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Abstract

The view of the philosophic pragmatism warns against the growing danger of the technological modernization of the human being in the mechanization era, which is gradually transforming and approaching a digital era. Authors such as R. Rorty believe that only the return to the paradigm of the human reality separated from metaphysical ideals could keep us away from exacerbations of ideas and the dehumanizing automatisms of technology. In the view of pragmatic philosophy, the human being is not a mechanic, operational construction; on the contrary, he has a consciousness that opts for free actions, which may prove, in the end, to be genuine or not, thanks to the success or due to the failure in the concrete reality. The aim of this article is to underline that the digital era must be perceived as a product of human ingenuity and its applicative potentialities and should not be seen as the domination of techne, but only as a stage of the developments in the technologies that must assist our life.

Keywords:

pragmatism, solidarity, contingency, irony, technical modernization and violence, quotidian (routine), action, real;

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1. **Introductive considerations. Pragma and the risks of interfering in the reality**

The term *pragmatism* has its origin in the Greek word pragma. This word means action. Therefore, the pragmatic man is guided by the impulse of the concrete and immediate activity. For him, the centre of his individual existence is in the area of interference in the reality; the process of centring, which modifies the reality, is more important than the a-priori, non-interventionist meditation. The thinker adhering to a pragmatic philosophical vision will also postulate his theoretical speculation and openness to the sphere of the supra-immanent ideals, focusing his arguments on the valences provided by the concepts of effectiveness and usefulness in the immediate reality. Philosophical pragmatism, the school of pragmatic philosophy developed by constantly relating to the thesis postulated by one of its pioneers, William James; according to this thesis, truth can be but what is advantageous for our thinking. From this perspective, the success of action guarantees the truth of the idea proposed in a given context. In the view of philosophical pragmatism, the applicability that determines a really positive effect of a conceptual thesis must be permanently related to axiology and calibrated based on the moral imperatives postulated by it. The absence of such a constitution regarding the ethics of interfering in the reality may lead to the abnormality according to which, as Toffler (1995) stated, "in the political sphere, a government can imprison or torture a dissident, can financially punish its critics and remunerate its supporters and can manipulate the truth in order to create consensus"(p. 21) Thus, for a thought to be considered really valid and genuine, it has to be confirmed as an ethical and useful guide, a secure guide for an individual but also collective action, an effective guide to its full success. In the absence of such consistent value-normative guiding, "in the marginal group of poorly socialized people there may start the objectification of counter-reality." (Berger & Luckmann, 2008, p. 222)

This paper proposes a theoretical brief foray into the world of philosophical pragmatism, emphasizing the reflections of philosophers such as Rorty. We would like to underline that the digital era must be perceived as a product of human ingenuity and it should be seen as a stage of the developments in the technologies that must assist our life instead of accepting it as the domination of *techne* over human.

2. Conceptual inauguration and introductive characteristics of pragmatism

Nietzsche's voluntarism and Bergson's biologist evolutionism have had a strong influence on philosophical pragmatism, causing a crystallization of its main theses. Under the impact of such influence, this school of philosophy will gradually identify the aim of knowledge with the process of knowledge itself and will adopt the belief that actually there are no true ideas, but only ideas that become true throughout human action to the extent that they prove capable of being efficient in the dynamic reality. In this context, philosophical pragmatism provides a pragmatic function, a crucial attribute in building imperatives and utensils for carrying out the action, the human act towards completion. The capability of reflection and meditation of the human consciousness is totally neglected here; the aim is to subordinate it to the practical and operational function. The common conceptual area where the great pragmatic thinkers, such as Ch. Pierce, W. James and J. Dewey, meet is represented by the view that tries to bring together theory and practice and to approach the traditional metaphysical theses in a critical manner. This view supports the idea that truth is in a fundamental relationship with praxis in terms of the real effects, the empirical consequences. Thus, only what is tested by its practical consequences is considered valid. The constant connection with the immanent reality and the direct reference to the size of its complexity through cognitive methods, which are as close as possible to the accuracy of irrefutable evidence, has situated pragmatic philosophical thinking among exact sciences. Such proximity and influence has left a decisive mark on the development of this philosophical school; it is characterized by several key characteristics including: 1. Supporting the transfer of the scientific method in philosophy, as the philosophical approach must constantly relate to the development of exact sciences; 2. Permanent proximity to the view of British empiricism, founded by David Hume; the process of analytical examination and experimentation will have a central role; 3. Rejecting the classical spirit-body dualism and supporting the thesis according to which the evolution of the human spirit is similar to the biological evolution. (Furst & Trinks, 1997, p.143)

