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Giuseppe Semerari and the Experience of Philosophical Thought

Augusto Ponzio and Maria Solimini

Translated by Susan Petrilli

1. Premise

The title of the present paper recalls the title of a 1969 volume by Giuseppe Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*,¹ where the term "experience" has a double meaning: an *objective* meaning referring to the itineraries and perspectives identifiable in the history of philosophical thought; and a *subjective* meaning indicating Semerari's own "learning and training" with respect to the former.² In this paper it is our intention to reconstruct some of the more important phases in Semerari's readings of authors and trends in philosophical thought throughout the course of his long career. In this perspective we assume the expression "of philosophical thought" in the double sense of the objective and subjective genitive: in other words, it is our intention to refer to Semerari's interpretation, "answering comprehension," and standpoint concerning given conceptions, approaches and choices in philosophical thought as they have emerged historically; as much as to the objective presence of the former in the development and orientation of Semerari's own research.

2. Gnoseologism, ontology, history

An author occupying a particularly important place in Semerari's work and who at the same time is objectively one of the most original thinkers in contemporary European thought is Pantaleo Carabellese (1877-1948).³ Carabellese's critical ontologism aimed at being a form of idealism which he defined as "Italian idealism" opposing it to both post-Kantian German idealism and to the idealism of Croce and Gentile, both of whom he accused of gnoseological reductionism. As Semerari demonstrates, Carabellese's theoretical scope is far broader; his work belongs to that particularly significant process in twentieth century European thought—which, in accordance with Semerari, may be described as the "refounding of ontology". The

authors belonging to this current include Husserl, Hartmann, Bloch, and Heidegger in Germany; Lavelle, Le Senne, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty in France; and the later production of Lukàcs in Central European culture. Semerari views the critical radicalization of the philosophical instances of modern thought as a characteristic feature of the refounding of ontology—which is not to be confused with the restoration of ontologisms of the Aristotelian-scholastic type—by contrast with philosophies hegemonized by the logic of Knowledge and thereby reductively stated in a gnoseologicistic sense (idealism, neo-Kantism, neopositivism, historicism, etc.).⁴

Opposing gnoseology and scientism and instead taking his place in that critical orientation in European thought which problematizes the foundations of knowledge and scientific knowing, Carabellese radicalized the classical Kantian question “How is knowing possible?” by posing the question of *how consciousness is possible and how being is possible*.⁵

Semerari devoted one of his early books *Storia e storicismo. Saggio sul problema della storia nella filosofia di P. Carabellese* (1953) to Pantaleo Carabellese’s critical ontology, amplifying it in a second edition of 1960 with the title modified to *Storicismo e ontologismo critico*;⁶ as well as a second volume *La sabbia e la roccia. L’ontologia critica di Pantaleo Carabellese* (1982), which contains essays published between 1962 and 1980.

The title of the 1953 monograph immediately evidences the problem of history in Carabellese’s critical ontologism, being an antihistoricist ontologism and not an antihistorical ontology. He took a stand against historicism as the modern religion of history, ready to understand and justify everything and which leads to crude political realism and to assertion of the values of force and power. Apart from Carabellese’s manifest personal political position,⁷ the objectively political character of his philosophy in his stance against historicism is made to emerge by Semerari through the reading he proposes in his first monograph on critical ontologism. The theoretical differences between critical ontology, on one hand, and the historicism of Croce and of Gentile on the other, subtend the practical difference between the model of direct democracy proposed by Carabellese and the models of liberalism (Croce) and fascism (Gentile).⁸ In *Storicismo e ontologismo critico*, Semerari identifies the *objectively* political character of Carabellesean ontology in the *properly* historicist attitude assumed by Carabellese, who was not content with the exaltation and passive acceptance of becoming nor with the deceptive negation of being abstractly opposed to becoming and understood as absolute aproblematic presence, but rather who dealt critically and responsibly with the problem of the origin, in the Kantian and Husserlian sense of the foundation and validity of becoming.⁹ Semerari was particularly inter-

ested in underlining that, in Carabellese's critical attitude toward being, recognition of historicity identifies with the assumption of an attitude of *control* and of *responsibility*, two concepts which were to play a particularly important role in Semerari's subsequent philosophical reflection.¹⁰

Semerari observes that the historicism criticized by Carabellese is that of Hegel, Croce, and Gentile, which he ended by identifying with historicism as such, losing sight of aspects and orientations which escape such identification. According to Semerari, Carabellese was unaware of Dilthey and other exponents of German historicism. This was a particularly serious gap, especially as far as Dilthey was concerned, given that—with the latter's assertion of the temporality of consciousness, the interpenetration of temporal moments and the interrelation of historical entities—among the historicists, Dilthey was the one who came closest to dealing with a problematic analogous to that dealt with by Carabellese.¹¹

Semerari presents critical ontologism, therefore, as the radicalization of historicism. Firstly because it recovers the temporality of existence as an essential structure in history. Therefore we may say of Carabellese's critical ontology what Löwith says of Heidegger's philosophy, in other words, that existence is fundamentally historical insofar as it is radically temporal.¹² But Carabellese, observes Semerari in *Storicismo e ontologismo critico*, does not transfer, as does Heidegger, the foundation of the historicity of our there-being itself, Being that dominates prior to all entities and from which the there-being of man must take place.

In this way Semerari begins his critical analysis of Heideggerian philosophy, which he was to develop subsequently throughout most of his works.¹³ In his first monograph on Carabellese, Semerari links Heideggerian philosophy to one of the most steadfast dogmatic assumptions of Hegelism, the coincidence between *being* and *nothingness*.

If Hegel may be distinguished from Kant, this is because he replaces Kant's agnostic prudence with dogmatic certainty, all the more dogmatic insofar as it eliminated the reasons which had converted Kant to agnosticism. Kant's doubt is Hegel's truth. Being and nothingness may coincide, because being is the very not-being of experience, and experience as such is the not-being of being. The falseness of Hegelian immanence has no other origin than this acritical maintenance of the transcendental concepts of being and experience [...] Profound criticalness is Hegel's true secret [...]. Heidegger's philosophy of nothingness is the most penetrating interpenetration of Hegel's thought. The parable of being is traced between *coming-into-being* from nothing and *being-for-death* and Heidegger [of *Was ist die Metaphisik?*]¹⁴ can repeat with Hegel that pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same thing and find this thesis to be true.¹⁵

In his book *Sperimentazioni* (1992),¹⁶ Semerari begins the opening text, "Strategie del rassicuramento umano", with the following question "why is there something and not rather nothing?"¹⁷ This question which presupposes recognition of the contingent, of uncertainty, *insecuritas* as being essential to the human existential condition, proves to be disquieting and Semerari proceeds to demonstrate how Heideggerian ontology hastens to neutralize and silence it, asking yet another question, that is, *what has happened to being?* as preliminary to it. The philosophical question that Heidegger himself indicates as fundamental and that belongs to the categorical horizon of existence, that is, to the possible and the contingent, is, in this way, redimensioned. This means that man, thrust into *insecuritas*, must not search for salvation in himself—in "natural succour", as Vico would say, in his techniques of reassurance, obtained by working together with other men—but must wait for it uniquely from its foundation, from that for which existence is thrust into risk, that is, Being, which, on the contrary, is safe¹⁸ and which allows the "person at risk" to "rest safely in risk".¹⁹

In Carabellese, with its alterity, plurality, temporality, and relation, existence is already a part of Being and does not depend on it *a posteriori* as that into which Being decays to existentialize itself.²⁰

Carabellese contrasted the rock of concrete, temporal, plural, relational being in the light of which the problem of the origin, of the foundation, of validity cannot be given up, with the sand of historicist becoming, of the historicist succession of the facts in which law and value coincide with the succession itself. The metaphors of sand and rock used by the same Carabellese in his later writings are taken up by Semerari in the title of a 1982 book dedicated to critical ontologism. These metaphors give us a good idea of the fundamental theoretical instance relating to the problem of history. Such a theoretical instance is asserted by Carabellesian ontology in its opposition to historicism through the ontological recovery of time and of existence and by contrast as well with the interpretation, traceable in Heidegger, of time and existence as the *outside*, as the *not* of meta-temporal and meta-existential Being, that is, as its decayed phenomena.²¹

