Editorial

At least two of the traits that Roberto Esposito proposes as part of a characterisation of Italian thought from the beginning may be taken to weave the present volume together: the renunciation of a transcendental mode of thinking, and concomitant with that an amelioration of the metaphysical divide that separates rational man from irrational nature and its animals. This involves placing thought and life on the same immanent level.

At stake in nearly all of our texts, explicitly or implicitly, is an attempt to bring thought and life closer to one another, or more generally, and contrary to a predominant tradition of metaphysics, to think whatever is specific to the human (which is often thought itself) as inseparable from the living thing that it also is and that other types of life also are. But in each and every case this is achieved without giving in to a facile naturalism more befitting of another tradition of thought. The essays contained herein thus exemplify the Italian philosophy to which our journal has devoted itself, for if Italian thought can be captured in a single description it is this attempt to depose a certain oppositional way of thinking about human nature and to place man and animal on a continuum without conceding everything — or even very much at all — to a naturalisation of the human.

Alberto Parisi demonstrates how a consideration of language that refuses to ignore its constitution by the aspirated breath allows one to move beyond the quasi-transcendental conception of the connection between language, meaning, and world to which deconstruction was compelled to confine itself: the living creature with its *phōnē* respires just as much as those who sublimate their breath in *logos*. Living creatures have voices, according to Aristotle; or, we might say, so as to emphasise the supposed difference between humans and animals, the latter 'make noises': they squeak, chitter, squark, and warble, and for these pretty but not particularly intelligible sounds to become human, they need the kind of articulation that *letters* provide. With this modulation, these musical emanations that seem sometimes to amount to little more than automatic reactions to pleasure and pain become capable of expressing supernatural ideas: ethics, justice, and law. Thus the political community of human beings opens within an articulation of the natural voice. Parisi demonstrates how the animal's song, along with the breath that animates it, have been conceived differently in the Italian tradition from Giorgio Colli to Giorgio Agamben, Adriana Cavarero and Emanuele Coccia, in relation to the reading of metaphysics that envisions it as being devoted to the dream of a pure unlettered voice that is infinitely present to itself.

With a new conception of breath, the relation between human and animal

need no longer be understood solely on the basis of what is said by metaphysics to come *later* (writing and its letters) but may be thought in terms of the speech that comes first and flourishes almost everywhere in the animal kingdom. Parisi resuscitates pneumatology and indeed reveals it never to have been stifled on the Italian peninsula. He thereby sheds much needed light on the relation between Italian thinkers, Agamben and Cavarero especially, and Derrida, on the question of speech and writing.

As Parisi indicates, following Emanuele Coccia, respiration allows us to think together not just man and animal but both of these together with the plant, and the capacity of all these organisms to adapt themselves to their environment is the subject of Pier Alberto Porceddu Cilione's essay on *oikeiōsis*.

Cilione demonstrates that this notion, the becoming 'at home' (*oikos*) of the animal with its own constitution which in turn allows it to settle in to its milieu or 'niche', provides us with one of the most powerful ways in which to formulate Giorgio Agamben's 'solution' to the problem of biopolitics, which is to say the type of 'life' that he urges us to conceive in the desuetude of the sovereign apparatus that creates the opposition between *zōē* and *bios* before collapsing it into bare life at the end of history. Beyond all three we happen upon a fourth kind of life that seems to be neither human nor animal — nor divine.

Notions such as this are easily mistaken for naturalistic terms, but they name a life that simply escapes the grasp of the conceptual oppositions which we shall come to identify with the poles that govern the various machines that populate Agamben's work and which are ultimately grounded upon the machine — or apparatus (*dispositivo*) — that is language, with its fundamentally oppositional structure. Agamben's work is shown by Cilione to be a search for the excluded middle, which is the ultimate niche into which our future life must insinuate itself. If this does indeed overcome the transcendental approach, then it nevertheless does not fall back into the naturalistic.

Agamben retrieves the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis* in order to delineate an alternative ontology of selfhood, suppressed by the accumulated weight of the legal notion of self-possession (property) and the responsibility it entails. This yields a conception of reflexivity that spans the animal and the human, in that *oikeiōsis* refers to the way in which any organism, perhaps plants as well, acquires a sense of its own extremities as tethered to its very core. It is the means by which the mereological relation is formed and life acquires the elementary autonomy that is the interdependence of parts and whole: in animals this takes the form of spontaneous motion, self-motivation, and in humans a certain (rationally controlled) liberty with respect to nature itself. If we are to think a new and blessed life — in which bodies get used to themselves, use themselves, and are used in the novel sense that Agamben assigns to this word, 'use' — then the notion of a certain self-'conciliation' or 'familiarisation' might provide us with a privileged way in.

