

Editorial

At its beginning, a journal is little more than a space in which something might or might not happen. The arena opened up by a journal is a clearing in which truths may become public. They may then be developed or subjected to critique. Our intention with this journal, in particular, is to increase the space available in today's academy and the extramural world for a discussion of Italian philosophy: its nature, its history, and the thinkers and writers who constitute it and continue to elaborate its potential.

A large part of a publication's task is, therefore, *exposure*, and by these means we hope to foster an already burgeoning interest in the philosophy of Italy, and so to increase the likelihood of further studies, publications, and projects in the same area. Publishers, after all, tend to have economic matters uppermost in their minds, often of necessity, and without the promise of a 'market', they are sometimes unwilling to venture the translation of 'unknowns' or the publication of works concerning those who remain obscure. Similarly, in the university, one hears of doctoral students being discouraged from studying 'obscure' figures for the risk of failing to fit into any pre-existing 'niche' within the academic 'job market'.

We regret the subordination of both publishing and academia to the market, but if we cannot yet destroy it, we may nevertheless intervene within it and help to create a new kind of 'demand', which the market should then feel it may not be entirely without profit to 'supply'. We can, in other words, create new niches, and indeed use a journal such as this, in concert with other initiatives, to broaden them together with those that already exist, so as to make room for productive work in the pursuit of truth. As we began by saying, a journal in its ideal form is a space in which one writes so as to attempt, however slowly and partially, to allow truth to emerge, and purported truths to be contested by other writers and readers. It provides a — more or less public — space for thought.

In particular, we feel that Italian philosophy is today perhaps more worthy than any other of this kind of intervention, as Italian soil is proving to be an extraordinarily fertile ground for new concepts and innovative engagements between philosophy and those disciplines with which it proves itself capable of communicating, from law to theology, from linguistics to anthropology, politics, and beyond. It is even tempting to think that, if there were to be one single geographical and linguistic location for philosophy that would prolong the history that some have considered to run from Ancient Greece to Modern Germany, and finally to the France of the 1960's, then it might be contemporary Italy.

An awareness of this possibility has already begun to dawn, and as testimony to this one need cite only the ever-increasing and in some cases long-standing prominence of such exceptional thinkers as Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Antonio Negri, and Gianni Vattimo, as well as certain figures who have perhaps in the last ten years gained increasing notice in Anglophone circles, such as Paolo Virno, Christian Marazzi, and Maurizio Lazzarato. This has been thanks to the noble efforts of publishers, editors, and, above all, translators.

And the number of these ventures is growing, for in addition to an already established series of books devoted to Italian thought by SUNY Press and Seagull Books, as well as notable work carried out for a long time now by Stanford University Press and Semiotext(e), we find forthcoming series proposed by both MIT Press and Bloomsbury. A Society of Italian Philosophy has also been established.

We wish to foster the expansion of all these initiatives, without any unnecessary limits. With so much happening, there is plenty to discuss. This ambition of limitlessness is assisted by the online status of the journal. We are not subject to any serious constraints of space, or any particular censorship; we make no binding promises of calendrical regularity which would demand a certain number of issues per year – no more, but also no less. One of our interventions in the marketplace of publication in particular, in which we are thankfully by no means alone, is to resist all of those features which make the experience of publishing in academic journals so increasingly frustrating and often unjust: the cost of accessing many journals, for libraries but much more so for individuals, particularly those outside of the academy; the quite irrational and needless demand for standardisation, often to an excruciating degree (formatting, punctuation, referencing....) even *before* the article has been accepted for publication in that particular journal; the properly staggering response times, partly consequent upon the immense pressure to publish in certain journals which have been elevated at least temporarily to the status of the ‘prestigious’; the constraints of a certain length, style, and easily identifiable genre of text, among many other things.

Being published online, in an ‘open-access’ form, we see no need automatically or in advance to impose these templates which function perhaps deliberately to discourage ‘speculative’ contributors, of whom there are – for certain journals – always ‘too many’, or simply as the expressions of a superficial desire for a veneer of ‘professionalism’ or an easily identifiable ‘brand’.

Of course, it would be unwise to imagine that we can free ourselves from these desires and necessities altogether, but we can try to minimise as far as possible the limitations they tend to impose, in terms of wasted time in particular, and the deleterious effects of such wastage upon authors and the quality and freedom of the work they produce. In other words, we should like to allow others to devote as much of their attention as we have the power to influence exclusively to *philosophy*.

This issue of our journal contains the first English translation of a work by Giorgio Agamben, originally published in 1968 in Italian, and now extremely difficult to obtain. We must thank the author for granting his permission to reprint the original here in a revised and corrected form, which may be considered final, and the translator, Connal Parsley, for his supreme efforts in bringing this remarkable text to a new audience.

‘The Tree of Language’ (*L’albero del linguaggio*) is an attempt to construct nothing less than a genealogy of contemporary linguistics. Kevin Attell has devoted a number of important pages to this work, and we thought it a matter of urgency that it be made available to Anglophone readers. The text is astonishing in its prescience, constituting Agamben’s very first engagement with a topic that would preoccupy the final chapter of his book, *Stanzas*, which deploys a certain reading of Saussure against Derrida, who is, as so often with Agamben, invoked without being named here, save subliminally.

