps: "no individual did that, because the idea was 'in the air'"). So why read Descartes rather than Ramus? This view still seems to assume that we know what the key questions and the major developments in philosophy are, that it is unquestionably important to understand and assimilate these questions and issues in themselves and in their genesis if one wanted to understand philosophy at all,

and that the only question is to whom these major developments were correctly to be attributed.

The other idea is that at certain times in the past people called a certain kind of thinking and a resulting body of written work “philosophy” which from the point of view of the present seems highly eccentric in subject matter or method. There is no such thing as a universal set of philosophical questions or issues; Paracelsus wasn’t remotely interested in asking or answering questions like those we find “philosophical,” still, lots of people at the time thought his work a paradigm of what a philosopher should be doing. The assumption here would be that the longer and more deeply one reflected on this fact, the more one would see that “philosophy” at different times and places referred to different clusters of intellectual activities, none of which formed a natural kind and none of which had any “inherent” claim to a monopoly on the “proper” use of the term “philosophy.” Doing a history in which Paracelsus figured centrally but not Descartes, could be seen as a part of trying to give a history, not so much of philosophy, as of historically differing conceptions of what philosophy was. Dick did not confuse these two things, and in fact I learned how to distinguish them clearly only from his 1984 paper, “The Historiography of Philosophy” (in *Philosophy in History*, Cambridge 1984). Rather, he was consciously relaxed about doing both as part of the same project, whether a book or a course of lectures.

Actually there was, I think, a *third* and slightly different strand also present in Dick’s “Alternative History,” which is the idea that philosophy is just a form of literature. The first version of the “Alternative History” is quasi-Marxist, i.e., philosophy is construed as a matter of large-scale social movements of thought which were integrated into a history of the way the species dealt with its natural environment, and then also with the social environment it itself created. In this story, individuals play a subordinate role, so you can just as well study Fichte as an instance of idealism as Kant. The second version is pragmatist (of a sort): philosophers,

like everyone else, try to solve problems, and what problems there are changes over time, so the history of philosophy is radically discontinuous in the longer term although it might seem to be unitary in the short term. If, however—and this would be a third variant—the history of philosophy is best seen as a collection of texts like a collection of, say, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels, of course, one can make a non-canonical selection of those texts. A novel, however, is not self-evidently best understood as a part of a unitary attempt by humanity as a whole to deal with the world, nor is it very obviously a form of problem-solving. Dick had great admiration for Vladimir Nabokov (“He was *born* writing like *that*”) and, despite his well-canvassed views about the potential role of literature in generating sympathy for the oppressed, he was also at the very least strongly drawn to Nabokov’s purist aesthetic and rejection of any social relevance for literature; novels should not have any truck with what he called “topical trash.” In philosophy, too, one might assume, the texts chosen would be ones that appealed to a refined and highly self-reflective, and also socially disengaged, aesthetic sense, and ones that were structured so as to constitute a satisfying narrative.

Dick had two different worries about his planned new course. The first was that, if the Committee on Instruction knew what he was up to, “They” would never permit it. Dick spoke of the Committee on Instruction as if it was a kind of academic Thought Police. One must, as it were, he said, consider the University as a complex machine with two interlocking parts, a Generator that was devoted to producing excellence in relatively abstract areas of research, primarily scientific research, and then a Transformer which turned the prestige acquired through this excellence into a force of repression, directed at legitimizing the deepest possible cultural and political conservatism. The combination of excellence and a strictly-enforced, backward-looking cultural ethos made the University an almost irresistible magnet for the extensive funding from the alumni, large corporations, and the

government that fuelled the Generator. The Committee on Instruction was the transmission belt between the two parts of the machine. “That is the way a great university protects itself from change,” Dick would say to me, as a kind of refrain during the late 1970s, meaning by “change,” I presume, in the first instance, cultural change. I naïvely objected that Dick’s description couldn’t possibly be correct because such a structure couldn’t possibly maintain itself: it was like a confidence trick or a perpetual motion machine; reality would eventually break through at some point. Dick, however, was, at that time, significantly more disillusioned, or perhaps more realistic, than I was. I never was able to determine whether he thought I was right in tacitly assuming that there *were*, on the one hand, *some* universities that were serious enterprises, as it were “all the way down,” and that operated according to the principles of merit and scholarship; then there were the cunning but deceptive ones, which diverted their acquired prestige to dodgy ends. Unfortunately, the dodgy ones could be successful for any extended period of time, as long as they could keep their motors running. Perhaps Dick thought that this whole distinction between the serious and the dubious couldn’t be made—after all, in some sense the excellence was genuine—or perhaps he thought that it was unimportant: how such a machine originally came into being and how it started to operate were complicated questions, but once the apparatus was fully working, as long as Princeton had enough power—in the first instance, real power in the form of money, property, and other real entitlements, but also the associated forms of “symbolic capital,” control of patronage, access to influential people, etc.—barring unforeseen catastrophes, it could keep the system going indefinitely. It had worked for a hundred years, Dick said, why not—if the money and power held out—for two hundred more?