Oikeiōsis bespeaks a self-relation that is at the same time a relation to others, an explosion of the individual that opens it from the very first moment onto a

certain commonality. Cilione's account is followed by two texts, originally given as talks at the same symposium in 2016 at the Brighton-Sussex Medical School, which directly, in the case of Tom Frost's piece, and indirectly devote themselves to the question of the precise relation that is said to hold between life's immunity and its community, to use the terms that Esposito has popularised. In other words, they pursue the question of this fourth kind of life, the life that an 'affirmative biopolitics' would urge upon us, into the political arena, where the relation between individuality and collectivity becomes pressing. That this has become all the more so of late opens the second of these essays onto the later book review that deals with Giorgio Agamben's *Where are we now?*

Frost's text stages its encounter around the notion of *munus*, not nearly as central to Agamben's work, at least on first glance, as it is to Esposito's. *Munus* names the obligation owed to others, or the set of official duties that one is expected to carry out in aid of one's community; this 'debt' stands at the heart of Esposito's notions of com-munity and im-munity. In the final analysis, Frost juxtaposes Esposito's affirmative biopolitics with Agamben's putative rejection of all biopolitics and all apparatuses which subjectivate life, so as to pose the tantalising question of the 'little difference' that separates the present world from the utopia that might — here and there, in the most unsuspected corners — already be with us, but whose glimmers the current exacerbation of biopolitical restrictions on human life risks snuffing out for good.

The following contribution stages the confrontation on a level that is avowedly not that of biopolitics, at least in the strict sense, and concerns itself with what Frost considers in the guise of the apparatus of capture and which might perhaps be understood by Esposito as an 'institution': Agamben has recently written that, in light of what has happened to us over the last two years, it is time to set human life free from institutions, a possibility that Esposito's position, particularly in his later thought, explicitly rules out. But here we ask the question of just what an apparatus — or rather a 'machine' — is. In the context of Esposito's *Two* and Agamben's *The Kingdom and the Glory* these machines operate in a curiously similar fashion, oscillating between two poles and feeding off the life that they have ensnared, to the point of exhaustion. In this way we hope to determine what is to be done with these machines at what seems to be a turning point in their history.

The following three essays pursue tracks that may be said to diverge from the biopolitical tradition into supposedly less 'radical' areas of thought, but nevertheless they may be seen to exemplify in another manner the conception of Italian thought that we began by identifying. In each case the timeliness of such apparently untimely figures as Benedetto Croce, Norberto Bobbio, Luigi Pareyson, and Carlo Sini is forcefully demonstrated, along with the fact that often the most orthodox and conservative in appearance can prove to be the most authentically radical, particularly in times when the radical left has so dishonoured itself in so many

respects. To be liberal under totalitarian rule calls for the greatest daring.

The time is ripe not just for a consideration of the living being's role as part of the civic body, but for an examination of the deliberate obliteration — which some call 'ideology', some 'censorship' — of those who might criticise the apparently hegemonic conception of that role. Equally, now is the moment to cast some light on the rather eclipsed tradition of liberal — anti-authoritarian — thought in Italy and elsewhere, at a time when liberty is in such short supply and apparently bad odour. This may be taken to demonstrate the way in which thinkers upon whom shadows of various kinds have fallen may at certain times come unexpectedly to enjoy the limelight and reflect some of their brilliance back onto current events.

Taking these essays in reverse order: Roberto Redaelli demonstrates that Carlo Sini may help us to navigate our way between the supposed idealism of the 'postmodern' and the absolutist realism of the Speculative Materialists. He is able to do so thanks to his notion of a certain skilful practice (generalised so as to encompass even its opposite — theory) which allows the human subject to make its way around its environment. This notion of practice might be said to move in the same direction as the 'excluded third' dear to those thinkers of life who wish to rescue it from the clutches of the oppositional machine, lending as it does a certain positivity to what might otherwise be the object of a negative-theological (or *purely* transcendental) discourse.

