

## **Transcendental temptations and pragmatist cures: Naturalist framings of the distinctively human**

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In this talk I consider the temptation to give transcendental readings of pragmatist conceptions of distinctively human forms of agency. I hold, with Knowles (2012), that to give in to this temptation is to sacrifice the naturalistic dimension of pragmatism. I make the point by considering Rorty's deployment of lines of thought developed by Brandom and Davidson, respectively, regarding the significance of language for mindedness. These are both Janus-faced thinkers in just the relevant regard, and I argue that Rorty's readings are designed to tie their arguments securely to the naturalist side of the divide. Nevertheless, Rorty unequivocally and enthusiastically endorses the discontinuity thesis that is characteristic of Davidson and Brandom; only language users have minds in any literal sense. This seems to fly in the face of a pragmatic naturalistic attitude, both as a species of essentialism and as a failure to take on board a basic Darwinian attitude to cognitive and communicative capacities, a challenge made vivid by Knowles (2012). I argue, however, that this challenge can be met in Rorty's own terms. However, I claim, the cost of the line of defense that I recommend is to leave the Rortyan view open to a line of friendly criticism that favors a wider, more gradualist conception of mind and agency than Rorty was ever willing to allow. The issue turns, though, on considerations that are both empirical and normative, and, in Rorty's sense, contingent. Thus, the dispute I bring into focus here is not between naturalist and non-naturalist varieties of naturalism. Rather, the varieties of naturalism that I sketch appeal to the same values of humanism and solidarity, but differ in the consequences they draw