

Introduction

Italian Philosophy—Threshold between Cultures

AN INCREASING RECOGNITION

Several years have passed since the publication, in 2007, of the edited volume *Contemporary Italian Philosophy*.¹ Up to that point, a few contemporary Italian thinkers were certainly known to Anglophone readers of philosophy—most notably, Giorgio Agamben, Norberto Bobbio, Adriana Cavarero, Toni Negri, Mario Perniola, Carlo Sini, Gianni Vattimo, and a few others. Yet the translation of these thinkers' works was more the result of fortuitous circumstances and personal events than the outcome of a concerted cultural effort to approach, understand, appreciate, and disseminate Italian philosophy in its overall context and richness. As a consequence, individualities glowed while overshadowing the culturally and philosophically rich context that had made the emergence of such singularities possible in the first place.

Despite its limits, limitations, and omissions, the above-mentioned 2007 volume was the first book in the Anglo-American landscape to explicitly engage Italian philosophy in its own right as capable of contributing its own creative, innovative, nonscholastic perspectives on major philosophical themes.² The volume, which gathered essays by seventeen leading Italian philosophers, added some new Italian voices to the continental philosophical tradition as known in the English-speaking countries, that is, a tradition deeply focused on French and German contributions. The chosen topic for the edited collection was the intersection of themes in ethics, politics, and religion; ever since Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Niccolò Machiavelli, Galileo Galilei, Giambattista Vico, up to Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, and, more recently, Giorgio Agamben, Adriana Cavarero, Roberto Esposito, and Gianni Vattimo, these areas have not

only intertwined, they traditionally constitute the core of major debates in Italian philosophy, which is overall characterized by its civic commitment. This is what Esposito, in a recent volume, *Living Thought: The Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy*, has conceptualized in terms of the crossing of the “axis” of life, politics, and history.³

The 2007 volume was also the inauguration of a unique series devoted to contemporary Italian philosophy—a series that, over the years, has welcomed publication of translations of Italian philosophers’ major works as well as edited volumes on either specific Italian thinkers or aspects of Italian philosophy.

There is no doubt that nowadays, within the Anglophone world, Italian philosophy has gained wider recognition and is granted much more scholarly attention than in 2007. Several volumes devoted to its representatives have appeared in various series with different publishers, and previously unknown Italian thinkers are being translated, published, and addressed in scholarly essays and conference presentations. Whether attention is paid to these authors because they are Italian or because they are philosophers is a question that can hardly be answered in the disjunctive form. Undoubtedly such thinkers receive consideration because of the theoretical merits and value of their thinking. Nevertheless, they can be the valuable thinkers that they are because they emerge out of a specific philosophical landscape, that is, the one constituted by the way in which philosophy is and has been done in Italy. In this sense, they are *Italian thinkers* according to a signification that accepts no partition of terms.

THE ITALIAN DIFFERENCE

One question that lurks behind the denomination “Italian thinkers” is, understandably, the appropriateness or even desirability of framing philosophy within national borders and identities. At the conceptual level, it can be argued that, at least in its Greek essentialist legacy, philosophy pursues a project of universality that escapes reductive delimitations and identifications with the particularity of national identities. At the pragmatic level, we live in a historical time when transnationalism and cross-culturalism seem to be pervasive albeit yet-to-be-completely-attained realities, whereas the concept of the nation-state is debunked as a dangerous legacy of imperialistic and narrow understandings of what constitutes communities. Within this cultural climate, geographical or ethnic descriptions and delimitations may be construed as arbitrary and bordering on nationalisms and ethnocentrisms whose effects are violent, destructive, and ultimately lethal. Hence, all such

descriptions are undesirable and should be avoided. There is no way to deny that these remarks have their points of strength, and that nationalism is in fact a serious danger—out of place and to be shunned.

Within the globalized world, though, and mainly to counteract the totalizing risks entailed in globalization, a concerted attention to the notion of place, the local, and the particular has also become predominant at both the conceptual and the socio-political-economic levels. From a philosophical perspective, a universality that does not take into account the particular is an empty concept, as Kant said. Places, localities, and geographies with their particular characteristics and geohistories that make them distinct and unique do affect how thinking develops. In this sense, it is this editor's conviction that, precisely because of the place where it develops (which entails institutions, practices, available resources, self-understanding, and self-esteem—briefly, the socio-political-economic-historic-cultural landscape), Italian philosophy retains its own specificity and individuality—its own uniqueness and difference.

