cault, and other Continental thinkers who reject the Enlightenment belief that it is possible to make universal statements about these things. Truth and knowledge are not timeless; they are determined by culture.

But Rorty rejects the radical social and political conclusions—a wholesale rejection of the liberal, bourgeois order—that the Continental thinkers draw from these views. Instead, he argues that just as the creation of democracy required that religion be treated as "irrelevant to social order, but relevant to, and possibly essential for individual perfection," so the survival of democracy requires the "privatization" of philosophy. In other words, McCarthy caustically explains, "Philosopher-poets are permitted to indulge in a radical and total critique of the Enlightenment concept of reason and of the humanistic ideals rooted in it, but only in private."

There are, McCarthy observes, more than a few ironies in all of this. Rorty's revolt against the analytic school's aloofness from the "real world" has led him to insist, paradoxically, on an absolute division between philosophy and politics. And his whole argument—because it is based on claims of universal truth—constitutes just the kind of philosophy he rejects. McCarthy shares Rorty's desire for a philosophy more solidly rooted in experience. But he believes that it must begin with the recognition that while universal truths cannot be asserted with the boldness of old, they are still indispensible "pragmatic presuppositions."

The Beginning of the End

In a tribute to the French sociologist Raymond Aron in *The New York Times Book Review* (Feb. 18, 1990), Harvard's Daniel Bell traces the scandalous genealogy of an idea that is much in fashion today.

The men Aron most admired in the 1930s were Alexandre Kojève, Alexandre Koyré, and Eric Weil, three superior intellects "against whom I did not dare measure myself." Kojève, the most brilliant and most mysterious, gave a famous seminar on Hegel's Phenomenology *with a group of auditors that included Raymond Queneau, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and occasionally Aron. His esoteric interpretation of the "end of history"—history had ended, he thought, with the universalism proclaimed by the French Revolution, but having failed to be realized in practice by Napoleon, it would now be realized by Stalin!—has repeated itself twice: once in the tragedy of French intellectuals such as Merleau-Ponty who supported the terror of Stalin as "historical necessity," the second time as farce, in the recent essay by the former State Department official Francis Fukuyama.*

A Jewish Revival?

"What Future for American Jews?" by Arthur Hertzberg, in *The New York Review of Books* (Nov. 23, 1989), 250 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107.

When the first Jews arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654, Baruch de Spinoza was at home in Amsterdam, insisting that the Jews had only two choices: assimilate or re-establish their own national state.

That prophecy seemed to be forgotten by the 1970s and '80s. Jews were one of the most affluent groups in America; anti-Semitism had virtually disappeared, at least among whites; and the loyalty Jews felt toward Israel came to be accepted as no more unusual than what the Italians felt for the "old country." But today, contends Hertzberg, a professor of religion at Dartmouth, "after nearly four centuries, the momentum of Jewish experience in America is essentially spent."

America's 5.8 million Jews have not been unaware of their predicament. During the 1970s, interest in the Holocaust was revived, and the threat of anti-Semitism in America invoked; Jews were urged to rally behind Israel and behind Jewish groups and rituals. Jewishness, says

Hertzberg, "was thus to grow stronger not as a religion but as the binding force of an ethnic community." But ethnicity alone will not suffice, Hertzberg insists.

Rates of intermarriage are rising. In Rhode Island, for example, the rate was 14 percent during the 1960s, 27 percent during the 1970s, and 38 percent during the 1980s. The commitment of American Jews to Israel, meanwhile, has weakened, especially since the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. They still send money to Israel, but they are less likely to visit, just as they observe Yom Kippur without any real commitment to its ritual fasting.

There is still a sense that Jews are more than an ethnic group, that they remain God's "chosen people." But the fact is that Jewish spirituality does not have very deep roots in the New World, says Hertzberg. Most Jews came here to get ahead, not to propagate a rebirth of Judaism. Unless American Jews begin to "hear voices," he warns, their history "will soon end."

The Poet and The Philosopher

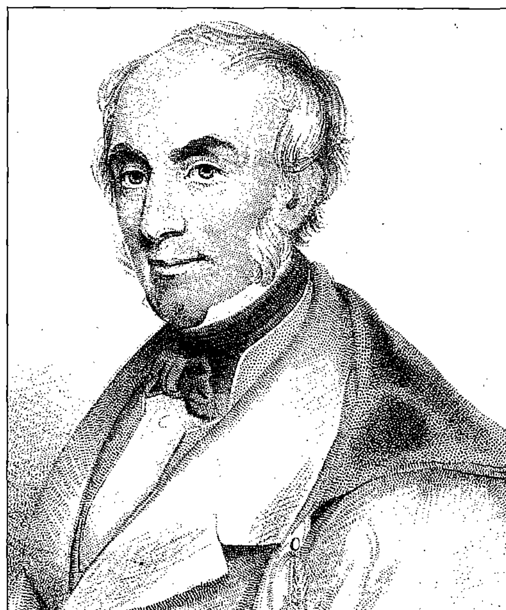
"Wordsworth and the Culture of Science" by Fred Wilson, in *The Centennial Review* (Fall 1989), 110 Morrill Hall, Michigan State Univ., East Lansing, Mich. 48824-1036.

In 1826, John Stuart Mill was gripped by what can only be called one of the most famous bouts of depression in the intellectual history of the West. At 20, he later wrote, his "love of mankind . . . had worn itself out." His despair was deepened by the oppressive influence both of his philosopher-father, James, and of Jeremy Bentham. They advocated a view of psychology, "associationism," which seemed to leave no room for pure emotion.

To revive his spirits, the young Mill read romantic poetry: Goethe, Coleridge, Shelley. But it was in the poetry of William Wordsworth (1770–1850) that he finally found comfort, and ultimately an answer to the philosophical challenge posed by his father and Bentham. And thus indirectly, writes Wilson, who teaches philosophy at the University of Toronto, "Wordsworth effected the assimilation of romanticism into the culture of science."

The dominion of science and of the scientific method was something that English thinkers had been forced to grapple with since Isaac Newton (1642–1727). The "associationists," including Bentham and the elder Mill, followed Newtonian logic in arguing that all higher cognitive processes—indeed human nature itself—could be analyzed as the product of associations between various sensory and bodily pleasures.

Wordsworth himself had once fallen under the influence of this impoverished psychology as it was expounded by William Godwin. It left him ". . . now believing/ Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed." Much like Mill, he experienced a spiritual crisis (which he described in *The Prelude*). Rejecting "associationism" without—unlike many of his fellow romantics—throwing out all of Newtonian science as well, Wordsworth came to believe in the "irreducibility" of the moral and religious senses. It was a line of argument that had



William Wordsworth wrote: "it is shaken off/ That burden of my own unnatural self."