Introduction

What is truth? This is a much debated question among philosophers. Many theories have been advanced trying to explain as to what truth consists in or to put it in another way, ‘What is the nature of truth?’ But as with most questions in Philosophy, this question does not have a simple answer. In general, it is believed that truth is that which is ultimately, finally, and absolutely real, or the “way it is.” Being grounded and anchored in reality and truthfulness, truth cannot contradict itself. Nevertheless, a variety of postmodernist philosophies and postmodern social conditions have tended to undermine the notions that objective truth exists in the first place. Richard Rorty, considered to be among the most controversial figures in contemporary intellectual circles, thinks that it is no longer necessary to ask questions about the nature of truth. Rather, what he and the other neo-pragmatists would like to do is to simply change the subject. Needless to say, Rorty’s treatment of the concept has drawn fire from many philosophers. This dissertation is a modest attempt to analyze Rorty’s conception of truth from his many works and critically evaluate it in the context of postmodernism.

Significance of the thesis:

This thesis addresses the present need for research in and articulation of the issue of truth as it is being conceived in postmodernism. At no time in history has the concept of truth been so misused, distorted, debated and challenged as it is today. A battle is being waged not just in the West but all over the world over Truth, and is being fought on many fronts - between the Modernists and all those who believe in the existence of one unconditional and absolute truth, and the Postmodernists, whose relativism is increasingly the philosophy of many contemporary academicians. Rejecting objective truth is the cornerstone of postmodernism. Postmodern thinkers want to replace objectivity with subjectivity: truth is not discovered, but created or constructed. And in the place of objective truth or what postmodernists call “metanarratives” (comprehensive world views), we find “local narratives,” or stories about
reality that “work” for particular communities—but have no validity beyond that community. Indeed, postmodernists reject the whole language of truth and reality in favor of literary terms like narrative and story. It’s all about interpretation, not about what’s real or true. In essence, postmodern ideology declares an end to all ideology and all claims to truth.

How has this seemingly skeptical and relativistic outlook regarding the possibility of clear meaning or truth gained such wide acceptance in the present day? As more and more people come to believe that truth is relative, few know why they think that way. Still fewer have any clue about how their beliefs practically relate to their own lives. They have been cowed into submission by the force or fashionability of new ideas without realizing their disastrous practical consequences for ordinary life. By and large, people today are more ideologically confused than deeply committed to their convictions. To come up with an appropriate response to postmodernism is, therefore, crucial. In view of this, I have attempted in this thesis to come up with not only theoretical but practical arguments (a general apologetic) in order to deal with the present crisis of truth.

In particular, this thesis takes into account the notion of truth in Richard Rorty’s philosophy, arguably, the most prominent philosophical defender of the postmodern turn in our time. In the true spirit of postmodernism, Rorty has argued that truth is not the sort of thing one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about. Or that it is just an “empty compliment” which we pay to those beliefs which are successful in helping us do what we want to do. Undoubtedly, the way truth is being conceived by many postmodern thinkers has caused grave concern among those who think that truth does matter. That without truth there would be no intelligible criterion of evaluation. That without truth we are all vulnerable to manipulation. That without truth there is no genuine freedom and fulfillment. As Os Guinness rightly said, “Truth without freedom is a manacle, but freedom without truth is a mirage.” And finally, that without the notion of truth life itself is not livable. Here I quote Douglas Groothuis who said, “The idea of truth is part of the intellectual oxygen that we breathe. Whenever we state an opinion, defend or critique an argument, ask a question, or investigate one kind of assertion or another, we presuppose the concept of truth—even if we do not directly state the word, even if we deny that truth is real or knowable.”
Study Background:

Postmodernism has its roots in modernism which began in the 1700s with the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is an age of reason, scientific discovery, and human autonomy. Descartes, considered the father of modern philosophy, believed that the autonomous man—the one who starts from his own thought ("Cogito ergo sum") can, with the help of reason, discover indubitable knowledge. Accordingly, according to the postmodernists, what the modernists assumed was that the mind was a "mirror of nature," meaning that our perceptions of reality actually correspond to the way the world is. From this presumption, modernists built a culture that exalted technological achievement and mastery over the natural order. Unfortunately, this Cartesian position, pushed to an extreme, paid a dear price. For where rational certainty had become the master, and the power of unaided reason held exclusive sway on truth, the masses felt alienated from the real world. Likewise, scientific and technological proliferations, which were thought, could create a better world, brought the modern age almost to the brink of disaster. The "myth of progress" ended up in a nightmare of violence—atomic bombs being dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima—and subjugation—owing to imperialism and the colonialization of the third world by the supposedly more modern and advanced industrial nations and the destruction of the environment—both for the marginalized and the earth. With the modern era thus leaving little or no meaning in life, postmodernism came and challenged all the ideals, principles and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set. Going to the other extreme, postmodernism rejects modernism’s autonomous individualism and all that follows from it. Rather than seeing humanity as an ocean of individuals, postmodernists think of humans as "social constructs." Postmodern psychologist and social critic Kenneth Gergen notes in his *The Saturated Self*, "With the spread of postmodern consciousness, we see the demise of personal definition, reason, authority… All intrinsic properties of the human being, along with moral worth and personal commitment, are lost from view…" Postmodernists regard humans as products of culture and deny the individual self all together. We do not exist or think independently of the community with which we identify. So we cannot have independent or autonomous access to reality. All of our thinking is contextual. Rather than conceiving the mind as a mirror of nature, postmodernists argue that we view
reality through the lens of culture. Consequently, postmodernists reject the possibility of objective truth. Reality itself turns out to be a "social construct" or paradigm. That is to say, we have moved from an objectivist to a constructionist outlook. Using Rorty's own argument, postmodernism is but a continuing conversation that has now taken over from modernism.

It is generally assumed that the belief in the one absolute and objective truth has been under attack at least since Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) but the full-scale frontal assault did not begin until the 70s. Nietzsche grounded his attack in his famous assertion of the "death of God." All beliefs in God, values and morality, said Nietzsche, had lost the power they once exercised and no comparable beliefs had emerged to take their place. The only thing remaining in the relative vacuum left by the death of God was a body of primitive instincts aimed at self-preservation and self-promotion, chief among them being the "will to power." Motivated by the "will to power," we devise metaphysical concepts — conceptions of truth — that advance the cause of a certain species of people. Nietzsche claims that there is no truth as such but only relative truths for a certain sort of creature or a certain society.

Then in the 70's, Michel Foucault, considered to be "Nietzsche's truest twentieth century successor" came on the scene. Echoing Nietzsche's "will to power" Foucault called any pursuit a "will to knowledge" that arbitrarily establishes its own truth. This "truth" is then imposed on others, thereby handing over power to the speaker or writer. So the human quest for knowledge is written off as the pursuit of power, and this power for Foucault and other postmoderns is embodied and expressed in institutionalized languages. In other words, truth is just the product of the practices that make it possible. Another postmodern philosopher of the 70’s, Francois Lyotard, called for a rejection of all metanarratives. Lyotard argued that modern philosophies legitimized their truth claims not (as they themselves claimed) on logical empirical grounds, but rather on grounds of accepted stories (or metanarratives) about knowledge and the world — what Wittgenstein termed 'language — games'. He further argued that in the wake of the collapse of modern metanarratives, people are developing a new 'language game' — one that does not make claims to absolute truth but rather celebrates a world of ever-changing relationships (among people and between people and the world). Jacques Derrida, to whom deconstruction is attributed, argues that all language is a self-enclosed system, a collection of
symbols, signifying nothing outside the language. There is no extra-linguistic reality. It is said that in the wake of Derrida's work, avant-garde postmoderns conclude that we can no longer assume an ontological ground for certain knowledge. Derrida's attack on the "center" - the search for meaning that exists outside and beyond language or the "transcendental signified" - has forever shattered traditional appeals to the author's intention. In fact, it has undermined appeals to anything located beyond the text. Finally, in 1979, Richard Rorty's book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, called for an abandonment of epistemology as the "prestigious arbiter of meaning."

