

Introduction. Italian Philosophy from Abroad

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The past few years have attested to the emergence of a new area of interest among scholars of continental thought, namely, the increased presence and popularity of Italian philosophy. The reasons for this rise are varied, and we will not address or speculate on them here. Also, the very questions of what constitutes Italian philosophy, whether there even is a unified phenomenon such as Italian philosophy and if so, when did it begin, what characterizes and differentiates it, etc. are topics of debate and, at times, contention. Regardless of these issues, it is undeniable that the philosophical positions of contemporary Italian thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, and Antonio Negri, to name but a few, have gained prominence in recent philosophical discussions.

Although its origins, nature, figures, and defining features (if any) may remain up for debate, the tradition of Italian philosophical thought has a history, breadth, and width that go well beyond the recent popularity enjoyed by positions associated with what has become widely known as Italian Theory. One could think of important historical figures such as (just to name a few) Dante Alighieri, Marsilio Ficino, Niccolò Machiavelli, Giordano Bruno, Galileo Galilei, Giambattista Vico, Benedetto Croce, and Antonio Gramsci. But also, and more recently, one could name the positions of Gianni Vattimo and his *pensiero debole*, Vincenzo Vitiello and his reflection on topology, Carlo Sini and his thought of practices, Massimo Cacciari and his negative politics and theology, Adriana Cavarero and Luisa Muraro and the thinking of difference, and the list could go on.

Yet, due in part to linguistic barriers, much of this philosophical work (especially the more recent material) has remained largely unknown outside of Italy, accessible to and accessed by only a small number of specialized scholars. To remedy in part this situation of a lack of knowledge and appreciation abroad and to provide a forum for wide conversations of a critical nature on the various aspects, themes, and figures that may be loosely gath-

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ered under the category of Italian philosophy, the Society for Italian Philosophy (SIP: <https://www.societyforitalianphilosophy.org>) was founded approximately four years ago outside of Italy, on the North–American continent. The primary goal of the Society is to promote Italian philosophy, broadly understood as consisting of both its historical content as well as its more recent expressions, inside as well as outside of Italy. The creative and impressive body of recent philosophical work in Italy over the last 40 years has and is continuing to have an impact around the world. This fruitful period of thinking is marked not only by the production of texts and ideas but also by intense debate, critique, and polemics. SIP’s hope is that it can contribute to the further development of Italian philosophy by bringing it into contact with its others, not only the varied schools of Italian thought but also schools and ideas that lie outside the Italian framework, broadly understood.

The essays gathered in this volume of *Trópos* comprise a sample of the work carried out by SIP at its third international conference held at Stony Brook University, New York, March 28–30, 2019. After meeting on the North–American territory for the first three years (London, ON, Canada; Rochester, NY, USA; and Stony Brook, NY, USA), in 2020 SIP will meet at the University of Turin. This international gathering will be the first time the Society will meet in Italy. We are grateful to Professor Gaetano Chiurazzi, who will serve as the local host for the Turin gathering, for the kind invitation to showcase some of SIP’s work here in *Trópos*. The essays we have collected represent, for the most part, work done outside of Italy, which now comes back into the Italian scholarly context, thereby facilitating a dialogue across oceans and testifying to the international movement that is Italian philosophy today. The essays gathered here do not follow any thematic order or sequence. They ought to be read as individual contributions to the conversation on Italian philosophy and its engagement with various interlocutors.

Embodied life and subjectivities are at the center of Silvia Benso’s “Affirmative Biopolitics: Life, Love, and Politics in Lea Melandri.” In this contribution, Benso offers an account of Lea Melandri’s philosophical position, especially as it emerges from her fundamental book, *Love and Violence*, her only complete work accessible in English. Melandri’s thought, centered on exposing the patriarchal traits that still characterize current dimensions of social and political life, aims at affirming a politics of life where individual, real subjects retain their embodied singularity and are not subsumed into the abstraction of concepts, universalities, and predetermined identities.

Alessandro Carrera’s contribution, “The Restless Mind of Italian Humanism: On Massimo Cacciari’s *La mente inquieta*,” follows Cacciari’s intention to emancipate fifteenth–century Italian humanism from the assumption that it was not real philosophy but rather philology and scholarship. By arguing that philology is philosophy and through an analysis of the role

that Fortune plays in the thought of various Italian humanists, Cacciari also brings to light the tragic component present in humanism, more specifically, in its unfulfilled longing for peace.

In “Organized Loneliness,” Diane Enns brings Italian thinking into conversation with other important figures like Hannah Arendt on important social problems. Mass urbanization, the changing nature of work, and a globalized economy have dramatically altered sociality, resulting in what Enns, borrowing from Arendt, calls “organized loneliness.” Franco “Bifo” Berardi’s discussion of work, abstraction, and semiocapitalism are mined and analyzed in order to augment Arendt’s deep insight. But Enns also notes that if we are to take Berardi’s claims seriously, more is at stake than just the decline of community. Organized loneliness challenges the very possibility of worlding that Arendt sees as vital for the human condition.

Mark Epstein’s contribution, “Preve’s Uses of Lukács: Rethinking a Marxian Tradition,” examines Costanzo Preve’s use of György Lukács as both a provocation and foundation for Preve’s own project of an ontology of the social being. The essay shows not only how Preve and Lukács are on opposite trajectories concerning the understanding and evaluation of the idealism–materialism continuum, but also how both thinkers share the need for a rethinking of the Marxian tradition that addresses aspects of social reproduction beyond economics.

Travis Holloway’s essay, “A Strategy for a Democratic Future: Constituent or Destituent Power?,” confronts the political question of the best strategy to employ for a democratic future. In conversation with recent work by Giorgio Agamben and, especially, *The Invisible Committee*, Holloway addresses aspects of the positions of those who invoke a constituent form of power that seeks to reform through constituent activities and demonstrations, and the positions of those who uphold destituent forms of power as a way to withdraw and dissolve the state through a lack of people’s legitimation. Rather than simply considering the two forms as opposites, Holloway highlights the strengths and weaknesses of destituent political activities in terms of their possibilities of imagining a world where one lives otherwise, that is, not according to neoliberal, capitalistic, self-entrepreneurial lifestyles.

In “Should We Renounce Hegel? From Existentialism to Hermeneutics,” Alberto Martinengo explores the relation between some of the most important representatives of Italian hermeneutics, namely Luigi Pareyson, Valerio Verra, and Gianni Vattimo, and Hegel’s philosophical position with the aim of showing that the discussion of Hegel by the aforementioned thinkers is fully part of the origin and history of Italian philosophical hermeneutics, which lie far beyond the narrow limits of early twentieth-century Hegelianism.

Angelica Nuzzo's "Leopardi Beyond Spinoza: Hegel's Logic of Essence" makes the case that Giacomo Leopardi's *Dialogo della Natura e di un Islandese* (1824) and the late poem *La Ginestra* (1836) offer readers a deeper understanding of the freedom of Nature that moves beyond the controversial reading of Hegel's understanding of the Absolute as being similar to Spinoza's *Deus sive natura*. Nuzzo not only corrects the misreading of Hegel along Spinozist lines but also introduces a broader, more dynamic understanding of absolute freedom through the philosophical writings of Leopardi, a figure that in Italy is seen as a philosopher, but which is seen more as a poet by Anglo-American readers. Nuzzo's essay captures a rich hallmark of Italian thought, namely, its engagement with literature and poetry, which are received as articulating profound philosophical insights.

The collection of essays concludes with Ariana Ragusa's "Tasting *Vino* with Vico: Full-Bodied Discourse," which creatively joins Giambattista Vico's account, in *The New Science*, of the origin and use of metaphors with a descriptive analysis of the experience of winetasting. Whereas Vico's narrative traces the birth and development of language to sight and hearing, the activity of winetasting, centered on the senses of taste and smell, supplements and expands Vico's linguistic considerations to the hedonic senses of taste, smell, and touch. Thus, Ragusa argues, winetasting offers a welcome enrichment of the human sensorial experience of embodiment, the earth, one another, and our own self.

As one can glimpse from these overviews of the essays contained in the current issue of *Trópos*, interest in Italian philosophy covers a broad range of content—from feminist themes to existential and political issues, from historic figures to more contemporary ones, from single authors to challenging conversations set up between Italian and non-Italian thinkers, from literature to philosophy. We, the editors, wish to thank the authors of the contributions for their willingness to let us reproduce their essays in this volume and give the readers of *Trópos* an additional sense of important thinking occurring within the context of Italian philosophy.