

## The Components of Richard Rorty's New-Pragmatic Educational Philosophy and Islamic Educational Philosophy

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to compare and investigate the differences existing in the attitudes of one of the most influential philosophical schools, Rorty's new-pragmatic, and the associated Western pragmatism, especially the educational system of the United States, with the Islamic educational philosophy. **Methodology:** This is a qualitative research study in which the internet and library resources have been used. The finding of this study indicated that the tenet of new-pragmatic is to propose factual issues beyond time and ignoring objectivity. **Findings:** Given that, new-pragmatism made use of some principles based on which it could bridging the gap of relativism. However, it is unable to explain the identity of an individual in a comprehensive educational philosophy. Consequently, new-pragmatism proposes the design of modern language which is an idealistic one and since it is a futuristic model, it cannot be the basis for educational philosophy which needs a practical model. Sequentially, it should be noted that in the studies which are conducted on the current educational philosophy practiced in Iran, many of the new alternatives are provided are not without failures. **Discussion:** That said, no new educational philosophy should be used in Iranian context without doing research and comparing it with the Islamic philosophy which pays the utmost attention to the human spirituality for many years even if the founders of such schools of philosophy have global reputation and be among the most influential philosophers.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the influential schools which helps to explain the community relations based on the practical power of human is the one which is called Dewey's pragmatic school. This school considers the action as the most important component of itself and tries to put the educational organizations in such direction. Dewey's pragmatic school thinks of the human as the active agent of such a direction. After Dewey, the proponents of pragmatic included two powerful groups by the 20th. These two philosophical organizations were the positivism school and the continental philosophy (Rorty, 1991).

Rorty's new-pragmatic is determined by "linguistic turn". New-pragmatic is a title to revive the applied opinions of classical pragmatic in early 20th century which was proposed by Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewey. The Rorty's thought started with substituted the question of "whether our beliefs are the exact manifestations of mental and material realities?" with "what are the benefits of choosing such beliefs?" (Gadamer, 1989).

In the current study the new-pragmatic approach toward educational philosophy was compared to that of the Islamic one. The Islamic education has a long prosperous history which can be traced from the second and third centuries of lunar year. The current investigation aims to compare new-pragmatic educational philosophy based on the Islamic educational philosophy. Since education is now an important issue and finding scientific and philosophical tenets for it are considered as crucial, it is very important to investigate the philosophical approaches in this regard. This study is to answer the following question: What are the components of new-pragmatic educational philosophy compared to Islamic educational philosophy?

New-pragmatic is a name which is proposed to show the shifting and changing of the idea and opinion with regard to pragmatic school proposed in the early of 20th. The pioneers of pragmatic were Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewey. Rorty and Cowan were the philosophers which changed some parts of pragmatic school and proposed new-pragmatic (Ghasemi, 2005, p. 2). From the very of its arrival, pragmatic school was not homogeneous; Pierce theory was semiotic, James worked on psychology based on pragmatic school, and Dewey special philosophy was "think-out". After the second world war there were some problems for pragmatic school which lead to the emergent of new-pragmatic philosopher; one of them is Richard Rorty whom some believe that he is one of the influential philosophers of the current era (James, 2005, p. 15).

Rorty's viewpoints regarding education: The consequences: In a paper titled "Education without Dogma" Rorty (1989) stated the educational stages clearly. Changing the title, Rorty (1999) published the same paper with the title of "Education as Socialization and as Individualization" in his recent book. He is stated in this book that the pre-university period is all about being socialized; meaning that the children need to pay their attention to the values, attitudes and knowledge. Nonetheless, the university period is all about criticizing what they have obtained in the pre-university time in which individuality is the main feature of education. Based on this approach, it can be stated that the Rorty philosophy which considers criticizing as important (historical thinking and self-regulation) is not effective in the pre-university period and during of this period only those elements of his philosophy which are about coordination (social solidarity, discussion and consensus) can be beneficial.