Dick’s second worry about this planned course was that he did not quite see how he could tell his story without mentioning Kant at all, and even to mention Kant would be to violate the rationale of the enterprise. Since I had at least as

negative an opinion of Kant as Dick had of Descartes, I encouraged him to move directly from Jacobi to Fichte, bypassing Kant altogether. He didn't seem very taken with this idea, although it was not clear to me why not. I suppose anyone who knew Dick knew his sometimes uncanny capacity simply to allow a train of thought that was moving in a direction he found uncongenial to peter out without it ever being completely clear why no further step in the conversation was made. This was not merely a gift or skill he had, but a personality trait that was integral to an aspect of Dick's philosophical make-up which I have already mentioned: his deeply rooted anti-Cartesianism. Once one has set the origin of a system of Cartesian coordinates, and specified the axes, one can continue to count off in any direction *ad libitum*. In Descartes, this thought is presented in a rather optimistic way—we can always go on and will, as it were, never run out of space which we can measure. It is possible to take roughly the same thought in a pessimistic way, as in Beckett. Descartes remained a recurring obsession with Beckett; it is probably no accident that one of his earliest published works is a long poem on Descartes (“Whoroscope”). The narrator in Beckett's *L'innommable* talks incessantly, describing the contents of the visual field, recalling things he saw in the past, speculating about the identity of the objects apparently moving past him and laws of their motion, but the need to do this is experienced as a kind of horrible compulsion. The work ends with the unnameable narrator addressing himself and articulating this compulsion: “You must go on; I can't go on; I'll go on.” Dick's reply to Descartes and to Beckett would be: *Why* exactly “*must*” you go on?

What particular questions you ask; where you need to keep asking questions; what is in the center of attention, what on the periphery, and what in the darkness outside; in what circumstances and to what exact extent clarity and explicitness are good things, and in what circumstances mere approximation—or *silence*—will do just as well; none of any of this was written in stone, inherently in the human breast, in the starry heavens,

or in Plato's ὑπερουπὸνιος τόπος. Still, in the end, there seemed to me to be an unclarity about whether this was finally a pragmatist or an aestheticist position. Was philosophy a response to questions, which, although they arose contingently and were constantly changing, were questions to which we *needed* a response (which philosophy, or even “only philosophy,” could give)? Or was it a free aesthetic activity? I suspect Dick would have tried to deny that this was the alternative with which we were faced. Don't we in some sense “need” to be freely active as much as we “need” to solve the practical problems that arise in dealing with our natural and social world? This would move Dick back in the direction of the Young Hegelianism which inspired the young Dewey (and the Critical Theory which interested me). Whether this way of trying to unify the two strands is a genuine resolution of a real difficulty, an evasion, or a misapprehension on my part is a question I have never been able to answer to my own satisfaction.

Dick was deeply tolerant and amazingly generous both in action and in spirit. When I was appointed at Princeton, he had, I think, some hopes of acquiring a colleague with whom he could discuss the more metaphysical parts of the German philosophical tradition that were near the center of his attention at that time. It must have been at least a mild disappointment to him that I had little interest in any kind of metaphysics and spent my time studying philosophers like Adorno who were of no interest to him and thinking about “social theory”—at that time a purported academic discipline that has now disappeared as completely as Davidson's. Characteristically, Dick used to say to people that my first book, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, showed the uselessness of the concept of “ideology,” whereas I thought it showed the reverse. We could also find no common ground in aesthetics because of my own obsession with the philosophy of music. Dick seemed not only, as I have mentioned, to be deeply unmusical, like Freud, but he sometimes seemed even slightly irritated by the very existence of music and certainly by the thought that someone could take it sufficiently seriously to

try to think about it in a sustained and systematic way. Finally, I think it puzzled him that I cleverly avoided ever giving any instruction in the university on Heidegger. None of this in the least diminished the unstinting intellectual and academic support he gave me in the most diverse contexts over decades, which went far beyond anything I can have been thought to deserve.

