

The publication of *Phenomenology in Italy: Authors, Schools, and Traditions* is, to say the least, a breath of fresh air for the anglophone, especially American, philosophical community. This book is nothing less than the introduction of an entirely new phenomenological tradition into the international phenomenological conversation. For, though Italy has a long and rich phenomenological tradition that lacks nothing when compared to, for example, the French reception of Husserl and Heidegger, it has remained mostly unknown to English-speaking scholars and especially to those working in the United States. This collection features essays by Italian scholars on the most important figures of the Italian phenomenological tradition, from Antonio Banfi to Paolo Parrini, spanning three academic generations. Each essay tackles a different author and the order is, as much as possible, chronological. The result is a volume that should spark a curiosity analogous to that of the discovery of a new continent, for the Italian phenomenological tradition has taken phenomenology in directions that, outside of Italy, will result entirely novel. From aesthetics to political philosophy to philosophy of science and even mathematics, the contributions of Italian phenomenologists are sure to breathe new life into the discipline. To this end, I would like to point to the SUNY Press series in Contemporary Italian Philosophy, which features translations of important contemporary Italian philosophers, including some of those featured in this book.

Before giving a summary of the contents, there is an important critique that should be made to this book, namely, that of a certain one-sidedness in the philosophers who were chosen to be showcased. Certainly, the Italian phenomenological tradition is far too vast to be covered in a single volume, but here phenomenology is entirely synonymous with Husserl. There is in fact a conspicuous absence of Heidegger and his reception which was certainly, if not as widespread, then as influential as the Husserlian. In fact, this collection centers mainly on the Milan School of Phenomenology, which has prospered in the State University of Milan since the 1920's. Yet one wonders why there are no chapter devoted to what we might call the "Turin School," which would include at the very least Luigi Pareyson, who was among the first to introduce Heidegger to Italy, and his student Gianni Vattimo, already known in anglophone circles for his hermeneutics and political thought. And perhaps the most glaring absence in the book is that of Aldo Masullo, the recently deceased philosopher from Naples who wrote extensively not only on Husserl, but also on Heidegger, Fink, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, and who influenced the direction of research in Naples in a way that we still observe today (consider, for example, the work of his student Eugenio Mazzarella).

I will discuss each essay in turn, lingering over what I take to be the most original and important contributions.

Federica Buongiorno, one of the editors of this volume, opens the book with a fascinating essay of the reception of Husserl in Italy through the phases of the translations of his works. This is a philological analysis of the decisions made by Husserl's various translators, which, Buongiorno sees, are indicative of how Husserlian phenomenology was received in Italy. This essay investigates mainly the so-called "second phase" of Husserlian reception, focusing on Enzo Paci and his interpretation of Husserl. The first phase would be in the time of Antonio Banfi, who was Paci's teacher and belonged to the earlier generation, and the third would be the current proliferation of phenomenological philosophy at the hands of Paci's students and their contemporaries. Enzo Paci is here cast as the protagonist of Husserlian studies in Italy, and his interpretation is considered one of the most influential, if not the most influential. Paci's interpretation takes Husserl's *Crisis* as his most important and primary work, thus giving his understanding of Husserl an existential, practical, and historical thinker. In this light, Husserl's

“early” preoccupations with logic and transcendental foundations would be a preparatory step toward the discovery of the pre-categorical and the *Lebenswelt* as the grounds of such theoretical activity. In this regard, Buongiorno points us to her own contribution to the translation of Husserl's works. She translated HUA/XXIV, which contains the important 1906/1907 lectures *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge*. Buongiorno helpfully points out that the very title of this work, along with several decisions which had to be made with regard to terms such as "Kunstlehre" and "Formenlehre," confirm Paci's reading of Husserl's works as unified in their subject matter and purpose.

