

Gerard STAN*

Communicative Rationality, Irony, and Solidarity. Hermeneutics of Rorty's Idea of Freedom

Abstract: Richard Rorty's non-essentialist, anti-representationalist, and ironic ideas have often caused consternation among Cartesian philosophers or contemporary metaphysicians of knowledge. Equally, Rorty's pragmatist ideas about freedom have been evaluated and criticized even by liberal thinkers. The main purpose of this article is to distinguish and argue in favor of three meanings of the idea of freedom in Richard Rorty's philosophy. First, I will argue that freedom is seen by Rorty, following Freud, as a condition of possibility for the Ego/self. Secondly, I will show that as long as the basic mechanisms of science are essentially argumentative, freedom is understood as a constitutive environment of scientific knowledge. Thirdly, I will argue that freedom is seen by Rorty as solidarity in the face of the suffering of human beings who recognize themselves as ironic and fragile. Finally, by investigating Rorty's meta-philosophical considerations, I will sketch what might be understood as freedom in the argumentative space of philosophy.

Keywords: communicative rationality, freedom, self, human nature, truth, anti-essentialism, anti-representationalism, scientific knowledge, solidarity, social hope.

Richard Rorty's ideas have caused consternation and holy rage among essentialist philosophers - whether continental or analytic - by at least three of the theses he has consistently defended in his writings: (a) the self, the potential metaphysical center of the human being, does not possess substantial consistency, being nothing more than a contingent set of propositional attitudes, a dynamic web, a network of beliefs and desires; (b) the truth, far from being the correspondence relation of a proposition with external reality, with facts, would be nothing more than an unforced agreement between the members of an epistemic community, determined by certain reasons visible only to scientists working within a certain field of research; consequently, epistemology, as a genre of philosophical concern, should be overcome; (c) the project of a free and fair society cannot be based on a set of metaphysical, abstract principles, on a philosophical understanding of the human essence, but on an immediate empirical generalization, that people have in common only their fragility, only their

* Stan Gerard, Assoc. Professor, PhD, Department of Communication Sciences and Public Relations, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania; email: gstan@uaic.ro

disposition to suffer when they are discriminated against, humiliated, imprisoned or tortured. This article aims to identify the basic understanding of the Rortyan idea of freedom and demonstrate that this idea is organically related to the three theses above.

In short, I will argue that Rortyan philosophy presupposes three distinct meanings of the idea of freedom: *first*, freedom can be understood as a constitutive environment of the self; *secondly*, freedom can be understood as a constitutive environment of the search and genesis of truth; *thirdly*, freedom represents, for Rorty, the condition for the possibility of a just society. Specifically, I will try to argue that, for Rorty, an individual's freedom is the very thing that makes possible the process of self-creation from which the unique and dynamic texture of his self will result. Furthermore, I will show that the freedom to choose and create vocabularies, theoretical tools, and argumentative strategies, rather than the constraints of an objective reality, makes scientific research converge toward acceptable viewpoints within scientific communities. Finally, I will show that, for Rorty, the solidarity of individuals in the face of the sources of suffering makes possible the freedom of a society, and not the implementation of a metaphysical project or some so-called ultimate principles of world organization extracted from a correct understanding of a so-called essence of man. I will also try to examine the extent to which the Rortyan arguments are sufficient to support the distinctive character of the three meanings of freedom and the extent to which these three ideas of freedom withstand an evaluative-critical examination.

1. Freedom as a constitutive environment of the self

In the Cartesian tradition, the Ego is seen as an inner core of the human being, it is substantial, generic, and impersonal, ensuring the deep identity of the human kind, but being unable to fix in any way the identity of individuals. This Ego would give the human being its identity over time because, even though the body undergoes changes and is divisible, the substantial Ego, being simple and indivisible, always remains identical to itself. The Cartesian Ego has sensations and beliefs, having the unique power to determine, under ascertaining their clarity and distinctness, whether they are true or not. If only the Ego can think, can determine which proposition is true and which is false, it means that, not being part of the physical world, it has exclusiveness in determining what exists and what does not exist in the physical world. In this sense, the Cartesian Ego is not only a principle of knowledge but also a principle of the world.