Just as it is through breathing that the living being and the world come to suffuse one another, and through *oikeiōsis* that they come to accommodate themselves to one another, here the relation between man and world is no longer understood according to the Modern conception of a subject and an object (this anti-Cartesianism was also identified by Esposito as a striking tendency of Italian thought). Indeed, the way in which a practice constitutes its own subject and object rather than being preceded by them bears a striking resemblance to Agamben's notion of 'use'.

If the relation — use or practice — that life takes up with itself is immediately a relation with others, then the telling of that life in the form of an autobiography must include an account of these others. Franco Manni's semi-autobiographical account of his relations with Croce and Bobbio depicts a common life at once intellectual and personal. The very possibility of such a thing as an 'intellectual (auto)biography' testifies to the intimate intertwining of thought and life, philosophy and living, while the account of an intellectual apprenticeship demonstrates that such a biography need not be merely individual but may uncover the way in which teaching — the teaching of philosophy in particular, it might be said — can make possible an intellectual (and personal) community comprised of those who live and breathe the same air and take in the same lofty philosophical atmosphere.

Daniele Fulvi in a text on evil in Pareyson (a notion that recent thinkers like Simona Forti have also not been afraid to rehabilitate) shows us that even in what Esposito might label — critically — a 'personalistic' philosophy, in this case a

personalism of an existentialist type, given to stressing the freedom of the individual (hence the ineluctable tendency towards a certain liberalism or libertarianism within existentialism), such a person is constituted only in a relation to something that transcends it. In Pareyson's case this is not another human being on the same plane of immanence, but rather Being or God: thus the individual from the very first does not do without a communal relation, it is just that here this assumes the form of a bond in the sense of *religio* rather than an obligation to a finite other. But even here, God is taken to have a personal form, as existing through a free act of will rather than being necessitated by his concept as the ontological argument affirms. Thus, even when one is abandoned, given over entirely to one's self, one is never altogether alone, and the person is always at least two.

There is also another ever so slightly concealed relation between Pareyson and the biopolitical thinkers that have occupied the greater part of our attention thus far: the existentialist urge towards the concretion of singular existents is entirely commensurate in its underlying thrust with the turning of thought in the direction of the real that we have picked out as a potential characteristic of Italian thought. To what extent the philosophers of biopolitics might be said discreetly to enjoy an existentialist filiation, even when their terminology seems distant from it, would merit further study (in the present volume, Tom Frost draws attention to the privileging of *existentia* over *essentia*, mode over substance, the priority of the hypostatic event, that Agamben sometimes broaches in the wake of a certain existentialistic moment in the early Levinas and the Neo-Platonists; and this without yet even mentioning the Heideggerian legacy).

In the section of the journal devoted to Reviews, the question of life in a non-human form is addressed by Ermanno Castanò's reading of a text on animality edited by Felice Cimatti and Carlo Salzani. He demonstrates, following Cimatti and Esposito, among others, that Giambattista Vico's rejection of Descartes' dualism between thought and extension allowed Italian thought from the very beginning to conceive the relation between man and animal in a way that would not receive the attention it was due until our own century, with the waning of the Cartesian paradigm. This is the relation to animals that Francis of Assisi embodied, in which the law of sovereign power, the symbolic 'no' that is said to separate us absolutely from the animal realm, has declined and the paradise from which it expelled us may once again be glimpsed.

If the Aristotelian hierarchy of souls runs, effectively, from the lifeless stone to the barely living plant, to irrational beasts and the rational animal that is man, hovering indeterminately between the lifeless and the living, around stone, plant, and animal, lies the virus, failing to abide by even the most elementary principle of human thought, the principle of identity, being subject to a continuous potential metamorphosis. For something that by any measure barely exists, it has had — indirectly — immeasurable consequences for the human polity in recent times. Thus we conclude with two review essays devoted once again to the relation

between community and immunity. Beyond the interpretations of Esposito given earlier, we find in Giorgio Astone's review of Donatella Di Cesare's text on 'resident foreigners', a philosophy of migration in which *debt* (in the sense of *munus*) remains central, as does the immunisation that ensues when one washes one's hands of obligations to others. The state functions in an immunising fashion when it stems the freely moving flow of migration — so much akin to the supposed dispersion of the virus — so as to clearly delineate its boundaries and the conditions that might allow someone from beyond the seas to belong to it. Once again, it seems to be state sovereignty that is responsible for such 'life and death decisions', and this impels Di Cesare in an anarchistic direction. At stake, throughout this volume, is the extent to which a community is prepared to sacrifice itself in the name of an immunity that preserves its identity, and the question of who is to say that it should.