The elevation of time to ontological concreteness and the relative temporalization of being assure the bases of history, no longer excluded from a being closed in its eternal fixity nor identified with a being that, receiving history inside itself, changes because of this in empirical becoming and destroys itself as being and as history.²²

In the ontology of Carabellese, therefore, we have history and temporality, and furthermore alterity, plurality and relation. According to Carabellese the subject is one, other, relation. Otherness is not conceived *à la* Hegel as the negation of egoism, rather subjectivity is constitutively other; unity and alterity of self open the self to plurality.²³

With respect to the recovery and development of Carabellese's thought the need most felt by Semerari, and already present in the 1960 edition of his first monograph, is that of radicalizing existential analysis and overcoming the conscientialistic reduction of the concrete indetachable in critical ontologism. In his essay of 1956 "Attualità e inattualità di Carabellese", subsequently published as an appendix in *Storicismo e ontologismo critico*,²⁴ Semerari in fact remarks on two limits in particular in Carabellese's ontologico-critical research: *conscentialistic interpretation of the concrete* and *partiality of existential analysis*. The first limit is due to the fact that Carabellese, as his acceptance of idealism already reveals, opposed idealism from Hegel to Gentile not in principle but because of how it had been realized, that is, as false idealism. His critique was directed above all at the cognitive preliminary issue from which idealism was to free itself, in order to found itself in a consciousness re-evaluated in all its diverse extra-cognitive expressions such as religion, art, ethics, etc. The second limit, connected with the preceding, was identified in the fact that Carabellese does not develop his analysis of existence to the point of revealing finiteness as constitutive to it. And this has consequences for the reduction of the scope of his very important interpretation of intersubjective relationality in terms of alterity. If, as Carabellese claims, each of the numerous selves is not finished with respect to the other, but is wholly opened to the latter, these selves cease to be singularities and existences in themselves, and merge into a unique self, a unique totalizing consciousness. That the intersubjective relation presupposes the finite character of existence escapes Carabellese, says Semerari, even if he perceives the implication of finiteness when he speaks of the transcendence of the self's otherness, thanks to which each one of us is unique and irreducible.²⁵

Semerari considers Carabellese's critique of the concrete as an important contribution to take up and develop, to reflect upon the original, precategorical unity of man and world subtending all predications and categorical determinations; such reflection is turned to unhinging what Carabellese called the "*judicativa* conception of existence," centered upon preference for cognitive experience and scientific knowing.

What Carabellese calls concrete corresponds in the last analysis to what phenomenology with Husserl calls 'anti-predicative experience' and with Merleau-Ponty 'ambiguity'.²⁶

This statement is from an essay of 1965—subsequently included as chapter three of *La sabbia e la roccia*, entitled "Lo scandalo linguistico"—when Semerari was dealing with the problem of the existence-alterity-world relationship from the perspective of phenomenology. However, it would be interesting to reconstruct the passages which

lead Semerari from critical ontologism to the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. From this point of view, chapter eight, "Oltre lo storicismo," of *Storicismo e ontologismo critico* is significant, being one of the parts added to the 1960 edition with respect to that of 1953. Here the fundamental programmatic indication is that the problem of history, after historicism, inevitably becomes that of its transcendental constitution with respect to which, as Semerari wrote in his "Prefazione" to the above-mentioned re-edition, "truly decisive is the contribution made by Husserl and by Merleau-Ponty".²⁷ Concrete being subtracted from its dogmatic mummification is "that being of which with our there-being we are the transcendental condition".²⁸

Semerari identifies a relation of analogy between the antihistoricism of phenomenology and of critical ontologism. Phenomenology reaches the same conclusions as critical ontologism, according to which modern historicism is no more than the point of arrival of the "doctrine of the self-concept", that is, of the subject that closes in upon itself, a subject empirically and psychologically understood, a subject self-elected to the status of being a mouthpiece for Truth and all other values. The phenomenological and ontologico-critical problem of history begins, says Semerari, just where historicism considers it solved. While historicism, similarly to naturalism, psychologism and positivism, absolutizes facts and believes it can solve the history of such absolutization, both phenomenology and critical ontologism, on the contrary, question the foundation, origin and value of history. It is significant, observes Semerari,²⁹ that such an approach to the problematization of history is closely connected with the claim, advanced on both sides, to the necessity of metaphysics, and it is significant that the historicists are not in a position to imagine any other form of metaphysics than that of the thing in itself and of antiquated ontologism.

As for the fact that in affirming the theological, ontological and metaphysical character of philosophy, Carabellese is accused of *archaism*, the first prejudice we must free ourselves from, says Semerari, is that of the vulgar acceptance of *metaphysics, theology and ontology*. It is a question of verifying whether Carabellese's use of these terms on the basis of a

severe logical and linguistic control, perhaps never before attempted, does justice to the old way of practicing metaphysics, theology and ontology.

We shall then understand how, in Carabellese—but according to Semerari the same may be said of Husserl—

the refusal of historicism, of scientism and of worldliness is not properly the refusal or negation of history, of science and of the world, but rather the problem of the origin, of the foundation, of the validity of history, of science and of the world.³⁰

From a terminological point of view, a similar operation is accomplished by Merleau-Ponty—and Semerari's repeated association of the latter to Carabellese is no accident—when in spite of Kantian critique, neopositivist refusal and Heideggerian negation, he reasserts metaphysics as a central moment in philosophical reflection. Putting himself in a position that may be considered to be very close to Carabellese's critique of historicism, Merleau-Ponty writes:

The sole object of metaphysical consciousness is everyday experience, this world, others, human history, truth, culture. But, instead of taking them ready-made, as consequences without premises and as though they were obvious, it rediscovers their fundamental[ly] alien character for me and the miracle of their appearance. Then the history of humanity is no longer that inevitable advent of modern man moving from the caveman, that imperious growth of moral and science discussed by "too human" scholastic handbooks, it is not empirical and subsequent history (...). Thus understood metaphysics is the contrary of the system.³¹

In Merleau-Ponty's view also—given his insistence on the corporeal, on intercorporeity, on perception, Semerari gives the latter's philosophical system special attention viewing it as the radicalization of phenomenology and explication of what remains hidden in it (as stated by Merleau-Ponty himself in his most recent essay on Husserl, "Le philosophe et son ombre")³²—metaphysics implies being aware of existence in all its concreteness, and facing the problem of control and responsibility in the relationship with another and with the world, in all its radicalness.

Antipsychologism and the assumption of the *fundamental character of the intersubjective relation* are the contact points indicated by Semerari in the last chapter of *Storicismo e ontologismo critico* between critical ontologism and phenomenology. And it is from this common basis—in the light of which both counteract the thesis that history and world coincide with judgment on them—that it is possible to begin our search for the sense of the world and for the conditions for judging about history as the premise for an attitude that is not passive toward it, but active and attributive of value.

Semerari returns to the gnoseologism of Croce's historicism in an essay originally published in 1966, "Croce e la filosofia," and subsequently included in *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, where Crocean philosophy is considered from a biographical-philosophical and sociological-cultural viewpoint and from the viewpoint of its configuration and validity as philosophical discourse. The opposition of philosophy as a methodology of historical knowledge to the sciences emptied of all theoretical value and reduced to the status of "edifice of pseudo-concepts" contributed, says Semerari, to the gnoseologic reduction of philosophy, emptying it, furthermore, on a theoretical level and lim-

iting its cognitive field insofar as it is conceived as methodology of historical knowledge, beyond being the cause for losing sight, among other things, of the concrete historical connection between the development of philosophical thought and of science. "Croce defended and restored the classical concept of philosophy as knowledge and plain formality".³³ Ignoring the call to philosophy that is not mere contemplation of the world but contributes to a critique of the world and investment of value, indeed perhaps as a reaction to it, Croce discovered the eternal categorical structures of historical judgment.