Contrary to the Cartesian tradition, Rorty believes that "the self is not something which «has» the beliefs and desires, but is simply the network of such beliefs and desires", and an individual's beliefs and desires are the

internal causes of his linguistic behavior. (Rorty 1991, 123) What matters in shaping a personal identity, a personal Self, are precisely those parts of its structure that have determined it to be different from all other selves, its idiosyncrasies, its structural contingencies, those own beliefs and desires considered as being important and relevant. (Rorty 1989, 23-24) Therefore, the real challenge facing an individual who wishes to mark his identity – the artist being one of those who particularly wishes to do so – is the construction of a uniquely textured self capable of imprinting any gesture creative enough originality. The individual who lives without imprinting his own stamp on the language in which he expresses his beliefs and desires does not really have a self. His linguistic behavior resembles the automatic manipulation, devoid of any personal meaning, of prefabricated verbal panels. Rorty points out that Nietzsche was the first thinker to explicitly suggest that we give up trying to know Truth and represent Reality as it is because the universe has neither an inventory list to know nor a determined extent.

“He hoped that once we realized that Plato’s «true world» was just a fable, we would seek consolation, at the moment of death, not in having transcended the animal condition but in being that peculiar sort of dying animal who, by describing himself in his own terms, had created himself. More exactly, he would have created the only part of himself that mattered by constructing his own mind. To create one’s mind is to create one’s own language, rather than to let the length of one’s mind be set by the language other human beings have left behind.” (Rorty 1989, 27)

Authentic self-knowledge presupposes an awareness of the possibility of self-creation; this is because any attempt by an individual to formulate in an inherited language his idiosyncrasies, his own beliefs, and desires, the elements that make him singular, is, to a large extent, doomed to failure. The fundamental, philosophically relevant fear should not be that our descriptions have not touched Truth, Reality, or the true Self, but the horror of which Harold Bloom spoke, the horror of discovering that we are only a copy or a reproduction, that we have could end the days in a world that our desires or beliefs have not affected in any way. (Rorty 1989, 29) The individual lives authentically only when he manages to create himself and express himself through his linguistic idiosyncrasies, through his own beliefs and desires. “Success in that enterprise - the enterprise of saying «Thus I willed it» to the past - is success in what Bloom calls giving «birth to oneself».” (Rorty 1989, 29)

The determining role in the demystification and replacement of the modern idea of the quasi-divine Ego, substantial or formal, belongs, according to Rorty, to Freud. The ego, the self, and the superego, the

psychoanalytic parliament that replaces the King Ego, is a network of contingencies rather than a well-ordered system of faculties. The terms we inherited from Freud - infantile, sadistic, obsessive, or paranoid - allow us to sketch a story of our development, of our idiosyncratic struggle, which is much more finely woven, much more adjusted to our case, than the moral vocabulary that the philosophical tradition has given us. (Rorty 1989, 32) If Freud is contested and contestable in many ways, he certainly has at least one merit: he has helped us enormously, Rorty believes, in moving us away from so-called necessary and universal truths about human identity and closer to concrete, to “the idiosyncratic contingencies of our individual pasts.” (Rorty 1989, 34) Freud does not see humanity as a natural kind with an intrinsic nature; consequently, he sees no need to construct a theory of human nature or essence. To reject the existence of human nature and to believe that the Self is a web of idiosyncratic beliefs and desires, says Rorty, means “to abjure the attempt to divinize the self as a replacement for a divinized world, (...) to get rid of the last citadel of necessity.” (Rorty 1989, 35) To the extent that he helps us to understand individual identity as the product of unconscious phantasies and idiosyncrasies, Freud helps us to understand our own lives as an attempt to clothe ourselves in our metaphors. (Rorty 1989, 35) Using Lionel Trilling’s terms, Rorty will say that Freud has shown us that poetry is a very constitutive fact of the human mind. (Rorty 1989, 35) In other words, the individual has the power to construct his own identity because he has the freedom to formulate in his own metaphors, in his own vocabulary, his own beliefs, and desires, and weave them into a unique network. What results from this process is his self and freedom is his medium, his condition of possibility. For an adept of classical metaphysics, the individual who would create his self would not have an ontologically consistent identity, being deprived of the privilege of possessing a substantial or divine self. He will never be able to come to terms with this image of human individuals as slightly more complicated animals, capable of carving a self out of their own beliefs and desires. Consequently, he will continue to imagine that he is a happy rational being, possessor of a self which was created in supersensible realms, but which is temporarily tested in the realm of corporeal decay.