Rorty often writes and argues with the intention to convince the reader of the validity of pragmatism. In typical pragmatist tradition, Rorty suggests that the modern representational model of cognition, according to which our mind is a mirror of the world that is to produce reality as accurately as possible, say by means of a critique of reason or logical analysis of language, to be no longer "useful." Thus he calls for a shift towards another type of philosophy, "Edifying Philosophy", the aim of which is the invention of new, interesting, and fruitful self-descriptions as well as keeping going philosophical conversation. According to Rorty, it should be a matter of conversation and social practice in place of argument that seeks to discover objective truth. Rorty thus can be said to be continuing the conversation that began with Nietzsche but without any neutral arbiter to decide between the competing interpretations. Rejecting the notion of truth as objective, Rorty says truth should be more a matter of intersubjective agreement on what is best to believe with members of one's society - in Rorty's case, the secular liberal society of the West. Now Rorty is very careful to say that what he is asserting is not that there is no truth but only that it is no longer *a useful notion, an empty compliment*. In his "Introduction" to "Consequences to Pragmatism" Rorty makes this quite clear as when he says that "truth is not the sort of thing one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about... "truth" is just the name of a property which all true statements share." Accordingly, what Rorty has suggested is that it is more useful to see it as a matter of solidarity or intersubjective agreement and not objectivity. As a matter of fact, even the sciences themselves are models of human solidarity. In this Rorty is said to have given a distinctively postmodern twist to the tradition pioneered by Dewey and others. What makes Rorty thinks this way is that
in his opinion, truth is not something that exists “out there” but in our vocabularies and hence contingent as they keep changing from time to time depending on our needs, interests, and purposes. Rorty thus sees our language, including the language of the natural sciences, as a tool that we use to cope with the environment. Besides, there is always the possibility of a “better vocabulary” that will help us cope better with our situation be it our contingent self or community. And yet, it is not because we have discovered the truth of things but because we have been able to give enough justification that for the time being we can discard our old vocabularies for the new ones. Regarding justification Rorty thinks it is nothing more than a sociological matter, a matter of seeing whether something is acceptable to my peers. 10 In view of this, truth becomes for Rorty simply “a compliment paid to the beliefs which we think so well justified that, for the moment, further justification is not needed.” 11 Rorty thus concludes that justification and not truth should be the goal of our inquiry. This has drawn in sharp criticisms from many philosophers and thinkers who feel that truth and justification are two independent conditions of our beliefs and one cannot be replaced by another. Rorty sees no problem in abandoning the issue of truth altogether. Shouldn’t we be more concerned? Herein lies the problem: What will happen if truth is abandoned for justification only? Can justification for that matter function without appealing to at least some normative concept of truth? According to some thinkers, in preferring justification to truth, Rorty has most certainly thrown the baby (justification) out with the bath water (truth). Can truth survive Rorty’s battering?

A related problem is that without a ‘substantial’ conception of truth Rorty’s philosophy surely slides into relativism. Rorty however rejects charges leveled at him and other pragmatists that they are “relativists” in the sense that any truth can hold. He rejects this because his “account of the value of cooperative human enquiry has only an ethical base, not an epistemological or metaphysical one.” 12 That is, the only “truth” he buys is that which he and his group have worked out from within; it is not relative to any other truth, particularly one that is “out there” in an epistemological or metaphysical “reality.” 13 Rorty calls this group “the liberal intellectual of the secular modern West” and claims as its frame of reference, tolerance, openness, equality, justice, solidarity. So then, Rorty feels, he can only be criticized for ethnocentrism, not for relativism.” 14 But can Rorty appeal to such liberal notions as “rights”
and “justice” which are not necessarily reducible to the contingent social norms, without an
absolute point reference to appeal to? What if he cannot find members in his community who
would agree with him “intersubjectively” on such notions as “rights” or “justice”? On Rorty’s
own terms, wouldn’t someone disagree with his position simply by presenting an alternative
vocabulary that will help us cope better with reality? Perhaps there is some way in which we
can offer a “final vocabulary” that would not only retain a manner of speaking that is
not egregiously relativist and cynical but also justify “better” our own as well as others’ lives
and actions.