Aspects of such specificity and individuality have recently been explored in Esposito's volume *Living Thought*. In it, Esposito indicates the Italian theoretical difference as resting on "three paradigmatic axes"—the immanentization of antagonism, the historicization of the nonhistorical, and the mundanization of the subject. According to Esposito, these three themes, which also enable Italian philosophy to escape the trap of the "transcendental fold" proper to much so-called continental thought, situate Italian philosophy in a position of alterity with respect to the trajectory of modernity—not premodern or antimodern, as it has also been claimed, Italian philosophy rather sits "on the other side of modernity, or, more precisely, along a tangent that cuts across it diagonally, without being absorbed by it."⁴

Esposito's evaluation of tangentialism may be true especially with respect to Italian philosophy during the period of European modernity, namely, from the sixteenth century up to the crisis brought about by the two world conflicts. And certainly there may have been, as Esposito indicates, an additional tendency of Italian philosophy "to escape outside itself—its continuous deterritorialization," for example toward the nonphilosophical. The conceptual movement toward the outside need not be read as an escape, though—that is, as a conceptual inability to dwell on what would constitute one's own. The movement toward the outside could also be read, I maintain, as the gesture of an intellectual host who exits to meet and welcome the guest, as the reception and acceptance of the outside within the inside in a self-constitutive act, a fundamental self-opening that allows for the penetration of vital elements to be re-elaborated (or reterritorialized, to use Esposito's Deleuzian language) into new, original

reconfigurations. Whether the self-opening to the outside is due, historically and genealogically, to a fundamental weakness and absence of power at the center, to a millenary slavish yet shrewd instinct for survival that prefers submission rather than disappearance, or to a histrionic ability to adapt and make the most out of all adverse situations is not a question to be addressed here. “Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello, / nave senza nocchiere in gran tempesta, / non donna di province, ma bordello!” (O Italy, you inn of grief, ship without helmsman in a mighty tempest, mistress, not of provinces, but of a brothel), writes Dante in a famous invective in *Purgatory* (vi, 76–78); and he concludes by repeatedly invoking (“vieni . . . vien . . . vieni . . . vieni” [come . . . come . . . come . . . come]) the intervention of “Alberto tedesco,” the German heir to the Holy Roman Empire, whom he chastises for having abandoned Italy (*Purgatory*, vi, 97–114). Be it as it may with respect to Dante’s own political stance, a fundamental aspect of Italian philosophy has nevertheless to do with a peculiar penetrability, permeability, and fluidity with respect to the possibility of infiltration by foreign elements—in the specific, the influence of non-Italian philosophies and thinkers on the Italian philosophical landscape.

Porosity may have been, as Dante both laments and invokes, a trait of Italian philosophy all along. It is particularly accentuated and deliberately advocated in the post–World War II environment after the folding of Italian philosophy upon itself due to the centrality ascribed to Croce’s and Gentile’s philosophies during the fascist period. Whether Croce’s and Gentile’s positions were open or closed to outside influences is a scholarly question that goes beyond our scope here. It is undeniable, though, that during the fascist period Croce’s and Gentile’s thought systems, and especially Gentile’s, exerted a hegemonic role from which it was hard to escape. With the collapse of the fascist regime, permeability and opening to external influences become a publicly invoked matter of style as well as content—if style and content could, of course, ever be separated in Italian philosophy.

A LINGUISTIC EVENT

Ever since its inception, possibly in 1308 thanks to Dante’s *Comedia*, which offers highly philosophical content expressed in nonphilosophical style, Italian philosophy is first and foremost a linguistic event. The *Comedia* (qualified as “divine” only later) in fact consecrates the Tuscan vernacular to be the Italian cultural language par excellence.

