Editors' Introduction

Hermeneutics has a long tradition in the history of philosophy. It carries the task of Hermes to bring God's message to humans and translate it without betraying it. This special issue of the journal Critical Hermeneutics *proposes a double research track: veritative hermeneutics and hermeneutic realism. This double track testifies to the original purpose of hermeneutics to formulate fundamental philosophical questions in light of human historical experience. Opposed to relativism, veritative hermeneutics and hermeneutic realism focus on truth, objectivity, the structure of reality, normativity, and meaning. The issue publishes contributions of this track's pioneers (Gaspare Mura – veritative hermeneutics, Günter Figal, and Anton Friedrich Koch – hermeneutic realism) as well as authors that explore this track from various perspectives: ethics, personalism, normativity, testimony, Biblical hermeneutics and Jewish thought, religious language, meaning. In this introduction, we will first present the authors working on veritative hermeneutics, then those working on hermeneutic realism.*

Hermeneutics has often been identified with relativism and weak thought and dubbed adverse to truth. Notwithstanding these ideas, the very task of Hermes is truthfully to interpret, not to betray. This relationship between Logos and truth is crucial for hermeneutics since its inception in Greek philosophy. Veritative hermeneutics aims at recovering this truth dimension of hermeneutics by inquiring into metaphysical themes, the relationship between truth and history, and the question of truth in interpretation. This approach highlights the complexity of truth, non-

reducible to a mere logical-grammatical vision of adaequatio *but based on the experience of historical and existential disclosure. For this reason, veritative hermeneutics conceives of truth in connection with the notion of Being and the ontology of language. It continues a longstanding tradition shaped by some crucial moments: Plato's and Aristotle's ontology of language, the medieval philosophy of truth, language, and Being, the modern Protestant hermeneutics of the Scripture, Dilthey's hermeneutics of life and historical experience, Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity, Gadamer's revival of* phronesis*, Betti's interpretation theory, and Ricoeur's hermeneutics of symbols.*

Gaspare Mura, the pioneer of veritative hermeneutics, elaborated in his widely esteemed life-long work a vision of hermeneutics as a philosophy of truth understood multi-dimensionally. Indeed, for Mura, hermeneutics must connect diverse epistemological fields and thus unify the natural and human sciences. A robust notion of truth does not benefit from disciplinary dichotomies but from a holistic approach. Mura's references range from medieval philosophy (Augustine) to Italian humanism (Vico, Betti).

The contribution of Gaspare Mura for this issue, titled "Truth and History in Vico and Betti. The Historical and Theoretical Foundation of Veritative Hermeneutics" explores the relationship between truth and history in Vico and Betti. For Mura, this relationship constitutes the ground of veritative hermeneutics. Vico's interpretation of the historical factum *and Betti's elaboration of non-subjectivist criteria of understanding are the pillars of veritative hermeneutics in opposition to the weak thought that appeared in the twentieth century.*

The article of Cristiana Freni, "The Person in Gaspare Mura's Hermeneutics: A Critical Study", analizza Gaspare Mura's personalism. First, it highlights Mura's sources: Armando Rigobello, Battista Mondin, Mounier, and Ricoeur. Second, it shows how Mura's personalist holism rests on the hypostatical tradition and relational personalism. Finally, it explores how Mura's personalism contributes to contemporary anthropological debates.

Tiziano Conti's paper, "Biblical Hermeneutics in Paul Ricoeur: Philosophy Encountering the I Am Who I Am" *analyzes Ricoeur's interpretation of one of most famous and discussed passages in the Hebrew Bible, "I am who I am". Conti shows how Ricoeur connects this passage with a passage in the Gospel of John: "God is Love". Thus, God's metaphysical perfection comes to light not through a tautological approach or via* negationis *but through the lens of* agape.

The article of Patrizia Manganaro, titled "Doing Truth. Intentional-performative Realism in the Religious Language", questions the relationship between two complementary approaches to language: one that considers the linguistic act an expression of language and one that focuses on the performative intentionality of language, especially religious language. Finally, Manganaro's study shows how veritative hermeneutics can bridge analytic and continental philosophy.

The contribution of Irene Kajon, titled "An Oven Like a Snake: Hermeneutics and Truth In Some Jewish Sources", reflects on the interpretative conflict in the Talmud, Bava Metzia, regarding the purity or impurity of the oven of akhnai, *that is, of the snake. The dialectical discussion among Rabbi Eliezer, a prophet and defensor of the oven's purity, and his opponents highlights the fundamental tenets of veritative hermeneutics.*

The second part of this special issue turns to hermeneutic realism. In this field, the groundbreaking works of Günter Figal and Anton Friedrich Koch have oriented hermeneutics toward objectivity and the relationship between the subject and reality. In his Objectivity: The Hermeneutical and Philosophy *(published in German in 2006 and translated into English in 2010, and Italian in 2012), Figal set up a realist hermeneutic paradigm that examines the fundamental features of reality: space, time, world, life, language, and freedom. In this paradigm, hermeneutics does not study only the conditions and structures of understanding but also the objects that give themselves to interpretation. Figal develops his analysis of objectivity in dialogue with the phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition of Husserl,*

Heidegger, and Gadamer, and with the classical tradition of Plato and Aristotle.

In the same realist vein, Anton Friedrich Koch published his 2016 monograph Hermeneutischer Realismus*, which claims the readability of things in relation to the interpretative subject. Following the analytic tradition, Koch includes the findings of science but underlines the belonging of things and the subject to the lifeworld. Even though reality exists independently of us, its intelligibility depends on the human subject. The latter is not an abstract intellect but a living being located in a certain space and time. Koch refers mainly to the analytic tradition and the existential thought of Heidegger.*

Günter Figal's contribution to this issue, titled "The Task of Hermeneutics", presents, in nuce*, a hermeneutic program focused on the objects of interpretation and understanding. It proves that interpretative normativity does not rest on the conditions of understanding but on the objects themselves. Figal investigates how these objects constitute the measure of adequacy or inadequacy of interpretation. His proposal places the "primordial meaning" of the object at the core of hermeneutic normativity.*

The paper of Anton Friedrich Koch, titled "Our Common Extended Consciousness and the Readability of Things: Two Theses of Hermeneutic Realism", elaborates on a hermeneutic realism based on what the author calls "common extended consciousness". Koch identifies two sides of this consciousness: the sensory, qualitative consciousness and the discursive, intentional consciousness. Regarding the first, all human beings share an infinite spatiotemporal field of consciousness, even though it is oriented differently for each person. Thanks to this field, we can reach an agreement about things. In the second case, Koch shows that language makes possible our knowledge of objects, which give themselves as ur-tokens of their names, phenomenal "this-such" representations of them, and elementary sentences about them.

Gert-Jan van der Heiden's contribution, titled "Witnessing, Truth, and Realism: A Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Approach", elaborates on a hermeneutic realism that revisits Aristotle's model of theoria *from the perspective of human testimony. First, Van der Heiden presents the realist critiques that accuse hermeneutics of correlationism and relativism. To address these critiques, he then examines two modes of understanding the real and the true: negative and affirmative. Finally, the article closes with the role of language as a place of truth.*

The article by Theodore George, titled "Is Hermeneutic Realistic? On the Normative Orientation toward Plurality" takes a realist approach to the pluralist vocation of hermeneutics. While admitting that hermeneutics entails a plurality of interpretations, George claims that this plurality rests on a community of interests and concerns. The postmodern paradigm that absolutizes plurality runs the danger of hermeneutic isolation in which each of us remains separated from the others. To safeguard plurality, George proposes the communal basis of dialogue as a normative criterion.

Mirela Oliva's paper, titled "Realist Meaning", accounts for a realist notion of meaning that includes all things, not only language. Oliva shows that the universalization of meaning results from a historical process that started with medieval Biblical hermeneutics, continued in German Protestant hermeneutics, up to contemporary hermeneutics, and crossed into analytic philosophy. The meaning of a thing entails its properties, relationship with other things, the knowing subject, and, ultimately, the world. Thus meaning means the essence, origin, purpose, causation, value, or importance of something. Finally, Oliva examines how this polysemy can unify various fields of reality and philosophical disciplines. She refers to Nozick's definition of meaning, which resembles the hermeneutics of meaning.

The article of Andrea Fiore, "Pragmatism, Realism and Hermeneutics: Dewey and Familiarity as a Tool of Interpretation", shows how Dewey's notion of familiarity contributes to the interpretation of reality. Fiore claims that pragmatism and hermeneutics share the realist effort to open access to

reality. The terms "familiarity", "familiar", "familiarize", and their antonyms, "unknown", and "strange", reveal the relationship between reality and the human being.

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Cristiana Freni

Theodore D. George

Mirela Oliva

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