The Schema of the Thesis:

Although Rorty appears to prefer the description, “pragmatist” to “postmodernist,”
yet on proper examination of his views on truth, he is often placed alongside a list of postmodern
thinkers such as Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida. This comes as no surprise considering his
anti-foundationalist, anti-metaphysical and deconstructive outlook. This dissertation is a modest
attempt to analyze Rorty’s conception of truth from his many works and critically evaluate it in
the context of postmodernism. To achieve this aim the dissertation is divided into the following
chapters:

The first chapter deals with the origin of postmodernism as a philosophy and in particular
the transition from the modern to the postmodern conception of truth. It begins with a survey of
the traditional or modern views on truth. Now modernism initiated by the enlightenment had
entertained an unbounded faith in the objective, universal and absolute truth and the capacity
of the human mind to know it. Accordingly, several modern theories of truth were advanced to
settle on the question of truth. Foremost among these truth theories are the Correspondence
Theory, the Coherence Theory, and the Pragmatic Theory of truth. First proposed in vague
form by Plato and Aristotle in his Metaphysics, the Correspondence theory says, truth is
what propositions have by corresponding to the way the world is. According to Aristotle, “To
say what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, or
of what is not that it is not, is true.”15 The Coherence theory is the belief that a proposition is
true to the extent that it agrees or coheres with some specified set of propositions. The Pragmatic theory is the belief that a proposition is true when acting upon it yields satisfactory practical results. For the pragmatist, truth, being equated as it were, with "ideas that work", one truth keeps changing for a better truth. Now more will be said on the pragmatist theory as it is generally considered to be directly linked to the postmodern conception of truth. Yet the survey undertaken here, in the history of modern philosophy, is not an exhaustive one.

Coming to postmodernism, most thinkers are of the view that postmodernism came about as a result of an accumulated disillusionment with the promises of the Enlightenment project and its progress of science, so vital to modern thinking. Questioning and rejecting the assumptions of modernism however, postmodernism is a worldview about discontinuity, suspicion of motive, and an acceptance of logical incoherence. As mentioned above, many believe that postmodernism originated with Nietzsche. Then in the 1960's, various post-humanist and anti-metaphysical discourses emerged under the rubric of post-structuralism and, later, postmodern theory. In fact, some have traced the history of the most famous strain in postmodernism to this period, characterized by the emergence of a new group of philosophers in France who not only were influenced by Structuralism — a theoretical movement that brought forward the view that it is not the self that creates culture; rather it is the culture that creates self - but also radicalized it. The import of their work appeared radical indeed as they announce "the end of the rational inquiry into truth, the illusory nature of any unified self, the impossibility of clear and unequivocal meaning, and the oppressive nature of all modern western institutions."16

Following this brief history of postmodern philosophy, certain cultural expressions of postmodernism as manifested in contemporary society will be depicted, which will be followed by a delineation of some of the most general assumptions of postmodernism. It is important to note that the central hallmark of postmodern cultural expression is pluralism. In celebration of this pluralism, postmodern artists deliberately juxtapose seemingly contradictory styles derived from immensely different sources. They have also employed features of older styles specifically in order to reject or ridicule certain aspects of modernity. To cite an instance, in the area of architecture, in response to the modernist contempt for anything unessential or superfluous, postmodern buildings give place to ornamentation. Further, where modernist architects sought
to demonstrate an absolute break with the past by rigorously purging from their designs any relics of earlier eras, postmodernist architects retrieve historical styles and techniques. But postmodernism is above all an intellectual outlook or a "philosophical disposition." In view of this, this chapter will also look at some of the most general assumptions of postmodernism that have brought about such great intellectual dispute in our time. To cite an example, postmodernists say there is not one but many "truths." Some of the most outstanding postmodernists will, therefore, be portrayed here, whose thoughts have had a significant impact on the postmodern outlook over the last few decades. These are Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida and of course, Richard Rorty. Finally, this chapter concludes with a highlight of some general criticisms made concerning postmodernism. Without doubt, postmodernism has been criticized and even denounced by many thinkers. Yet it cannot be denied that some of the challenges that postmodernism raised are crucial and they cannot be so easily set aside or dismissed. Whether it is right, is, of course, another matter.

