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## 1.

- <sup>1</sup> This issue of EJPAP represents a new step forward in the comparison between two great philosophical traditions, Pragmatism and Hermeneutics. It recalls and mirrors the lines highlighted in the international conference held in Cagliari, Italy, in May 2019.<sup>1</sup> On that occasion, scholars from different disciplinary fields pertaining to the two different traditions discussed the key themes of subjectivity, historicity and representation. They were understood as key thematic-problematic terms for a productive comparison between Pragmatism and Hermeneutics. The results of this dialectic, later expressed in the volume *Pragmatismo ed Ermeneutica* (Busacchi & Nieddu 2019), distinguished themselves for the plurality of accents, reflecting marked differences, including the specificity of the problems dealt with and within the approach used. However – both by addressing classical authors of the two traditions and by turning to authors on the margins of these traditions or to contemporary developments close to them – the various contributions seemed to turn towards a common horizon that shuns the extreme opposites of nihilistic relativism and any form of absolutism and dogmatism about reality, knowledge and what governs human action.
- <sup>2</sup> The conference, where – in fact – subsequent study projects in contiguous fields were grafted,<sup>2</sup> explored, as already mentioned, the relationships and connections of Pragmatism and Hermeneutics in the three areas of subjectivity, representation and historicity. The question of subjectivity and the Self was seen – and is still to be seen – as the starting and ending point of the itineraries traced by the two traditions. In this

issue, the problematic transversal character of the subject and subjectivity remains, becoming the point of origin of an articulated philosophical anthropology (in which Pragmatism and Hermeneutics can find a happy union, based on the expression of a possible reciprocal transformation). In reality, the question of the subject remains in many ways in the shadow of broader questions to which Pragmatism and Hermeneutics link: i.e., the question of action, the knowledge of the world and understanding of phenomena, the question of one's own self, of the other and of the internalised other, and the question of experience. When planning the project for this issue, we wanted to emphasise the notion of experience, as a more extensive theoretical-thematic component. In addition to the strictly inherent question of knowledge and subjectivity, it embraces the equally fundamental issue of the relationship with the other, with oneself and with the world. From different perspectives, for both Pragmatism and Hermeneutics, experience permeates the search for truth and the search for meaning, the formation of the individual and the creation and development of knowledge and arts, ethical and aesthetic norms, practices and communicative interaction, and social living. The theoretical choice that lies ahead is expressed in an original re-elaboration of the subject-object relationship in connection to an idea of subjectivity that is no longer static and unique, that is, it is not conceived of according to a unilateralising paradigm (naturalistic or spiritualistic). The Self emerges as a multiple and dynamic reality, where being a person does not seem so much anchored to an external relationship with the other and with nature, but rather to a processual design ("reflective subjectivity," "to *become* a person") that includes the dimension of internalised otherness and responsibility. The latter seems to come from the overcoming of the idea of obedience to duty or mere compliance. From the side of the pragmatist tradition, attention is strengthened to the profound constitutive nexus of sociality and self-realisation. At the same time its connection with Hermeneutics can favour a remodelling of the natural dimension of the Self towards an ethical translation of duty into responsibility. In short, individual action overcomes the stalemate of mere compliance with duty and turns towards a *personal* assumption of one's duty, understood as responsibility (or replying to the other from oneself, which is first of all *in itself*); the individual is fully involved and responsible for the deliberative processes. From the perspective of the Hermeneutical tradition, various possibilities open up for a rethinking of the dialectic of "nature" and "freedom"; at the same time, its connection to Pragmatism avoids the evanescence of endless interpretative itineraries (around the world, values and meaning), rather pushing towards a mediative and tensional dialectic between "being" and "having to be."

- 3 Furthermore, at the conference in Cagliari, the theoretical-practical dilemma of representation came into play in relation to a dynamics connected to the dimensions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, or in connection with cognitive, communicative and social interaction processes. The idea that reality is in constant motion and that truth is located at the ideal limit of an infinite verification process is combined, particularly in Dewey's thought, with an attitude of profound trust in the scientific method. This method is applied precisely, as is known, to all fields of human thinking and acting. These are the components that represent in the pragmatist context the fundamental criteria of a co-constructive subject-object relationship and never of an absolute type, as an antidote to both dogmatism and nihilism. Although this picture may not find full and direct correspondence with the developments of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics, some aspects do resonate with it - especially in authors such as

Gadamer. Even if the terrain is different, Gadamer too advances the idea of the close invincible union between truth, experience and interpretation. His concept of “fusion of horizons” focuses precisely on a mobile dialectic between (1) a subjectivity understood as a fragmentary mirror where the self-reflection of the individual is but a glimmer in the compact flow of historical life, and (2) a cognitive-interpretative process always implicated in the historical (and linguistic) characterisation of the subject knowing and aiming at progress. Even Ricœur – rejecting the hidden shifts behind the idea of “an infinite hermeneutics” – expresses more markedly than Gadamer the critical and interdisciplinary vocation of the hermeneutic work, joining a new procedural model (for philosophy and sciences) called “the hermeneutic arc.” From this theory, explanation and understanding are linked under interpretation and are at the service of the advancement of knowledge and human emancipation.