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3. The severity of the supremacy of *techne* on man in the view of philosophical pragmatism

By adopting scientific methods, pragmatism did not leave man aside, nor did it view the problematic paradigm of human existence as an experiment or an equation that needs to be solved technically. On the contrary, from the very beginning, everyday human reality is assumed, and man, the descendant of Adam, is perceived in his social, inter-personal dynamics. Man is regarded as a key factor of propulsion and development for the energies of life and the human society is to be postulated as the environment, the scene of these manifestations of humanity. Thus, in the view of pragmatic philosophy, the human being is not a mechanic, operational construction; on the contrary, it has a consciousness that opts for free actions, which may prove, in the end, to be genuine or not, thanks to the success or due to the failure in the concrete reality. Philosophical pragmatism is decisively related to the everyday life of a community, its socio-political modulations and its daily mundanity. Starting with this mundanity, man can be analyzed in relation to his positive or negative valences, his creational ups or destructive downs. In the attempt to examine the social human being in its social context, the approaches of pragmatic philosophy will gradually reflect on the situation of the human existence within that social environment. Thus, for example, the school of American pragmatism became not only a lucid analytical approach to human dynamics within a historically determined period, but also the image of that period; the papers of the representatives of this school are windows to the American social and political environment at that time. (Marga, 1998, p. 87) Pragmatism regards and approaches the man in action, continuously committing to achieving something pre-conceived, planned for concrete materialization. If such a project, when implemented in practice, has extensive effects, then it can be considered genuine and deserves its status of prerequisite for other more ambitious projects. Thus, the pragmatic philosophical view supports the idea of investing the concepts with truth in direct proportion to their practical repercussions. The more a concept, an idea, a theory tends towards a superior limit of applicability in reality, towards a pragmatic maximum, as Pierce calls it, the more it must be confirmed as a true thesis, which can generate other true and operationally useful theses. (Marga, 1994, p. 60) However, the tendency towards pragmatic maximization involves postulating the human individual as an active,

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living being, a creative entity that evolves as species, being his own subject of action, the only goal of his actions. From the perspective of philosophical pragmatism, as highlighted by the analysis of Jurgen Habermas, man intends to enrol in a progressive process that transforms the ideas into positive actions, perfecting his life based on the constant connection between science and action. Thus, the human being must not be reached in the deep structures of the consciousness by the automatisms of the modern world of technology and mechanization; in turn, man must dominate them, keeping the balance between theory and practice, between the creativity of the living human spirit and the transfer of ideas to the cold universe of matter. (Marga, 1985, p. 118) Accepting the subordination of the human being to the postulates and dynamics of techne itself would lead to the fractionation of the communicative inter-relation between people; the man controlled by mechanization will no longer address the others as a conscience invoking other consciences, the way to rejecting and inflicting violence on others being thus opened. Therefore, this alienation of one another is based, among other things, on dysfunctional communication, or, as Habermas (2005) calls it, "systematically disturbed" communication; "The violence spiral begins as a disturbed communication spiral, which leads, through the spiral of mutual uncontrolled mistrust, to communication breakdown." (p. 67)