Buongiorno proceeds to identify two differing tendencies or, less radically, two emphases in the reception of Husserlian phenomenology, and sees them as the result of how and when translations of Husserl appeared in Italy. One places emphasis on the question of logic, and the other on the theme of history. Once again, this is the identification of an “early” and a “late” Husserl, and we have seen how Paci sees a continuity between these two poles. Two translators of the *Cartesian Meditations*, first Filippo Costa in 1960 and then Renato Cristin in 1989, both agree with Paci's reading and interpret the *Meditations* accordingly. In sum, Buongiorno's essay is informative and creative in the way that it explains the Italian reception of Husserl. It prepares readers well for the interpretation of Husserl they should expect in the following chapters, but one also wonders why Buongiorno does not include the reception of *Ideas I* and *II*, especially since she informs the reader in a footnote that they were the first works to be translated (1950) and that she sees the "second phase" of the Husserlian reception as starting precisely in the early 1950's.

The second essay, authored by Luca Maria Scarantino, gives an account of how Husserl was first received in Italy by Antonio Banfi in 1923. Scarantino sees this as nothing less than a new era, a “transcendental turn” in Italian philosophy. Against the dominating neo-idealism of the early 20th century, Banfi proposed a “transcendental rationalism” that grafted onto a pre-existing neo-Kantian framework. This made subject and objects poles of a cognitive relation and left behind the need for any ontological realism. In this way, Husserl helps Banfi justify a "law of pure consciousness." Banfi's main work, *Principi di una Teoria della Ragione* [*Principles for a Theory of Reason*] extols Husserl's transcendental method as liberating the "rational system" from the need for an absolute (metaphysical) ground. In this work, pragmatism and phenomenology converge in a "transcendental functionalism" which doesn't take itself to establish a metaphysical ground for the experience of consciousness, but rather a suitable intersubjectivity based on the eidetic variation that the phenomenological method offers. We are left with an intersubjectively valid, correlational/synthetic form of rational consciousness. Furthermore, that intuition carries within itself the condition of its own understandability is for Banfi the establishment of a pragmatic a-priori.

In Banfi's critique of Husserl we see, according to Scarantino, the limitation of his philosophy. This critique is directed at the concept of intuition, which he thinks does not do enough to distinguish between the material and the rational contents. For Banfi, this ultimately brings us to mix individual experience and the rational universal. At this point Scarantino skips forward to one of Banfi's disciples, Giulio Preti, whom he reads as correcting and ultimately completing Banfi's quest for a transcendental rationalism free of metaphysical grounds. Preti's philosophy will be discussed below as part of the summary of the essay dedicated to him, but here the important thing to highlight is the extent to which Banfi's work on Husserl was influential in Italian philosophy. Later scholars have retroactively identified Banfi as the “father” of the Milan school of phenomenology because of the influence his philosophy had on his

students, many of whom are also discussed in the book. It seems that Banfi should be seen just as much one of the originators of phenomenological studies in Italy as a philosopher in his own right, though in practice the two cannot and should not remain separate.

The third essay in the book is authored by Angela Ales Bello, whose own work on Husserl is known beyond the Italian scene. She writes about Sofia Vanni Rovighi, who taught the history of philosophy at the Catholic University of Milan and encountered Husserl's works in the late 1930's after extensive work in medieval and specifically Thomist philosophy. Rovighi's main contribution to phenomenology in Italy, according to Bello, was the discovery of the medieval root of intentionality. Like many who engage Husserl, Rovighi finds it difficult to settle on a definitive understanding of Husserlian intentionality. She reaches back to Aristotle and medieval philosophy, especially the Franciscan thinker Petrus Aureolus, to show that the concept of intentionality originates in these historical sources. Intentionality for her means that consciousness is always consciousness of an ideal entity ("the ideal objectivity of the meaning obtained...through the eidetic reduction") which has its foundation in a real, existing entity. Ultimately, she takes Husserl to be placing consciousness above being in a metaphysical sense (*in se*) and proceeds to reject this position, claiming instead that being precedes consciousness of it. At this point, Bello interjects that, in her own view, the Husserlian primacy of consciousness should be understood as *quoad nos* and not *in se*.