- 4 Finally (again referring to the conference) historicity found room through the examination of the epistemological issues relating to scientific knowledge on human beings and the very questioning of reality and human experience. Hence the strong interdisciplinarity and the openness to the contribution of scientific disciplines: social theory, philosophical anthropology, ethics, epistemology, semiotics, philosophy of language, ontology, philosophy of mind and historiography. Such a presence of disciplines and multidisciplinary openness is certainly a reflection of the opening of the theoretical-problematic field determined by the dialectics between Pragmatism and Hermeneutics. It is an indirect testimony of the significance and importance of the operation that was intended to be carried out and which is enriched now with new perspectives. Although in a different formulation, a similar multidisciplinary openness can be found in this issue: the presence of social theory, philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, ethics, epistemology, semiotics remains; and aesthetics, artistic experience, political theory and law are now more marked.
- 5 On closer inspection, attention to scientific problems and openness to the sciences have characterised in different ways the very history of these two great traditions. Philosophical hermeneutics stems from hermeneutics as a technique and as a discipline at the service of linguistic-philological research, and then of the human sciences; Pragmatism affirms itself as a real method of the natural and human sciences. From the epistemological point of view, it is necessary now to recognise a strong opposition between the founders of Pragmatism and the founders of Hermeneutics. Pragmatists tend to defend an epistemological monism. This is true, for example, with Dewey, who seeks to transpose the methods of investigation of the experimental sciences to the whole of social and moral life. By contrast, hermeneutics tends to defend an epistemological dualism. This is true, for example, with Dilthey when he opposes *understanding* (for the sciences of the mind) and *explanation* (for the natural sciences). The opposition will be even more radical with the advent of Heidegger’s ontological hermeneutics and his critique of science. This tendency is confirmed in Gadamer who opposes truth to methods coming from the sciences (including methodological hermeneutics itself).
- 6 Since the second half of the twentieth century, Pragmatism and Hermeneutics have moved, in a way, in the direction of mutual openness and, in general, an opening beyond their own spheres and horizons. In the Anglo-Saxon world, we have witnessed a progressive disintegration of the “monistic” ideal of analytic philosophy in favour of a pluralism of methodical orientations and research topics and themes which

retroactively produced a positive effect also on Pragmatism. It is true that originally, in Europe (to be precise in England) a reason for Pragmatism's greater openness to the sciences came with its intertwining dispute between idealists and realists, precisely as a result of the push of the realists on the terrain of specific logical-gnoseological issues. In authors such as Bertrand Russell, for example, the problem of the objectivity of knowledge, the centrality of logical functions and linguistic-propositional syntheses, and therefore the dilemmas of interpreting the data, assumed even more centrality. This, we know, did not lead to a hermeneutical turn but to a form of critical realism open to the philosophy of language. On the American front, however, the reference to hermeneutics and the work of interpretation seems clearer and more immediate, mainly due to the important and original input given by Richard Rorty who – with his work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) – has not only been able to configure philosophic work in close connection with the theoretical-scientific horizon, but recalled and proposed such speculative connection as productive and saw it as a heterogeneous part of the continental tradition. In Rorty's perspective, authors such as Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Foucault, Derrida, and others contribute to document the change of perspective of theoretical and specific research with respect to any foundationalist claim and at the same time to strengthen the classical tradition of Pragmatism.