The second chapter takes into account Rorty's call for a demise of epistemology as the "prestigious arbiter of meaning." To start with, it will consider the ground(s) on which Rorty had called for this demise or abandonment of epistemology. According to Rorty, Western philosophical tradition since Plato has been gripped by the picture of knowledge as accurate representation of reality, and of truth as correspondence to reality. With the rise of modernism from Descartes onwards, the mind has supposedly mirrored reality. What Rorty has uncompromisingly argued however, is that the mirror image is just that - an image, that is, one description among many possible other descriptions. Epistemology then no longer becomes the prestigious arbiter of meaning and hence it must be abandoned. What Rorty suggests is that we should start seeing knowledge as a matter of conversation and of social practice, rather than as an attempt to mirror nature. In preferring practice over theory Rorty was considerably influenced by Dewey. Accordingly for Rorty, philosophy must give up epistemology and become instead a form of hermeneutics.
The remaining part of this chapter will be a discussion of Rorty’s hermeneutics, which according to Rorty, is simply an “expression of hope” that philosophy will no longer be seen as a matter of “mirroring nature” or discovering truth but as “continuing the conversation.” Rorty claims his use of the term is largely due to Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*. Prediger however, has challenged Rorty’s claim saying that what Rorty has done is to selectively appropriate Gadamer’s thought for his own neo-pragmatist’s aims and concerns, thereby disguising some important differences between them. Rorty also makes a distinction between what he calls “systematic philosophy” that offer arguments and “edifying philosophy” that might just be “saying something.” Besides, it is not just continuing the conversation but also changing it as much as possible, lest it become boring. We do this, according to Rorty, by continually inventing new “vocabularies”; by “simply by playing the new off against the old”. The chapter ends with a critical analysis of Rorty’s concept of philosophy as conversation only.

The third chapter is an attempt to analyze Rorty’s notion of truth as solidarity as found in his writings. First of all, the chapter will focus on Rorty’s argument that objectivity should be reduced to solidarity or what he calls “intersubjective agreement” among members of a community. Secondly, it will consider Rorty’s claim that science too is a matter of solidarity. In fact, he says that the only sense in which science is exemplary is that it is a model of human solidarity. In a nutshell, Rorty’s “solidarity” requires no metaphysics, not even the so-called “quasi-transcendent norms” found in Habermas discourse nor the “limit-concept of ideal truth” as suggested by Putnam, since subject-object relation is mediated by subject-subject relation, i.e., intersubjectivity. Further, no (naturalistic) epistemology is required either. Truth is what it is good for us to believe (pragmatism—knowledge and interests) and is dependent on community-specific procedures of justification (against universality). It is intersubjective agreement and as a result, there is no qualitative difference between knowledge and opinion, science and non-sciences. Its only goal is to create a more expansive sense of solidarity than we presently have. Though Rorty’s notion of a community is unclear for he says it may include not only a group of existing people but also historical or fictional characters, yet he is quite explicit concerning his own community, which he refers to as “the community of the liberal intellectuals of the secular modern West.”
Surely, Rorty’s writings have met with passionate disapproval from some critics. What this chapter will finally attempt to do then is to analyze various criticisms as articulated by many scholars and at the same time outline Rorty’s responses to his critics and eventually attempt to determine whether his defenses are sufficient to rescue him from the charge that his philosophy self-destructs by its own logic.

Chapter four is an investigation into an oft-quoted linguistic argument in Rorty’s writings and which can be said to be at the foundation of Rorty’s idiosyncratic conclusions about truth and reality. It goes this way: To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations. The chapter begins with a description of Rorty’s views on contingency and also, Heidegger’s influence on Rorty. What the “onto-theological tradition” (a term Heidegger used to label the history of Western metaphysics) had advocated was the view that the particular words we use are unimportant for the very reason that words are considered to be mere vehicles for something less fragile and transitory than marks and noises. In contrast, what Heidegger is telling us, according to Rorty, is that words do matter: “that we are, above all, the people who have used those words.” From here Rorty comes to his most important conclusion that truth is a property of words, that is, of vocabularies. Rorty however, makes it clear that it is not just one “vocabulary” that is the “truth.” Thus when we consider the different vocabularies such as the vocabulary of Newton versus that of Aristotle, it is difficult, Rorty says, to think of the world as making one of these better than another, of the world as deciding between them. For each vocabulary is “just an empty compliment— one traditionally paid to writers whose novel jargon we have found useful.” Rorty’s method, therefore, relies on the dialectic of persuasion rather than on rational justification: he tries to make his descriptive vocabulary more attractive than older ones.