## 2. Literature review

A point should be noted with regard to the educational categorization. This is rooted in one of his philosophy components calling "The incompatibility of public and private affairs". Based on this issue and those have been stated above, human social and individual aspects are contradictory to each other and one cannot reach a common sense among them. However, one should consider the two aspects as two separate tools to be used in different situations (Bagheri, 2005, p. 9).

A) Educational Principles of Pre-university period: From the philosophical opinions of Rorty, social solidarity in substitution of objectivity, ethic of communication and consensus should be paid attention in pre-university period. Since Rorty rejected the human essence, education cannot lead to bring about human talents. The thing is in his philosophy the social culture which an individual lives is very important. Given that social solidarity and consensus are the features of this stage.

The following educational principles can be proposed based on Rorty's approach": 1. Putting aside objectivity discourse: This principle which is true more about social sciences means that not to use the vocabulary about objectivity. Not using the related vocabulary about objectivity is due to the fact that it is a presupposition representing the mind and the knowledge and this is one of the vital Rorty's criticism. Some of Rorty's approach interpreters believe that from his point of view using limited representational language is acceptable. Brandom (2002) stated that the use of representational language should be to the extent that it becomes meta-lexical; meaning that we can evaluate and identify them regardless of their objectives and goals. However, as stated by Conant (2000, p. 321) it shows the severe disagreement of Rorty with the representation. According to Conant if an individual thinks that Rorty is seeking to change a meta-lexical (instrumentalism) with another meta-lexical (representation), he/she should not be blamed. Rorty in objection to objectivity stated that: I do agree with Michele and Mcintire in that any deduction either in physics or in ethics is dependent to tradition. In another word, the objectivity in physics and ethics are not the same since the social traditions is dependent ethics. Rorty also noted that Goodman's legitimate necessity and purely randomized generalizations is acceptable for pragmatic followers such as Dewey. However, it is due to the fact that Goodman considers legitimacy as the coherence of our described vocabularies not as the representation of the world. It is in direct objection with Kripke and Aristotle's opinion which consider legitimacy as the representations of the world (Rorty, 2002, 64).

Given the force which Rorty applied to the coherence of our vocabulary in which it has no relationship with objectivity, one can conclude that the objectivity discourse is abandoned.

2. Promoting intersubjective justification: When one cannot justify his/her claims in different sciences through using the outside world, he/she can make use of the inter subjectivity to justify them. Based on Rorty's philosophical opinions, he wants to substitute objectivity with intersubjective consensus to the extent it is possible. Given that, one of the approaches which should be considered crucial in the educational context with regard to teacher-students and students-student's relationship is inter subjectivity. This means that that the educational context is more about the intersubjective relationships of minds rather than minds and the world. The result of such assumption is that knowledge is a belief, but a belief which is agreed by individuals. Depicting educational context with regard to Rorty's inter subjectivity makes it so close to an idealistic approach. For the idealists, education is established based on the minds communication; as in Plato's works discussion has got an influential role. However, the difference between Rorty's pragmatic approach and the idealistic one is the attention which is paid to the human interests which intersubjective justification is due to it. It is discussed in the next principle (Bagheri, 2005, p. 12).

3. Focusing on interests and needs: The most obvious feature of pragmatism is attention it pays to the individual and social interests and needs. The direction of intersubjective justification is due to determining the interests and needs. In the education, the individual and social interests and needs are the criteria for assessing intersubjective justification. Each and every belief which helps to better fulfill the needs and interests, is more acceptable. It is so since based on pragmatism belief is not something out of performance. In comparing Habermas (modern philosophy pragmatics) and Dewey (In search of certainty), Rorty stated that his preference is the book by Dewey. Rorty, however, stated that it is not because he thinks Dewey obtained the truth and rationality and Habermas does not, but because, from Rorty perspective, in his comparisons he considers which of approaches can contribute them to be more beneficial than the democratic (Rorty, 2002, p. 25). In his perspective, Dewey can be regarded as referential since he does not consider rationality as something abstract and fix as do Habermas and Kant, but considers it in relation to

pragmatic and in this way it is more beneficial from a democratic policy. Based on this principle, the criteria of assessing should be individual and social interests and needs in the educational systems (Bagheri, 2005, pp. 12-13).