Albeit still in Latin, Dante had already formulated and defended the dignity and legitimacy of the vernacular, in this case the Florentine idiom

that he thus elevates above the level of being a mere dialect, in his work *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, probably written between 1302 and 1305. There, Dante defines the “vernacular language” as “that which infants acquire from those around them when they first begin to distinguish sounds; or, to put it more succinctly, [Dante] declare[s] that vernacular language is that which we learn without any formal instruction, by imitating our nurses” (*De Vulgari Eloquentia* I, i–2). The vernacular stands in opposition to what Dante refers to as *gramatica*, that is, “a certain immutable identity of language in different times and places” (*De Vulgari Eloquentia* I, ix–11). In comparison with, and opposition to, such more formal, atemporal, and essentialized or essentialist language that only few master through long years of study (with the term “*gramatica*” Dante is in fact most likely referring to the study of Latin), in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* Dante argues for another, more Aristotelian, immanent kind of universality based on concreteness, originarity, and naturalness. It is such universality that legitimates the superiority of the vernacular in its specificity. As he says, “the more noble is the vernacular: first, because it was the language originally used by the human race; second, because the whole world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third because it is natural to us, while the other is, in contrast, artificial” (*De Vulgari Eloquentia* I, i–4). In this unfinished work that is a true gem in linguistic studies (but also in negotiating concrete universality and particularities), among the fourteen forms of vernaculars he retraces on the Italian soil, Dante then identifies the “illustrious vernacular” in his beloved Tuscan idiom, the Florentine. Other writers follow suit, and through a process that spans over centuries and is possibly completed only in recent years thanks to the pervasiveness and influence of the mass media, the Tuscan vernacular becomes the Italian language and the major factor of cultural unification and identity.

Dante’s move resembles *ante litteram* Descartes’ foundational operation that marks the end of medieval philosophical systems, the birth of modernity, and the beginning of national philosophies. The text that allegedly grounds French philosophy as a philosophy of subjectivity (and initiates modernity as the age of individuality), namely, Descartes’ *Meditationes*, is written not in the national language whose philosophical dignity it thereby legitimizes, but in what was considered a supranational language, namely, Latin.⁵ Whereas by the time Descartes writes, France was already set on its path of national identity at the geopolitical level, there was no Italy as a nation-state with a centralized government at the time when Dante wrote, and such a nation-state would not exist for a long time still. In other words, there is an Italian language and thus an Italian literature, philosophy, and culture based on such a language much earlier than Italy becomes a

sovereign state in the modern sense. In this sense, Italian philosophy as a cultural event based on language precedes the formation of all possibilities of an Italian nationalism based on geographical borders. Being Italian is a cultural event ahead of all belonging to a territory, a soil, a nation (or even a blood lineage).

THRESHOLD OF ENCOUNTERS

The fragmentation of the Italian geopolitical territory means that, ever since Dante's foundational act, Italy is in fact crossed by (not always peaceful) influences from the rest of Europe (Spain, France, the remainder of the Holy Roman Empire based in what will then become southern Germany, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, Belgium and the Netherlands through the banking activities of the entrepreneurial Tuscan towns of Lucca and Florence especially), from Asia (with the Venetians, whose trade extended to Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, India, and China), from northern Africa and the Middle East (especially with the Sicilians, whose commerce with Arab cultures turned Palermo into a center of medicine and Aristotelian knowledge), and even from North and South America through the Spanish and French dominations there. While the Italian language acts as some factor of unification at least in the intellectual world in which philosophy partakes, the land where the Italian language operates is open to a variety of cultural (and military) intrusions that are reworked, reelaborated, rethematized, and retheorized along lines of appropriation that are both different among the various geographical regions of Italy and yet not sheltered behind their isolation.

What thus develops is a very unique, osmotic model of philosophical elaboration in which being Italian appears as a threshold, a border, a point of internal as well as external encounters, intersections, and exchanges. These dynamics occur at a double level: they take place among realities internal to the Italian peninsula (the various municipalities, principalities, dukedoms, and so on) that already share some elements of linguistic commonality or affinity but differ geopolitically (thus, the Florentine Dante, for example, spends most of his life outside of Florence); and they also occur between such realities and what lies outside of them at the linguistic, cultural, and geopolitical levels (Leonardo, for example, spent part of his time in France while many European thinkers, including Leibniz, Goethe, and Nietzsche among others, spent significant time in Italy). Ultimately, Italian philosophy appears almost as an alchemist's or a magician's laboratory where experiments of fusions, amalgams, and transformations happen

and new configurations are created as a result. To be an Italian philosopher might precisely mean to be such an alchemic, magic, perhaps kaleidoscopic threshold—an opening and a door onto the outside through which inside and outside enter in contact, communicate, and open up to new visions rather than a gate that ultimately defensively closes on itself in a nationalistic move.