The second, third and fourth part of this chapter will explore into Rorty’s view that not just language but even the self and the community are contingent creations. To Rorty, language is neither a medium of representation nor expression of reality. What then is his view of language? A careful study of Rorty’s view of language reveals that he borrows to a great length from Davidson and Nietzsche’s philosophy of language. Taking from Davidson, Rorty
has come to view vocabularies as merely tools for coping with certain kinds of organisms. Furthermore, since all languages being contingent in their origins and not mediums for expression or representation, our “intellectual and moral progress [becomes] a history of increasingly useful metaphors rather than of increasing understanding of how things really are.” Rorty thus rests his argument, more than anything else, on Nietzsche’s well known image of truth as a “mobile army of metaphors.”

Rorty also rejects the traditional notion of the self as possessor of an essence or nature. Rorty credits Nietzsche with providing an alternate, more useful metaphor, namely, the self-creating self trying to overcome what is merely inherited from others: “recreating all ‘it was’ into a ‘thus I willed it.’” Next, he credits Freud with establishing the contingent nature of the moral self by showing how our moral sense develops via an attempt of dealing with the contingencies of one’s upbringing, of coming to terms with a blind impress. Having established the contingent nature of the moral self Rorty goes on to deny even the existence of any moral community founded upon some rational, universal foundation. The reason is simply because, as Rorty believes, there is no morally privileged standpoint from which to make universal judgments. So then how does Rorty ever hope to make his views agreed by the majority? Rorty says his strategy will be what he calls “redescription”. What Rorty will do is, using his own words, “try to make the vocabulary, in which these objections are phrased look bad, thereby changing the subject, rather than granting the objector his choice of weapons and terrain by meeting his criticisms head-on.”

This critical recognition that vocabularies, individuals and communities are contingent products of time and place does not mean that one must live without personal convictions or social commitments. On the contrary, Rorty dreams of a liberal utopia with an ethic which maximizes freedom and human solidarity and minimizes pain. Labeling the ideal citizen of this utopia a liberal ironist, Rorty defines a “liberal” as someone who thinks that cruelty is the worst thing we do. Ironists, on the other hand, are those who can realize that anything can be made good or bad by being “redescribed” and who deny that any criteria of choice between “final vocabularies” exists. On this view therefore, the liberal ironists are free to be “as privatistic,
‘irrational’ and aestheticist as they please” as long as they “do it on their own time-causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged.”22 In the public realm, however, our paramount concern should be with public issues of social justice and human solidarity. Rorty’s “liberal utopia” however, has been criticized by many thinkers who think these two, i.e., irony and liberalism, are fundamentally incompatible.

In a nutshell, by abandoning what Rorty considers to be the now-outdated vocabularies of theology, metaphysics, and foundationalist philosophy, we can provide the conditions for a revitalized public and private life, one that consists of an “intricately textured collage of private narcissism and public pragmatism”23 Indeed, what Rorty envisions is a liberal society that is thoroughly secular or, de-divinized: “(T)o get to the point where “we no longer worship anything, where we treat nothing as quasi-divinity, where we treat everything - our language, our conscience, our community - as a product of time and chance.”24 Now Rorty is not really concerned that he cannot offer a ‘logical’ argument for his redescription. All he hopes to do is change the way we talk about truth. He wants to replace our old descriptions with a new, bolder redescription. But not many are ready to accept this “new, bolder description” and they have given us several reasons as to why this is so. Taking their views into consideration, this chapter will then critically evaluate certain distinctive claims of Rorty regarding contingency of language, human nature and community and find out whether Rorty’s “vocabulary” of his “liberal utopia” can practically replace the metaphysician vocabulary of the one absolute and objective truth.

