

## **The Concept of Solidarity in Richard Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism Thought**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to examine solidarity in the view of one of the philosophers, Richard Rorty. The subject of discussion in this study is: 1) The concept of solidarity in the thinking of Richard Rorty; and 2) What is underlying Richard Rorty formulating the concept of solidarity. This research is a literature study study, with qualitative methods, and the philosophy of Neo-pragmatism as the basis of analysis. The findings in this study, in Richard Rorty's view that the growth of solidarity is in an imaginative way through language in the scope of literary work, by putting imagination forward as a way to be able to feel the "feelings" of what others feel. The underlying thing richard rorty formulated the concept of solidarity is that there are several things such as ironic human language as well as metaphysical humans. That's one of the things that richard rorty would be in solidarity with.

Keywords: Neo-pragmatisme; Richard Rorty; Solidarity

### **Introduction**

Every era has a different culture, culture, or belief and sometimes it is always colored by debates, both groups and individuals. One way to avoid a debate is to have an "attachment" between each other. To create a peace or avoid the emergence of a debate, the concept of solidarity is one way to understand this.

The word solidarity itself, when viewed from the historical sequence, emerged in the European region, which comes from the word solid which means solid, the use of the word solidarity itself can be traced for the first time in several European histories. As in French history the word "solidarity" has been used since the era of the Napoleonic Code or the Napoleonic Code, the Napoleonic Code is the French civil code at that time drawn up during the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte. which was first introduced around the 1800s with the word "solidarite", then later in the 1980s the Polish trade union movement used the word "solidarnosc" which is a form of civil resistance to enforce change at the time. In addition,

solidarity itself is not new to humans, because solidarity itself has many dimensions and changes with history or development (Liedman, 2002).

Then in this case the author will describe solidarity in another dimension or spectrum, because the author also sees only a few scientists or philosophers who have discussed or devoted their attention to solidarity. In this case, one of them is the American philosopher Richard Rorty, in his 1989 book entitled *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Rorty talks about solidarity and his ideas in this regard have aroused a lot of attention and discussion at that time.

As a trigger for his own discussion, the author here quotes the discussion in the book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* in the introductory section of Rorty saying that in his utopia, solidarity is a goal that must be achieved. Achieving this is in an imaginative way, according to Rorty, this imaginative way is able to make us more sensitive to other people. Later Rorty wrote that solidarity is not found through reflection but is created, created in this case by increasing our sensitivity to details such as feeling the pain or pain and humiliation of the unknown in an imaginative way. This kind of sensitivity makes us think that we too can feel what they feel. This is not like a theory but rather a genre such as ethnography, journalist reports, picture novels or comics, drama documentaries, and novels. Rorty himself gave examples of several writers who had an influence on his life, such as Dickens, Olive Schreiner, and Richard Wright, who in some of their fiction writings contain stories of suffering that makes us feel like we are experiencing the same thing. Examples of other writers such as Choderlos deLaclos, Henry James, and Nabokov who in some of their works give us details about what kind of cruelty it might be to make us, change our personality (Rorty, 1989: xvi).

Rorty's thoughts cannot be separated from the influence of several ideas that inspired his era, especially at that time the era of post-modernism was in its infancy. The post-modern era itself is an era in which some philosophers began to pay attention to language as a matter of problem. Then briefly the question of philosophy was drawn into the field of literature by pragmatists, one of the characters is Richard Rorty (Sugiharto, 1996: 49).

Thus, this has become one of the discussions of Rorty's many thoughts in his works, among which are *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* which are one of the main sources or foundations in this paper. The importance of this study is to find a new dimension or spectrum of how solidarity from Rorty's point of view appears in various ways with various aspects in it. Here are some relevant scientific papers that deserve to be reviewed. Among others "Mencari Kemungkinan Solidaritas Tanpa Dasar Universal: Telaah atas Pemikiran Etika Sosial Richard Rorty," written by Hadinata (2018). This study discusses Richard Rorty's thoughts on solidarity without