NARRATING THE STORY

Despite the recent increase in attention and recognition paid to contemporary Italian philosophy, a volume that provides a contextualization—that is, a tracing of the general interconnections, threads, and fabrics that nourish the emergence of contemporary Italian thinkers in their magnificent individualities and enable them to be the thresholds mentioned above—is still missing from the Anglo-American philosophical landscape. Albeit in a minimalist format, the goal of the present volume is precisely to work toward filling or minimizing such a lack.

One way to minimize the gap would be to write a history of philosophy, perhaps of a theoretical kind, that provides an overview of the main affinities, lines of development, and major thinkers of the period under consideration. In the present context, the period that has been chosen is the decades that span from the aftermath of World War II to the end of the millennium, that is, the second half of the twentieth century. Because of the close temporal proximity that occludes our contemporary eye to what might be truly enduring in the judgment of history, engaging in delineating a grand history of contemporary Italian philosophy would however be a rather daunting project. Basing it on a narration that occurs from an external, third-eye, unified, and allegedly objective standpoint would also risk offering a still image of an environment that is on the contrary quite lively and animated. Additionally, the practices of historicism, hermeneutics, and deconstruction have taught us how all historical accounts bespeak the perspective of the narrator. In light of such considerations, it has been the more modest choice of this editor to let the story be told not by a grand narrative but by those who, through their scholarly writings as well as their academic lectures, public conferences, and performances of various kinds, have contributed to delineate such a history. Thus, the format of the interview has been chosen as the most appropriate mode of narration for the volume.

The interview style has also seemed the best to correspond to and mirror a peculiarity of all Italian philosophers, namely, their self-imposed role of public intellectuals willing to express their philosophical positions

not only in professional books and essays but also in public contexts and conversations such as political meetings, intellectual gatherings and festivals, daily and weekly newspapers, media performances and appearances, and so on.

Most interviews have occurred not in a face-to-face conversation but over email, that is, already in the reflective mode allowed by the written format. To approximate the vivaciousness, wittiness, and lightness of live dialogues and still retain the rigor and discipline of serious philosophical thinking, interviewees were asked to keep their register of discourse at an informal but not frivolous level, to employ a technical but not technicistic vocabulary, to avail themselves of an agile but not superficial style, and to engage in punctual but not tedious, pedantic, or overly conceptual content expositions. The individual responses to the interview questions are very different in tone, content, form, style, length, main focus, and amount of detail given—each of the interviews is in this sense a true testimony to the differences that characterize each thinker as unique and give life to the variety of the Italian philosophical landscape as a whole.

Of course, autobiographic narrations have their shortcomings and dangers too, one of the main risks being excessive protagonism on the side of the narrating self. Partially to deflect such a risk, each of the interviewees was given the same set (both in number and formulations) of questions to which they were invited to provide answers. The sequence of questions follows a zoom-in/zoom-out technique in which the past combines with the present to illuminate a current situation that in turns opens up toward the future. The interviews follow a three-step cadence. First, they start with more general questions that address issues of provenance, external (domestic and foreign) influences, and lineages. Next, they move to a self-description offered by each interviewed philosopher and aimed at highlighting the main tenets, theoretical originality, and timeliness of each individual position. Finally, the interviews dare to glance toward the future by asking for possible ways, suggestions, and advice through which philosophy can contribute to the delineation of such a future.

The standardization of questions and their sequence has guaranteed some uniformity to the conversations while also leaving vital space for the self-disclosure of multiplicities and variations. What emerges is certainly not a history of contemporary Italian philosophy (even understood in minimalistic terms) capable of doing equal justice to all its representatives. What surfaces is rather a glance at a cross section of Italian philosophy as it was experienced in its development roughly after the 1950s. Some important thinkers of the period and their positions are at times simply mentioned, at times quickly glossed over, at times dismissively summarized, at times

sharply criticized, and at times expounded at length with affection, irritation, or admiration. The overall picture is enshrined in the details as much as in the overview the volume provides. In all cases, the connections that tie together and weave the fabric of Italian philosophy are disclosed in a vivid and lively picture.