As the years went by, and we both left Princeton, I am afraid the incipient intellectual and emotional gulf between us got wider, especially after what I saw as Dick's turn toward ultra-nationalism with the publication of *Achieving Our Country*. Dick had always been and remained to the end of his life a "liberal" (in the American sense, i.e., a "Social-Democrat"): a defender of civil liberties and of the extension of a full set of civic rights to all, a vocal supporter of the labor unions and of programs to improve the conditions of the poor, an enemy of racism, arbitrary authority, and social exclusion. On the other hand, I found that he also enjoyed a spot of jokey leftist-baiting when he thought I was adopting knee-jerk positions which he held to be ill-founded. That was all fair enough. I tried not to rise to the bait, and usually succeeded, but this did not contribute to making our relations easier or more comfortable for me. The high (or low, depending on one's perspective) point of this sort of thing occurred some time in the 1980s when Dick sent me a postcard from Israel telling me he had just been talking with the Israeli official responsible for organizing assassinations of Arab mayors on the West Bank. He closed by saying he thought this was just what the situation required. I often wondered whether in acting in this provocative way he was treating me as he would have liked to have treated his father, a well-known poet, and man of the (relatively) hard Left, who eventually, as Dick put it, "became prey to *very powerful* fantasies on which he was perfectly willing to act"; Dick had to have him institutionalized after some potentially murderous outbreak. Probably by wondering about this, I was trying to convince myself that I had an importance in Dick's imagination that I surely did not have.

Achieving Our Country, though, represented a step too far for me. The very idea that the United States was “special” has always seemed to me patently absurd, and the idea that in its present, any of its past, or any of its likely future configurations it is in any way exemplary, a form of gross narcissistic self-deception which was not transformed into something laudable by virtue of being embedded in a highly sophisticated theory which purported to show that ethnocentrism was in a philosophically deep sense unavoidable. I remain very grateful to my Catholic upbringing and education for giving me relative immunity to nationalism. In the 1950s, the nuns who taught me from age five to twelve were virtually all Irish or Irish-American with sentimental attachment to certain elements of Celtic folklore, but they made sure to inculcate into us that the only *serious* human society was the Church, which was an explicitly international organization. The mass, in the international language, Latin, was the same everywhere; the religious orders were international. This absence of national limitation was something very much to be cherished. “Catholica” in the phrase “[credo in] unam, sanctam, catholicam, et apostolicam ecclesiam” should, we were told, be written with a lower-case, not an upper-case, initial because it was not in the first instance part of the proper name of the church, but an adjective meaning “universal,” and this universality was one of the most important “marks of the true Church.” The Head of the Church, to be sure, and Vicar of Christ on earth, was in fact (at that time) always an Italian, but that was for contingent and insignificant reasons. The reason most commonly cited by these nuns was that, as Bishop of Rome, the Pope had to live in the “Eternal City,” but only an Italian could stand to live in Rome: it was hot, noisy, and overcrowded, and the people there ate spaghetti for dinner everyday rather than proper food, i.e., potatoes, so it would be too great a sacrifice to expect someone who had not grown up in Italy to tolerate life there. I clearly remember being unconvinced by this argument, thinking it set inappropriately low standards of self-sacrifice for the higher

clergy; a genuinely saintly character should be able to put up even with pasta for lunch and dinner every day. I have since myself adopted this diet for long periods of time without thinking it gave me any claim on the Papacy. In any case, it was obvious even to a child of six or seven that none of these sisters had ever been within a thousand kilometers of Rome.

