

Richard Rorty: AI Business Storytelling in the AI Revolution

Study Guide E-Ticket | David M. Boje | October 8, 2026

Purpose and the question

Professor Muhammad Asghari's October 14 dialogue invites us to ask what happens when corporate AI systems become storytellers, mirrors, and sometimes authors of the vocabularies by which people describe themselves. Rorty asks us to relinquish the dream that knowledge is a perfect mirror of an independently given reality. But what happens when a corporation sells a machine that appears to be a mirror, and trains it to be helpful, confident, and profitable?

1. Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (1979)

Rorty challenges the spectator theory of knowledge: knowing is not merely copying the world inside the mind. In AI business storytelling, the language model does not simply reflect organizational truth. It produces situated sentences from training, alignment, prompts, and institutional constraints. Discussion: whose voice is absent from the mirror? What evidence can interrupt a persuasive AI summary?

2. Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity (1989)

Language, selfhood, and communities have histories rather than fixed final foundations. The ironist questions her own final vocabulary. Yet irony alone is not solidarity: Rorty asks how literature and attention to cruelty might enlarge our sensitivity to other people. Discussion: can an AI-generated story enlarge solidarity, or does it reduce another person to a convenient persona?

3. Asghari on Rorty and moral philosophy

Asghari's 2015 question—Has Richard Rorty a moral philosophy?—is an invitation to ask how anti-foundationalism relates to moral obligation. His 2020 conversation with Susan Haack offers a productive tension between pragmatist openness and standards of inquiry. Read the two texts alongside the October 14 dialogue rather than presuming either scholar endorses a particular AI application.

4. Bakhtin and answerability

Bakhtin's *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* adds the once-occurrent, answerable act: a human cannot hide behind a general theory or an algorithm. Where Rorty interrogates vocabularies,

Bakhtin presses the writer to answer for the event of writing. What cannot be delegated to a language model?

5. From postmodern management to digital organization

Boje's 1997 restorying of reengineering, 2001 reclamation of organizational story, 2015 pragmatic storytelling and ethics, 2017 management histories, 2018 organizational storytelling methods, and 2019 digital-organization essay form a sequence rather than a single thesis. The 2026 Last Postmodernist working paper returns to the inner storytelling mountain. Study question: when a digital platform changes a living story into data, who gains the authority to edit the plot?

6. Consciousness, Turing, and the limits of analogy

Chalmers (1996) asks why and how physical processes are accompanied by subjective experience. Turing's historical work helps distinguish operational tests and engineering achievements from unearned claims about consciousness. A conversational system may perform convincingly without settling the question of experience. Do not equate eloquence with moral personhood.

7. Questions for the October 14 circle

What is the corporation's final vocabulary—alignment, safety, openness, trust, scale, efficiency? Which vocabularies are excluded? Can human writers use AI without surrendering their own sentences? How do we identify cruelty and hidden costs? What would it mean to refuse an AI-generated account, and who has the power to do so?

Reading pathway and references

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