SETTING THE PARAMETERS

Historically, the period on which the volume focuses is very important for Italy. It is in fact only after World War II that Italy became the country we know today—both a unified country delimited by the current geographical borders and a democratic republic. On June 2, 1946, a referendum was held that irrevocably transformed Italy from a monarchy under the leadership of the Savoy dynasty (which some blamed, among other things, for having consigned Italy to Mussolini's regime and then to the devastation of the war) into a republic. On January 1, 1948, the new constitution officially established Italy as a "democratic republic founded on work." Thus the symbolic date when the reconciliation between Italian language and Italian territory occurred is 1948. What seems especially significant is that the politically foundational act is, from the outset, a democratic act—Italy is born as a sovereign state as the outcome of a people's referendum and a referendum in which women too, for the first time, are called to vote; and Italy is constitutionally born as a democratic republic as a consequence of a shared, not-always-easy dialogue and debate among political forces very different in nature, histories, core values, and constituencies. The dialogical, which also means conflictual and differential, element is part of the very constitutive act that leads to the establishment of the Italian republic. That, at times, such an element has also worked to hinder the conversation is part of the internal logic that guides all dialectical movements. It is against such a socio-political-cultural background that contemporary Italian philosophy unfolds, carrying on itself the memory and mark of its republican, democratic, dialogical origin.

As a symbolic date, 1948 has been chosen also as the watershed ultimately to decide, among the many possible candidates, which Italian philosophers to include in the present volume. The first, major criterion for inclusion has of course been the theoretical vigor that thinkers have displayed in terms of making meaningful and lasting contributions to the Italian philosophical landscape. Several years after the turn of the millennium, it is perhaps a bit less daunting to recognize the names of those who have left a mark on the previous century and, by extension, have influenced

the shaping of the twenty-first. Even so, the number of those who merited inclusion seemed still too high given the editorial constraints of the volume, the need to offer profound reflections within a limited number of pages. The symbolic date of 1948 has presented itself as a helpful and seemingly appropriate chronological device.

All the twenty-three philosophers who have contributed to the volume were in fact born before 1948, with Emanuele Severino being the oldest (having been born in 1929) and Adriana Cavarero the youngest (having been born in 1947). Significantly, Cavarero is also the only woman in the collection. This too is indicative of a period and an academic situation marked by women's difficulty in entering the universities at the nonstudent level. When they succeeded in entering such a world, it was even more difficult to make their voices heard in their difference and specificity (that is, as creative thinkers and not as commentators of various kinds), especially at those higher academic levels that allegedly grant prestige, recognition, and the "official" status of an intellectual worthy of public audience. The date that has been chosen means that, generally, even the youngest thinkers included in this volume who were in their twenties in the late 1960s were able to play a major role in the shaping of Italian philosophy in the second part of the twentieth century. Even a quick glance at the bibliography at the end of the volume, which does not list journal articles, book chapters, invited lectures, or conference presentations, should suffice to attest to the philosophical stature of the contributors.

Although somewhat arbitrary, the chronological criterion seemed less unfair than others that were also possible. This still entailed, however, that some important names that have become familiar to the Anglophone readers in recent years (such as Roberto Esposito and Maurizio Ferraris, among others) unfortunately had to be left out because of their not being of age, as it were, during the time under consideration. Some additional absences will also be evident—most notably, Giorgio Agamben, Massimo Cacciari, Umberto Eco, Diego Marconi, and Toni Negri, among others. These absences are due neither to deliberate omission nor to accidental forgetfulness on the side of the editor. Rather, they are to be ascribed to the modesty, reticence, or reservations harbored by some thinkers. Also absent are those Italian philosophers who, although of Italian nationality, have conducted most of their scholarly activities outside of Italy. This phenomenon, which has reached vast proportions in recent years due to the stalemate, intellectual asphyxiation, and lack of opportunities in the Italian academia, is known in Italy as "*fuga dei cervelli*" (brain drain or human capital flight). This despicable situation of exile has, for the most part, prevented such thinkers from deeply influencing the philosophical

landscape within Italy, and thus they have not been included in the collection. Finally, some important thinkers are absent because unfortunately they are no longer with us; these include Nicola Abbagnano, Francesco Barone, Lucio Colletti, Dino Formaggio, Aldo Gargani, Eugenio Garin, and many others. Their names often appear in the memories of those who are part of the volume and so are present vicariously, as it were.

