sively revised the philosophical (and, to some extent, the popular) conception of how science functions.

Before Kuhn, there had been a tendency to see science, or at least natural science, as the model of rationality, proceeding through careful accumulation of evidence and logical deduction to conclusions which, if they failed of certainty, did so only because of mistakes (which we can correct) or the limits of the evidence (which we can hope to improve). Kuhn made an influential but controversial case that science actually works in a much more complicated way, in which dominant ideas and practices (which depend on, and partly constitute, "paradigms" of "normal" science) play a decisive role in determining what is counted as evidence and how the evidence is construed. The precise nature of a "paradigm" was much controverted (one critic noted 21 different senses of the term), but out of Kuhn flowed a new approach to the philosophy of science, one in which virtues traditionally ascribed to science, such as "rationality" and "progress," were increasingly viewed as contestible, historical concepts subject to change.

2. Richard Rorty

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980), Richard Rorty explicitly generalized Kuhn's notion of normal science into the concept of "normal discourse," defined as any discourse embodying agreed-upon criteria for reaching agreement (a version of Kuhn's notion of paradigm). He argued that "the attempt (which has defined traditional philosophy) to explicate 'rationality' and 'objectivity' in terms of conditions of accurate representation is a self-deceptive effort to eternalize the normal discourse of the day." The broad influence of this book and several subsequent ones, including *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), played an important role in undermining the traditional essentialist case for liberal values.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Rorty was still inclined to claim that some political engagement was a necessary feature of a vital humanities program, though he counted on "academic freedom and collegial good manners" to prevent undesirable suppression of unpopular political persuasions. In *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (1991), he said,

There are already indications that leftist political correctness is becoming a criterion for faculty hiring. But, with luck, these injustices will be no worse than those which contemporary academic leftists endured from exponents of "traditional humanistic values" in the course of their own rise to power.

Already in the late 1980s, however, he had registered his discomfort with important elements of the negative view of American society popular among members of the "cultural left." Though he joined in the criticism of Allan Bloom, he saw merit in E. D. Hirsch's "cultural literacy" project. By the mid-1990s he was sharply distancing his views from multiculturalism (and from postmodernism as well), arguing on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* that left-wing academic supporters of multiculturalism are "unpatriotic."

Rorty's experience provides a useful case study of the frustrations encountered even by antessentalist liberals in remaining sanguine about political correctness. As David Hollinger recounts, in *Postethnic America* (1995):

Rorty, as a defender of human rights, had managed by 1993 to distance himself dramatically from a syndrome criticized by the Aristotelian philosopher Martha Nussbaum ... [who had] heard anthropologists attack "Western essentialist medicine" for its "binary oppositions" such as life and death, and health and disease. One lamented the introduction of smallpox vaccination to India by the British because it "eradicated the cult of Sitala Devi, the goddess to whom one used to pray in order to avert smallpox," and thus exemplified "Western neglect of difference."

3. Stanley Fish

Some would doubt whether it is possible to be an antessentalist liberal. Stanley Fish, who has been called the "high priest" of political correctness, is one of the most vocal critics of liberalism, which he considers incoherent. In his criticism of liberal values, Fish is an important source of the view that notions such as "free speech" and "discrimination" have a different meaning for victims and for oppressors.

It is in the critique of liberal values that the negative rationale for multiculturalism takes its most powerful, and perhaps disturbing, form. Politics is seen as pervasive because notions of neutrality, impartiality, objectivity, fairness, and so on have no absolute character. For Fish, there is no neutral standpoint to be occupied. Accordingly, the claim of traditional values to proceed from an impartial process should (sometimes) be unmasked; everything is political already, since "the truths any of us find compelling will all be partial, which is to say they will all be political."