Because of this idealist interpretation, Rovighi can only be critical of Husserl. If consciousness is the absolute principle and precedes being, then God himself can only be encountered as immanent in consciousness, as thus as dependent on it. Ultimately, Rovighi levels against Husserl's phenomenology the same criticism that she has for Plato: phenomenology cannot help us to escape the cave, because doing so requires taking on a superhuman point of view that is simply not available to phenomenologists. Now, despite her misinterpretation of Husserl, Rovighi's work is significant in that it was the first to open a dialogue between phenomenology and medieval philosophy. To this end, Rovighi not only carried out her own work, but also brought Edith Stein's phenomenology to Italy to aid in this project. If Rovighi's idealist interpretation of Husserl is corrected, then it becomes clear just how similar he and Thomas Aquinas are on many fronts. Ultimately, Bello's appreciation of Vanni Rovighi comes just as much from her historical importance in the context of the phenomenological reception in Italy, as from her admiration for Rovighi's intellectual honesty, which, she states, is a rare quality to find in a scholar.

The fourth essay, by Roberto Gronda, introduces us to the works of Giulio Preti, the student of Banfi who was already mentioned briefly in the second chapter. Preti taught and worked in Florence beginning in the mid 1930's, and he is credited with bringing to completion Banfi's transcendental rationalism. Husserl was a constant interlocutor during Preti's career, up to the very last chapters of his important work *Retorica e Logica* [*Rhetoric and Logic*]. It seems that Preti was mostly influenced by Husserl's work on logic, in particular the first *Logical Investigation* and *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, with particular interest in the idea of a pure logic, the notion of fulfillment, and the distinction between meaning and expression.

Preti's philosophy begins with what he calls the "principle of immanence," a principle drawn from Husserl which states that the object's transcendence means that it is never fully given in a single experience and therefore always indicates the possibility of further completion. In this way, the object's transcendence is another form of immanence in the sense that its objectivity is constituted in experience. This principle affects Preti's understanding of experience as always implying a horizon, such that no experience is fully intuitive and always carries

absences within it. This notion of an excess of experience leads Preti to claim that idealism and positivism are two sides of a single philosophical reality, which he calls “integral realism.” Husserlian phenomenology itself is cast as a positivism that spills over into an idealism, in particular its notion of “form” not as what is opposed to content, but as what represents, i.e., as symbol. This notion of symbol as what pre-ordains the law of the object is essential to a rationalism that wants to give the empirical its full value. To this end, Preti rejects Husserl’s hypostasis of “immediate sense data” and criticizes Husserl’s strong conception of intuition. Later, Preti writes of categories not as structures that are gleaned from experience, as Husserl would have it, but as man-made postulates that at once play a transcendental role in experience and are historically effected. Preti’s last works heavily criticize Husserl’s *Crisis*, rejecting his diagnosis of a crisis of the sciences and his solution in the form of transcendental phenomenology. These are “philosophers’ follies,” Preti states, deriving from an inversion of the relation between philosophy and life. Preti thus had his share of criticisms for Husserl, but nevertheless the German philosopher exercised an enduring influence on him.

With the fifth essay, authored by Amedeo Vigorelli, we come to Enzo Paci, the Milanese philosopher who is in many ways at the center of this volume. Paci was active beginning in the 1950’s after some time spent in the Italian army before and during the Second World War. He met Paul Ricoeur as a prisoner of war in Wietendorf and read Husserl’s *Ideas* with him. As a professor at the State University of Milan, Paci brought about a veritable phenomenological renaissance in a time when Husserl was not widely read and neo-Enlightenment was the dominant philosophy. He travels to Leuven to converse with van Breda and Boehm, reads Husserl’s unpublished works, and corresponds with Sartre, Patocka, and Ricoeur.

Paci’s reading of Husserl is greatly influenced by, and conducted in conversation with, the neo-idealism of Giovanni Gentile. Although Paci criticizes Gentile’s idealism as a naturalism (Gentile’s consciousness posits nothing more than the world as it is in the natural attitude and does not gain access to its own constituting activity), he still wants to understand the main structures of Husserl’s phenomenology (world, constitution, reduction) as a dialectical triad. Paci is most influenced, according to the author, by the fifth Cartesian Meditation, taking the “intermonadic relationship” to be even more fundamental than the process of self-identification itself, and constitutive of it. His reflections on the constitutive function of intersubjectivity bring him, on one hand, to a phenomenology of need and eros, and, on the other, to materialist and economic integrations. The main interlocutors here are Freud and Marx, each of whom witness to the essentiality of intersubjectivity and to the needs of the ego. A particularly original contribution here is Paci’s phenomenological account of sex: the sexual act here acquires a generative meaning not only in a procreative sense, but in a constitutive one, making up a *sui generis* temporal ekstasis and opening the ego teleologically to a relationship with humanity as a whole—birth and rebirth.