4. Persuasion rather than forcing: As stated earlier, based on Rorty's opinion the main component of Liberalism is negation of violence. He points out that from the perspective of liberalism nothing is worse than violence. Given that, using power and force to regulate human relations are rejected and precaution should be substituted with it. Precaution has got two criteria. First using words and not force in communicating with others. Second, not to use threatening and humiliating words. If a teacher says to his/her student not to propose such silly questions or "I will do something else" he/she was aggressive even if he/she does not do anything physical (Rorty, 2002, p. 21).

5. Consensus expansion: The teacher-student relationship should be regulated based on the principle of consensus expansion to the extent it is possible. The principle of consensus is beyond the principle of persuasion. Persuasion, indeed, happens among those who have common knowledge about something and they are the members of the same society. However, consensus can happen among the members of different societies. In a paper entitled "On Ethnocentrism: A Reply to Clifford Geertz" Rorty proposes a cosmopolitan view and an ethnographic one (Rorty, 1998, pp. 203-205). From his perspective, one can think of Cosmopolitan but it is only possible through ethnography. It should be noted that Dewey as one of the founders of pragmatism, thinks that the theories are more being reasonable rather than consensus.

Rorty's objection regarding the world rules is like a barrier which hinders him to justify cosmopolitanism. Being a historicist makes him to think of each and every society based on its specific characteristics which distinguish them from others. This is Historicism which leads to ethnography and to think that each and every society has its own problems, issues, situations and solutions. Consequently, he will not be able to speak of cosmopolitanism except when a society expands its aims and goals to other societies (Bagheri, 2005, p. 14).

Consequently, Rorty puts himself in objection with those like Kant who considers transcendental features for wisdom and does not think of it as dependent to a special situation; and Habermas who believes that each language implies some presumptions about rationality and truth. Rorty proposes a new concept with regard to education in objection to Habermas. Habermas believes that consensus should be obtained through the idealistic mutual communication and describes it as: coordination which is due to learning from our or their viewpoints when others and we should configure our self-imposed actions (Habermas, 1992, p. 138).

6. Tolerance: The last main principle based on Rorty's opinion which one can speak of convergence according to which is tolerance. According to Rorty tolerance is applied to the situation which persuasion and consensus are not reached among the contradictory views. In that situation one should tolerate contradictory viewpoints. Rorty states that the proponents of pragmatism consider the aim of doing research (on whatever aspects of culture) as a mixture of non-mandatory agreement with a tolerant disagreement. In other words, Rorty believes that the aim of doing research is agreement and optional consensus and in the situations in which such an agreement is not reached implies tolerance. Given that, those who do not reach agreement in doing research should tolerate the results of their study (Rorty, 1998, p. 41).

B) Educational principles of university period: In addition to the pre-university philosophical opinions, some other components should be paid attention to for the university period which can be called heterogeneity components. These elements include the instrumentality and functionality of language, self-attribute feature, social facilities feature, and comics. In terms of such components, the following principles can be stated for the university period:

1. Contextualization of individualism: Rorty, in his paper on education as socialization and individualism, believes that after the socialization stage in the pre-university period, in the university stage a person is going

into individualism stage. While in the socialization stage the focus is on the community, in the individualism stage the context should be prepared for criticizing others' opinions.

In terms of Rorty's educational approach about individualism which is a flash back toward self-attribute; explained earlier. If in the first stage of education the identity of an individual is established in homogeneity to others, in the second stage the individual should know that his/her "ego" is not something fix and need to be created and recreated in the process of self-creation. In this stage of education, the individual should think of the recreation of his/her identity which is developed from the very childhood period till now. He/she should seek new facilities which can help to recreation of ego; egos with regard to the future. This principle is so close to the next one which is about the creation of a new language (Bagheri, 2005, p. 18).

2. The creation of a new language and broadening the extent of democracy: Based on what Rorty states about the language facility, it can be concluded that the creation of a new language is always possible. Since language does not have the feature of representing the reality, it is not true that language can describes things in a static manner forever. It is so since language shows realities and realities are fix.

