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Introducing **DIFFERENTIA**

This new publication aims at expanding and intensifying the dialogue between the Anglo-American and the Italian cultures. DIFFERENTIA intends to provide a sorely needed outlet for the exposure and diffusion, in English, of contemporary Italian thought, primarily in the area traditionally called philosophy and with particular emphasis on the history of ideas, social criticism, political theory, and literary studies. It will cut across these and perhaps other more local discourses in an effort to constitute loci where differences are evidenced rather than hidden, where discussion is mobilized against any tendency to pass over in silence some of the unsettling issues of our time.

DIFFERENTIA seeks an arena for the encounter and exchange between two cultures above and beyond what is made available by the few existing publications that seem either too conventional or too specialized to arouse interest or elicit a response from a heterogeneous intellectual community. In this light, the journal will host contributions from various fields of inquiry in the belief that an exchange and a comparison both within and without the codified languages can occur, and that bridges may be erected between the University and art and cultural discourse at large; though as to how such a process occurs and what its results may be, it is up to the individual writers to say and the individual reader to assess.

In DIFFERENTIA readers from linguistic and ethnic domains other than Italian in the Anglo-American world can keep abreast of what their counterparts in Italy are doing, and vice versa. This may entail giving space, occasionally, to ideas, projects, and critiques which are not necessarily complete and systematic, as will be the case with works "in progress," or the theses of very young and unknown authors. This approach does not automatically mean patronizing the "new" or the "different" for its own sake: it means rather being open to other, perhaps neglected possibilities of signification. Moreover, as a short gloss on the title and subtitle will suggest, and as the essays in the present and forthcoming issues will attest, the journal will not appropriate or endorse ideologies on the basis of a supposed primacy, originality, or some sort of absolute importance and need—in our Post-Modern World—of Italian thought.

Such categories have had their say and done their damage, such that even the word “philosophy” was regarded as overly value-laden and as potentially implying some exclusive and privileged space or position. There are thinkers in Italy today who go as far as to question the legitimate claims of an autochthonous “Italian philosophy,” but there are also others who question whether philosophy itself has anything left to say, regardless of where it originates. Though this is surely more than a quibbling over semantics or a local diatribe among contending schools or movements, it is the high-level involvement of the faculties of thought, the persistent questioning and critique of various attempts at furnishing answers that interest and inform DIFFERENTIA. The “differences” here fall outside dualistic oppositions and appear to migrate across sectorial metalanguages, national boundaries, and linguistic registers.

It seems to me that thinking is ultimately what comes after, what is other than, any one expression or experience of a purported original, unitary Deity or Law. In its verbal attire thinking is forever “thought,” a second or third order of considerations whose vantage point resides precisely in not being the First or the One or the Only one. Thought represents a temporal as well as a cognitive difference, a persuasion to distinguish and diversify declined over topics and conjugated with the compelling questions of our times. In this sense, DIFFERENTIA is awareness, also, of being the manifold speaking of not always reversible formulations, the contention of various logoi, finally a discourse that must articulate itself through the meandering itineraries of the Many, the recollected, the givenness of what must (and perhaps ought to) have been and will have to have been before hierarchies can be determined and values submitted to the contingent strategies and powers that be.

In subsequent issues, the Topic section will feature interventions on The Discourse of Institutions, Postmodernity, Humanism, Third World Perspectives, German Thought in Italy, Visions and Versions of America, Approaching the XXI Century, Italian-American Culture, Technology and Political Thought.

This first issue is dedicated to the memory of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, who passed away while the journal was in the making. An early supporter of this project, Rossi-Landi was one of the most learned, versatile, and combative voices in Italian culture during the past forty years. His work will be the topic of an upcoming symposium and will be discussed further in the pages of DIFFERENTIA.

The Editor