Paci’s return to Marx and Freud within phenomenology also serves to break the false dichotomy of natural science and philosophy of culture within which both Marxism and psychoanalysis found themselves at this time. He reads the transference in the psychoanalytic relation as a privileged place where the intersubjective “Paarung” takes place. Furthermore, “even the Marxist concept of economic structure, in its dialectical interrelations with the superstructures, requires subjective constitution” (69), Paci states. An intentionality of needs must found Marx’s account of economic and material relations between people and classes. This amounts to nothing less than a rethinking and even a rewriting of Marx’s capital by underpinning

the material and dialectical relations it described with phenomenologically purified notions of need, desire, and praxis.

The sixth essay in the volume, by Elio Franzini, takes up the phenomenological aesthetics of Dino Formaggio. Also active beginning in the early 1950's, Formaggio was another student of Antonio Banfi, a colleague of Enzo Paci, and another personality of the Milan School. Though he inherited from Banfi a critical view of Italian neo-idealism and its Hegelian roots, Formaggio nevertheless sought to bring together the two meanings of "phenomenology" (the Husserlian and the Hegelian) rather than rejecting the latter in favor of the former. Formaggio's departure from his teacher is also observed in his definition of art as a "field" that is not superimposed on objects, but rather derives from them and is therefore constantly expanded and constructed through the exercise of art itself. Such a definition of art seems to come from the derivation of the definition of aesthetics from the original Greek meaning of *aisthesis* as sensory knowledge or perception. Aesthetics is thus a general theory of sense-perception and the artistic object is a peculiar object in the field of *aisthesis*. It is this Greek understanding of aesthetics that brings Formaggio to the claim that phenomenology, as the philosophy of experience, is the method most proper to it. Phenomenology is the method for "bringing out the meaning of things" encountered in *aisthesis*, especially artistic objects. And, because it applies to the whole field of sense perception, it is capable of cutting across different artistic movements and periods, grasping the universal structures that define the artistic as such.

The general definition of aesthetics is therefore what is at stake throughout Formaggio's oeuvre. In his view, aesthetics must be sharply distinguished from both poetics and criticism, each of which have their objects and aims. Aesthetics, unlike these other disciplines, must be a general method of formalization that is capable of theoretical rigor and philosophical awareness, and not the analysis of concrete instances, no matter how sublime. Ultimately, art is understood aesthetically as the shared project of depicting our existence in the life-world. This is precisely the kind of universal definition that unifies art as a field, and the analysis of art, starting from this definition, must look at the artwork as the product of a body-at-work, of the transcendental praxis of the ego.

In a marked excursus, Franzini also states that the desire to identify the "Truth," though understandable, is driven by either teleological assumptions or psychological (empirical) convictions. Hence, it can be ignored at the level of method. This, according to Franzini, is one of the traits that unifies the Milan School. And it sounds important, but unfortunately Franzini does not explain further what this means. What is "Truth"? In what way can a descriptive, phenomenological method ignore this "Truth"? Such an important point should have been made more clearly so as to show the values held in common by the Milan School, which is at the center of this volume.

The seventh figure discussed in the volume is Giuseppe Semerari. The essay, written by Ferruccio De Natale, highlights Semerari's friendship with Paci, his interest in the historiography of philosophy, his materialist interpretation of phenomenology, and the convergence in his thought of phenomenology and Marxism. A contemporary of Paci, Semerari had a relationship of reciprocal influence with the Milanese philosopher even as he spent his life teaching and researching in the south of Italy at the University of Bari. The kinship between the two can be observed in their mutual interest in Marx and in their shared belief that any account of knowledge must see knowing as first and foremost a praxis enmeshed in the life-world.

