

*Ad lectores*

This issue, our first for 2024, opens with a hitherto unpublished work by Jacques Derrida, marking twenty years since his death.

There follow three articles, on the thought of John Duns Scotus concerning the immortality of God, by Claudio Avogadri; about Ignacio Ellacuría's perspective on Ortega y Gasset, by Calogero Caltagirone; and on some problematic features of the category of "states of life," with a view to a possible alternative vision, by Manuel Valenzisi. Under *Les essais*, our readers are offered Fabio Nardelli's reading for our time of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Then, as well as the record made of particularly significant events in the life of our Pontifical University Antonianum, the reader will find here the *recensiones* of two volumes worthy of note.

The philosophy of Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), at least until the end of the 1970s, develops around the conceptions of "writing," of difference, of deconstruction. It was as that decade was ending, during an unspecified 1979 *Colloquium*, that Derrida delivered his *Conférence sur l'enseignement philosophique*, which is published here for the first time (cfr. *infra*, p. 9-21). The typewritten pages were found by Andrea Bizzozero in the archive of the admirable Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC) of the Abbaye d'Ardenne at Saint-Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe, in France, which he has been visiting periodically for some years now, to pursue his research into the master of deconstruction.

Derrida begins with a little game of opening and closing quotation marks (*guillemets*), in which he is inviting his audience to take part – as, thanks to the publication here of his paper, we, too, his readers, may now do. Derrida explains that even a synchronic discourse on philosophy – a discourse which would prescind from any classic authors or texts in the history of philosophy – would nonetheless be a text, and, indeed, a "quote" (*une citation*). To speak of the teaching of philosophy, or of anything else, in the manner of philosophy, or as a philosopher, without any direct quotation from anywhere else, while yet speaking and debating within a certain "code," and in accordance with a definite model and a particular programme, amounts to one big

“quote” (*citation*): It is still a *citation*, though done without quotation marks, while dreaming that one is being innovative and spontaneous (*naïf*) or, still worse, while displaying a false ingenuousness. But «the invisible quotation marks, the invisibility of the quotation marks, the cancellation of the quotation marks, are part of the programme of philosophical ‘typography’» (*infra*, p. 11). This playful little remark, right at the beginning of the *Conférence*, is notably destructuring.

First of all, it shows how unreal is the distinction between one way of teaching philosophy, which takes as its starting point a passage written by a past or present philosopher, and proceeds by commenting, and inviting comment, on it, in class, or in the lecture hall, and that other way of teaching philosophy, which, intending to prescind from the texts and the classics, is based instead on actual reasoning about ideas or concepts, choosing perhaps for the first lesson the rhetorical question: “What is philosophy?” or even the more radical one: “What is Being?” These two ways of doing philosophy are two great «possibilities that appear to be mutually contradictory, each one excluding the other», which Derrida, simplifying, calls *intra-textualiste* and, respectively, *méta-textualiste*. Using expressions closer to idealism, one could say, with Giovanni Gentile, the thought that is thinking and the thought that is being thought. In the explanation here offered by Derrida, there is a concretization of the rather more universal and more general assertion of Martin Heidegger that «the language speaks» (*die Sprache spricht*), as he explained in his famous lecture of 1950: *Die Sprache* – now to be found published in M. HEIDEGGER, *Gesamtausgabe*, I,12 (Frankfurt am Main 1985; the quote here is from p. 11). In his own lecture to teachers of philosophy, Derrida, reducing to concrete terms that which concerns the speaker in himself, explains that philosophical language speaks in the teaching of philosophy, that it speaks before the teacher does, and through the teacher of philosophy. The institution that is language has thereby become «a powerful machine, programmed and programming» (cfr. *infra*, p. 11).