University teaching should focus on language facility. In such situation, individuals can use language in a modern way and create new description of things. These modern descriptions will create modern interpretations which in their places lead to change. Once Marx stated that the philosophers tended to change the world interpretation while we need to change the world itself. However, from the viewpoint of Rorty there is no difference in the interpretation of the world and changing the world. In another word, our world is not more than our descriptions; our world, from the perspective of Rorty, is created through our descriptions and if we change our descriptions it will change. That said, the change in how to describe the world means changing the world.

Islamic Educational Philosophy: Islamic texts, from one hand, offer a special ontology, and from the other hand, ask for scrutinizing the other philosophical knowledge and consider doing it as Shariah obligations. The Holy Quran invited human to think about the creation of skies (heavens) and earth and to recognize the God works. Religious leaders always allowed people to ask about these questions and encouraged them in this way. Given that, the Islamic philosophy is the one whoes main contents are based on the Holy Quran and traditions and its configuration regarding explanation and deduction of the world is like other philosophical approaches (Talebzadeh, 2010).

That said, in Islamic Thought God is the origin of all benefaction. The final goal of education in Islam is to make human close to the God's features and to achieve good life. Consequently, the meaning of education can be: recognizing God as the omnipotent, selecting him as one's only God, and worshiping him, putting back to all except him.

Islamic education characteristics: 1. Divine education: Islamic education is originated from revelation sources, so it is a religious, spiritual, and divine education. Based on the different divine religions, humans are created for a specific goal and they should do their best to close their spiritual to God. In different religions, in addition to rational recognition, the role of worshiping is emphasized. The optimal goal of human beings is to reach the God's attributes and to reach this goal they have to avoid moral vices and things that keep him from God. Divine education helps humans to recognize God and his prophets to pave the spiritual and mundane life (Shariatmadari, 2001, p. 235).

2. Rational education: one of the main features of Islamic education is the importance of wisdom in the development of individuals' personality. God has directed humans in two ways: through his prophets (apparent messenger) and through wisdom (Esoteric messenger). Consequently, the very basis of Islamic education is the rational aspect of human personality. The Holy Quran verses emphasize on this issue. "They shall not think", "they are thinking" "They shall not see" and "they shall not know". "The Lord does not create this world useless" (Al-Imran, 91). Moreover, the Holy Quran states about the reality of human essence:

“This is the essence that the Lord has created human with it” (Rome, 30). All in all, in rational education, the wisdom does not in objection with human essence; and the direction of human essence is in the direction of the God’s attributes. Given the two Islamic education features, it is a spiritual and rational one.

Educational aims from Islamic perspective: Worshiping God is the final goal of human creation and all Islamic educational affairs are systematic. Based on this aim, humans should refer to their essence for the recognition of self and God and with his spirituality give bow and thank to the majesty of God. Teaching wisdom which is more valuable from learning sciences. Wisdom unlike knowledge focuses on the practicality of science and earning virtues by the individuals. In the Islamic education the mere learning of sciences which has no effect on human success are not recommended and they should learn sciences to help them obtaining good ethics. The practical side of science is regarded wisdom. That is the fact the mere science does not make human wise, but he should use these sciences in the way of reaching his majesty. Being justice seeker with regard to the society in which human live. That said, if human will be educated through the principles of Islamic education his essence which is a justice seeker will be aroused to establish justice in his own individual and social life.

Human development which is related to self-recognition. It is the fact that help human to recognize that he is not just the flesh of body and he can develop his spirituality and his soul. One of the most important features of Islamic education is to develop the spiritual and mundane aspects of human being, simultaneously. And it is a fact that the human mundane life is an instrument toward his spiritual life. Cooperation is one another feature of Islamic education that based on which human being consider alter-ego as important thing which can help his spiritual life. Doing God’s commandments and victimizing self can help human to put aside the materialistic needs and help others to finally altogether reach spiritual majesty. 1) Having friendship relation with other nations without thinking the geographical borders. 2) developing thinking skills that help human to identify immaterial affairs. This issue which wisdom can be familiar with the immaterial affairs is a way through which human can think of recognizing God, the other life, and angels. 3) developing social spirituality based on which human develop his essence with regard to spiritual affairs and do not put his energy only to mundane affairs. It is due to such school of thought that human finds cooperating essence. 4) developing personal ethics which is the final goal of human’s individual and social life. All of the above mentioned features from worshiping God to developing social spirituality lead to developing personal ethics (Shariatmadari, 2001, pp. 40-42).