Semerari's interest in phenomenology seems to arise from his dissatisfaction with the dominant ways of understanding history. On one hand, Semerari studied and contributed to the

history of philosophy for many years—in fact, he is one of the most important scholar of Schelling and Spinoza in Italy to this day. However, the philosophical relationship with the thought of the past can never be exhausted by the historiographical exercise. On the other hand, Semerari rejected both the neo-idealist and the historicist accounts of history. The question of history led Semerari to Husserl's late thought, which allows him to formulate an understanding of history as based on human temporality. Semerari thus begins to conceive of the human being as a privileged center of relations, especially temporal ones. In this way, Semerari's philosophy is a humanist "Relationism." Husserl's phenomenology is taken up within the context of this relationism in order to stress its humanist implications. For Semerari, phenomenology shows that the subject has not only a role in, but a responsibility for, the constitution of objects in their sense. Phenomenology is thus absorbed into Semerari's humanistic project as a way to critique the naturalism that divests the subject of its responsibility and alienates it from the world. The use of the term "alienation" is not accidental here, as it emphasizes Semerari's debt to Marx. The result is an exciting mingling of phenomenology, humanism, and Marxism, one that is able to put the human being and its historical relations at the center of philosophical discourse *without* losing itself in a structuralism that leaves the individual behind.

The next essay, penned by Stefano Besoli, concerns the phenomenological thought of Enzo Melandri. Beginning his career in the early 1960's, Melandri's philosophy tackles a staggering diversity of topics, from Aristotle to Husserl, from formal logic to literature, from empiricism to analogy. Although he is not well-known outside of Italy, I find it worthy of mention that Giorgio Agamben named Melandri's *La Linea e il Circolo* [*The Line and the Circle*] as the most important philosophical work of the twentieth century along with *Being and Time*.

Melandri recognizes in Husserl's phenomenology a return to two Aristotelian maxims: first, that the object determines the method of research according to its essence; second, that the meaning of being is not univocal. From the first he draws the more radical conclusion that logic and mathematics, as formal-*eidetic* sciences, cannot claim a methodological or essential primacy over a material-*eidetic* science like phenomenology. In other words, phenomenology must found both logic and mathematics. Phenomenology is thus the *prote philosophia* that weds the formal and the experiential, the material and the ideal. The outcome of such an understanding of phenomenology would be nothing less than a definitive clarification of the "sense of the relationship between the formal and the transcendental" (100). Drawing a comparison with Kant, Melandri identifies the phenomenological a-priori as a material one, so that "the logic of thought cannot renounce its inherentness to the world and therefore can only be founded in the logic of experience, grasping the essential structuring of the experience itself, which does not stand on principles projected from above as heteronomous conditions of its mere thinkability" (104). One should keep in mind that Melandri discovers this at the beginning of his career, *before* the publication of the *Analyses on Passive Synthesis*). The result of this juxtaposition of Kant and Husserl leads Melandri to identify the thematic continuity in the Husserlian oeuvre as that of finding an intermediate stage between the particular and the universal. This mediating moment can be found as early as the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* in the construction of the concept of cardinal number, and as late as *Experience and Judgment* in the concept of *Typus*. For Melandri, this Husserlian discovery amounts to a redefinition of the Kantian concept of "schema" through the doctrine of *eidetic intuition*.

As to the maxim on the non-univocity of being, Melandri sees in husserl the support for this position because in phenomenology, being does not have a single mode of givenness. Even

the categorial, that is, in being of an ideal nature, can be legitimately given in a way that is ontically different from that of real being. Inasmuch as being is relative to its mode of givenness, it is always spoken of in many ways with reference to subjectivity, on account of which in the transcendental reflection of phenomenology there is no naturalistic limit, and intentionality is designated as the “universal principle of the analogy of being” (112). Melandri brings together these two Aristotelian-Husserlian insights in his work on the concept of analogy. Analogy is for him what allows philosophy to navigate between the complete equivocality and the complete univocity of being, by virtue of a reflection on language as what brings together the a-priori and the a-posteriori, consciousness and world, thought and being. We see how Melandri is once again reworking of Kantian schematism, allowing language to occupy the mediating position that accomplishes a truly analogical position not only with regard to the question of the relationship between thought and being, but also with regard to the question of the plurivocity of being itself.