a universal basis that has relevance for a plural society, including the formation of a new us. This thinking has been criticized as an attempt to promote ethnocentrism. In this paper, it is emphasized that a solidarity cannot be built on a categorical foundation of universal humanity. Behind it all, a solidarity must start from where we come from, namely with a concrete reality and a reality of life that is part of our daily struggles (Hadinata, 2018). Warman (2009) wrote "Kontingensi dalam Pengetahuan sebagai Upaya Redeskripsi Masyarakat Solidaritas di dalam Pemikiran Neo-Pragmatisme Richard Rorty." This study discusses several points regarding Richard Rorty's solidarity, in this case departing from fundamental assumptions such as that humans are equal and free or various other assumptions. The solidarity built by Rorty departs from an ironic society that recognizes differences in the process of knowing. Solidarity is built by feeling sensitive not to want to hurt others because of the contingent nature of knowledge (Warman 2009). Adi Armin (2003), "*Richard Rorty: Pendiri Pragmatisme Kontemporer.*" This paper reviews that Rorty's solidarity is the opening of opportunities for communitarian creations that do not need to be legitimized by institutions and bureaucracy. The development and growth of the community towards fulfilling the needs it wants is designed by the active role of the community, so that government intervention is something that is minimal. The movement for changes in society is expected to be stimulated by pioneers, such as the strong, ironic liberal poet who is considered a cultural hero. This group is a social group that has no short-term goals and has no particular interest. Moreover, their position is outside the structure of the bourgeois group, so it is hoped that it will bring fundamental changes to the impasse of rational settlement of the social problems that have accumulated (Adi Armin, 2003).

Several studies above, review solidarity in Richard Rorty's thoughts with various perspectives. Although there are similarities in terms of methodology and others, this paper will discuss solidarity in the perspective of Neo-pragmatism philosophy. Which, language and literature is one of the main themes in the philosophy of Neo-pragmatism. This theme is enough to color almost all philosophers in the postmodern era, especially in the United States. In Neo-pragmatism philosophy, the philosophical outline is to conclude that the meaning of a word is the result of how the words are used, not what other people describe. Therefore, within certain limits the philosophy of Neo-pragmatism will be used as a theoretical basis to analyze the concept of solidarity according to Richard Rorty, in order to be able to see in a complete, in-depth, and objective manner.

The purpose of this research is to answer some of the problems that are the subject of discussion, which include: 1) The concept of solidarity in

Richard Rorty's thinking; and 2) What are the things that underlie Richard Rorty formulating the concept of solidarity.

### **Research Methods**

This research is a type of library research (library study). Therefore, this study focuses its study on sources that are literate without the need for field research. The method used in this research is a qualitative method. According to Nazir, qualitative is descriptive research that aims to find answers to the fundamentals of the phenomenon or object of research being studied (Nazir, 2003: 84).

The primary data in this study were obtained from books or works that discuss Richard Rorty's thoughts. The books used as primary sources in the research are as follows: 1) *Contingency, Irony, & Solidarity*, Richard Rorty, 1989; 2) *Menelusuri Pragmatisme: Pengantar pada Pemikiran Pragmatisme dari Peirce hingga Habermas*, Jesicca Adinda, 2015; 3) *Seri Tokoh: Filsafat Richard Rorty: Pendiri Pragmatisme Kontemporer*, Adi Armin, 2003; and 4) *Dua Belas Tokoh Etika Abad Ke-20*, Franz Magnis Suseno, 2000. While secondary data is obtained from sources related to the discussion of the research to be carried out, such as books, journals, theses, articles, and other scientific works (Azwar, 1999: 117).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **1. Biography of Richard McKay Rorty**

Richard McKay Rorty was born on October 4, 1931 in New York City, United States. His achievements in academics include teaching at several universities, such as at Yale University from 1954 to 1956, at Wellesley College from 1958 to 1961, at Princeton University from 1961 to 1982, and the University of Virginia from 1982.

As he tells in his autobiographical work, entitled "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids," Rorty's early and informal education began with books in his parents' library. Some of the books he likes and inspires include Leon Trotsky's book, *History of the Russian Revolution and Literature and Revolution* as well as notes in two volumes of the Dewey Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials. Some of these works and his family relationships with socialists such as John Frank and Carlo Tresca shaped Rorty's thinking. It was from this that also introduced Rorty to the suffering of the oppressed people who fought for social justice. All of this created Rorty's early interest in philosophy.

