

Riccardo Pozzo, *History of Philosophy and the Reflective Society*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2021, pp. 231.

This book¹ aims to provide new impulses to research in history of philosophy by looking into the conditions of possibility of new approaches that aim at engaging diverse philosophical traditions. It offers new definitions and stocktaking of best practices focused on China and the West cultural interaction which can be taken as the start for extending the model of other cultures.

The reflective society embodies “cultural innovation”, “societal readiness”, “inclusion” and “reflection”. Cultural innovation is about “space of exchange” in which citizens “share their experiences” while appropriating “common goods”. The main objective is to show the effectiveness of history of philosophy in societies that are innovative, reflective and inclusive. The result is rethinking history of philosophy in terms of a “dialogical civilization” by enabling participatory translations, individual processes of reflection and collective processes of inclusion. History of philosophy can have an innovative, reflective and inclusive impact on societies with new narratives that thematize diversity from a global perspective.

Riccardo Pozzo analyzes three questions that define philosophy as a humanistic discipline: “What can and what cannot philosophy do? What are its ethical risks and possible rewards? How does it differ from science?”. To reduce their scope, the author reframes these three questions alongside the vertical perspective that considers history of philosophy as the main grounding of philosophy, that without which no philosophy could exist, and alongside the horizontal perspective of philosophy as part of the humanities, where philosophy meets with history, geography, anthropology and linguistics.

In the part one of the book (*History of Philosophy*), the author considers current perspectives in history of philosophy in order to show how the discipline is becoming a critical factor in an enhanced and enriched multicultural and multireligious society, first and foremost on behalf of the urgent need of its encompassing and

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appreciating diversity as well as the sharing of experiences, values and aspirations. In the first part of the chapter is analyzed the “contextualist revolution” as the latest development within the community of historians of philosophy in English-speaking countries.

The author proceeds by surveying debates at the global level to explain why and how history of philosophy contributes with content and processes to the reflective society. Riccardo Pozzo concludes the chapter by suggesting that the effectiveness of the history of philosophy lies in a new model that considers both the “internal aspects” of an oeuvre that grows (which can be investigated first and foremost in a lexical analysis) and the “external aspects” of the “paratexts” that have presided at the constitution of that oeuvre.

Pozzo observes that was Mario Dal Pra, the editor of the “Rivista critica di Storia della filosofia”, who asked for “an innovative and richer notion of philosophizing to enable a renewal in Italian culture” through continuous interventions in the realm of the history of philosophical historiography and its methodology, which “inevitably impacted on specific problems of systematic research”. History is a “free process”, if rhythms can be determined in it, but not such as to never preclude, in any situations, the opening to multiple possibilities, if the logical systems themselves are multiple, even if the past is plural, “interwoven whit voices that have remained suspended towards a future that can understand them and insert them into the fabric of human events”.

Intellectual history involves a close reconstruction of philosophical arguments as they have been recorded in texts during the centuries. Intellectual history has strong bonds with the history of philosophy, history of wisdom, history of thought and *Geistesgeschichte*. They are different insofar as philosophers tend to neglect nuances within external contexts and look first and foremost for the “internal consistency” of the argument they are considering.

The debate took a decisive turn in the fifties when Eugenio Garin had put all the weight of “historicism” in favor of the “history of philosophy” while pointing out that “the unit-ideas are limited to particular aspects of common experience” as implicit or explicit presuppositions that are persistent through the centuries and vary only through the terms used by them.

In this horizon, the correct opposition was between the history of thought *secundum historiam* and the history of thought *secundum veritatem*, which brings up the difference between historical and philosophical history of philosophy. The

solution was proposed by Gueroult who proposed “to establish a *dianoématique*: a science of the conditions of possibility of philosophical works insofar as they own an understroyable philosophical value”. An analogous statement was issued by Enrico Berti concerning the semantic relation between “verità filosofica” and “storia all’interno della metafisica classica” when he did not hesitate to admit the difficulty of Gueroult’s history of philosophy *secundum veritatem*.