A society in which individuals represent their selves as the result of a process of self-creation is a society in which individuals have given up seeing their selves as products of a metaphysical matrix. Such individuals gradually end up abandoning their beliefs in ahistorical principles or mechanisms that would predetermine the structure of their individual lives or of the society in which they live, gradually acquiring an ironist, pluralistic, dialogic thinking. Or, in the logic of Rorty’s philosophy, the emergence and expansion of ironist thinking is the premise, at the level of the individual

that makes possible the emergence of an authentic free society. In time a free society needs to develop in its citizens those liberal virtues that can preserve it in the long run; or, ironist thinking is the main virtue, Rorty believes, that can maintain and maximize the degree of freedom in a society.

2. Freedom as a constitutive environment of scientific research

To be a philosopher in the modern tradition means, first and foremost, to construct a theory of knowledge, that is, to construct a philosophical theory of how a Self comes to mirror the necessary and universal aspects of Reality. The results of this mirroring should be formulated in True sentences that correspond to Reality. Thus, any philosophy of knowledge had to be a theory that explained how the human mind manages to capture and bend to the shape of real states of affairs, to formulate true propositions and theories. Rorty's entire work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) is a plea for overcoming such a way of understanding knowledge, and ultimately a plea for overcoming the theory of knowledge as a way of doing philosophy.

Speaking about the relevance of Jürgen Habermas in the arena of contemporary philosophy, Rorty emphasizes that he replaced the «philosophy of subjectivity», the philosophy of the Ego, which knows the world based on internal dispositions and faculties, with a philosophy of intersubjectivity; thus, the old conception of the epistemic subject centered on reason, shared by Descartes, Kant, and Nietzsche, was replaced by what Habermas calls communicative or intersubjective rationality. Habermas here makes the same move of thought as W. Sellars: both philosophers try to interpret reason as the internalization of social norms of argument rather than as a disposition or component of the human self. (Rorty 1989, 62) Rorty, following Habermas, believes that a belief *p* constitutes knowledge not because it is isomorphic to a state of affairs, nor because the corresponding state of affairs causes the belief to be in any particular way true, but because it is accepted due to the consensus of members of an epistemic community, the consensus of competent interlocutors. “The history of science tells us only that one day Newton had a bright idea, namely *gravity*, but stays silent on how gravity caused Newton to acquire the concept of itself – or, more generally, how the world «guides» us to converge on «absolute» rather than merely «perspectival» terms.” (Rorty 1991, 57) Rorty's major and at once outrageous point is that the external world or reality does not in any way guide us to knowledge. (Stan 2011, 267-169) What really matters in the genesis of scientific knowledge is a mature epistemic community, with high standards of dialogue, argumentation, and epistemic foundation; scientific knowledge is the result of argumentative activities of epistemic communities, it is a product of communicative

reason, it is a result of free interaction between competent epistemic subjects. The epistemic ideal of the acquisition of truth understood as “correct representation” or “correspondence to the facts” is replaced by that of rationally motivated consensus, the consensus established between epistemic authorities in a certain field of research.

