

# Representationalism and Antirepresentationalism - Kant, Davidson and Rorty

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## Representationalism and Antirepresentationalism - Kant, Davidson and Rorty (1)

**ABSTRACT:** The notions of representationalism and antirepresentationalism are introduced and used in contemporary philosophical discussions by Richard Rorty to describe his and the neopragmatists' attitude toward traditional problems of epistemology. Rorty means that the history of philosophy shows that there are no [final answers](#) to the traditional questions about knowledge, truth, and representation; consequently, they should be rejected. Rorty thinks such questions should be eliminated from philosophy since there is no possibility to get outside of our mind and language. We cannot say anything about a mind-transcendent or language-transcendent, nonlocal or eternal reality. Hilary Putnam agrees with Rorty on this, but not with the conclusion that we should reject traditional philosophical questions. For Putnam, the epistemological questions are worthwhile asking and, although we cannot find the final correct answers, we should continue our investigations as if there were final answers. Our struggles with those problems can lead to refinements of the formulations and to cognitive developments. Putnam proposes a quasi-realism which is often called "internal realism." Rorty rejects

every refinement of realism as still realism and believes that the questions of knowledge, truth, and representation lead to regresses ad infinitum or to circular reasoning.

Probably few philosophers influenced so decisively the development of epistemology as Kant. Without him it is not possible to describe the last two hundred years of the history of philosophy as well as contemporary philosophy in general. On the other "end of the line" one of the most influential contemporary American philosophers Richard Rorty proposes that we should abandon epistemology and [Kantian](#) picture of representation. In this paper I pose the question, whether Rorty is thoroughly succesful in his abandomnt. I try to investigate the differences and similarities of Kantian and Rortyan thinking with the help of the epistemological notion of representationalism and of the antiepistemological notion of antirepresentationalism. If it is possible to find crucial overlapping areas of both thinking, then there arises a dilemma: either Kant himself is a "Rortyan", postepistemological thinker, and this would be a surprizing new idea about Kantian philosophy or Rorty succeeds not completely to overcome the structures of Kantian-epistemological thinking.

The notions representationalism and antirepresentationalism are introduced and used in contemporary philosophical discussions by Richard Rorty, to describe his and the neopragmatists attitude towards traditional problems of epistemology and "to make safe the world" for a "postepistemological" thinking. Rorty means, the history of philosophy showed, that there are no final answers to the traditional questions about "knowledge," "truth" and "representation"; (2) consequently they should be rejected.

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