The ninth essay in the book, by Roberta Lanfredini, concerns the experimental phenomenology of Paolo Bozzi. A psychologist, Bozzi was one of the foremost scholars of *Gestaltpsychologie* in Italy and a proponent of phenomenology as a methodology for the sciences that would rival what the author calls the “psychophysical” one. He was also influenced by pragmatism and the Berlin School. Bozzi’s reflections begin with the “non-privative” definition of the phenomenon: to say that something is a phenomenon is not to say that it is an appearance *as opposed to* a reality, but rather to say that it is an object for our experience. Perception, our capacity to be in contact with what appears, has its own structure and dignity which should not be assumed to distort its object. In this, Bozzi takes over, but also critiques, Ernst Mach’s views on perception. He also inherits from Mach the conviction that it is possible to create a “naïve” or “phenomenological” physics that would begin from perception rather than try to remove its effects. In this paradigm, experience is the adaptation of ideas to sensations.

In establishing an alternate method for the natural sciences, Bozzi also critiques the concept of “datum,” which he understands not as a pure fact or sensation, but as an already eidetically reduced phenomenon. As such, a datum is a field of possible essential variation whose boundaries can be clearly fixed in reflection (for Husserl) or in experimentation (for Bozzi). What Husserl calls the “eidetic boundary” of the phenomenon Bozzi calls its “determination” (126). Bozzi’s take on Husserl’s eidetic variation is in this way the conjunction of two principles, namely, that of stability and that of sufficient differentiation: if a perception is sufficiently stable and pinned down through a sufficient differentiation of its components, then its identity and homogeneity are guaranteed and certain. Correspondingly, Husserl’s regional ontology is adapted to represent the “absolute threshold” beyond which a phenomenon simply does not appear.

Against the physicalist prejudices of “brain states” and “stimuli” as causes of experience, Bozzi counters with Wittgenstein that “nothing in the visual field permits us to conclude that it is seen by an eye,” or, in the case of the brain, “nothing in the experiential field permits us to conclude that it is caused or experience by the brain.” The stimulus and the brain state do not exist for us, and so they should not exist for the natural sciences if they are to be faithful to the phenomenon. To this end, Bozzi seeks to reinsert the qualitative aspects of the phenomenon into the scientific method, so that the true scientific step is not the projection of the quantitative into the qualitative, but vice versa a projection of the qualitative into the quantitative. Furthermore, Bozzi strengthens the scientific palatability of perception by postulating its non-ineffable, public, and independent character against the fear of so-called “private perceptions.” This lands him in a position of empirical realism, where “the object must be viewed as it is and as it seems. In

phenomenological observation there is a perfect coincidence between ‘esse’ and ‘percipi’” (132). We end up with a conception of the scientific phenomenon as “pure phenomenon” in the sense of something original and independent of conceptualization and judgment, the perceived as a result of unification and synthesis of appearances, “invariance in the variations” (134). All this contributes to a theory of scientific method that will be of interest to philosophers and scientists alike.

The tenth essay, authored by Federico Leoni, introduces to the philosophy of Carlo Sini, one of the most important philosophers in Milan still active today. A student of Enzo Paci, Sini brought phenomenology, neo-idealism, and pragmatism together in his remarkable philosophy. Though his study of neo-idealism came first, Paci’s first major works from 1965, *Introduzione alla Fenomenologia come Scienza* [Introduction to Phenomenology as a Science] and *Whitehead e la Funzione della Filosofia* [Whitehead and the Function of Philosophy], already reveal deep influences from Husserl and Anglo-American pragmatism.

The work on phenomenology introduces the reader to what will be one of Sini’s philosophical preoccupations for the rest of his career, namely, the problem of how to begin a rigorous philosophical investigation. “One begins...precisely with the realization that one has already begun” (139), which is to say that the only point of beginning for a rigorous methodology is *in media res*. The starting point is a bundle of ongoing activities and practicing phenomenology means illuminating what is normally confined to the darkness of what remains unthought. Thus, to begin means going back to describing all the operations belonging to the domain of perception, memory, imagination, but also expressiveness, motility, bodily gestures, and the whole set of practices that a body constantly performs in order to inhabit a world. However, Sini comes to radical conclusions about the boundaries of the body, which for him turn out to be blurred. The body extends itself into many other bodies and things, so that the beginning of philosophy lies in the fact that the body is lived by and in infinite other bodies, and that each operation shapes its circumstances and produces its objectifications while configured and objectified by and in infinite other operations. This indicates that the Husserlian attempt to begin by isolating the transcendental plane already implies an infinite task destined to remain incomplete.

At the same time, Sini’s subjectivist interpretation of Husserl, perhaps gained through his reading of Heidegger, lead him beyond transcendental phenomenology. It is in Heidegger and Peirce that he seeks a philosophy that can lead him to the world of things and practices, and he finds it in *Being and Time*, which he reads in conjunction with Peirce’s semiotic pragmatism. Being-in-the-world means being enmeshed in a set of material practices and references, which is why no presence is ever a mere presence, but always the sign of another presence. Heidegger's mistake, according to Sini, is to collapse common and semiotic signs, thereby emptying the semiotic structure of its philosophical import. Sini then imports this existential semiotic into Husserl, reinterpreting phenomenological kinesthesia and praxis as the acts of drawing signs and creating distances between phenomena. This is an engagement of the question of the genesis or event of the sign—not merely what a signitive relation is, but how it is generated: “What we want is to witness the tracing of the trace,” he states (144). In this way, Sini reinscribes the question of beginning into his semiotic phenomenology: how do we begin, how is the sign created? And just as with phenomenology, Sini finds that the sign has no beginning, but is always already a matter of having been interpreted. Peirce’s “interpretant,” the one who establishes the semiotic relationship, thus cannot be a subject: “to interpret is to have already interpreted, and the interpretant is nothing else than this having already interpreted.... each

present interpretation occurs on the basis of infinite past interpretations which exert their pressure on it” (142). In the end, the whole universe is the interpretant and the thing interpreted, offering itself as its own source and its own destination. In this sense, semiosis is not a capacity or activity of the subject, but an anonymous source, a cosmological event. If all praxis is semiotic praxis, if life is drawing and interpreting signs and creating distances between the sides of the semiotic relation, then the “subject” as the creator of signs, and “Being” as the sender of beings, are fetishes of the sign (or, more precisely, of the event of the sign). Sini’s later work pursues the further conclusions of this realization, developing on one hand a phenomenology of gestures, and on the other a philosophy of rhythm. Both seek to describe the performance of the already-established semiotic relation.

The eleventh essay, by Roberto Miraglia, describes the phenomenology of Giovanni Piana, another of Paci’s students and a colleague and interlocutor of Sini. Piana, recently deceased, developed a “phenomenological structuralism” that interprets phenomenology as a non-ontological, comparative description of experiential structures. He de-ontologizes phenomenology by replacing the term “essence” with that of “structure,” and the concept of evidence with that of “exhibition.” In so doing, Piana rids phenomenology of any Platonic interpretations and makes it possible to describe and compare structures without having to locate them within the ontological dichotomy of consciousness and world. What results is the laying bare of a field of experience that is neither ontological nor psychological.

Phenomenology thus becomes the clarification of how concepts are used in our daily life and how they relate to the world. The point of the reduction is nothing more than simply circumscribing the field of genetic-descriptive analysis. Likewise, it makes no sense to think that phenomenology can resolve the crisis pointed out by Husserl. All phenomenology can do is present, in general, a variety of constitutive tasks. Of the two strains that he identifies in Husserl’s philosophy, the theoretical and the ethical, Piana thinks that only the theoretical accurately represents and carries out the tasks of phenomenology. The ethical, by contrast, is ideological insofar as it confuses phenomenology for some kind of philosophy of renewal, whose task it would be not only to answer ethical questions, but to make humanity more responsible. Piana then brings this non-foundationalist phenomenology back to its empirical roots as a philosophy that derives ideas from impressions.

Miraglia tells the reader that Piana’s greatest accomplishments were more applied than theoretical. In particular, Piana is famous for his work on imaginative-expressive phenomena, especially music. Imagination is seen as a *sui generis* structure of experience, but one that affects all others. It not only places us in front of imaginary objects, but also enhances experience of perceived objects, making creative syntheses possible and ultimately art itself: “The pseudo-predicative synthesis of imagination steps into the associative connection: the sun is the eye of the sky. Being transforms into Value. This transformation consists of a real intermingling among objects: the result of the synthesis is an entirely new kind of object, an iridescent object which is not what it really is because it is what it is. Neither sun nor eye—but sun and eye together, the one through the other” (155). This understanding of imaginative constitution is then applied to the phenomenon of music, resulting in groundbreaking analyses that have left their mark not only in philosophy, but in Italian culture more broadly.

Finally, the twelfth essay, by Andrea Pace Giannotta, discusses the philosophy of Paolo Parrini, who teaches theoretical philosophy at the University of Florence still today. Parrini is a student of Giulio Preti, who is also introduced in this volume, and has worked on contemporary analytic philosophy, the philosophies of Husserl and Kant, and the history of epistemology and

science in the 19th and 20th centuries. Gianotta argues that Parrini's reading of phenomenology leads to a phenomenological form of empirical realism.

Parrini calls his own philosophy "positive philosophy," which stands as an alternative to both radical relativism and metaphysical realism. The former is, for Parrini, the result of those views that carry to the extreme the "theory-ladenness of observation" (162). Metaphysical realism, on the other hand, comes from the attempt to overcome the critique of metaphysics on the part of Kant and the logical empiricists. These attempts result, for Parrini, in a reprisal of metaphysics that seeks to give a foundationalist account of knowledge as *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*. In the realm of scientific knowledge, positive philosophy translates into a moderate epistemic realism that affirms as its basis the empirical underdetermination of scientific theories as well as the theoretical overdetermination of experience. This means not only that it is always possible for a theory to be disproved by new experiential/experimental evidence, but also that, in principle, the same experiential evidence can translate into more than one theoretical framework. Positive philosophy is completed by what Parrini calls empirical realism, which differs from the metaphysical version according to the classical Kantian distinction.

These epistemological positions are affirmed on the basis of the possibility to test hypotheses empirically. It is in relation to this need for empirical verification that Husserlian phenomenology makes an appearance in Parrini's epistemological thought. According to Parrini, Husserl finds a "fourth way" to the tree epistemological options presented by Friedman, namely, Neokantianism, logical empiricism, and Heideggerian hermeneutics. The "phenomenological way" makes possible an analysis of the empirical basis for knowledge that is cashed out in terms of a structural continuity between Kant and Husserl. In the first place, both philosophers highlight the irreducible contribution that each side of the form/matter distinction plays in cognition, where instead the neo-Kantians and the logical empiricists tend to downplay the role of matter. At the same time, Husserl is interpreted as seeking a way to ratify a kind of knowledge completely devoid of formal components. As a consequence of this interpretation, Husserl is castigated in favor of Kant, who famously foreclosed the possibility of any "judgments of perception." This interpretation of Husserl carries on for the rest of the essay, where the possibility of Husserl's material a-priori, here understood as "a priori knowledge (i.e. universal and necessary knowledge) of the content or matter of knowing, which would be expressed through apodictic judgements" (172), is considered and then rejected. This rejection is due to the claim that this material a-priori can only provide us with psychological-subjective validity, not transcendental validity. At the end of the essay, an appeal is made to the "genetic turn" in Husserl's phenomenology so as to claim that Husserl himself dealt with the static conception of a material a-priori in the same way as Parrini. Lastly, Giannotta compares Parrini's positive philosophy to the "network model" and to "neutral monism."

In conclusion, *Phenomenology in Italy* is a substantial collection of essays and witnesses to the rich phenomenological tradition that Italy has to offer to the rest of the world. Although there are some conspicuous absences in the choice of authors to showcase, I hope that this collection will herald the beginning of the dissemination of Italian thought in the international philosophical community, and that it will inspire more efforts in the translation of Italy's philosophical treasures.

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