4. Solidarity, contingency and irony as sources of the pragmatic transition from absolute to relative. Richard Rorty

Philosophical pragmatism seeks a separation from the metaphysical tradition, not by eclipsing the decisive issues of the human existence, but by approaching it from other conceptual positions. Therefore, the centre of gravity of meditation moves from the classic mind-body bipolarity to the issue of transferring the mental to action by readjusting the language to the standard of science. In this new context, man and his words do not conform to structures of mechanic circularity, to techniques that exclude the consciousness; they are rather being discovered new meanings and potentialities. (Marga, 1995, p. 200) Rorty will summarize these fundamental directions of analysis within philosophical pragmatism by using three crucial concepts: solidarity, contingency, irony. The idea of a common ontological ground for all human beings was postulated and developed in various systems of

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thought such as the Hegelian or the Heideggerian system. Nietzsche also claimed the existence of an existential impulse for the entire human paradigm and Freud bears the responsibility for reconfiguring the view on the inter-relationships between human consciences in relation to the tension of the sexual libido. (Rorty, 1998, p. 25) Starting from this background which is specific for all human consciences, one can sense the presence and constant action of the phenomenon of solidarity. In Rorty's view, in accordance with the perspective of philosophical pragmatism, solidarity involves respect for truth and its perception. Being sympathetic with the others means understanding that there is a single external reality, which is perceived differently by each of us, and according to this perception each acts in a new, differentiated manner. Truth as a reference model is descended from the level of metaphysical and epistemological knowledge to that of inter-relations between people; it becomes what we as individual beings believe is good in terms of effectiveness, concrete utility and real applicability. (Rorty, 2000, pp. 76-77) Thus, the existence surrounding us is unique, but the ways of perceiving it differ from one consciousness to another, as well as the ways of interfering in its mechanisms. Acceptance and respect for each other's perception and action regarding the same world underlie solidarity as a fundamental concept for philosophical pragmatism. Any relationship involves reciprocity (Buber, 1992, p. 42) and "the person becomes aware of itself as something that participates in the existence, as something that exists only together with other beings (al seines Mitseienden), and thus as a conscious being." (idem, pp.91-92) Postulating the personality, the consciousness as the essential unity that can develop the philosophical discussion on ethics and ontology, conceptual pragmatism senses the importance of the language in this analytical context. If solidarity requires recognition and respect for every human person, then it is assumed that each consciousness is expressed through language. The word becomes a sign of personal freedom and contingency, of the unexpected in thought and action. Rorty will stress this idea, deeply discussed and enriched by Nietzsche, according to which the better you control your own language, the more you realize not only your own freedom, but also the contingency under which you often exist. Pragmatism is not supporting a thesis that excludes harmony and the possible transcendent organization of the world; it supports the idea of human freedom that can only occur on the grounds of

ontological unpredictability. Putting the human being under strict mechanical existential determination is again excluded, warning against the danger of man's technical modernization and the end of his freedom under the mechanisms and automatisms of modernity. By language, philosophical pragmatism understands the mirror of the human ego in its creational dynamics, but also in its relativism that allows the semiotic game of interpretation. If man is a free being, sympathetic with the others and subject to contingency, which requires personal choices, then his language will be relative, changeable and transitory to other modulations and reconfigurations. The supporter of pragmatism should not see in language anything else but the reflection of the changing dynamics of the human existence. Such a perspective is assumed, in Rorty's view, by the ironic-meditative attitude. The ironic contemplator will always look at the postulation of a universal-human vocabulary, a vocabulary invested with final value, with scepticism, doubt and of course irony. For this contemplator, such inviolable, absolute vocabulary, which is not subject to multiple modulations and metamorphoses, cannot exist. Man is subject to multiple changes, passing to ever new levels of existence and knowledge. Likewise, if we think of his vocabulary as a reflection of his self, as a book of his profound identity, then we must accept that it is also characterized by the features of the human being it belongs to. Assuming this critical thesis that rejects the existence of an absolutely human vocabulary, the ironic contemplator could be defined by three major attributes identified by Rorty's analysis: 1. Demonstrates real doubts regarding his possibility of having a final vocabulary because he notices how his own conscience and implicitly his cumulative vocabulary has been influenced by the vocabularies of other people or authors whose work he has read, this vocabulary being subject to severe transformations induced from the outside; 2. Notices that no argument is strong enough to justify the idea of the existence of a final vocabulary, any such argument being, in turn, a relative evidence, subject to individual transformations, just like the individual vocabulary; 3. Realizes that no matter how complex and conceptually developed his vocabulary is, it doesn't get any closer to reality, to the essence of existence, than the vocabularies and languages of other people, through which they express themselves and try to provide a personal explanation regarding the world surrounding them. (Rorty, 1998, p. 134) In fact, personal vocabulary is a level of individually interpreting certain aspects