Rorty is Habermasian when he sees communicative reason, conversation, and rational consensus of epistemic authorities as mechanisms of the production of scientific knowledge. This fact attracted vehement criticism from contemporary philosophers, such as Susan Haack and Simon Blackburn, who claim to be guardians of rationality and scientific results based on objective criteria. When they denounce and criticize the Rortyan heresies regarding the irrelevance of the problem of timeless standards of justification or the possibility of correct representation of reality, Susan Haack and Simon Blackburn are Cartesians, prisoners of a representationalist and foundationalist metaphysical perspective on knowledge. According to Susan Haack, Rorty’s position on the issues of knowledge and truth would suffer from an epistemological disease called *conversationalism*, that is from the understanding of epistemic justification as being “a matter of social practice or convention, variable both within and between cultures, and nothing more.” (Haack 1993, 190) Moreover, according to Haack, the illness of *conversationalism* would be the complex result of the conjunction of three other illnesses from which Rorty’s philosophical position would suffer: *contextualism* (an approach to the problem of epistemic justification opposed to foundationalism, coherentism or funderentism), *conventionalism* (the ratification criteria of knowledge not would meet the standards of objectivity), and *tribalism* (practices of epistemic justification would be seen as tied strictly to an epistemic community, would be *our* practices of knowledge validation). (Stan 2017, 216-217) In the same critical register, Simon Blackburn is outraged by the Rortyan idea that language and mind are not meant to represent the world, finally accusing the American philosopher of valuing coffee shop chatter about truth more than work seriously conducted in the library or laboratory. (Blackburn 2005, 164) So Rorty’s dialogical view of science is reduced to a frivolous coffee shop discussion. Susan Haack and Simon Blackburn are Cartesians, representationalists, and foundationalists, but not Habermasians when they denounce and criticize the Rortyan heresies regarding the irrelevance of the problem of timeless standards of justification, the philosophical irrelevance of the problem of the correct representation of reality or the argumentative and dialogical nature of science.

Freedom is co-substantial to the process of the genesis of knowledge because knowledge is a product of the open confrontation of the most ingenious hypotheses and foundations, including empirical ones, but a

confrontation that does not proceed under the imperative of objective matching with the Facts or correspondence with Reality. The structure of a fact can be an epistemic foundation only if it takes the form of a propositional description made according to a certain purpose and certain standards, and is used as a premise in an argument-based confrontation. The idea of an objective description of the facts, as they are in their essence, is more a metaphysical dream, a perspective of the Divine Eye, and not a discernible situation in a concrete epistemic community. Rorty believes that this morbid desire for objectivity “is in part a disguised form of the fear of the death of our community echoes Nietzsche’s charge that the philosophical tradition which stems from Plato is an attempt to avoid facing up to contingency, to escape to time and chance.” (Rorty 1991, 32)

The reception of Rorty’s analysis regarding the practices of knowledge and the possibility of epistemology is negatively affected by the confusion regarding the idea of epistemic community and the role attributed by the philosopher to these communities in the genesis of scientific knowledge. In its ordinary uses, the concept of community has connotations imported from social and political philosophy; in these theoretical fields, the term community means local community, geographically determined community, or cultural community (in the sense of cultural anthropology). However, Rorty does not treat the idea of community in the way that geography or cultural anthropology does. When the American philosopher speaks of “the community of liberal intellectuals of the modern secular Occident”, he does not have in mind a geographically bounded community, but a trans-geographical community, made up of individuals who understand that they are not the representatives of something ahistorical, who understand that they are nothing but the moment history that I live. (Rorty 1991, 29) So, Rorty’s ethnocentrism aims at the situation that an epistemic subject, a member of a particular epistemic community, must be able to establish his beliefs before those with whom he has enough beliefs in common so that he can engage with them in a rational dialogue and fertile (Rorty 1991, 30). In other words, the idea of a Rortyan epistemic community presupposes that a scientist bases his hypotheses on arguments that he can formulate and support through a free interaction with the members of an epistemic community, and not through a necessary reference to a Reality, which would have the power to impose one version or another of a hypothesis or one version or another of the justifications invoked. It does not follow that the specific epistemic practices and criteria agreed upon within an epistemic community condemn the scientists in that community to some kind of tribal worldview, but that there simply are no ahistorical and universal criteria and practices of knowledge, other than those agreed between experts working within a given research area. All scientific knowledge is the result of efforts made and standards imposed within communities of

scientists. So Rorty believes that there is no such thing as absolute justification of a belief, only justification relative to an “epistemic system.” (Tartaglia 2007, 191)