At the age of fifteen in 1946, Rorty entered the University of Chicago where he eventually earned his BA (Bachelor of Arts) and MA (Master of Arts) degrees. After completing his education at the University of Chicago Rorty continued his education at Yale University and received his Ph.D. in

1956. Then Rorty served two years in the United States Army from 1957 to 1958, after which Rorty taught at Wellesley College for three years until 1961.

Rorty was a professor of philosophy at Princeton University for 21 years, and in 1981 he also received several academic awards and honors such as the Guggenheim in 1973-1974 and the MacArthur Fellowship in 1981-1986. In addition, in 1982 he became the Kenan professor of Humanities at the University of Virginia, and taught at several universities, such as Trinity College, Cambridge 1987, Harvard 1997, and in 1998 Rorty became professor of comparative literature at Stanford University, where he spent the remainder of his career. his academic career.

Shortly before his death, Rorty wrote a work entitled "The Fire of Life" which was published in the November 2007 issue of Poetry magazine. Then Rorty died June 8, 2007 at the age of 75, at his home due to pancreatic cancer (Rorty, Richard | *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, n.d.).

## **2. The Concept of Solidarity in the Thought of Richard Rorty**

Rorty said that solidarity cannot be found simply through reflection, but through a process by humans themselves. Solidarity is created by increasing our sensitivity to the reality of the pain and humiliation of others that we do not know, or in other words empathy. That sensitivity makes us aware of people who are different from ourselves.

Rorty argues that philosophy as a rigorous discipline of theoretical thinking does not help much in building a solidarity which is indeed a social problem and human sensitivity that cannot always be measured by theory. Therefore, in an effort to generate solidarity, Rorty uses the literary medium as a tool to express his views. According to him, literature can help become a medium to channel feelings and express mutual sensitivity to a shared solidarity. In this case, Rorty also relies more on the roles of poets, writers, and journalists to participate than philosophers. In generating real solidarity, is the challenge of how humans position themselves with individuals who are not in the "community", so that they can share what they feel, and journey beyond the strict boundaries of differences, principles, and theories for the sake of humanity.

Solidarity is a concept that has been around for a long time. It is through this concept that social reality is created. Not only that, morality also exists because of the concept of solidarity. However, this solidarity referred to by Rorty has a different foundation from what existed before. Efforts to avoid violence can be resolved by understanding solidarity. Rorty says, "it is not thought of as an acknowledgment of the essential self, in all human beings. Instead, solidarity is thought of as the ability to see the increasing number of traditional differences (of ethnicity, religion, race,

customs, and so on)." as insignificant when compared to concern for cruelty and humiliation (Rorty, 1989).

The task of a philosopher is not to determine what should be done and what should not be done. The unique role of a philosopher is to formulate imaginatively ways in which humans can no longer commit atrocities against others. However, this is also not only done by a philosopher. Poets, historians, and novelists have been able to do this, even with more depth than philosophers have formulated. We have to go back to reading books that talk about slavery, poverty, exploitation. The hope is that by witnessing the atrocities perpetrated by one human being against another, we can realize the mistakes we have made, and become more "less cruel".

Then according to Rorty solidarity is a goal that must be achieved. This is achieved by imaginative ways, according to Rorty, this imaginative way is able to make us more sensitive to other people. Then Rorty also writes that solidarity is not found through reflection but is created, created in this case is by increasing our sensitivity to details such as feeling the pain or pain and humiliation of unknown people in imaginative ways. This kind of sensitivity makes us think that we too can feel what they feel.

In this case, the medium will be created by reading, understanding and feeling the cruelty through ethnographic writings, journalist reports, picture novels or comics, docudrama, and novels that may be able to make us change our personality so that we do not do cruel things. And this will encourage the growth and spread of a solidarity.

### **3. Richard Rorty's Foundation for Solidarity**

To understand Rorty's idea of solidarity itself, one must first look at what underlies it. When examined according to the author, there are things that underlie it, such as the discussion of ironic humans and metaphysical humans.