The view of philosophy, from which nothing more than a description of how things went must be asked, was precisely the repositioning of the contemplativistic model of philosophy, which could not be separated from profound motives of ethical-social conservation, if relaunched in open and direct polemics against the philosophies of reforms (Comte) and social revolutions (Marx).³⁴

To the gnoseological reduction of philosophy in Crocean historicism there corresponds, all the same, a precise ideological standpoint. This, on one side, renders Crocean historicism no less than Gentilian actualism, co-responsible toward the ideological genesis of fascism and, on the other, ties it to the interests of the South's agrarian bourgeoisie. In "Il neoidealismo nella filosofia italiana del primo '900," Semerari demonstrates, with documents, the clear political qualification of Italian neoidealism "such that its most characterizing conceptual structures were functions, guarantees and theoretical symbols of a given political choice" (35). It is now clear how the standpoint against Marxian philosophy as well as the gnoseological emptying of philosophy had a very precise end in Italian neoidealism.

The critique of Marxism is, in my view, the key to understanding the historical value of Italian neo-idealism, that which constituted the secret *leitmotif* of systematic constructions of Croce and of Gentile insofar as they were functional to the reordering and perpetuation of bourgeois power in Italian society (...). When we speak of neoidealistic reaction, we are alluding, at the most, to the antipositivistic offensive of Croce and Gentile [...]. In reality, the neoidealistic reaction took place in two directions: it was the reaction to Marxism from the general point of view of the class, it was the reaction to positivism from the viewpoint of the conflict sustained, for some time, by the agrarian bourgeoisie of the South against the industrial bourgeoisie of the North.³⁶

Considering Semerari's subsequent theoretical thinking, an important moment of which is represented by his book *Insecuritas. Tecniche e paradigmi della salvezza*,³⁷ it is interesting that in his paper of 1966 on Croce he explains the final outcome of Croce's theoretical itinerary in the light of his request—both of an existential and of a social

and intellectual order—for personal security. Such security was reached by Croce delusively at the cost of his pathetic refusal of the status of *insecuritas* as the structural condition of the human being and through reductionisms and simplifications. Such an attitude consented both his return to Hegel, which ignored, or better, silenced the disquieting questions of post-Hegelian thought posed by Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud, as well as the rigid schematization of his “philosophy of the spirit” which blocked, but only on the level of intentions and ideology, the fluid and unpredictable dynamics of life: existence, culture, history. If, on the contrary, Croce had focused on the status of *insecuritas* as the original living human condition instead of exorcising it with the mystifications of his philosophy, he would have explained the genesis of categories, logic, culture and knowledge, instead of never interrogating himself as to how they were formed, despite of the fact that he declaredly identified philosophy with history.³⁸

Inverting the parts, Croce made his position pass as being true to history and as anti-metaphysical; in reality, his philosophical system reposed old-style metaphysics where the state of being secure and stable is represented by History in its historicist-idealistic acceptance; and he achieved this by presenting his philosophy as methodology of history.

In his book *Sperimentazioni*, Semerari points to Croce as a clear example of an exchange between metaphysics and methodology where the reassuring function of philosophy is fulfilled through mystification.

To say, with Croce, that philosophy is no more than the methodology of history, is the trick through which the metaphysics of the ‘Philosophy of the Spirit’ imposes itself at a methodological level.³⁹

An analogous example is offered by Vico, the founder of the historical sciences and guardian of Crocean historicism. In Vico, Semerari traces both the connection between methodology and metaphysics, as well as the reduction of metaphysics to the status of an apologetic and rhetorical expedient useful to the end of rejecting, restraining—searching for firm points and inviolable boundaries in the sphere of religious tradition and common sense—the new vision of the world and of man as put into perspective by the development of the physical and mathematical sciences. In Vico’s view (*Scienza Nuova*, I, Degnità XII e XIII),

common sense is a judgment without any reflection, commonly felt by a whole order, by a whole peoples, by a whole nation, by the whole of the human race and it is taught to nations by divine providence.

In “Sulla metafisica di Vico,” a text included in *Esperienze del pensiero moderno* and which develops a conference held in 1968, Semerari

thoroughly examines Vico's "metaphysics of common sense". To critique Vico he contrasts the moderation of individual will and the subjective uncertainties to be achieved through education in common sense. The latter is privileged both insofar as it is conveyed as a system of judgments of not human but divine provenance; as well as on the basis of the rhetorical expedient that avails itself of quantity considering more valid that which can make a claim to universal consensus or to the greatest number of people.⁴⁰

In another essay originally published in 1968, also taken up again in *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, Semerari, analyzing the complex relationship between Vico and Descartes, shows how Vichian anti-cartesianism taken globally is the expression of

an attitude of resistance and defence against the philosophical development of the new mathematical and experimental science [...], a cultural tactics devised, more or less consciously, to the end of *quieta non movere*, of leaving things as they are, limiting, as far as possible, the field of action of new methodology which would seem to be dangerous for the natural course of ideas and for common sense.⁴¹

In the opening essay entitled "Strategie del rassicuramento umano," included in his previously-mentioned book of 1992, *Sperimentazioni*, Semerari refers to Vico as an example of the strategies of human reassurance provided by religion.

That extraordinary page in *Scienza nuova* where G. B. Vico perspectives Religion as reassurance for man deprived of natural reassurances, of "aids provided by nature" [...] has probably not been studied enough as yet. The expression *naturali soccorsi* must be extended to the techniques of reassurance or to all of what man, in the horizon of his mundane and social existence, exploiting his own capacities, invents, organizes and maintains under his control to the end of reassurance. Historical religions constitute, in their essential nature, nothing more and nothing less than more or less complex institutional apparatuses whose difference with respect to scientific and political techniques is that according to the latter, man lets his own reassurance, his own salvation depend in the last and decisive analysis on something he admits to be beyond his powers of control.⁴²

This inclination to confide in something necessarily secure and safe in itself, such as *faith*, may be traced back to Vico himself. In the light of Semerari's critique, despite its theoretical distance from Vico and its programmatic intention, this is what appears to be common to both Vico (considered to be the leader of idealistic historicism) as well as to Heidegger (one of the major recognized exponents of the refoundation of ontology), as we shall see more clearly in what follows.

3. Existence, reason, science

The critique of gnoseologism conducted by Carabellese's critical ontology is traced by Semerari back to Husserlian phenomenology. It is significant that Semerari, as a means of indicating certain essential aspects of phenomenology, should recall the final paragraph of *Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, where the need of reconstructing the unity, the organicity of reason is asserted, intending not only logical reason, but also practical and aesthetic reason.⁴³

Semerari has laid particular stress upon a note in Husserl's diary dated 25 September 1906, where he writes the following:

In the first place I name the general task which I must solve for myself, if I wish to call myself a philosopher. I am referring to the critique of reason. I cannot live truly and truthfully without clarifying, along general lines, the sense, essence, methods, fundamental points of view of the critique of reason, without having imagined, projected, established and founded a general outline for them.⁴⁴

What in Semerari's view is important and particularly significant in characterizing Husserlian phenomenology is the connection—as this autobiographical note clearly puts into evidence—established between the construction or reconstruction of the critique of reason and living “truly and truthfully,” that is, living authentically and therefore living between philosophical research and existence. As Semerari writes:

In Husserl's perspective the critique of reason ceased being a scholastic, abstractly intellectual exercise, or the resolution of merely methodological and epistemological issues and became a profoundly existential problem involving the sense itself of life and of deliverance from the torments of doubt and of the lack of clarity and certainty. It is in relation to the critique of reason thus understood that Husserl's slow and fatiguing work takes on meaning for the elaboration of appropriate techniques of reassurance in relation to skepsis and crisis, especially in the forms (and their variants) in which they imposed themselves in his time: psychologism, naturalism, relativism, anthropologism, historicism, philosophies of the *Weltanschauung*.⁴⁵