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of the reality and not its essence; the vocabulary of the ironic person has the same limited capability of digging for the truth as the vocabularies of other people. (Inkpin, 2013, 292–312)

5. Eluding dehumanization in the digital era by assuming constructive subjectivity

Starting from the analysis of the phenomenology of vocabulary, for Rorty the overall philosophical approach must be undeceived, and the meditation that regards the ontological human dimension must be detached from one's own reference points postulated as being absolute. Among these concepts, Rorty places objectivity and truth. (Bacon, 2012, 229-245) If the existence of a final, fully closed vocabulary cannot be guaranteed, then the truth that such a vocabulary could enunciate is also in doubt. Since there are different vocabularies and any vocabulary is subject to constant modifications and rhythmic metamorphoses, there are also theses and ideas that can claim the status of truth although they are subject to changes and implacable relativism. In terms of utility and rationality, the philosophical view under analysis claims reducing the truth to the community good, while objectivity becomes solidarity towards the social. (Şandru, 2009, p. 95) In this conceptual context, interpretation and perception have a decisive role. Therefore, from the perspective of the pragmatism developed by Rorty's thinking, we cannot speak about a strictly objective attitude regarding knowledge, but subjective assumptions about reality. This reality is, in turn, transitory and evolutionary-progressive, constantly influencing the human being. As Floridi (2011) states, "We "identify" (provide identities) to each other, and this is crucial (although not the only) variable in the complex game of the construction of personal identities, especially when the opportunities to socialize are multiplied and modified by new information technologies".(p.555) Therefore, starting from the mechanical era, mankind entered the mechanical digitally-computerized era, the danger of dehumanization in the context of the domination of techne and widespread computerization being constantly enhanced. The eruption and resurrection of the digital era affects not only the philosophical and theoretical perspective, but also the way every human being assumes its daily life. (idem, p. 561) "The art of our species", as Herder (1973) called it, is essentially conceived based on the idea of humanity (p. 191), but art assumes that "we can only become what we

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must become through us and through the others (...); our humanity necessarily combines with the humanity of others, and our life becomes a school, a field for practicing it."(p. 192)

6. Conclusions. Philosophical pragmatism or the return to Protagoras's phrase Man is the measure of all things

Pragmatism addresses the threat of the possible collapse of man in the excesses of technology by soliciting the permanent return to the paradigm of human consciousness and understanding that mechanization must remain a utensil, a means and not an end in itself, a purpose. Thus, philosophical pragmatism recommends approaching the human being in terms of the reality of its everyday life, history and quotidian, as man is a spiritual and material presence that leaves a mark on nature in a profound and unmistakable way; nature is conquered by man based on the advantages of technology, but it can reach disastrous imbalance, generated by the excesses of technology. By supporting the return to the mundane aspects of man, philosophical pragmatism seeks to move the contemplative attention from ideal to real, from what man dreams of and aspires to towards what he is in terms of tradition and modernity. Seen from such a perspective, the digital era must be perceived as a product of human ingenuity and its applicative potentialities. Overturning the data of such a configuration leads to the sad vision where man is seen as a product of the digital age. Against the completion of such a decadent scenario, pragmatism appeals to the everyday human reality, the presence of each of us as proof that we are relative, yet unique consciences, regardless of the developments in the technologies that, as we have already mentioned, must assist our life.

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