STRUCTURING THE VOLUME

The philosophers whose interviews do appear in the volume belong to a variety of traditions, schools of thought, academic institutions, and areas of provenance (geographical as well as cultural, political, and intellectual). Their respective works differ in content, methodology, and areas of interest. Their personalities, modes of expression, registers of voice, and approaches to matters are as varied as the intellectual and cultural paths that have led them to being the unique philosophers they are. Altogether, what emerges is a broad, deep, lively, witty, at times humorous, and even irreverent picture of the Italian philosophical landscape.

The individual contributions have been arranged not according to philosophical areas, fields, or disciplines, but according to connecting themes that work as lines of flight capable of gathering and holding together different trajectories along ideal affinities and commonalities. Six of such thematic lines have been identified to give structure to the volume: (1) Ethics, Passions, Practices; (2) History, Justice, Communities; (3) Imagination, Art, Technology; (4) Rationality, Sciences, Experience; (5) Being, Nothing, Temporality, Place; and (6) Human Beings, Evil, Transcendence.

Italian philosophers are generally very versatile. During the span of their philosophical careers, most concern themselves with many areas, topics, and authors so that even conceptually very distant thinkers end up overlapping in some of their interests or works. In this sense, they represent a challenge to all disciplinary delimitations, not only within the general field of philosophy but within the cultural world in general (some of them are also politicians, mathematicians, poets, novelists, or jurists). The thematic lines, the parts of the volumes into which thinkers have been forced (not without their consent) as well as the titles assigned to their interviews (again, not without their agreement) are not an entirely accurate, exhaustive representation of the complexity of each individual philosopher. Other lines, themes, and titles could be imagined. Lines, themes, and titles are thus more suggestions than categories or statements, more evocations than descriptions. Like buzzwords, they hopefully provide

an initial albeit limited insight into the complicated, multilayered, multifaceted landscape that constitutes Italian philosophy during the second half of the twentieth century.

Amid the variety of voices and their narrations, whose variations would be impossible to capture and recapitulate in an introduction, elements also emerge that work toward delineating some shared traits of the general Italian philosophical landscape. Among them are the enthusiasm for philosophy generally sparked during the years of high school; the desire to overcome the primacy if not the hegemony of idealism and its legacy in the form of a pervasive historicism; the recognition of and at times discomfort with the sharp division (religious, political, but also philosophical) between a secular trend associated with the study of the history of philosophy and a Catholic trend devoted to metaphysical issues broadly construed; the delay in the spreading of epistemology and philosophy of science, and the absence of analytic philosophy until quite late in the twentieth century; and an understanding of philosophy as “impure reason,” to use one of Remo Bodei’s expressions, that is, as an activity deeply involved in various other practices of life.

It goes without saying that all limits and limitations of the volume, including awkward translations of very different philosophical registers and conversational styles, are imputable to the editor and not to the interviewees. All philosophers included in the volume have been very prompt in interactions that almost always occurred over email; highly enthusiastic in their adhesion to the project; extremely supportive in their willingness to offer suggestions and advice; and incredibly gracious in understanding the constraints of the endeavor and in working with the editor’s own idiosyncrasies. Conversation and dialogue are the heart of philosophizing. The interviewed philosophers have shown themselves to be masters at that. In thanking them, this editor hopes that the conversation may continue and the dialogue extend to the Anglophone readers, who will find here ample material for thought and meditations. If, as anticipated and hoped for, the invitation to enter and continue the dialogue is accepted, this will be an additional attestation to Italian philosophy’s ability to be a genuine threshold between cultures.

Ivrea (Italy), July 2015

NOTES

1. Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder, eds., *Contemporary Italian Philosophy: Crossing the Borders of Ethics, Politics, and Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007).

2. A previously edited collection by Giovanna Borradori, *Recoding Metaphysics: The New Italian Philosophy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988) organized Italian thinkers in terms of their response to Heideggerian metaphysics and thus provided a rather specific and tributary grid of interpretation.

3. Roberto Esposito, *Living Thought: The Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 10.

4. See Esposito, *Living Thought*, 22.

5. Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode*, written in French, precedes his *Meditationes*. It is in the *Meditationes*, though, that the importance, originality, and novelty of his theoretical position as a philosophy of subjectivity fully emerge in their theoretical power.