In conclusion, freedom is the constitutive environment of the plurality of opinions and the dialogue necessary for a scientific community to be alive, functional, and fertile; the freedom of a researcher presupposes the fact that he does not have to submit to a so-called absolute Reality or timeless standards of knowledge, that he does not have to produce theories and explanations that must correspond to the Facts themselves, that he does not have to apply a so-called Method Scientific, which generates, in the universal and non-discriminatory way, the Truth. To the criticism of those who accuse him of relativism, Rorty responds relaxedly: “There is nothing wrong with science, there only something wrong with the attempt to divinize it, the attempt characteristic of realistic philosophy.” (Rorty 1991, 34)

3. Human fragility and the meaning of freedom as solidarity

From Rorty’s perspective, if there is progress in human societies, it can be found in the direction of greater solidarity between human beings. But solidarity between people is not an ahistorical given, it is not a reflex arising from the recognition of a metaphysical essence shared by all human beings, but it is one created historically under the impetus of the finding that people can equally be victims of forms of cruelty, violence or authoritarianism.

“But that solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation - the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of «us».” (Rorty 1989, 192)

A society is all the freer as each of its members can relate to the other members of the society, unproblematically including them in the crowd designated by the phrase «we». Rorty believes that the recognition of the suffering of our neighbor rather than the recognition of a common metaphysical essence makes us more in solidarity with the human beings around us; united by solidarity, the members of a society become freer.

As James Conant points out, for Rorty,

“liberal is someone who thinks cruelty is *the worst thing we can do* and that ‘morality’ should not be taken to denote anything other than our abilities to

notice, identify with, and alleviate pain and humiliation. Someone who is committed to the vocabulary of liberalism thinks that there *is no noncircular theoretical justification* for his belief that cruelty is a horrible thing.” (Conant 2000, 277).

Recognizing the contingency of humans and the fact that we are all prone to be victims of cruelty and humiliation is, in Rortyan thought, the only source of moral progress and an essential step toward freedom. A society freed from the obsession with the practical implementation of a metaphysical project is inevitably a society more attentive to the needs and sufferings of its members, and this constant attention and benevolent assistance from others will lead individuals to be more moral and, consequently, to be freer. The communist and Nazi chaos, Islamist fundamentalism, or Putinist imperialism abundantly demonstrate to us today that people do not become more benevolent with each other if they possess an inherently one-sided and biased metaphysical or onto-theological theory on human nature or transcendent realities; on the contrary, such a theory becomes an alleged foundation for decreeing that certain human groups or categories are less human or even non-human and must disappear.

As William Curtis also pointed out, Rorty’s philosophy is deeply anti-authoritarian: it is a philosophy that rejects the idea of the existence of a single, objective, and universal rationality that can establish and impose norms and values on different cultures and societies. Furthermore, the perspective defended by Rorty places us in the position of recognizing the plurality and diversity of perspectives and interests existing in a society, without any particular individual being legitimized to claim that, possessing a final and definitive truth, he would be in the position of to propose political or social solutions valid for everyone, once and for all. Comparing Richard Rorty’s position with that of other prominent liberal thinkers such as John Rawls, Charles Taylor, or Jürgen Habermas, William Curtis will conclude that Rortyan pragmatism offers a more coherent and convincing approach to liberal virtues because: it is more adaptable to changing circumstances and different perspectives, it is more tolerant of pluralism and more immune to authoritarianism, it is less arrogant and less dogmatic, less utopian and idealistic, creating the circumstances of a dialogical liberalism. Furthermore, Rorty’s perspective on liberalism is valuable because it emphasizes the connection between the existence of a free society and the cultivation of liberal virtues, especially irony. Thus, William Curtis shows that:

“My strategy has been to focus on the practical upshot of Rorty’s wide-ranging intellectual project, which only makes sense, given Rorty’s

commitment to pragmatism. This upshot is the necessity of the liberal virtues, especially the virtue of irony, for the success of liberal culture and politics. It's not that institutions, procedures, and principles are less important than the cultivation of liberal virtue. But the emphasis on ethical character, the creation of the liberal minds and imaginations that democratic citizenship demands, is currently being minimized by most contemporary liberal theory. Rorty's visions of modernity and liberal utopia show that this is a mistake." (Curtis 2015, 260)

Rorty's non-metaphysical, ironist project of understanding freedom has been criticized either because it departs from the Western liberal tradition or because its idea of contingency makes it impossible for freedom to emerge and be defended. *In the first case*, the idea of political freedom built by Rorty was criticized for not being based on the idea of universal human rights, objective moral values, or metaphysical principles, the only ones from which political legitimacy could derive. However, as we have already seen, the ironic mind rejects the legitimacy that comes from an alleged area of the ahistorical, of simulated objectivity, and proceeds from the premise that its own beliefs, values, and societal institutions can always be refined or revised.

In the second case, Rorty is criticized because the kind of liberalism he supports would be based, on the one hand, on an idea of contingency that would be incompatible with freedom and, on the other hand, on the lack of a philosophical idea about human nature. This also surprises Jean Bethke Elshtain when he says that: "the absence of an «intrinsic» human nature or of moral obligations that are preprogrammed leads Rorty into a world that is at one and the same time too open and plastic («any and every dream») or too constricted («blind impress»)." (Elshtain 2003, 148) In this sense, the idea of contingency defended by Rorty would not only be a recognition of the historical and cultural variability of human beliefs and values but would even be a denial of any objective or rational basis for them, a plunge into relativism and nihilism. Rorty's response to such accusations is well captured by Richard Bernstein: "We would all be better off if we simply dropped all talk of «relativism», «objectivism», «realism», and so on, if we gave up on the idea that deep down in all human beings there is some real essence that can serve to justify our liberal convictions." (Bernstein 2015, 129) The reason is simple: as contingent and ironic beings we can never have sufficient reasons for such a metaphysical discussion and would deeply doubt its relevance.

The accusations against Rorty also go in the direction that his idea of solidarity is only a form of irrationalism and emotionalism that cannot support a genuine democratic community. Despite this kind of criticism, however, Rorty's idea of freedom is compatible with that of contingency:

Rorty claims that freedom is possible precisely because no universal, objective, and transcendent reason can authoritatively determine the norms and values of a society. Moreover, the emergence of free Western societies is a contingent fact, a fact that might not have happened. As Richard Bernstein very well explained, “the emergence of liberal societies in the West is a happy accident – a historical contingency. Rorty rejects all grand narratives that suggest that there is an inevitability or a destiny in the eventual triumph of liberal freedom. He keeps criticizing Habermas (whom he greatly admires as a public democratic intellectual) because he still – according to Rorty – has a hankering for something like Kantian foundations and universal validity claims. Whenever Habermas talks about context-transcendent universal norms, Rorty pulls out his «critical knife».” (Bernstein 2015, 130) For Rorty, freedom is not inevitable, does not derive from any historical determinism, nor does it derive from principles that claim universality, but is a social hope, which is based on the ability of people to imagine and co-create a future better, without being constrained by any external or internal absolute authority.

So, Rorty understood political freedom as a historical accident that arises in a society from the ironist intellectual attitude and the solidarity of fragile human beings, that is, from the recognition of the contingency and plurality of points of view and by creating and maintaining social bonds between fragile persons, who may have different perspectives and divergent interests. In Rorty’s liberal utopia, the solidarity of individuals, and consequently their freedom, is not based on a theory or set of metaphysical principles shared by all members of society, but on the sensitivity that these develop to pain, suffering, and humiliation suffered by their peers. Rorty believes that the construction of institutions and the establishment of mechanisms that lead to the reduction of suffering become more important than conforming to certain abstract metaphysical principles: democracy and freedom take precedence over philosophical reflection.

