

## Prefazione

This volume is in honour of Paolo Parrini, one of the most important Italian philosophers of our time and undoubtedly the most eminent epistemologist the land where lemon trees bloom has ever had. He graduated with a thesis under the guidance of Giulio Preti and then taught at the University of Florence as an assistant professor before being appointed to the chair of History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Then he came back to Florence as professor of Theoretical Philosophy until he retired in 2011 (the term “theoretical” is a literal translation of a word which in the academical lexicon used in Italy refers to epistemology as well as to ontology and metaphysics). Beyond his highly specialised research, in virtue of which Parrini became member of prestigious national and international institutions, he organised international meetings which were a landmark in overcoming the gap which for too many years had existed between philosophical research and accompanying standards of argument as cultivated at its best both in Europe and in further afield, and that which had formerly been common in Italy. Moreover, Parrini profitably acted also as editor of numerous proceedings – with great intellectual profit to the resulting volumes – and devoted much energy to improve the teaching of philosophy in Italy.

His works span a large variety of topics, some of which are easily acknowledged as “classical” such as the puzzling link between knowledge and truth, while others are much less familiar, such as the paradigmatic role he assigns to the definition of metrical standards for an appraisal of what “synthetic a priori judgments” can mean. To mention some titles in the list of his books:

*Linguaggio e teoria* (1976)

*Una filosofia senza dogmi* (1980)

*Knowledge and reality* (1998)  
*Sapere e interpretare* (2002)  
*L'empirismo logico* (2002)  
*Filosofia e scienza nell'Italia del Novecento* (2004)  
*Il valore della verità* (2011);

while amongst his papers which appeared as journal articles or as chapters in books must be cited:

*Di alcuni problemi di filosofia della logica* (1972)  
*Filosofia e scienza nella cultura tedesca del Novecento* (1978)  
*La psicoanalisi nella filosofia della scienza* (1988)  
*With Carnap beyond Carnap* (1994)  
*Immanenzgedanken and knowledge as unification* (1999)  
*The crisis of foundationalism, epistemic justification and the nature of philosophy* (2001)  
*Popper e Carnap su marxismo e socialismo* (2002)  
*L'insegnamento della filosofia tra identità disciplinare e rapporto con gli altri saperi* (2004)  
*Preti filosofo dei valori* (2004)  
*Analyticity and the a priori: fifty years of Two Dogmas* (2007)  
*La scienza come ragione pensante* (2009).

Full bibliographical information can be found through internet on the website of the University of Florence.

This short list should be sufficient to convey the extraordinary coexistence, in one and the same mind, of a theoretical commitment to the solution of great issues (some of which involve extreme technicalities) left by the development of philosophy during the 20th century, together with a meticulous internal history of the debate and a sensitivity to the need of avoiding the isolation of philosophy within humanities and scientific culture – a sensitivity which, in particular, has effects on the practice of philosophical education. At the same time it must be stressed that only a partial picture of Parrini's work emerges from the study of those of his books and papers which have appeared in English, although the relevance of his view about specific topics is already internationally established. The papers included in this Festschrift volume strongly suggest that a collected edition of Parrini's papers in English would help underline that the manifold aspects of his thought are part of an original

and unitary philosophical perspective of worldwide interest.

As for the reception of Parrini's work in Italy, it is by now recognised as a major point of reference even by philosophers in other traditions. But this recognition did not come easily. For about twenty years both the foci of investigation and the approach suggested by Parrini received less consideration than they deserved, owing to the difficulty of locating them with respect to any of the three main "schools" of philosophical inquiry which dominated the Italian scene, i.e., history-oriented philosophy (though nominally free from the oath of allegiance to Croce's historicism), analytic philosophy and hermeneutics. In this cultural ambience, Parrini found himself involved in a long struggle for existence – not only to permit his own ideas to be appreciated, but also to combat the misunderstanding and the distortion of one of the main lines of development of 20th century philosophy, namely logical empiricism, by calling attention to its inner dialectic, and resisting the view which reduces its central tenets merely to the incidental employment of certain logico-mathematical machinery. It is curious, so to say, that right for Parrini's effort to improve the understanding of what logical empiricism meant in order to understand the problems it left and the ways to solve them, his work was considered by authoritative colleagues as more of an historian of philosophy than of a philosopher, and since his methods were not exactly those of professional historians, he had just taken the wrong lane, while the real import of this was that the sense of Parrini's research was lost.

To this difficulty must be added a second, namely the highly technical demands required to follow his arguments closely, and the fact that these pre-requisites were drawn from many different areas, involving the mastery of notions from logic, physics, geometry and the theory of language, as well as a detailed knowledge of the development of epistemology and metaphysics from Kant to our time. There was also a third difficulty, less specific to philosophy – namely the ingrained cultural habit in Italy of ignoring or opposing really first class talent and according it recognition only after reputation has already been established on the international stage.

Only a small minority of professional philosophers or teachers of philosophy in Italy was able to satisfy these rigorous technical pre-requisites and also had the intellectual courage to dispense with the need to identify with one of the three main currents in philosophy mentioned above, or to shun the easy way of locating contrasting perspectives,

which consists in the glorification of vague links between different traditions. Given this circumstance, it is unsurprising that the academic ‘system’ was puzzled and disoriented in the face of Parrini’s arguments. But such obstacles were overcome with time and patience, and now, after years in which his investigation were studied only by a small community of specialists, Parrini’s stature as an all-round philosopher is recognised in Italy too.

On the occasion of Paolo’s retirement from teaching, this volume is a small tribute from colleagues, friends, former students, reflecting the different ways in which his work has influenced the thinking of the contributors on a wide variety of subjects. But it’s also a tribute to his passion in discussing any theme of philosophy, his ability to spot a hidden difficulty in what we were claiming as naturally right, and the unforgettable example he has been as professor at the University of Florence, where his courses provided for many years the students the understanding of key-issues of 20th century’s philosophy, through dedication and constant recall to the highest standards of argumentation. Both editors have a great debt to Paolo for his help in defining their own research path, but also for his outspokenness and his warm humanity in personal relationships.

The contributions, including those of the editors themselves, provide only an indication of the richness of content of Parrini’s philosophy. Some papers concern classical topics of epistemology with reference to the views of philosophers such as Leibniz, Kant, Cassirer, Peirce and Wittgenstein, while others focus on notions such as experience, objectivity, truth, a priori, realism and rationality. Some papers have the character of surveys, others deal with specific issues. In either case, Parrini’s work clearly emerges as a point of reference for the philosophy of our time and as a guide to its further advance. As was agreed, none of the papers is intended simply as an homage. Indeed, some of them pinpoint problems and advance suggestions in the style of open, unbiased discussion which characterises all Parrini’s work. The contents of this volume are inspired by the conviction that, if Paolo has retired from his academic duties, he has not retired from research. In the light of that conviction, we rely on his contagious enthusiasm, untouched by age, for that strange activity named “philosophy”; and in that spirit we are waiting eagerly for his next papers and books.

*Roberta Lanfredini, Alberto Peruzzi*