In the paragraph *Historical and Philosophical History of Philosophy*, Pozzo analyses Tullio Gregory’s thesis that reduces history of philosophy and the history of philosophies to a more general history of ideas and cultures. “History which is seen, on the other hand, with sufficiency and contempt by those who think of a history of philosophy to which the true or the great philosophers belong, while the not great or almost philosophers (minor figures, non-great philosophers or quasi philosophers) are placed in intellectual history: it is in this second category that Richard Rorty, with the infallible aim of a Far West shooter, places, among others, John Duns Scotto, Giordano Bruno, Pierre de La Ramée, Mersenne, Wolff, Schopenhauer, Bergson, followed by people who are not generally called philosophers, such as Paracelsus, Montaigne, Grotius, Bayle, Lessing and so on until Thomas Kuhn. With these authors, we descend from the heights of *Geistesgeschichte* to the down-to-earth level of intellectual history” (Gregory, 2017, 41).

Riccardo Pozzo observes that “innovative research in history of philosophy” seems possible to day on the basis of a through complementarity between the historic-genetic reconstruction of one philosopher’s approach (*internal*) and the reconstruction of the context of regional and institutional public opinion (*external*). One renowned model available for this remains the *Überwegs Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Holzhey 1983-2020). It is time to rejuvenate the methodology of the history of philosophy, more specifically that of the history of concepts in its global extension by taking advantage of achievements that have proven to be fruitful for the advancement of the discipline, such as the *Lessico Intellettuale Europeo* (Gregory et al. 1967-2021), the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Ritter and Grunder 1971-2006), the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* (Cassin 2004) and the *Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture* (Wang Lin and Han Zhen 2015-2020) alongside with other excellent projects (Rosales and Lopez 2019; Wang Yueqing et al. 2020).

The methodology relies on tools such as vocabularies, ontologies, concordances, frequencies more generally on the anlysis of texts and corpora, which integrates

quantitative and formal methods into the portfolio of methods of history of philosophy and intellectual history. The approach aims at boosting “computational history of ideas” and “computational concepts modeling” to break ground for knowledge organization systems that produces synergies while optimizing crosswalks for future translations projects involving a lot of languages. The future is a history of philosophy that enables “cultural innovation” which it does when it accounts for the fact that “cultures have grown through hybridization with the cultures of their neighbors”.

“Social and cultural innovation” is a notion that embraces two syntagmata. It has become of current usage among researchers since 2013 due to the name chosen by the “European Strategy Forum Research Infrastructures” (ESFRI) for its working group on projects and landmarks that are primarily connected with the “Social Sciences and Humanities” (SSH). The *Social and Cultural Innovation Group* proposes possible solutions (related to Research Infrastructures) that can help tackle the Grand Challenges facing society, such as health or demographic change, or the inclusive, innovative and secure societies challenge from the third pillar of “Horizon 2020”, called “Tackling social challenges”. It establishes possible methods through which social sciences and humanities could be used as an evolution criterion for the activity of other Research Infrastructures in the ESFRI road-map. It also explores how Research Infrastructures can contribute to social innovation or better knowledge transfer towards society.

In this horizon, the chapter *Cultural Innovation* (pp. 97-118) provides a conceptualization of cultural innovation as an additional and autonomous dimension of the different processes of innovation. As a working hypothesis, cultural innovation can be understood as the outcome of complex co-creation processes that involve the reflection of knowledge flow across the social environment while promoting diversity within society. This chapter of the book defines and contrasts the notion of “cultural innovation” against other recently discussed forms of innovation, such as “social innovation”, “scientific culture” and “heritage-led innovation”. Based on such conceptualization in a second step, the chapter proposes indicators for measuring cultural innovation and shows their operationalization in some empirical case studies. Finally, considering science and public policy agenda-setting, it wraps up by discussing policy implications and verifications strategies for widening participation in cultural experiences on behalf of policymakers such as the ministries of research, education, economics

and culture.

In the second part (*Reflective Society*), Pozzo introduces the second pillar of his book, namely the “reflective society”. The author starts with an account of the state of the art around “reflectivity”, continues with the analysis of the “self-reflective society” and concludes with some information on the role the term has been playing for “European research policy” since 2013.

It is interesting the linguistic and semantic-philosophical analysis of the notion of “reflectivity” pointed out in the paragraph 4.1. The author observes that Kant in his *Reflexion über die Logik* made it clear that to become a self-determined cognitive agent, the human being needs “reflexion” because prejudices are based on cognitive passivity, “on the inclination towards the mechanism of reason rather than towards its spontaneity under law” (AA 16: 406, 5-6).

Reflexion emerges as the faculty and activity that stands at the “intersection” of reason in its practical and theoretical uses. The notion of “reflexion” describes a process that relies on individuals who reflectively appropriate content and become producers of new knowledge once they share it. As the faculty and activity that stands at the intersection of reason in its practical and theoretical uses, reflexion is labeled one of the most important of personal emergent and creative properties. Reflexion is the proof of the reality of the “creative life” of the mind.

The first philosopher of reflexion was Johann Gottfried Herder, a contemporary of Immanuel Kant. Herder considered reflexion a process, a general function of the human being for isolating content “from the whole wavering dream of images rushing” through his senses, collecting “into a moment of walking”, dwelling “on one image spontaneously”, observing “it dearly and more quietly and finally abstracting characteristics showing him that this and no other is the object”. According to Dilthey, “self-reflection provides the foundation not only for thinking and knowing but also for action”. It is our self-reflection (*Selbstbestimmung*), then, that investigates the origin and the rules in human emotional life. Dilthey argues for a *Philosophie der Philosophie* (1903) that accepts no claim in isolation and no striving in its immediacy. This means that all theoretical and practical positions must be justified and related to a reflective context that allows to particular discipline a final say. Dilthey conceives philosophy as operations and confrontations with society. His *philosophy of philosophy* is a means of reorganizing knowledge for society, a non-transcendental (historical) form of the critical division of intellectual labor. Disciplinary boundaries can always be questioned for the sale

of a more encompassing perspective. However, world-views (*Weltanschauungen*) are effective only if they bring the conceptualizing and generalizing tendencies of philosophy to meet the concrete needs of life that find expression in religious and cultural practises, and in the arts and literature. *Weltanschauungen* would not claim to account for everything that is and legislate what should be, but provide ways of understanding things in context and assessing the meaning of life. This horizon gives worldviews a hermeneutical function: a diagnostical hermeneutics ought to develop the full resources of reflective judgment to establish critical priorities.

The syntagma “Self-reflective Society” is based on the work done on reflection by Kant (1790) and Habermas (1968, 1971), by Ulrich Beck (1983) on “reflective modernity”, Alessandro Ferrara (1998) and Simon Clarke (2005). The “Self-reflective Society” refers to deliberative communication of citizens in a modern public sphere aiming at mutual understanding, for example, our attitudes towards rethinking artificial intelligence, human enhancement, fragmentation of knowledge, attention spans and data access.

Pozzo observes that the challenges laid out for self-reflective and inclusive society have been developed since their inception during the Enlightenment. Hegel elaborated the light’s metaphor into a powerful tool to make out social dynamics. A closer scrutiny reveals that Habermas has applied to society what Hegel had elaborated as the passage from the surface of being to the ground of essence, a passage that takes place, literally, by “reflecting into the thing”, like reflected light that illuminates something previously invisible, or creates a pattern not previously existing.

According to Habermas, Hegel was able to demonstrate the “phenomenological self-reflection of knowledge as necessary radicalization of the critique of reason”. Hegel reintroduces the process from sense-certainty to reflection. This movement is the experience of reflection: its goal is that knowledge which the critical philosophy asserted as immediate possession. Interaction is the participation of knowledge that gives information: “knowledge-constitutive interests mediate the natural history of the human species with the logic of its self-formative processes”. As the basic orientation of a reflective society, interest is hence “rooted in specific fundamental conditions of the possible reproduction and self-constitution of the human species, namely work and interaction”.

Adopting thoughts of Max Weber, Habermas has coined the phrase “communicative rationalization of the lifeworld” (*kommunikative Rationalisierung der Lebenswelt*) to capture the particular features of modernity that necessitate the

exchange of reasons. Habermas elaborates on how a new political community needs to reach a just way of dealing with any given conflict among its members with this specific understanding in mind. He specifies one formal principle as a guideline, reformulating Kant's moral law: "Just those actions norms are valid to which all possibility affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses". Among the users of the full syntagma of "self-reflective society" was James Fishkin who introduced the notion in the context of an examination of procedural rationality. "Practises that fulfill our conditions are rational in the sense that they are self-reflective". The problem he started from is the confidence we can have "in any political proposition when critics of it have been silenced". Freedom and democracy of political culture are very important in our society: free and critical analysis of certain "particular political truths" is necessary and it is part of the solution to the legitimacy problem in contemporary society.

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