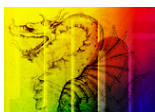


# JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY HISTORY OF IDEAS



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Volume 1 Issue 1

Item 1

– Section 1: Editorials –

A NEW JOURNAL

by

Manuela Albertone – Enrico Pasini



## JIHI 2012

Volume 1 Issue 1

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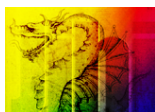
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# A NEW JOURNAL

Manuela Albertone – Enrico Pasini



COMING across a new journal devoted to the history of ideas and to intellectual history, our readers, well aware of the wealth of initiatives in this field, might well ask: why has this journal been created, and what kind of journal is it? What will make it unique? The key which explains the creation of the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History of Ideas* obviously lies in the specification of “Interdisciplinary”. This specification, nevertheless, needs to be illustrated further, through additional explanations, which will also serve as a presentation of our programme.

**1** THE notion of a history of ideas as a global history, and, as such, intrinsically interdisciplinary, lies at the heart of our publishing project. Our ambition is to always draw on a plurality of discourses, on diverse scientific languages, on a corpus of varied principles, but all investigated through a common approach of history of ideas and intellectual history.

The interdisciplinary nature of the history of ideas, following Lovejoy’s classic definition, right up to the debates of the 1990s; the concept of intellectual history as the study of historical actors whose ideas derive from the interaction of different contexts, which was wrought by the University of Sussex team over the past three decades; the methodological reflections which emerged from the focus on language by what has been termed the “Cambridge School”; the awareness, in the field of the history of philosophy, as in the field of the history of sciences and other specialized histories of ideas, of the indissoluble connections between their

subjects: these trends have all contributed to create a potential interdisciplinary space, in which the history of ideas must and can correspond to the intersection of different disciplines. This is a space which so far has not been given adequate expression, other than on an occasional basis. Our journal would like to offer such a space on a systematic basis.

While more clearly defined methodological approaches will be present in the journal (as can be seen already from the first issue) we are especially interested in devoting space to contributions which, in practicing a history of ideas in a genuinely interdisciplinary way, offer instances of methodological innovation. As a matter of fact, our journal would like to transform itself into an ongoing open research site, for reflection and mutual exchange between disciplines, indeed between specializations which do not always have the opportunity for crossing, measuring and mingling in the investigation of common topics which inevitably require an interdisciplinary approach.

The rigorous selectivity in the choice of articles for publication is therefore essential for our initiative. We will offer space for methodological reflection, for discussion between specialists in different disciplines, but the articles published will be strictly interdisciplinary in their approach and in their content. Needless to say, this approach must be fully verifiable, on the basis of the methodologies used, or of the topic chosen. In both cases the conception must be markedly interdisciplinary. All published articles will be subject to peer review, with at least two reviewers with different competences. (We should add that, since the journal is based in Italy, there will never be more than one Italian reviewer for each article, if any.)

We want to avoid, within the limits of our abilities, the pitfall of superficiality in the interdisciplinary approach. We shall always ask ourselves: are the topics (concepts, ideas, doctrines, and general intellectual phenomena) of the articles selected intrinsically interdisciplinary? Is the historiographical development really interdisciplinary? Can the interdisciplinarity deployed really reconnect or advance our knowledge in different fields? We hope that such researches, inspired as they ought to be by a history of ideas which relates to the corpora and languages of specific fields (the history of science, of economic ideas, of legal ideas, of mathe-

matics, of medicine, etc.), will encourage the conscious development of a global and comprehensive historical understanding.

**2** THE articles in this journal will be published in English or in French. English and French have been chosen as vehicles of scholarly communication, since they play a crucial role in the circulation of ideas on which interdisciplinarity is based. This is to some extent an arbitrary choice, but we must admit, albeit reluctantly, that Italian, German, Spanish have expressed very rich intellectual traditions, but they have never established themselves as tools of international communication of the history of ideas neither in the past (as was the case for French) nor in the present (as is the case with English).

While we have decided to rule out any chronological limit, nevertheless we plan to favour topics connected to the Early Modern Age and the “transition period”. Exchanges between philosophy, philology, rhetoric, or between medicine, historiography and political theory, or, to give an almost banal example, between philology and theology: between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries all these exchanges produced not only debates, but a new assemblage of ideas. The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw the great philosophers-mathematicians (such as Descartes, Leibnitz, Newton), and the close connection between the sciences of organised life and mechanical physics, or between nascent microscopy and the metaphysics of the infinitesimal calculus. In the Early Modern Age, in every intellectual domain, as we learn from many important studies, the history of technology is always intermingled with the history of ideas.

The “long 18<sup>th</sup> century” is marked by the birth of the modern sciences of economics, of anthropology, of statistics, of chemistry. These were all sciences which shared (among themselves and with other sciences) a large part of their technical vocabulary and their conceptual tools. We often find the same words and reflections in literature, physiology and psychology, or in political economy and natural history. Finally, the procedures of many disciplines which in this period set out their corpus of principles, their language, are largely characterized by an interdisciplinary approach. Adam Smith is the author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* before

publishing the *Wealth of Nations*. Du Pont de Nemours, the author of the *Physiocratie* (which publicized the principles of the first scientific theory of economics) was well aware of the connections of scientific knowledge. In 1814 he wrote to J.-B. Say, reproaching him for excessive specialization, pointing out that political economy was not confined to the science of wealth, but it was also the science of constitutions.

**3** THIS project originates from the interdisciplinary experience of the two Editors (trained respectively as a philosopher and as a historian). They share a common interdisciplinary attitude in the history of ideas in their respective research domains, and a desire to compare different kinds of interdisciplinary practices. A group of young scholars who share this experience in their research have taken part in the conception and realization of the journal—they represent the most dynamic part of the editorial board.

This new journal is also the expression of our common work in other fields. We have created a Interdisciplinary Group of the History of Ideas (GISI, to be found on <http://www.gisi.unito.it>) created by researchers from the University of Turin, but also open to common initiatives with researchers from other institutions and universities. The Group aims to encourage exchanges between specialists from different disciplinary backgrounds, and to promote interdisciplinary research in the history of ideas. With this objective in mind, we have started to organize (as in all scholarly cooperation) workshops, discussions on recently published books, and methodological seminars on interdisciplinary issues, with special attention to researches by younger scholars.

In line with the interdisciplinary approach of European research directives, we are confident that the history of ideas can contribute to a reflection on the intellectual foundations of our present culture. We see this journal as a potential reference for specialists of different disciplines, a place to have them come together and to encourage their exchanges, by creating an international network of discussion and mutual exchanges.