Similarly, the (mostly) Hungarian priests who taught me from age twelve in a boarding school near Philadelphia had some residual Hapsburg loyalties—Grillparzer and Nestroy played a larger part in the curriculum than they would have in some other schools—but they were all very distinctly tri- or quadri-lingual men of the world, who knew very well that it was the accidents of history—specifically the closure of their schools by the Hungarian Communist regime in the late 1940s, and the failure of the uprising of 1956—that had brought them to a culturally insignificant place they would in the normal course of events never have chosen even to visit. They were not in any doubt but that the US (in the 1950s and early 1960s) was an empire which engaged in continuous displays of exaggerated self-praise, as all such empires had always done, showed its soft side when that was politically expedient, but was as capable of impatient, insouciant, or fully-intended brutality as any other empire. These points were driven home pretty sharply in between discussions of the syntax, lexis, and meter of Vergil's *Aeneid*. "His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono / imperium sine fine dedi" (1.277–78); that's what they all think (in their prime), the "rerum domini et gentes togatae." The two Spanish priests on the staff had had some experience in Central America and did not refrain from enlightening anyone interested about the operations of the United Fruit Company (and the CIA) there and about some of the uses to which the US Marines were put. All the priests made the assumption which was all the more effective for not usually even being at all explicitly articulated that American power, influence, and prosperity, and the relatively relaxed and tolerant regulation of the non-political aspects of everyday life which they permitted, were

highly contingent and transitory, a result of a geographical and historical conjunction that would not last or recur. McCarthy had recently shown how thin and fragile the culture of tolerance was. We were all encouraged to get on with our lives as quickly as possible: the prosperity and relative freedom might last twenty, even thirty or forty years, but that would be it, and the bubble *could* unexpectedly burst even more quickly than that, so it was best to make the most of the resources on offer at the moment. Philadelphia in 1960 was a pale shadow of Vienna in 1830: City Hall was a second-rate imitation of Vienna's Rathaus, the Lyric Opera a poor provincial cousin of the Volksoper, and the orchestra, like virtually all the other major American orchestras in the era of Szell and Solti, was directed by a Hungarian (E. Ormandy). The recently departed John Foster Dulles was a kind of latter-day Metternich, and NATO was the Holy Alliance. One might in the final analysis prefer the Holy Alliance to its opponents, but that was no reason to idealize it.

Looking back from the present (2007), one can see that the imperium in fact lasted longer than expected, fifty or sixty years from 1945 rather than twenty or thirty, and everyone else, amazingly enough, seemed to realize it *was* an imperium only as its star was discernibly beginning to wane about the turn of the twenty-first century. Perhaps Hegel was right about the owl of Minerva. Even more oddly, they seemed to mistake the dusk of an empire gradually coming to an end with the early dawn of a *new* imperial period. A miscalculation by thirty or forty years may be very significant in the biography of an individual, but historically it changes little. The priests who taught me were capable of taking both the long and the short view. Their attitude toward the then-present (1960) was already proleptically elegiac, summed up by the plaintive song I can still recall hearing played repeatedly on some kind of primitive gramophone: "So war's anno '30 in Wien, / und die Zeit, sie kommt nimmer zurück" ["That's the way it was in 1830 in Vienna, / and that time will never return"]. "Vienna" survived even the revolutionary year

1848, and lingered on until 1918, albeit much diminished. Similarly, after two or three decades—or, if it came to it, five or six decades—of affluence, the US would gradually settle back into a kind of shabby obscurity, like one of the Latin American places in Conrad or that would later be described in the novels of Gabriel García Márquez. For these nuns and priests, believing that the US was “a city on a hill” would have been simply a bit of risible Protestant nonsense, palpably contrary to religion, historical experience, and common sense, like believing in banshees or vampires.

Hegel says at some point that a great man causes others to write commentaries about him and his work. I have probably spent more time thinking about Dick than about anyone else outside my narrow circle of intimates. His philosophical position contains much of great interest and importance, along with, as one would expect, some things I cannot bring myself to agree with, but that position is clearly and plausibly put. His writings have a human richness and substance which are not present in most contemporary philosophy. As a person, however, he remained a complete mystery to me. I rarely had the sense I understood why he did anything he did. I don't usually find most people that unfathomable. Perhaps it is simply that I *cared* enough to want genuinely to understand him, because I admired him, more than I cared about understanding other people, and so was not satisfied in his case with the superficial “explanations” of people's behavior which we normally accept.

As a person Dick was thoroughly lovable, and as a philosopher both extraordinarily perceptive and, at times, intensely irritating. The one thing he was not—*not ever*—was predictable or boring. I won't see his like again in my lifetime. I hope he would have been pleased to know that he would be remembered as this kind of person and this kind of philosopher.