Semerari evidences the significance of Husserl's critique of reason which he connects to concrete living by contrasting it above all to 1) the gnoseologism of Kantian critique, which, restricting the horizon of knowledge, reduces the problem of reason to the problem of the limits of reason and not also to its origins, sense and value; 2) Hegelian philosophy, in which “the phenomenology of reason is, in reality, no more than the ontological description of a system aprioristically concluded”, which by eliminating the antidogmatic character of

Kantian critique, decrees "the end of the critique of reason as pure reason";⁴⁶ 3) dogmatism, which in (common with idealism) presents positivism as a variation of historicism. The problem of the critique of reason as it appears before Husserl's phenomenology is therefore, according to Semerari, the problem of the *crisis of reason*, and this crisis appears as the *crisis of the transcendental*.⁴⁷ Husserlian phenomenology proposes the reconstruction of the critique of reason reconducted to the subject of living experience, not the empirical, psychological subject, but the transcendental subject; more precisely, reconducted to *transcendental intersubjectivity* as that from which we are able to retrace the sense of reason, establish its validity as formal reason, find the meaning for man in its techniques, operative, categorical and linguistic structures.⁴⁸ Therefore, Husserlian phenomenology

returns to the problem of Critique in the very point of its greatest aporeticity, where Critique is converted into dogmatism, subsequently and variously inherited by idealism, naturalism and historicism.⁴⁹

It is in the light of this problematic design that Semerari reads the overall itinerary of Husserl's research from *Philosophie der Arithmetik* through to *Logische Untersuchungen* and from these to *Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*: what generally emerges from such an itinerary is the problematization of reason as human reason. This involves recognizing the inseparable connection with responsibility, with a radically antidogmatic attitude on the basis of which philosophy as a "rigorous science" is the critique of institutionalized forms of knowledge, the knowledge of common sense and of the sciences. In fact, philosophy thus understood probes into the process of the formation of knowledge as from the *Lebenswelt*, reconducting it to human control and orienting it as a function of a (continuously reproblematicized) *telos*, in which man may intersubjectively find himself and to which he may answer in the first person. Semerari reads the critique of reason in a Husserlian perspective as a problem of *insecuritas*, existential uncertainty faced without recourse to prejudices, dogmatisms, and assumptions free of verification, but, on the contrary, through the assumption by man of a radically responsible attitude. It is in the perspective of such radicalization that transcendental reduction, the transformation of external experience (*Erfahrung*) into internal experience (*Erlebnis*), the passage from reduction to constitution, the question of self-responsibility (*Selbst-verantwortung*) posed in *Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, but also in the introduction to a *Formal und transzendentale Logik* should be considered. The world must be reconsidered as it appears in its being as it is for us, taking as a starting point the possibility that the subject has of being able to answer for it. This subject in fact calls itself into question as an empirical subject, as a psychological subject, consolidated in its habits, automatisms, and stereotypical

behaviors, and places itself, instead, as an *a priori* condition, a transcendental subject, determining being, sense and value. The crisis of the European sciences consists in the separation between science and human existence, between science and the assumption of responsibility by man toward the world, himself and others.

It is interesting that Semerari should contrast *Krisis*, considered a text of fundamental importance for an understanding of our times, to Heidegger's *Brief über den "Humanismus"*: such an opposition would seem to indicate the contrast between the *exact* assertion of Heideggerian antihumanism—based on the hypostatization of the observation of the *being* of things as it presently is, with an ensuing reduction of men to the mere status of men as they in fact are—and the project for a new humanism to be constructed on the basis of a new science to which especially philosophy as a *rigorous* science has the task of contributing.⁵⁰ What an acritical acceptance of behavioral norms, scientism, technicism and the subjection of science to production for production's sake, has caused us to lose sight of and objectively annul is the humanism of a *new science* essentially intended as to reconduct knowledge, including scientific knowledge, to its original function of control, self-responsibility and reciprocal responsibility.

At the conclusion of his life Husserl realized that science was slipping away from man's control and, instead of eliminating existential insecurity, increased it. The final call to the responsibility and self-responsibility of man—with which *Krisis* closes—took on the same meaning as reference to consciousness against the effects of a natural attitude and all forms of thought linked to 'prejudice of fact' had had in Husserl's *Ideen*. But, all the same, Husserl did not give up science. He would have never undersigned the proposition that Heidegger was to dictate a few decades later: 'Only a God can save us'. Science was not to be repudiated, but simply inscribed in a new perspective inspired by and taking off from the principle of responsibility. The critique of reason needed to be transformed into the critique of the conditions of possibility of being responsible and self-responsible.⁵¹

From this point of view, the difference between Vico, who refused to give up his fideistic attitude, including faith in "common sense," and Husserl is obvious; and is clearly put into evidence by Semerari in a note to his previously cited paper, "Intorno all'anticartesiano di G. B. Vico". Similarly to Vico, Husserl (in paragraphs 9 and 34 in *Krisis*) criticizes Galileo Galilei, who on discovering nature "concealed" it insofar as he substituted for nature itself a mathematical interpretation of it, thereby proposing, in his turn, a "new science". But Galileo Galilei develops the latter as a science of pre-categorical (existential and subjective-transcendental) foundations of the objective sciences and in terms of a radical critique of common sense and of the obviousness of a pre-determined world. As far as Descartes is con-

cerned, Husserl's critique, profoundly divergent from Vico's, substantially accepts the Cartesian view of the Cogito,

concerning which he reproaches Descartes for not having fully understood its deep and overwhelming meaning.⁵²

Semerari focuses particularly on the relationship between Husserl and Galileo Galilei in a 1965 essay, "La filosofia scientifica di Galilei",⁵³ which is of particular interest due to its analysis of a relationship among different languages. Despite Husserl's critique of Galileo Galilei, Semerari singles out the following points in common between them: the Galileian reference to things themselves, to the sensible as the place of authentication, to acknowledgment of the primacy of sight over the other senses, to the assumption of experience as the basis of scientific construction. But the point of differentiation and in a certain sense of incommensurability between Husserl and Galileo Galilei is identified by Semerari in the reference to Schelling's third lesson on "Über die Methode des akademischen Studium",⁵⁴ where natural science is considered as an immense philology and nature as a system of linguistic levels, of linguistic stratifications.

Schelling's thesis of the plurality of languages may reconcile Galileo Galilei's position, who discovered and appreciated a single language—the mathematical—with Husserl's position, who refused to reduce the multiple languages of nature, with its added possibilities of multiple signification, to a single language and to a single mathematical meaning. Though he is not mistaken, Husserl's critique of Galileo Galilei is improper: to the end of his own research, the latter was only interested in one particular type of language, while, on the contrary, Husserl proposed a linguistic theme linked to a scientific and philosophical post-Galileian problematic.⁵⁵

In an essay entitled "Crisi e critica della ragione" in *La crisi delle scienze europee* (1981),⁵⁶ Semerari enquires into the theoretical-historical interconnection between the *critique of reason*, the *crisis of sciences* and the *crisis of reason*, focusing on given turning points in the history of philosophical thought. A fourth aspect emerges in this interconnection, that of the *crisis of the transcendental*, the other face of the crisis of reason involving the loss of its sense, function and foundation which can only be retraced by rediscovering the problematicity, insecurity and precariousness of the existential human condition.