The same paper further underlines the impossibility of pure reason, that dreamt of by Enlightenment era thought and delineated by Kant in his famed *Critique of Pure Reason*. Falling asleep with such a dream or *illusion* is the risk run by the one who teaches philosophy in the *méta-textualiste* manner. Knowing and teaching that philosophy must have recourse to texts helps to «(a) not ignore the histo-

*ricity* of logic, of rhetoric, of the concatenations the concepts and the systematizations that are at work; (b) *critique* the illusion of “natural” discourse, immediately freed from any code, from all “technicality”, from all semantic sedimentation, from any systemic or syntactical bond, discourse that forgets, that intends to make forget, that for some reasons, which deserve to be analyzed, yet which this [illusion] denies or else takes up, philosophy is always produced within the *milieu* of writing» (*infra*, p. 20). Here, too, the debt owed to Heidegger is evident, in terms of the underlining of the inescapable historical dimension of the human being and, consequently, of the human being’s discourse; and in respect of the “absolute” mediation of language in human rationality. It is that which Heidegger works out in § 32 of his *Being and Time*, with regard to the “fore-” (*Vor-*) of the «pre-given with fore-having, fore-sight, fore-conception» (*Vorhabe, Vorsicht, Vorgriff*); which, in Derrida’s French, is expressed as *précompréhension*, “preunderstanding.” The non-secondary role of Heidegger’s thought in his own philosophy is underlined by Derrida in the lecture published here. In it, presenting between quotation marks – in the citation/non-citation provocatively placed at the beginning of the lecture – a philosophical text invented as the starting point of a possible first lesson of philosophy given in the *méta-textualiste* manner, Derrida states: «every discursive act could be a quotation from Plato, from Hegel, from Husserl, and *above all* – this “above all” deserves to be studied – from Heidegger» (*infra*, p. 10; italics added).

Finally there is the Teacher of philosophy, whom Derrida addresses concretely with his playful consideration of the quotation marks, as the one who does philosophy, from within a discourse that runs through the whole history of philosophy. It is a history that is constituted, not only by texts, but by the thinkers who composed those texts, thinkers in conversation with one another. This is a conversation that runs through the history of philosophy all the way to us, whom Derrida in ’67 had called “community of the question,” *communauté de la question* (cfr. J. DERRIDA, *L’écriture et la différence*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1967, p. 118), and which in later years he will prefer to designate as a friendship among philosophers, in which they share their own “things” as friends – freeing himself from any burdensome and institutional term such as “community,” evocative as it is of a religious context, and much preferring, in the light of the

philosophizing-together of Plato's Academy, the aspect already written into the name and image of philosophy: *philia* and *eros*.

Incident to this, let me mention some notions of philosophical activity that Derrida proposes in his lecture.

Philosophy is essentially discourse, «a discussion, a dialogue or a conversation through which we accompany the preunderstanding towards understanding» (*infra*, p. 10). Using the traditional terms of hermeneutics, prominence is given here to the dialogical and pedagogical dimension of openness towards the other, possibly the pupil/disciple, and towards whomever is called to share a friendship between philosophers.

«The philosophical word is always a teaching word», *la parole philosophique est toujours une parole enseignante* (*infra*, p. 11). Even when I am at my desk to study philosophy, in the hindermost corner of my study, of my library, or of my home, the exercise of philosophizing, inasmuch as it is an act of giving an accounting to myself, and of giving an account of myself – this is one of the meanings of *ratio* – I am always turned towards another so that the other may verify my assertion. Paraphrasing the titles of the works of Anselm of Canterbury, every *monologion* of mine is always a *proslogion*, a word addressed to others, a colloquy. In other words, as we read in the text of Derrida's lecture: «philosophy is essentially a conversation» (p. 10).

In this sense, teaching philosophy starting from a text *must* «allow for reading *within* the philosophical text that which may no longer be read in a philosophical manner, that which no longer makes sense philosophically [...] the 'other' of philosophy» (*infra*, p. 15-16).

By publishing and presenting the *Conférence sur l'enseignement philosophique* Andrea Bizzozero, in his quality as the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy does, as it were, offer the entire fellowship of philosophy teachers, over which he presides, a worthy stimulus to reflection on the activity carried out by each – most of all by considering the provocative nature of the text and the five questions with which Derrida closes (in order to open!) his report. By this very publication, it is as if our journal now invited all our readers, and especially those engaged in the teaching of philosophy, to reflect, still more and together, on the task and commitment for philosophy today.

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