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Dear Editor:

Richard Rorty's review of Scott Soames's careful study of 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosophy is more "dramatic narrative" than analytical commentary. Rorty expresses dissatisfaction that Soames focuses on specific advances and mistakes instead of Rorty's pet issue: whether there is an objective, independent reality on which the correctness or incorrectness of theories, conjectures, and speculations depends. Rorty portrays the question of independent reality—or perhaps the rejection of independent reality—as philosophy's equivalent of the discovery of a cure for a disabling disease. (The issue appears much more important to those who deny reality than to those who embrace it.) Formulating the issue in terms of "correspondence" postpones the inevitable critique of reality-denial as a cure much worse than the putative disease. The suggestion that it is a matter of decision, choice, or terminology whether a given truth is necessary is of a piece with Rorty's conception of truth, and symptomatic of a serious misunderstanding of the concept of necessity. The odyssey of philosophy in the previous century is not primarily about questioning reality. Philosophy is a rational quest for knowledge and understanding through the employment of reason, argument, and tutored intuition. Although it is too soon for mature adjudication of 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosophical movements (including the century's spin on the reality debate), it is none too early for philosophy to reflect thoughtfully and judiciously on its journey from turn of century to turn of millennium. Such is Soames's retrospective.

Sincerely,

Nathan Salmon  
Professor