The first phase Semerari identifies in the historical development of philosophy is the crisis of primitive cosmological science, on the basis of objective changes which have intervened in the historico-social structure. These changes find expression first in Parmenides with his assertion of a concept of reason as opposed to the delusoriness of sensorial experience, and subsequently with Protagoras, who

may be considered the first to have elaborated a critique of reason expressed in the assertion of man as the measure of all things. At the same time, this reply may be considered as:

a discovery, even of course, of the *transcendental* as the criterion of differentiation between the knowable and the non-knowable, between being and not-being, between true and false. It is a question, furthermore, of a transcendental which, given its extreme simplicity, would seem to be free from the mythologies with which its more refined forms were subsequently to appear paradoxically charged [...]⁵⁷

The second case is the crisis determined by the advent of modern experimental science, by a radical shift in world view caused by geographical discoveries, by the questioning of religious authority in the Reformation: a crisis of certainty and security to which the Cartesian Cogito is a critical reply. Semerari agrees with Derrida that the Cogito is not only reason and order, but also madness and disorder, the source from which reason and madness are diversified.⁵⁸ Interestingly enough, Semerari also underlines that, despite the possibility of transcendental function, of pre-categorical foundation inherent in the Cogito—the *measure* used by Protagoras—nonetheless in Descartes the Cogito, rather than being maintained at the level of the pre-categorical, propends for reason which is identified with the mathematical order of the natural universe, thereby absolutizing a categorical structure considered as the unique model of rationality.⁵⁹

The third case is represented by the crisis of philosophy and of the natural sciences faced by Hume, and which he believes he can solve with an appeal to “human nature” as the epistemological principle of all knowledge, “the science of man science” being the basis of philosophy and of science, given that the mathematical and the natural sciences are also formed by taking the knowledge of man as their starting point. Semerari claims that the “science of man” is the *Humean critique of reason*, and despite its being vitiated by comparison with the reductivism of the Cartesian Cogito by ahistoricity, its approach to the pre-categorical is far broader and its problematization of the transcendental, deeper. With respect to the Humean critique of reason, a step backwards is represented by the “epistemological artifice and fiction of the Kantian *I* think, ‘one and identical’”, which is the result of extrapolation and hypostatization of the logico-linguistic structures of the mathematics and physics of the times, leading to identification of theoretical reason, no differently from the Cartesian Cogito, with its mathematical model.⁶⁰

With Husserlian phenomenology, the problem of the crisis of the sciences—seen above all as a problem of the loss of sense and value for human existence and as a problem of the critique of reason viewed as a profoundly existential problem—is dealt with through the recovery

of intersubjective intentionality which carries out a teleological function and in this sense is constitutive, transcendental with respect to constituted objectivity; and therefore through a radical critique of a world presented as absolute, existing for its own sake, as a system of determinations which belong to it obviously.

In this sense—says Semerari—a phenomenological critique recognizes its debt to Hume and Kant with whom, even more than with Descartes, the problem of transcendental constitution arises, even if Hume loses himself in sensualism and Kant does not know how to seriously distinguish between psychology and transcendentalism.⁶¹

Among the authors who have most contributed to the constitution of the historico-existential paradigm of the philosophical problematization of science, indicated by Semerari with the Vichian expression “new science”⁶²—contrasting it to “syntax” which only covers the technical-formal aspects of science—Marx holds a particularly important place. Marx is viewed in this perspective by Semerari in his essay “Materialismo e scienza naturale” (1972) included in a book of 1973 *Filosofia e potere*, as well as in an unpublished paper of 1980 “Il paradigma della ‘scienza nuova’ e la sua forma marxiana”, subsequently developed in *Sperimentazioni*.⁶³ While agreeing with Althusser that “Marx elaborates a new science, a system of scientifically new concepts,” Semerari is in fact using a completely different interpretation of the word “science” with respect to Althusser, who “lends (imposes upon) Marx a formalistic (philistine!) notion of science”, which is in fact “refuted” by Marx’s works. The scientificity of the Marxian critique of political economy is not based on the self-reflection of science as prescribed by the paradigm of syntax, but on *anthropological radicalism* and on the *integral historicization of the laws of political economy*.

This is how Marx obtains his ‘epistemological break’, which does not take place within his works—as Althusser imagines—that is, between the so-called *ideological* period and the so-called *scientific* period, but rather between his work considered generally (for the sake of clarity, from his *Introduction* of 1843 to *Capital*) and the whole preceding tradition in both philosophical (idealistic and materialistic-mechanistic) and economic-political thought.⁶⁴

4. Relation, freedom-necessity, value

In relation to the itinerary that leads from the Cartesian Cogito to the critique of reason in transcendental terms, Spinoza’s philosophy may be considered as an obstacle, a deviation from the transcendental level to an objectivistic-naturalistic metaphysics, beginning with Descartes. This is substantially the interpretation Husserl gave of Spinoza in *Erste Philosophie* (1923-1924) and in *Phänomenologische*

Psychologie (1925) and which remained unvaried in his posthumous work *Die Krisis* (1954), even though in the latter Spinozian ethics is considered as “the first universal ontology” that attempts to unite physics and psychology, and searches for their original relationship.

While agreeing with an interpretation that evaluates Spinoza’s role in developments on the theme of the transcendental,⁶⁵ Semerari’s evaluation is far broader. He begins with works on Spinoza which he subsequently reorganizes in his 1952 book, *I problemi dello spinozismo*,⁶⁶ develops in Benedetto Spinoza (1968)⁶⁷ and continue analyzing throughout his career. Semerari also interprets Spinoza’s philosophy in its relationship with Husserl’s phenomenology⁶⁸ remarking upon the particular common points: the correspondence between Spinoza’s concept of “regeneration” and Husserl’s “epoché”; the analogous approach to the method of philosophy considered as liberation from “prejudices”; the relationship which had already been perceived by Spinoza between the order of things and dispositions of the mind; the reconducting of science, already present in Spinoza, to the pre-categorical level of existence, making of the former an expedient for existential reassurance.⁶⁹

What mainly interests us now in Semerari’s reading of Spinoza are his references to the themes of relationality and the freedom-necessity relationship, which in Spinoza’s philosophy and in Semerari’s interpretation of it receive special attention. As to the first theme, specially interesting is a page from *I Problemi dello spinozismo* (ch. I) where Semerari makes the observation that Spinoza founds “not a literal monism, but a profound pluralism” underlining its “*metaphysical unity*”, on the basis of which the many mutually recognize and relate to each other. That this is central in the very orientation of Spinoza’s philosophy, even if he may not have been “fully aware” of this—here too a reflection on what forms the “shadow” of the philosopher as intended by Merleau-Ponty—is demonstrated by the claim to the reality of individuals in relation to the universals or entities of reason, which at the level of political philosophy implies recognizing the juridical properties of the individual-citizen in relation to the State. In this sense, says Semerari,

Spinoza criticizes Leibniz, before Leibniz criticizes Spinoza, Spinoza explicitly anticipates the aporias of Leibnizian philosophy, which historically would seem to remedy the apparent logical void of Spinozism. The Leibnizian restoration of traditional transcendence deprives the plurality of monads of the unifying element which, alone, can justify the relating of monads to monads, otherwise closed in subjective claustral worlds, vainly accorded by mythical pre-established harmony. For Spinoza the true starting point is not God, but experience of his multiplicity, and monism is the result of a metaphysical view within the multiplicity.⁷⁰

As for the second theme, in a chapter entitled "La libertà" in *I problemi dello spinozismo*, referring to Spinoza's assertion that freedom consists in consciousness of one's own nature—including the corporeal structure of the self: "the first and direct object of mental activity is the body" ("obiectum ideae humanam mentem constituentis est corpus")—to which we are necessarily bound, and in acting as a consequence, Semerari underlines the important conclusion that may be drawn from Spinoza's doctrine, that is, that freedom and responsibility are indissolubly connected,⁷¹ so that

Freedom is not a patrimony given to us to administer, but a value of industriousness that we construct, instant by instant, during the course of existence, individual and group existence, and of humanity, transforming potential possibility into effective reality, according to our forces and capacity. [...] Freedom and liberation are not two, but one. And freedom is achieved in and through liberation [...]⁷²

Both these themes are central in Schelling's philosophy, another philosopher to whom Semerari has dedicated various studies, including the volumes *Interpretazione di Schelling*⁷³ (1958), *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty* (1962), *Introduzione a Schelling* (1971).⁷⁴

Semerari's interpretation of Schelling has the special merit of having contributed to freeing him from interpretative modules which have fundamentally remained subordinate to a Hegelian definition, according to which Schelling acts as a mediator between Fichte and Hegel; as well as both from a reading in the perspective of culturalism as inaugurated by Dilthey and from Lukàcs who, apart from not taking his distance from Hegel, evaluates Schelling—as does Kierkegaard—in terms of irrationalism.⁷⁵

As early as his paper, "Dell'io come principio della filosofia" (1795), Spinoza plays an important role in the development of Schelling's thought and in separating it from Fichte's philosophy. Semerari states that

the *I* is the name used by Schelling to designate in a Fichtian climate *Spinoza's absolute Substance* [...] . Similarly to Spinoza's *Substance*, Schelling's *I* repropose the beginning and end of freedom....⁷⁶

Furthermore, as Schelling was to say in his 1809 reprint, the *I* is never interpreted as subjective but as absolute, that is, as identity between the subjective and the objective.⁷⁷ Schelling's absolute is understood in relational terms, as the relation between the finite and the infinite, intuition and concept, real and ideal. By contrast with Kant, Schelling does not place the category of relation at the same level of all other categories, but at their foundation, so that

one may see how the Absolute is the *hypostatizing definition of the original form of thinking*, in other words, *the entification of the category of relation* [...] The philosophy of nature and idealism unite with the Absolute thus originated and structured and it is because of this union that Schelling himself was frequently to call the philosophy of identity ideal-realism [...] To understand Schelling's Absolute either as thought or pure infinite, in which being is *decided*, or as being and pure finite in which thought is decided is to fall into one of two opposite and unilateral tendencies—abstract materialism and abstract idealism, objectivism and subjectivism—against which fights the philosophy of identity formed on the relational and antipredicative structure of the Absolute.⁷⁸

And it is on the basis of the assertion of the antipredicative fundamentality of the *relation* that Schelling's *ideal-realism*, beyond contrasting with the alternative idealism/realism, opposes mechanism both on a cognitive and scientific level as well as on a practical level; furthermore, it too resorts to the concept of metaphysics as the opposite of all mechanisms and as an organic manner of feeling, thinking and acting. Semerari sees in Schelling's Absolute, understood as the absolute form of the relation and principle of relation, beyond a substantialistic and pre-existentialistic interpretation common to Schelling's naturalism and to Spinozism,⁷⁹ the assertion of *original ambiguity* as the direct object of philosophizing. This may be used to address the crisis of traditional science based on mechanistic models thanks to the new situation provoked by the development of the sciences and of knowledge in general beyond those models.⁸⁰

Similarly to Spinoza, Schelling's Absolute guarantees autonomy of the finite from the infinite, of being from the idea without implying a return to the Kantian opposition. Precisely because the absolute is the relation of the finite and the infinite, of the real and the ideal, in the Absolute the finite is not decided in the infinite, but on the contrary, it never ceases to be finite, because the Absolute never ceases to be a relation.

With a proposition that is far less paradoxical in the facts than what would appear in its formulation, we could state that the Absolute in the philosophy of identity is *the principle of verification of the impossibility of any kind of absolutization*. Fichte in the last analysis is right in objecting [...] that the philosophy of identity should be called rather philosophy of nothingness, for here the Absolute becomes nothing as it transforms into a relation. But what is annulled is the old absolute, the foundation of individualistic, mechanistic and abstract philosophies which, as the advent of Fichtian idealism has shown, remains in the formalism of the void of knowledge from which they free themselves through recourse to faith.⁸¹

Of some interest is Semerari's insistence on the radicalization of

Spinozism in Schelling through the latter's assumption of the problem of the *temporal finite*, an issue which Spinoza left aside and which, once the Absolute becomes an antipredicative relation, as it does for Schelling, cannot be ignored given that the finite as the *difference* from all other finites to which, as such, it relates, presupposes temporality as a constitutive structure and coincides with its very existence.⁸²

The difference with respect to Spinoza also concerns the contingency/necessity relationship, which Semerari links to the transformation of Spinozian mechanistic naturalism into Schelling's relational and organicist naturalism, which, from this point of view, "presents itself as an *upturned* Spinoza". In fact, as a consequence of his return to Spinoza through Fichte's idealistic-pragmatic perspective, Schelling substitutes Spinoza's "causalistic necessity *a parte ante*" with "finalistic necessity *a parte post*".⁸³ This is possible in Schelling for whom the philosophy of nature is not merely the science of determinism and mechanism—to which the same Spinoza remains connected in spite of his critique of Descartes—so a connection is established between the dynamic process of nature and the concept of freedom. In "La libertà", chapter IV of *Introduzione a Schelling*,⁸⁴ Semerari underlines the difference established by Schelling on these basis with respect to Spinoza concerning his concept of freedom (which he develops in his work of 1809, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der Menschliche Freiheit*.) Here Schelling asserts that freedom cannot be made simply to consist in the dominion of intelligence over the sensible and over the appetites, thereby grasping only its negative aspect. In its positive aspect freedom is decision, participation in the active process of life as relation and organicity, and nonetheless, as in Spinoza, freedom is necessity, the assumption of the necessity of one's own nature. However, Semerari attaches special importance to Schelling's conception of freedom as "the discovery of the irrational as the foundation", that is, the evidencing of an irrationalistic residue of the individual personality and the identification of the nature of God with blind will, with an obscure will to exist. This

upturned the classical tradition of philosophy restored in those years and reaccredited by Hegel in terms of the most rigorous absolute rationalism, and placed something not conceptual and not formally rational at the foundation of the historical process of the world: need, that is, the simple will to exist".⁸⁵

In Schelling's view, consciousness is produced from the production of the unconscious which constitutes, in his words, "the transcendental past of the *I*" as consciousness. In this way, Schelling's philosophy

inaugurates the way through which Marx, Nietzsche, Freud were to attack the absolute sovereignty of consciousness—an authentic pillar of modern ideology [...].⁸⁶

Schelling thus contributes to the advent of contemporary consciousness. In Semerari's view the meaning and value of such consciousness coincide in the transition from *argumentative reason* (Pascal is another important author to be remembered in considering the problematic relative to the Cartesian Cogito, mechanism, and scientific physicalism),⁸⁷ that is, from reason as the art of persuasion used by man without being compromised, to *projectual reason* identified with the human subject itself as it struggles to give sense and value to its own existence. It is in this perspective—considering, that is, the problem of reason and science in connection with man's struggle for responsibility and control, for the constitution of values and for the conditions of possibility to answer for them, so that science may not only be seen as the science of means but also of ends, that is, as the will to rationalize ends and values in man's life⁸⁸—that Semerari evaluates the contribution of Nietzsche's philosophy:

Stripped of all equivocity, the Nietzschean super-man acts as a regulative ideal for a theology of human reason oriented toward the evidence of life understood as the responsibility of man who inhabits the world and wishes to be realized by determining himself in expression that is no longer contradicted by his nature.⁸⁹

The will to power consists in passing from belief in things *as they are* to the willing their transformation, *their having to become thus*. From this point of view, the "will to power" intended as the will of the existent to preserve itself and grow according to its possibilities, is interpreted by Semerari as the recognition of existential precariousness in the development of life itself. And knowledge does not emerge as "a luxury", as an end in itself, but as a function of life.⁹⁰ The Nietzschean critique of values leads to an awareness of the fact that the latter are anticipated and planned in relation to a concrete problematic situation, as the end of existential choices and as the possibility of positive choice.⁹¹ According to Semerari, Nietzschean philosophy is therefore the development and radicalization of philosophical speculation as inaugurated by such authors as Hume and Kierkegaard, beyond the Humean ahistoricity of the "science of man" and the religious bent of the Kierkegaardian paradox.⁹²

Semerari characterizes Hume's "philosophical melancholy," as discussed in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, as

the symbol of philosophy, which, having detracted validity from certainty, incapable of justifying itself to the very end, sets man, without compromise, before the radical problematicity of his existence and of the

insecurity of his being.⁹³

Humean philosophical melancholy is manifested as the philosopher's deeply felt solitude caused by the impossibility of conforming and passively adapting to the rules, to institutionalized practices and to the customs of social cohabitation. A situation which does not denote superb separation and intellectual self-exaltation, but, on the contrary, humble recognition of the condition of simplicity and pure passion that characterizes the "poor existent single man" as Kierkegaard expresses himself, evidencing in his concluding non-scientific gloss (*Afsluttende uvidenskabeling Efterskrift*) the paradoxical relationship of such a condition with Truth conceived as eternal and essential. Semerari refers to Hume's melancholy as a way of situating Schelling's thought, observing that the "melancholy and desperation" confessed by Schelling in *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Offenbarung* (1842) and ensuing from the inability of philosophy to establish the end and true reason of the world,

are the evidence of the failure of a philosophical adventure—that attempted by Kant and Hegel—which, beyond appearances and despite the impressiveness of its theoretical constructions, ends by eluding the inexorable questions posed by Hume, against which it does not measure itself frankly and courageously. This also happens because such a philosophical adventure would otherwise be obliged to take apart and demolish most of the German philosophical tradition which, on the contrary, it wishes to reconfirm and further develop in the perspective of a 'Risorgimento' revival of German national culture.⁹⁴

Contrary to Spinoza who maintained that contingency is only a defect of our intellect, contemporary philosophy increasingly evidences our categorical horizon in terms of the possible or the contingent.⁹⁵ From this point of view, Semerari highly considers Sartre's contribution, whose Roquentin, the protagonist in *La nausée* announces the "extraordinary discovery" that "the essential is the contingent [...]; "by definition existence is not necessity [...]"⁹⁶ demonstrating in *L'Être et le Néant*, that, being ourselves and the world *Contingency*, implies that Contingency can only be ignored or masked through an act of bad faith. According to Semerari the great distance between Sartre and Heidegger clearly emerges at this point: in fact, while for the latter what has been hidden in the history of philosophical thought and must now be reasserted is Being, for Sartre instead what has been forgotten and masked is contingency and existential anguish, which have been hidden and disguised by reassuring pretense:

In a certain sense, *Sein und Zeit* and *L'Être e le néant* count as the poles of an alternative which contemporary thought is called to bet on: whether to continue variously masking Contingency or, instead, to finally take

Contingency seriously in all its implications beginning with nothingness.⁹⁷

In Semerari's opinion, Sartre's limit in *L'Être e le Néant* consists in his absolutization of freedom, which annuls the motivation of the choice, in the absolutization of freedom which involves the exclusion of responsibility. On this point Semerari establishes a convergence between the Sartrean conception of freedom and the antinomy of Croce's philosophy of freedom, despite divergence as to their point of departure: by absolutizing history Croce annuls the relationship of history to freedom and, therefore, to responsibility as freedom of choice; by absolutizing freedom Sartre annuls any possibility of the relationship of freedom to history and, therefore, to responsibility of one's own present choice in the face of conditioning by the past.⁹⁸

Absolute freedom and abstract absolute determinism coincide, but the concrete remains freedom relative to a conditioning temporal (that is situational) determination.⁹⁹

Semerari believes that Sartre's merit is fundamentally, instead, his "disenchanted humanism" whose manifesto may be considered to be "Matérialisme et Révolution".¹⁰⁰ Taking up *L'Être et le Néant* and anticipating *Critique de la raison dialectique*, "Materialism and Revolution" asserts the contingency of human existence and transformability of the collective order and system of values. It is significant, says Semerari, that against such disenchanted humanism we have the reaction, from two opposite philosophical fronts, of Heidegger with his "Brief über den 'Humanismus'" and of Lukacs with his "Existentialism or Marxism?". Indeed, disenchanted humanism can neither be approved by the person who understands the human solely in terms of an opening to Being, nor by the person who views man's problems in the perspective of a mechanical reflexological relationship between consciousness and being, and through an interpretation of Marxism that is dogmatic and subordinate to Stalinism.¹⁰¹

5. Post-idealistic Italian philosophical thought: The genesis and formation of *neoilluminismo*

In a 1968 essay entitled "Il neoilluminismo filosofico italiano,"¹⁰² ["Italian Philosophical Neoenlightenment"] which refers to the revival, after the second World War, of the free exchange of Italian philosophy with the rest of the cultural world from which it had been isolated by neoidealism and fascism, Semerari cites an observation made by Augusto Guzzo, who realized at the time "that the issues which torment us these days had to find a solution elsewhere other than...in

the panlogism of Croce and of Gentile".¹⁰³

This essay paved the road for a reevaluation of a twentieth-century "tradition" which comprises thinkers such as Giuseppe Peano, Giovanni Vailati, Mario Calderoni and Federico Enriques. It also looks at the actualism of Antonio Aliotta, the originality of Carabellese's critical ontologism and the great efficacy of Antonio Banfi's *critical rationalism*, especially as they relate to Windelband's and Cassirer's Neo-Kantism, Husserlian phenomenology, Simmel's philosophy of life, and historical materialism.

As regards Banfi's neorationalism, and underlining what he considers to be one of its constant characteristics as delineated in what Fulvio Papi calls the "School of Milan",¹⁰⁴ Semerari identifies a main theme in the recovery of life for philosophy freed from all empty formalisms. As a confirmation, Semerari remembers that with the appearance of one of the most significant texts of the "new course", *La vita come ricerca* by Ugo Spirito in 1937, Giulio Preti, an exponent of the "School of Milan," observed that Spirito was breaking with actualism and proceeding in the same direction as critical rationalism. In the 1930s the connection between philosophy and life, expressed programmatically by Banfi in *Principi di una teoria della ragione* (1926), opened critical rationalism, similarly to the European philosophy of those years, to the problem of existence, which Banfi assumed not in its abstract immediacy but in the totalizing movement of reason contrasting with all dogmatic closure.¹⁰⁵

As a description of the philosophical climate in Italy during the 1930s, nothing is more appropriate than the words spent by Banfi in an essay of 1934, *Sui principi di una filosofia morale*—"it is not thought that teaches life to live, but life that teaches thought to think"—and the Platonic saying—*kalòs o kindunos*—reproduced by Abbagnano as the opening motto to *La struttura dell'esistenza* of 1939. The debate of the 1930s concentrated on life and on problematicity at the limit of not-being. A brief survey would show how many of the most significant books of those years bear the term life or a more or less equivalent term such as experience or existence in the title: *Vita di Galileo* by Banfi, *La filosofia e la vita* by Calogero, *La vita come ricerca* by Spirito, *L'esperienza e l'uomo* by Lombardi, *La struttura dell'esistenza* by Abbagnano.¹⁰⁶

Despite the differences between them, critical rationalism, experimentalism, the philosophy of mathematics and of science, and Italian pragmatism all commonly contributed to freeing reason from idealistic and historicist dogmatism. On this basis Italian *neoenlightenment* began to flourish during the 1940s, sharing with historical Enlightenment the focus in philosophical reflection on problems relating to reason and science. This "structural pluralism", as Semerari calls it,¹⁰⁷ of Italian *neoenlightenment*, consisting in the fact that it was represented by

thinkers different in provenance and ideological formation, found its common denominator in the general attitude that considers the problems of man's world and of his existence as remaining rigorously in the *human* world, in the natural and social horizon of man himself. This enabled recovery of the truth of positivism without in the meantime leaving aside the subject, and therefore recovery of the truth of idealism, beyond dogmatic developments in these two philosophical currents. Nicola Abbagnano's positive existentialism, Giulio Preti's pragmatic neopositivism, Remo Cantoni's historicist humanism, the methodological rationalism of Norberto Bobbio and of Ludovico Geymonat, the revival of phenomenology thanks to Enzo Paci and the group belonging to the review "Aut-Aut", to which Semerari himself belonged, all inhabit in different guises the sphere of neoenlightenment.

Semerari insists particularly on the connection between this "third phase"¹⁰⁸ in twentieth-century Italian philosophy, represented by neoenlightenment, and the anti- and post-idealistic ferments of Italian contemporary philosophy left on the margins during the dominion of idealism. So, while reconstructing the formation process of Nicola Abbagnano's positive existentialism, Semerari shows that this line of thought may be understood not so much by considering it in relation to European existentialisms as by viewing it as a "critical radicalization and development" of the experimentalism of Antonio Aliotta, which influenced Abbagnano.¹⁰⁹ Aliotta's assertion of the necessity of "philosophizing humanly," of considering, that is, the human point of view as the "only one possible from which we do and can philosophize";¹¹⁰ his revindication of the pluralistic character of experience both at the level of form with the consequent critique of preference for the gnoseological, as well as at the level of the irrepressible multiplicity of individual points of view due to their relative impenetrability; the acknowledgment of the data of experience—insofar as it is pluralistic, relativistic, relational—as possibilities; and finally his radicalization in the sphere of human existence, considered in all its dramatic and ambiguous character, of the moral destiny of man: all this finds development in Abbagnano's positive existentialism as it develops out of Aliotta's experimentalism and finds expression in a 1923 book entitled, *Le sorgenti irrazionali del pensiero*. Furthermore, beyond being a continuation of Antonio Aliotta's experimentalism, Semerari demonstrates that the necessary transition towards positive existentialism accomplished by Abbagnano subsequently in *Il principio della metafisica* (1936) through his recovery of ontological thought as against gnoseologicistic metaphysics, the reduction of philosophy to mere methodology, and the foundation of ontology in the horizon of existence, is also connected with Carabellese's critical ontologism, explicitly evoked by Abbagnano. Carabellese's critical ontologism is

characterized by the effort towards the antipredicative dimension of being and the overcoming of all subjective and objective hypostatization of the ontological structure.¹¹¹

Analogously, Semerari traces links in Enzo Paci's research with the thought of Banfi who was led to the critique of neo-Kantian transcendentalism of the Marburg School and to the need of a connection between thought and being. This also led him to the problem of ontology and to the radicalization and problematization of transcendentalism: "which marked his existentialism and differentiated him from that positive *existentialism* presented by Abbagnano in 1939 with *La struttura dell'esistenza* and to [that] with which Paci is habitually associated".¹¹² Semerari shows how Paci reached existentialism on his own account and with his own motivations with respect to Abbagnano, just as Abbagnano, differently from what the same Paci believed, in other words, that positive existentialism was the synthesis of Heidegger and Jaspers, reached the same conclusion through the experimentalism of Antonio Aliotta and the ontological reflection of his 1936 book.

In the last analysis the distinction between Paci and Abbagnano consisted in their different understanding of the same existentialistic experience, which derived from the difference between transcendentalism and experimentalism. This was to be translated into the difference in theoretical direction according to which Abbagnano and Paci were subsequently to continue their philosophical efforts, methodological empiricism (Abbagnano) and an explicit relationistic elaboration (Paci), moving off from a common existentialistic phase.¹¹³

In three books which appeared between 1938 and 1940, *Il significato del Parmenide nella filosofia di Platone*, *Principii di una filosofia dell'essere* and *Pensiero esistenza e valore*, Paci dealt simultaneously with the question of the radical problematization of transcendentalism, the existential radicalization of Banfi's transcendentalism, and the reformulation of ontology. In the claim to complementarity between the models of transcendentalism and ontologism, Semerari sees the beginning of Paci's relationistic choice, even if he avails himself of it at a strictly methodological level.¹¹⁴ This explains Paci's strongly positive attitude towards the problematic nature of *La vita come esistenza* by Ugo Spirito "for having conducted theoretical research to a maximum point of transcendental problematicity and for having reached, *at the same time and moving in the same direction*, the plan of existence".¹¹⁵ At the same time, Paci was interested in the recovery of the ontological theme which had matured in European philosophy between the 1920s and the 1930s. In his "Preface" to *Principii di una filosofia dell'essere*, Paci explicitly recalls the refounding of ontologism with direct reference to Hartmann and Carabellese, as Semerari observes:

After the 1930s Paci no longer returns to the thought of Carabellese, but it is significant that when in 1954 he published his first broader exposition of relationism, he gave it a title with a Carabellesian flavour, *Tempo e Relazione*, and, when he committed himself to the elaboration of his relationistic phenomenology, he centered it...on time and relation.¹¹⁶

Semerari identifies in a relationistic perspective that which remains constant throughout the whole of Paci's research from the initial existentialistic phase to the declaredly relationistic phase and on through to the final phenomenological-Marxian phase. A spokesman now of Whitehead, now of Merleau-Ponty, now of Husserl, now of Marx, or an eclectic in the pejorative sense of the term, in Semerari's view, Paci still is the philosopher among Italian philosophers of his generation who developed with the greatest awareness and coherence the meaning of the characteristic signs of the culture of our century, focusing throughout his career on the principle of relation as opposed to the principle of substance (as dominated in physics, biology, psychology, the social sciences). The work of Paci "is the Italian laboratory of the epochal passage from the substantialistic to the relationistic way of thinking".¹¹⁷

In "Filosofia e storia" (1967), Semerari observes that in the sphere of philosophical historiography

historical research cannot ignore, absolutely, neither the logical and structural forms of philosophical discourse, nor the multiple ties which unite, compromising it, philosophy to the life of mankind and of societies, nor above all the specific theoretical impulse which coincides with philosophizing and on which historical knowledge itself depends (if I do not have theoretical interests in philosophy I cannot have any authentic interest in its history either) and, in the last analysis, the possibility of all history.¹¹⁸

This is best exemplified precisely by Semerari's work during the course of his complex but fruitful theoretical reflection on the history of philosophical thought; and, we shall have reached our goal if—we have succeeded in conveying an idea of its consistency and breadth.

NOTES

1. G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, Urbino, Argalia, 1969.

2. Cf. cit., p. 6.

3. Carabellese was a student of B. Varisco, though he was also significantly influenced by F. Masci (see G. Semerari, "Varisco e Carabellese" (1983) in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano*, Naples, Guida 1988, p. 121-147). His numerous works include *Critica del concreto* (1921), Rome, Signorelli, 1940; 3rd. ed. Florence, Sansoni, 1948; *Il problema teologico come filosofia*, Rome, 1931; *La filosofia dell'esistenza in Kant* (1941-43), intro. by G. Semerari, Bari, Adriatica,

1969; *L'Essere e la sua manifestazione*: I. *Dialettica delle forme*, II. *L'Io*, Rome, Castellani, 1943-1946; "La coscienza" in M. F. Sciacca (ed.), *Filosofi italiani contemporanei*, Milan, 1947.

4. Cf. G. Semerari, *La sabbia e la roccia. L'ontologia critica di Pantaleo Carabellese*, Bari, Dedalo, 1982, p. ii-v.

5. *Cfr. cit.*, p. 26.

6. G. Semerari, *Storicismo e ontologismo critico*, Manduria, Lacaita, 1960. This is the edition referred to in what follows.

7. Carabellese was not a political activist and yet at a time when philosophy was at the service of the State ethic, he supported the independence of philosophy from politics or, more precisely, the autonomy of philosophizing with respect to any one regime. Semerari focuses on the political bent of Carabellese's thought in his book of 1982, underlining its orientation toward democracy understood as the negation of separate and absolutized interests, of egoistical closure, and, consequently, of violence and dominion of man over man: see in particular the chapter entitled "Ontologia e politica" by G. Semerari, *La sabbia e la roccia*, *op cit.*

8. *Cf. cit.*, p. 25 and p. 95.

9. *Cf. G. Semerari, Storicismo e ontologismo critico, cit.*, p. 17-18.

10. The problems of responsibility and of control run through the whole of Semerari's research, whose most important phases from this point of view are marked by the following books significantly entitled *Responsabilità e comunione umana* (1960, 2nd. ed. 1966); *Scienza nuova e ragione* (1961, 2nd. ed. 1966) and *La lotta per la scienza* (1965). These books were subsequently united in *Civiltà dei mezzi, civiltà dei fini. Per un razionalismo filosofico-politico*, Verona, Bertani, 1979; *Filosofia e potere*, Bari, Dedalo, 1973. *Insecuritas. