

Guest Editors' Preface

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The idealism has introduced in philosophy anthropological, ethical and political categories, which are still useful for the understanding of several phenomena related to the human being and to his action in the world. For this reason, this special issue of *Ethics & Politics* deals with the idealistic philosophy: our intention is to discuss some idealistic theories or to use some idealistic categories for the study of human life.

The fruitfulness of a similar operation is shown in detail in each analysis that may be conducted looking to the idealism. In general, however, you can see immediately how the basic concepts used in the idealism to talk about the man remain at the centre of political and ethical debate.

First of all, the concepts of anthropology. Anthropology, for idealism, is the basis of ethical and political theory, because it works like the premise of what moral philosophy is then able to say. And within idealism, a man is a man because he is a spiritual subject. By virtue of what essentially belongs to him, the subject, in the idealism, takes upon himself the task of give a meaning to the things, to be the source and the origin of each rule, legal and ethics, to establish the socio-political system and its differences. In short, he is a subject who arranges his world. He is also a thinking subject to whom the world appears; he is a free individual, he is a person, he is a moral agent that moves in nature and puts into effect his decisions both in civil society and in history. Finally, the man is also the centre of the religious life that we find in every civilizations, and he is the protagonist of the

philosophical reflection in which all these essential judgments are maintained.

We must also remember that idealism (especially the Hegelian) reached in its most complete form at the top of modernity, or at the end of modernity and identified just in the subjectivity the principle of modernity.

In the twentieth century the post-modern and post-human thought started from the deeply and radical criticism of the idealistic philosophy and of the directive unifying and creative function that it assigned to the ego. Reporting the “crisis” of subjectivity and the insufficiency of the model of a unitary and monologic subject, the philosophical post-modernism has continued to refer to idealism, to criticize effectively the philosophy with which modernity ended.

A dialogue between these two moments so significant for Western thought is revealed and is even necessary today as well as particularly fruitful. When contemporary philosophy continues to listen to idealism in order to draw from it a positive teaching, contemporary philosophy needs to understand what idealism intended to say. But in the opposite situation where contemporary philosophy wants to deny idealism to get rid of the contradictions of modernity, contemporary philosophy must still pay close attention to the idealism and to its teaching. In particular, contemporary philosophy must understand what idealism said in its most mature phase, that is, the Hegelian, and the Neo-hegelian or Actualistic.

To really take a speculative tradition, or to really contest it, we must continue or we must contradict what was said in that tradition. It's not enough that its contents are simply repeated or that they are quickly forgotten.

What the essays collected in this issue want to do, then, is just continue to think starting from a part of what idealism had thought. This happens when the validity of some idealistic thesis is maintained, but even when their ability to describe without contradictions some important aspects of human experience is denied.

So, if we keep the idealistic important assertion that man is basically spirit and thought, what can we say about his ability to want freely and about his ability to act practically? What can we say about his relationship with nature and with his physicality? What about his need to stay in society and his need for religion? And what about his

desire to control and produce the presence of things and his own presence?

In the following essays we try to give an answer to these and other problems. We will see that in certain cases the teaching of idealism can be totally followed. In other cases it must be maintained only up to a certain point. Always, however, it can highlight the reasons of some dynamics according to which we continue to act on the world and we continue to think our relationship with the world.

We don't ignore that idealism had used an extremely elaborate conceptual formulation that makes more difficult and that doesn't simplify its study by the contemporary philosophy. Furthermore, especially in recent years, the contemporary philosophy poses the problems it wants to solve without regard for their elaboration by the thinkers of the past. In the worst cases it even seems to ignore the fact that its own problems have been discussed and studied seriously even by the philosophies that preceded it.

In our opinion, this way of working doesn't help a lot the philosophical theory. In fact, instead of speeding up the analysis of problems, this method try to solve its issues without using the speculative results obtained in the past and without knowing which speculative errors were committed in the past and can be avoided today.

This doesn't mean to subordinate our philosophy to the history of philosophy. On the contrary, it means to reinforce our philosophy through the theoretical comparison with theses that have come before us in the history of thought and have shaped our current way of living and doing philosophy. Through this comparison, every problem that will be formulated will be immediately more complicated than it could be if we followed a different path. But in this way, any solution that will be proposed will be more solid and secure than it would be if it was born far away from any comparison and any mediation with our recent past.