

Editors' Introduction

The Twentieth century was deeply influenced from philosophical hermeneutics' theoretical-practical and reflective developments. It introduced a so large range of problematisations, contents and perspectives, and in a so vast referential and implicational (inter-) disciplinary scale, to enter into the real orbit of a philosophical koinè, not of a decennary or few decennaries (Vattimo), but of a century and more. It expresses the productivity, significance and heuristic strength of a research and thought that hits different scientific domains, particularly (but not exclusively) the human and social sciences: from psychology to sociology, from psychoanalysis to literature, from semiotic to biblical exegesis, from anthropology to linguistics, from rhetoric to narratology, from history to law, from political theory to religion etc.

This is an itinerary as vast and fecund as non linear and problematic, and even conflictual.

For a long time hermeneutics has been recognised as technical and philosophical discipline of reference in the interpretation of signs, symbols and propositional contents; in biblical exegesis and the interpretation of texts in general; in research and reflection around methodological and epistemological aspects of science; in investigation of phenomenological and ontological nature related to the phenomenon of understanding and to the contents of knowledge; in the critical approach to ideological construction; and much more.

Contemporary philosophical hermeneutics has significantly contributed to determine a truthfully complex modality to approach

the knowledge of reality, human being, cultural products and values. From here it comes the necessity of a redefinition of discursive levels and registers, of a statutory re-qualification, of refining procedures, methods and interpretative possibilities. In addition, there is a widespread practical-ethical tension, both in reference to methodology and to the contents, and as a dialectical-dialogical as a problematising and conflictual tension. This is philosophical hermeneutics as mediation-normalisation and as alternative-alteration; and philosophical hermeneutics as a discipline of conciliating synthesis and as a practical-theoretical critique.

In an opened range of investigation and research, this number of Critical Hermeneutics thematises the question of the relationship between understanding and interpretation within the thematic perspective of philosophical hermeneutics of yesterday, today and tomorrow. The question related to the possibility that interpretation and explanation could open to productive dynamics and practices of knowledge and understanding within different or potentially connected knowledges, cultures and ideas remains opened, among other questions.

In part 2 of this issue 1, the fundamental themes of twentieth century hermeneutics are re-examined, particularly in the essays by Francesca Brezzi, Vincenzo Cicero, Fabrizio Turolto and Carmelo Vigna.

In The Game as Art "or" The Art in Play, Francesca Brezzi traces the search for "truth" in the game of understanding, one of the central themes of gadamerian hermeneutics. Starting from the well-known Gadamerian reading, she attempts a "loose" reading, a sort of inverted hermeneutics, through which she will be able to demonstrate the ontological dignity of the game, of play as truth experience.

In SAYING CHRIST: Observations on Some Christological Aspects in Paul Ricoeur, Vincenzo Cicero re-examines Paul Ricoeur's fruitful contribution to Christology and the hermeneutics of the "kerygma", even though the philosopher did not dedicate specific works to the issue. The polyphonic name of the Biblical God is of great interest, as is the reconstruction of the Ricoeurian aporias related to the Christ-Logos, key issues in relation to thought which becomes stronger when confronted with faith.

Fabrizio Turollo retraces the central themes of Ricoeurian hermeneutics in his essay, Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic Style: Explain More to Understand Better. As heir to the philosophical tradition inaugurated by Heidegger and Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur follows the same line of the two undisputed masters of twentieth century hermeneutics, but gives his own very personal reading. As opposed to Heidegger, who chooses the "shortest path" to quickly reach an ontology of understanding, Ricoeur prefers the "long path" of patient reflection on psychoanalysis, linguistics, narratology, critique of ideologies, anthropology; a long path that explores the universe of signs, texts, in order to bring out the hermeneutical nature of all our knowledge. By trying to overcome the dichotomy placed by Gadamer between truth and method, Ricoeur shows the complementarity between explanation (erklären), typical of the sciences, and understanding (verstehen), practiced by the humanistic disciplines. Explanation and comprehension are, in fact, two sides of the same hermeneutical arc, that arc which is stretched every time a reader is placed before a text and is called upon and questioned by it.

In Hermeneutics and Metaphysics: A Possible Alliance, Carmelo Vigna looks back at the legacy that hermeneutics has given to contemporary reflection. If on the one hand the hermeneutic season as the dominant form of philosophy now seems to have faded, on the other, it is an undeniable fact that hermeneutics has contributed to

the enrichment of Western theoretical heritage. Hermeneutics must still be held with due consideration within the context of the variety of philosophical knowledge forms, without being contrasted with "speculative" (metaphysical) knowledge, as it was customary to do a few decades ago. It is only when we flee from every useless and sterile contraposition, that we can think of it in the light of a new and fruitful alliance with metaphysics.

Therefore, if there are many questions that a critical reflection on hermeneutics poses, it certainly also reveals the living and vital character of a discipline that never ceases to be questioned by the world around us and never ceases to invite everyone to become faithful and discreet interpreters of their own time. Only through such understanding can we avoid the risk of being trapped inside the shallows of a closed and self-referential knowledge whose greatest danger is losing sight of the essential link with the world of life.

V. Busacchi – G. Costanzo