Islamic education approaches: 1) worshipping God is one of the affairs which can contribute to human self-perfection and reach moral values. The importance of worshipping is due to the fact that human cannot reach majesty just through wisdom. consequently, he needs to worship for this purpose. 2) the integration of faith and action is one more way of developing human. After the integration has been done, its effects can be seen in the individual and society. This is a fact that human cannot reach majesty just with faith and worshipping and he should combine them. The effects of this combination can be seen in his individualistic and social life. 3) integration of science and action which is one more aspect of human development. After the integration has been done, its effects can be seen in individual and society. It should be stated that in Islamic educational philosophy, an individual who does not use his science in relation to developing his society will not be successful. Given that, human should integrate faith, action and science altogether to reach majesty.

### 3. Findings

To provide the answer to the main question of this study which includes the totality of the sub-questions of the research one should consider the differences existing in the basis of Islamic educational philosophy and that of new-pragmatic philosophy by Rorty. The thing is the two philosophical approaches are different with regard to their attitudes in which the Islamic one is express a final aim for human while in the new-pragmatic

one it is just an experimental goal. Given that, to answer the question it is tried to explain what is called as the final aim of Islamic educational philosophy about truth. The truth which proposes different approaches to prepare teachers, individuals and educational systems. Then, the Islamic educational philosophy is used to explain the new-pragmatic educational philosophy proposed by Rorty.

Due to the influence of Wittgenstein language theories the truth has been defined by Rorty as: the truth is something created by the human language, and it cannot go beyond the human language. Consequently, truth is created by human and there is no other truth out there. Rorty's opinion is based on the following framework: 1. truth is created by human 2. truth cannot go beyond the framework of language, so there is no holy issue beyond the language, so there is nothing beyond what human has created. 3. whatever exists can be meaningful only through language and history and the context and time are important in this regard. 4. accepting the issue in the traditional philosophy that human can reach to truth and wisdom is rejected (James, 2005, p. 15).

In this section, the truth criteria will be discussed to highlight the gap between Islamic and new-pragmatic education; after investigating the effects of truth in the educational system based on new-pragmatic. From the viewpoint of Islamic education philosophy there are phenomenon which are beyond language or human cognition including the existence of God, designing aim for the world, and moral affairs are among them. From the perspective of Islamic education, the mentioned truths are explained based on human essence. The human essence is with him from the very childhood and from that time he should be helped to be able to develop in the correct path. The truth of Islamic educational philosophy can be stated as follow: 1. The truth are affairs which are free from the changes in the empirical knowledge of human beings 2. the truth are free from the language structures 3. the human divine essence is one of the truth that base on which one can understand eternally truth such as the existence of God, the aim of the world, and the moral ethics and achieve life correct aim to develop.

The statements which have been stated are the opinions of three Islam thinkers including Allameh Jafari, Morteza Motahari, and Allameh Tabatabai who believed in the crucial importance of human essence in understanding the truth; each expressed his opinion in different writing. After stating the difference of the two philosophical approaches regarding the truth, now the attitudes of the both approaches will be discussed about education. Based on the fundamentals of Islamic educational philosophy, the following critiques can be applied to new-pragmatic approach:

A) in the educational philosophy of Rorty, due to the fact that it does not believe in the existence of anything beyond language, Rorty is forced to expand the democracy issue to bridge the gap.