The ironic man in this case according to Rorty is an individual who realizes that the world view is always coincidental and does not have absolute or dynamic certainty. Human irony is also difficult to admit to scientific and non-scientific theories. In his book entitled *Contingency, Irony, & Solidarity*, Rorty describes the ironic man as an individual who dares to accept the fact that even his most central beliefs and desires are uncertain. A person who is ironic in this case does not mean that he cannot believe in something or is completely skeptical of views, and is not a person who certainly does not have faith. In this case what Rorty wants to emphasize is that the ironic person is the individual who can believe something that goes hand in hand with openness and acknowledges that other people may have different opinions and beliefs.

Meanwhile, according to Rorty, metaphysical humans are those who believe that a nature has an absolute and objective meaning. The

metaphysical individual believes that everything has an objective nature, and philosophy plays a role in discovering it. Worldviews, moral and religious beliefs, are not only about vocabulary, but also about objective truth. Here that only one person is right, the others are absolutely and definitely wrong. These two things are the basis for Rorty's view of solidarity, in addition to the many complex bases for this, the author tries to understand it.

#### **4. Richard Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism Analysis**

A student asked his teacher: "Sir, what is the name of the object to measure it?" And the teacher replied: "That object is called a ruler."

The example of the conversation above which mentions the name of an object, it can be concluded that language plays an important role in human activities. Naming an object or an activity makes it easier for humans to carry out a communication process. The arrangement of language appears in such a way that a name has existed in human civilization since time immemorial. In the example of the conversation, the name "ruler" has been known as a tool for measuring an object by humans, and of course in this case each region uses a different language. However, there is one certainty here, the naming "ruler" has gained its legitimacy in society. A person will not be able to call it in other words such as "door" or "key" when talking to other people if he means a tool to measure objects. Naming "ruler" in this case is one of the many languages known to humans.

Language is a tool that humans use to communicate with their surroundings. The legitimacy of language given by society like this we can call objective knowledge. The agreement to name an object, activity or other things is obtained by humans in order to legitimize the language that will be used in the process of interacting with others. The existence of this kind of objective knowledge does not merely rule out the constructive process until the emergence of that knowledge. This means that communication is needed as a bridge agreement. This communication is not only about one individual with another individual, but also communication between communities, groups, layers, and more broadly, namely the state.

Rorty concentrates his thoughts more on "language". Regarding the problem of copy or copy, he argues that language is not a copy or a copy of the reality that exists outside of humans, but is a tool used by humans to interact with what is outside of themselves and to process information within themselves.

Rorty also explained that language makes it easier for us to carry out activities through the experiences we have gained, and apply them to other activities that may be very different from previous activities. It is a natural condition of language that enables one to transform one experience into different contexts. More deeply, language is a form of human knowledge.

Experiences that contain various kinds of knowledge are reflected by the series of languages they use. The knowledge that is formed in the experience of his interaction with the outside world continues to grow, and this also affects the language he has. On the basis of these changes and developments, humans are also a form of "contingency". Contingency that continues to develop through self-discovery and the influence of the environment around him.

Rorty in his writings says:

Truth cannot be out there - cannot exist independently of the human mind- because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own -unaided by the describing activities of human beings- cannot (Rorty, 1989: 5).

Which means the world can't speak, only we can. The world will be able to speak if we have built ourselves with language and of course with the beliefs that we have. The concept of truth about something will not be able to stick in him unless we have built it with the language we believe in. This is something like an explanation of the truth built by language. However, the creation of a good language itself occurs if it has been through the way of communication.

There is truth in communication. Conversations that occur between humans always imply their respective knowledge through the language they use. When they have agreed on a topic of conversation then therein lies the common belief in what they know.

Language is a form of knowledge that is owned by everyone. Then when the knowledge formed by the interaction of an individual has developed, the language that has implications for vocabulary will eventually change. This phenomenon occurs on the basis of contingency that occurs around humans. Human civilization that develops over time will also have an impact on the knowledge possessed by humans.