- 7 From a different point of view, Rorty's original proposal – that is, as he himself claims, combining Pragmatism and Hermeneutics – can be coupled with the matrix of interdisciplinary openness and vocation in the classics of Pragmatism (Peirce, Mead, James and Dewey), as is attested by the studies that have emerged both in the conference and in this EJPAP issue. Rorty added to it a stronger pluralist tendency with a relativistic character, but already in the classics we can see elements belonging to a research horizon that can be qualified as hermeneutical. In Europe, a movement with a similar pluralist/relativist tendency has invested philosophical hermeneutics, originally anchored to problems of the technique of interpretation and then gradually expanded to the dispute over scientific methods, the reflection on the subject, the dilemmas of social theory, of anthropological philosophy, ontology and metaphysics. Since the 1960s, however, Hermeneutics has increasingly lost the configuration of a unitary field to assume that of a composite archipelago characterised by different styles, approaches, and models, some of which invite interdisciplinary work (Gadamer, Ricoeur, Betti), others that push for sectorial closure (Bultmann, Szondi) and others that push toward nihilism (Vattimo, Severino).
- 8 To date, Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenological approach seems to represent one of the most promising avenues for a productive comparison and collaboration between Pragmatism and Hermeneutics on the front of anthropological-philosophical studies, regarding the scientific status of the human and social sciences, procedural issues, critical sociology, linguistic-ontological issues, questions of psychology and philosophy of mind, moral philosophy and social ethics. The lesson of this philosopher encourages us to read the tendency to openness of both traditions not as a quality aimed at their respective internal theoretical-speculative needs, but as a means and a way towards the constitution of a new holistic perspective on human beings, their possibilities of realisation, and the reality in which they live. In fact, today, the differentiation of knowledge has produced unprecedented advancements but has also thrown the human

into unprecedented forms of vagueness and uncertainty, that risk turning into roads with no return.

## 2.

- 9 This issue collects seven contributions which are an expression of different thematic-problematic orientations and interests. In the first contribution (“Readdressing Objectivity: From Peirce to Betti, and Return”), Vinicio Busacchi delves into the question of the objectivity of scientific knowledge, proceeding from the rethinking of the experience-interpretation link in Peirce, Gadamer and Betti; in his contribution, the connection of the pragmatist perspective with hermeneutics favours in particular the broadening of the question of objectivity beyond the horizon of the human and social sciences, associating it with a component of critical realism.
- 10 In the second contribution (“Dewey and Pareyson’s Aesthetics: A Dialogue between Pragmatism and Hermeneutics”), Andrea Fiore offers an introductory perspective aimed at probing the possible analogies between John Dewey and Luigi Pareyson’s aesthetics; the aim is not to lay one perspective on the other but to bring out the productivity of the elements of convergence, both on the theoretical side of art as well as that of everyday life.
- 11 In the third contribution (“Dewey’s Denotative Method: A Critical Approach”), Andrii Leonov pursues the objective of a critical examination of the reconstructed denotative method as genuinely empirical and scientific through a confrontation on Dewey’s work including a hermeneutic point of view.
- 12 In the fourth contribution (“Meaning and Experience: For a Pragmatic Hermeneutics”), Johann Michel aims to lay the foundations of a pragmatist hermeneutics by taking the relationship between meaning and experience as a common thread. The challenge is to analyse this relationship from three distinct angles: immediate experience, acquired experience and creative experience. From each of these perspectives, the aim is to grant a meaningful place to non-verbal – and specifically bodily – experience, which calls for a somahermeneutics.
- 13 In the fifth contribution (“Heidegger and Dewey: Art and the Horizons of Meaning”), Nicola Ramazzotto opens a dialogue between Heidegger and Dewey on the role and possibilities of art in establishing horizons of meaning, mainly highlighting points of convergence.
- 14 In the sixth contribution (“From a Remote Pedestal to Everyday Life: The Social Role of Art in Gadamer and Dewey”), Elena Romagnoli develops a documented correlation between Dewey and Gadamer on aesthetic experience; also in this case there is no evenness but the research responds to an exploratory need of a clear theoretical and practical value.
- 15 In the seventh, final contribution (“Utilitarianism as Exercise of Suspicion? A Challenge to Pragmatism and Hermeneutics”), Ernst Wolff examines pragmatism and hermeneutics as kindred approaches to action, as they face the persistent influence of utilitarianism in social life. The originality of the approach consists in articulating Hans Joas’s pragmatism with Paul Ricœur’s hermeneutics in a common front against utilitarianism.

- 16 In light of the potential that this research has envisaged, as recalled at the beginning, and in light of the results achieved so far, this series of contributions gives significant but certainly not exhaustive answers. Hence the usefulness and the opportunity to continue the research along a path that has proved to be promising.
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## NOTES

1. *Comparing Philosophical Traditions: Selfhood, Historicity and Representation between Hermeneutics and Pragmatism*, International conference, University of Cagliari, 14th-16th May 2019. The conference was organised by Anna Nieddu and Vinicio Busacchi; Hans Joas and Johann Michel were keynote speakers; and Marcelino Agis-Villaverde, Rosa M. Calcaterra, Carla Canullo, Rossella Fabbrichesi, Brendan Hogan, Giovanni Maddalena and Giancarlo Marchetti were among the participants.

2. See, for example, Côté & Huebner 2021.

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