



GIOVANNI MADDALENA AND GIOVANNI TUZET (EDS.)

I pragmatisti italiani: Tra alleati e nemici

Milano: Albo Versorio, 2007. 285 pp. No index.

Firenze, 1904–1907: a peculiar and highly inventive journal, *Leonardo*, is promoted by a group of young Italian philosophers and writers that claim to be “pragmatists.” A diversity of views is found in the four main leaders of *Leonardo*. On the one side, Papini and Prezzolini, who, concerned with an active philosophy of life, are closer to James; on the other side, Vailati and Calderoni, more concerned about reasoning and methodology, are closer to Peirce. *Leonardo*’s idiosyncratic reception of pragmatism is tintured by a strong emphasis on personalism, existentialism, and nihilism. Maddalena and Tuzet’s compilation approaches with great detail the multifarious web of relations emerging in the *Leonardo* movement, a plastic web that goes well beyond the simple opposition delineated above. Politics, literature, law, science are fundamental for the young Italians who have a strong desire to change society. Pragmatism appears as the one philosophy that can unite their extremely wide interests and their will to act according to those interests.

Maddalena and Tuzet’s compilation is an example of the kind of *reception studies* that is worthy of publication. Not just an academic output for the usual restricted circle of scholars, most of the articles try to explain the deep philosophical problems beneath the tensions among the young Leonardians, and how they are still of relevance today. A struggle against dualisms and oversimplifications is hoisted by most contributors. As a result, one sees how a multivalent *life of philosophy* evolves, one that cannot be captured easily on a rigid grid, but one that stays closer to a plastic, continuous—very Peircean—hypersurface. The Prezzolini-Calderoni debate, the complementarity of Papini and Vailati help to produce a kind of magnetic field with all sort of *currents*,

mediations, transformations between the extremes. *I pragmatisti italiani. Tra alleati e nemici* expresses in its own subtitle the fundamental middle ground (“tra”: between), the polarities (“nemici”: enemies) and the conciliations (“alleati”: allies) that render the compilation fascinating. Philosophical *impurity* is much to be welcomed after the excessive hammering of analytical philosophy in the 20th century.

Maddalena and Tuzet (pp. 9–22) resume the main features treated in the book: the wide variety of purposes of the Leonardians, their good knowledge of pragmatism (better than usually assessed), Papini’s central role and Vailati’s pendulous complementation, the opposition between Prezzolini and Calderoni, their common ground in attacking Cartesianism, positivism, and idealism, their tendency to invigorate existence, their difficulty of synthesizing a sought totality of life through an epistemology that is intrinsically bounded. In contrast, de Waal (pp. 115–144) presents a general overview of the movement, centered on the contraposition of magic and reason (“i maghi e i logici”). The remaining articles go on to explore particular perspectives: (i) Maddalena (pp. 23–42) and Marietti (pp. 43–51) compare Vailati and Peirce; (ii) Tuzet (pp. 53–74) studies Calderoni and normative knowledge; (iii) Colella (pp. 75–95) and Colapietro (pp. 97–114)¹ track back-and-forth the debate between Prezzolini and Calderoni 1904–1905; (iv) Quaranta (pp. 273–285) presents some unpublished letters of Schiller to Prezzolini; (v) Russo (pp. 145–166) and Martínez (pp. 167–178) look for Papini’s encounters with psychology and Unamuno; (vi) Luisi (pp. 179–200) acknowledges the influence of James and Bergson on the *Leonardo* movement; (vii) Franzese (pp. 201–221) and Nieddu (pp. 223–244) detail the reception of pragmatism in later Italian thinkers (such as Aliotta and Juvalta); (viii) Torregrosa (pp. 245–254) and González (pp. 255–272) elucidate the influence of pragmatism and Rome on Eugenio d’Ors.

Many provoking thoughts are advanced by the contributors. A short list of considerations that impacted this reviewer is here presented, but it should be clear that only a much longer list would do adequate justice to Maddalena and Tuzet’s compilation. In the second section of his article, Maddalena compares the art of reasoning in Vailati and Peirce, showing how the complex, stratified deductions in Vailati (pp. 28f) collide with the richer Peircean apparatus of abduction and deduction (pp. 31f), and explains Peirce’s advantage which he attributes to his phenomenological and semiotical approach. Continuing further, Maddalena shows how Vailati’s noncommitment to metaphysical modalities (p. 37) distinguishes him from Peirce, thus providing both a global limitation (difficulty of holistic interpretations) and a local enrichment (place for individual actions studied from a logical point of view). Maddalena’s ideas open the way for an exciting application of a *logic of sheaves* (“fascio di tendenze” in Vailati’s words, p. 39) which would help to chart mediations between

the polarities abduction/deduction, modality/reality, and individual/community. Tuzet's plasticity (p. 66), combined with his emphasis on how normative knowledge can only be obtained residually (web of norm applications, p. 54) and not projectively (perspective from a normative definition, p. 54), also unravels a strong underlying "geometry" of pragmatic interactions that would have pleased Vailati, Peano's brilliant student. Colapietro's application of Peirce's cenopythagorean categories to distinguish Papini/Prezzolini (closer to firstness, p. 104) from Vailati/Calderoni (closer to thirdness) smooths the possibility of situating the Leonardians on a *continuum* where all kind of interactions take place, beyond annoying dualisms (p. 106). On the other hand, Colapietro risks a bold, brilliant, and debatable thesis on how a philosophical view can influence a political standpoint: Prezzolini's negation of limits launching him to high creativity but predisposing him to fascism, Calderoni's acceptance of limitations restricting his system but providing a more balanced acting behavior (p. 108).

A pleasure to read, the book is very carefully edited (nice indented citations, appropriate bibliography and notes at the end of each section, fluid fonts). Name and subject indexes, inexplicably lacking, would have been crucial pragmatic tools. Maddalena and Tuzet's compilation is another sign of the blooming Italian activity in Peirce studies (now accessible in part through Marco Annoni's webpage: www.centrostudi.peirce.it). The interest in Peirce becomes wider every day and reception studies like the one promoted by Maddalena and Tuzet show how a thorough *foreign* understanding of the greatest *American* mind accommodates *naturally* with a thought that does not accept geographical boundaries.

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NOTES

1. The articles by Colella and Colapietro were previously published, in English, in *Transactions* 30.2 (1994).