The fifth chapter is an examination of Rorty’s claim that all we need is justification and not truth. Nonetheless, before delving into Rorty’s arguments a brief presentation of the traditional understanding of truth and justification will be made. What has been the general assumption in any traditional epistemology is that to constitute knowledge, a belief must be both true and justified. That is to say, truth and justification are two independent conditions of beliefs and one cannot be replaced by another. Yet in Rorty’s view, all we need is justification and truth should simply be discarded. His argument is that the difference between truth and justification really makes no difference to practice, i.e., to his decisions about what to do. Thus he concludes “If I have concrete, specific, doubts about whether one of my beliefs is true, I can only resolve
those doubts by asking if it is adequately justified..." There is nothing to truth beyond justified belief and henceforth what has always been seen as the “desire for truth” should be substituted with a “desire for justification? In other words, justification and not truth should be the goal of inquiry. Rorty however sees a certain aspect to truth which cannot be eliminated, which is its cautionary use and expressed as “fully justified, but perhaps not true.” This is because, in Rorty’s view, justification is relative to an audience and also, that some better audience might exist, or come to exist, to which a belief which is justifiable to us would not be justifiable.

Following Rorty’s view on truth and justification, a number of questions have been raised concerning Rorty’s views on truth and justification. Does the difference between truth and justification really make no difference? Can we look only to justification as the goal of our inquiry and not truth? Despite Rorty, there are still many who believe that justification, in itself, does not make sense without truth. In view of these questions, this chapter will then critically assess some of the main arguments that have been offered by a number of thinkers concerning Rorty’s view that all we need is justification and not truth.

Because of his views on truth and justification, Rorty has been labeled a relativist by many scholars and philosophers. Rorty though on more than one occasion has denied this charge by insisting that he is an ethnocentrist rather than a relativist. Rorty makes a difference between these two by saying in Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth, “…there is no truth in relativism, but this much truth in ethnocentrism: we cannot justify our beliefs (in physics, ethics, or any other area) to everybody, but only to those whose beliefs overlap ours to some appropriate extent.” This takes us to the sixth chapter where an investigation will be made concerning Rorty denial that he is not a relativist and find out whether or not he can escape the charge of relativism.

Now relativism is, at its most basic, the view that cognitive, moral or aesthetic norms and values are dependent on the social or conceptual systems that underpin them and consequently a neutral standpoint for evaluating them is not available to us. Now very few philosophers are willing to apply the label “relativist” to themselves. And this goes even for Rorty, who on account of his own claims or statements has been regarded by a number of scholars and philosophers as one of the most articulate defenders of relativism. Some of these
are, “Every belief is as good as every other,” “There are as many meanings of ‘truth’ as there are procedures of justification,” and “there is nothing to be said about either truth or rationality apart from descriptions of the familiar procedures of justification which a given society—ours—uses in one or another area of inquiry.” This chapter will, therefore, probe into some of the arguments brought forward by a few thinkers and find out whether the charge of relativism brought against Rorty is plausible or not. It will then consider the claim that Rorty made that he is not a relativist but an ethnocentrist and finally determine whether Rorty escapes being a relativist by being ethnocentricistic.

The concluding chapter is an attempt to summarize all findings from the foregoing discussions and analysis by drawing upon certain corollaries and consequences and also suggest possibilities for further research in this area.

**Methodology:**

The method followed in this thesis is both descriptive and analytic. Hence I have judiciously quoted from the works of Rorty as much as they are available, focusing mainly on those that deal with his notion of truth. They serve as my primary sources. Besides, I have also used several secondary sources, mainly internet sources and in particular, e-journals, whenever they are found to be relevant to the issue(s) at hand. I hope the description will prove itself to be quite an interesting one especially as it has taken place within the context of philosophical issues that have endured drastic changes in the history of western philosophy over the last few decades. The method is also analytic, for after each description of Rorty’s views, including his line of reasoning and conclusions, it makes a critical assessment by bringing together the counter views or criticisms of other thinkers/authors, which then leads finally to the conclusion. Yet this analysis is not intended merely for the sake of engaging in an intellectual debate but to lead the reader to an active engagement in the pursuit of Truth.
Notes and References:

1 The prefix meta means "beyond" and is here used to mean "about", and a narrative is a story. Therefore, a metanarrative is a story about a story, encompassing and explaining other 'little stories' within totalizing schemes.


8 Ibid., p. 133.

9 Rorty, “Introduction” to “Consequences to Pragmatism”


12 Ibid., p. 24.


14 Ibid., p. 30.


16 Lawrence Cahoone, (Ed.) From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology (Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing) 2003, p.4.


19 Ibid., p. 9.

20 Ibid., p. 29.

21 Ibid., p. 44

22 Ibid., p. xiv.