In the realm of neo-pragmatism, the final vocabulary which also develops on the basis of this knowledge is expected to remain tolerant of one another. This means that the concept of solidarity is still put forward as a way out to bridge the differences in the final vocabulary owned by each human being.

Rorty himself said that what is valuable about human life and all the differences that exist in it, is that we as humans are expected to always trust and be able to work together with others for a better future. It is an extension of the ultimate vocabulary of variety, and tolerance as a form of human solidarity. When humans have all these things, then life no longer contains



differences that must be contested, but instead must be put forward for the sake of living together.

Thus, ontologically, humans have always been in a situation without being centerless. Rorty sees that humans are contingent beings who continue to grow in self-discovery efforts through the influence of social interaction in realizing a solidarity.

Rorty's explanation regarding the concept of solidarity can be seen with the example he gives regarding the different attitudes shown by Italians or Danes towards Jews and Belgians towards Jews during Hitler's Nazi reign during World War 2. According to Rorty, the possibility of being helped is greater in Italy and Denmark. Through this example, Rorty does not mean to blame any particular party, but only wants to show an attitude called solidarity and how this attitude emerged. The condition for the emergence of an attitude of solidarity is a "feeling" that they are the same. This feeling is described in the word "we". This word describes an emotive relationship between one subject and another. This word also describes unity from the point of view of the first, second and third person words. That is, solidarity will not appear if there are only the words "I" and "you". Therefore, solidarity is a primary concept in social life.

Rorty shows siding with literature in the solidarity construction described above. The roles that were once monopolized by philosophers were replaced by humanists and novelists. According to Rorty, the task of a philosopher is not really to determine what should and what should not be done. The unique role of the philosopher is to formulate imaginatively a way how humans no longer commit cruelty to each other. However, this can not only be done by philosophers. Novelists, poets, historians and translators are able to do this with even more depth than philosophers have formulated.

Strictly speaking, Rorty saw that the role of the strong poets was very important in developing this contingency-based solidarity. This is because the writers do not provide a final answer to a question or demonstrate proof related to the validity of claims for other claims, but rather create an imaginary world that empathizes with other people. Here, Rorty realizes that writers connect us as readers with events and provide new perspectives through descriptions of suffering, humiliation and cruelty. This is possible because the writers describe events with characters, while theorists work with abstract ideas. That is, in theoretical circles there is a tendency to go beyond contingency. It is different with the writers who in the novel, for example, clearly show the characters in a certain time, place and situation, it is seen that the writers have an awareness of contingency.

## Conclusion

The results and discussion above have led the author to several conclusions. First, the concept of solidarity in Richard Rorty's view is that the achievement of solidarity is in an imaginative way, this imaginative way according to Rorty is able to make us more sensitive to other people. In essence, solidarity is a matter of sensitivity. So what needs to be worked on in this case is for that sensitivity to be expanded. Thus according to Rorty, we must become more sensitive, more empathetic, more curious about others, and more ironic about ourselves. We become sensitive not because of a theory, but because we come into contact with other people. What Rorty is trying to emphasize here is nothing more than what is necessary is for us to learn to "feel" that other people have feelings that are easily hurt and humiliated. Then, according to Rorty, what is valuable about human life and all the differences that exist in it, is that we as humans are expected to always trust and be able to work together with others for an even better future. It is an extension of the ultimate vocabulary of variety, and tolerance as a form of human solidarity. When humans have all these things, then life no longer contains differences that must be contested, but instead must be put forward for the sake of living together. Second, an analysis of the things that underlie Rorty's solidarity with Rorty's thoughts, namely that Rorty in his solidarity intersects a lot with various aspects of sub-ideas or thoughts. Thus, according to the author, the discussion becomes complex so that it is not easy to understand. However, the author tries his best so that a good estuary or result can be found for solidarity in Rorty's view. Finally, however brief this study is, at least it can provide an adequate description of the view of solidarity according to Richard Rorty in his review of the philosophy of Neo-pragmatism. However, the findings in this study are subject to error. In other words, the author's arguments about the concept of Rorty solidarity, need to be reviewed in subsequent studies. Therefore, this study should be an attraction to start the next study.

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