In the present work, we find a similar critique of the interpretation of language as a system of *signs* (the ‘semiological’ conception) given in a year that cannot but be significant for readers of Derrida: 1968, just one year after the great opening trilogy of 1967. It is as if Agamben saw from the very beginning how necessary it would be to distance his own project from such an immensely powerful use of so many of the thinkers dear to him, by another whose work at first glance might appear uncannily similar to his own – perhaps even to warn readers against a certain seduction here.

Rather remarkably, the text also contains a reference to quantum physics, in the form of Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, to which Agamben would return almost half a century later, in a short text on probability, entitled *What is Real?*

The text thus reveals how quickly it was that Agamben came to find his own voice; while in the 1960’s it was closer to Heidegger’s than it would later become, it is already by no means that of a mere disciple. Such an early work allows us to marvel once again at the remarkable constancy in the concerns and references which have characterised Agamben’s work right up to the present day and from close to the very beginning.

This continuity in Agamben’s thought is noted by Lorenzo Chiesa in the first of two texts devoted to Agamben’s work that follow this translation. These articles, by Chiesa and Stephen Howard, respectively, both address questions to Agamben’s corpus as a whole, with Chiesa drawing out the project of Homo Sacer by tugging on a certain discreet thread within *The Use of Bodies*, which concludes the series. This strand is bound around Sophocles’ phrase regarding the ‘superpolitical apolitical’. Given the continuity of Agamben’s thought, the entire edifice of Homo Sacer – and as we have seen, even earlier and beyond this series – may be at risk if a certain element here fails to hold.

Howard then exposes Agamben's project in a different light, by considering its overall method, and in doing so pursues a question the posing of which is long overdue: does Agamben distinguish between 'genealogy' and 'archaeology'? The precise provenance of these terms is carefully determined, along with the trajectory that carries them from Nietzsche and Foucault to Agamben.

The next section of the journal includes a penetrating engagement with the work of Simona Forti by Lars Cornelissen, which traces an alternative genealogy of the contemporary figure of 'evil' by reconsidering what Forti calls the 'Dostoevsky paradigm'.

Then, Andrea Bellocci engages with the question of truth in the context of hermeneutic philosophy, and with a hermeneutics of a particularly Italian kind, stemming as it does from the work of Luigi Pareyson. Bellocci allows us to become thoroughly acquainted with the latter's work, whilst maintaining a certain distance at once both respectful and critical. One of the central questions raised here, and to which the author offers a novel response, is that of the status of the claim that truth is infinitely interpretable: does the principle exclude itself from the very realm which it governs? And one might note in passing that Bellocci's text contains a discussion of evil which may be placed in communication with that of Cornelissen in the essay that precedes it.

Following these articles is an eclectic selection of review-essays, longer and more philosophically satisfying perhaps than a standard book-review, which vouchsafe us a series of snapshots of recent works in and around Italian thought.

Let us note in passing that in a number of cases, we have somewhat artificially appended to these reviews bibliographies as complete as we could manage. We hope gradually to expand these bibliographies and include more of them, both in the journal and on our website, where they may be corrected and kept up to date collectively.

Lucio Privitello provides us with a vibrant extended essay on Claudio Paolucci's recent book, yet to be translated into English, on a student of Luigi Pareyson, and perhaps one of Italy's most underrated thinkers – in academic philosophical circles, at least – Umberto Eco.

Sevgi Doğan presents a recent text by Roberto Esposito, *Da Fuori: Una filosofia per l'Europa* (very recently published in an English translation by Zakiya Hanafi under the title of *A Philosophy for Europe: From the Outside*), a timely discussion of the meaning and future of Europe when the integrity of the union has come to seem more fragile than ever. At stake here is something like a *philosophical* understanding of the crisis within Europe, and that involves Esposito in an engagement with the nature and development of *European* philosophy and its curious relation with distinct *national* philosophies, including what he has termed 'Italian Thought'.

Finally, my own text presents a reading of Paolo Virno's *Essay on Negation*, at the time of writing (May 2018) due to appear in an English rendition

by Lorenzo Chiesa. I attempt to clarify the place of this work and its problematic within the context of Virno's work as a whole and to demonstrate how it might be employed so as to resolve certain questions raised by a systematic reconstruction of Virno's philosophical gesture. This means engaging with his conception of the relation between the transcendental and the empirical, their historical collapse, and the way in which 'human nature' is conceived in light of this.

Finally, I must, on behalf of the entire editorial board, thank our authors and translators for allowing their work to appear in a forum entirely untried and untested, to expend such time and effort on a venture with no guarantee of any lasting or even fleeting success. If the undertaking does indeed succeed to any significant degree, it will be thanks to their willingness to take such a risk – and in an academic culture where certainty and long-established prestige seem to be the order of the day.

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