Conclusions

As it resulted from the previous discussions, we can discern three distinct meanings of the idea of freedom in Richard Rorty: (a) Freedom is seen as the constitutive environment of the self; any self, being a network of beliefs and desires, is, at the same time, the sum of different contingencies, but also the result of a conscious process of self-creation. So the self is not determined by some eternal metaphysical laws, laws crystallized in the very essence of a self. On the contrary, individuals have embedded liberty in the very conditions of possibility of their selves; in other words, the condition of possibility of a self derives from the fact that it can create itself, that freedom is precisely the environment in which each self has its roots. Once

these roots are broken, the self petrifies, turning into a kind of mineral waste, with claims of an ahistorical, metaphysical entity; (b) Freedom is seen as the constitutive environment of scientific knowledge, as long as Rorty sees justified argumentative practices as the basic mechanisms of scientific knowledge production, and not the efforts to mirror or represent the true structure of objective Reality; (c) Freedom is seen as solidarity in the face of the suffering of human beings who recognize themselves as ironic and fragile, of human beings who understand that the elimination of the suffering of fellow human beings takes precedence over the acceptance and implementation of any set of metaphysical truths.

If I were to go a step further, I think we can identify in Rorty's metaphilosophical considerations and the idea of philosophical freedom or in the space of philosophy: this kind of freedom would mean the possibility of using terms without writing them with majuscules, to accept the idea that there are no major themes that must be addressed in the space of philosophy, the right to overcome and ignore philosophical vocabularies (many of which claim to be unique or final vocabularies), themes and arguments, the acceptance of the non-existence of a so-called method of philosophical analysis that would necessarily lead to a privileged class of principles and truths, the right to debate philosophical problems looking with relaxation, humor, and irony at the classical dualisms: one - multiple, God - creature, eternal - mortal, reality - phenomenon, form - content, opinion - knowledge, essence - accident, etc. Wittgenstein wrote in his *Journal*: "All theories that say: «This is how it must be, otherwise we could not philosophize» (...) must of course disappear." (Wittgenstein 1998, 44) These theories must disappear because otherwise, we will always feel obliged to develop our thinking only inside certain conceptual frames, of metaphysical provenance, only inside a certain intellectual field marked by one species or another of metaphysical authoritarianism. Now, philosophical freedom means, first of all, awareness and detachment from pre-established metaphysical frameworks that, like invisible train tracks, imprint a pre-established direction on thought, annihilating it most of the time.

References

- Bernstein, Richard. 2015. "Rorty's Inspirational Liberalism". in Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley (eds.), *Richard Rorty*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 124-138.
- Conat, James. 2000. "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell". in Robert B. Brandom (ed.), *Rorty and his Critics*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Blackwell Publishers. 268-342.
- Curtis, William M. 2015. *Defending Rorty. Pragmatism and Liberal Virtue*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. 2003. "Don't Be Cruel: Reflections on Rortyan Liberalism", in Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley (eds.), *Richard Rorty*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 139-157.
- Haack, Susan. 1993. *Evidence and Inquiry. Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology*. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell.
- Rorty, Richard. 1989. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, Richard. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.
- Rorty, Richard. 1991. "Solidarity or Objectivity?", in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth. Philosophical Papers I*, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 21-34.
- Rorty, Richard. 1991. "Is Natural Science a Natural Kind", in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth. Philosophical Papers I*, Cambridge University Press. 46-62.
- Rorty, Richard. 1991. "Non-Reductive Physicalism", in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth. Philosophical Papers I*, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 113-125
- Stan, Gerard, "Truth and the Critique of Representation", *Logos & Episteme. An International Journal of Epistemology*. Vol. II, Issue 2, 2011: 253-272.
- Stan, Gerard. 2017. "Vérité, conversation et l'herméneutique de l'annihilation. Susan Haack vs. Richard Rorty". *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* Vol. IX, No. 1 / June 2017: 209-230.
- Tartaglia, James. 2007. *Rorty and the Mirror of Nature*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1998. *Notebooks 1914-1916*. Oxford: Blackwell.