In this regard, by expanding his educational philosophy, Rorty states that there is no truth and it is not problematic. So, "if my neighbor states that there is 20 gods or no god, there is no harm to me". Given that, since Rorty does not believe in the human essence he expresses the democracy. In this regard since there is no harm to me if my neighbor states the statement that there are 20 gods or no gods, democracy resolve the problem through policy. Based on Rorty opinions having common beliefs and religion is not necessary to have a democratic society. In contrary to new-pragmatism, in Islamic philosophy as stated by Motahari, our prejudice should not be that high toward those who are Muslim which make us against those who are not and ask God to direct them to the right path. Directing to the right path and not to be indifferent is one of the main approaches of Islamic education.

B) due to considering no truth beyond language in the Rorty philosophy lead to instrumentality of truth which is in association to relativism. Based on this, it can be said that each philosophical approach is emerged and developed based on social, historical, political and economic situations in a society. And, new-pragmatism is not exceptional. Instrumentalism is related to humanity based on its prerequisites. The truthfulness of such statement can be investigated by studying the opinions of key figures in this school. According to Dewey pragmatism is an instrumentalism school of philosophy (Bastami, 2010, p. 60).

Instrumentalism will lead to the ignorance of all the supernatural events and the divine aspects of human essence and limiting the educational approaches to natural affairs. It should be noted that the new-pragmatic philosophy could provide responses to the critiques based on the thinking structures of western societies. The societies which accepted the opinions of Machiavelli rather than humanity values. These societies founded their civilizations based on secularism, materialism, and colonialism. Hence, the development of the idea of realism and pragmatism with such theoretical bases is not outreach and it can be observed in the performance of the western politicians how they do everything to achieve their mundane goals and justify them. Indeed, the best development of new-pragmatism is within the capitalist organization, the organization which is founded based on consumerism. Given that, it is not be an appropriate philosophy for countries which have divine values (Bastami, 2010). Due to that, in the Islamic educational philosophy emphasized on religion based education to prepare the individuals for encountering the supernatural and the other life. In Islamic educational philosophy one of the innate sciences is the potential in-person knowledge which helps him to understand the existence of God and to worship him. Motahari believes that the Islam religion is in complete agreement with the human essence. In this regard, the religion and its principles are based on in-person knowledge. To practice some sections of human in-person knowledge, religion should include in the education (Tabatabai, 2003, p. 14).

C) since the truth does not exist in new-pragmatic philosophy, the objectivity discourse is ignored. It means that the objective affairs have no role in the education and everything is due to the structure of language which is configured in the mind. Rorty is to the extent in objection to the objectivity which he believes that it should not be used even in natural sciences and nothing should be beyond language. On the contrary, Islamic educational philosophy points out that the objectivity in the nature can lead human to recognize the beyond; the creator of the nature.

#### 4. Discussion

According to the Islamic education the truth exists in the essence of all humans and something which has objectivity. Ethics and spirituality are among the truth of the world existing in the essence of all humans due to the Divine desire. Human can develop from a common life to a superior one using in-personal knowledge of these truths. Contrary to the Islamic educational philosophy is the new-pragmatic philosophy which has some principles such as abandoning the objectivity discourse, establishing modern language and consensus, ignoring the truth that there are many things beyond language. New-pragmatism which is based on liberalism ideology with the emphasize on western democracy believes that all cultures and educational philosophy should be transformed to the western cultures.

The main contradiction of Islamic educational philosophy and new-pragmatic philosophy is the conception of truth in each of them. That whether the truth is something real and objective or created by human and cannot go beyond language. The critiques of Islamic educational philosophy are due to the fact that the truth is a structural thing which is emphasize the relativity of affairs. It is because of these critiques that new-pragmatism tries to pay attention to other issues such as abandoning the objectivity discourse, consensus, democracy, and liberalism to evade the critiques. If there will be no truth, there cannot be a criterion based on which the conflicts can be settled down.

Since the new-pragmatic philosophy ignores the objectivity in the human education, common life, and the guidance role of education to help individuals to find in-person knowledge, it is suffering from falls reasoning. It is so since the first principle, ignorance of objectivity, are based on liberalism and democracy and new-pragmatism sticks to other principles such as consensus and creating new language wants to design a new objectivity. This is because of putting the liberalism in the place truth and the special attitude toward democracy. And, this issue lead to the weakness of new-pragmatism to act as an educational philosophy.



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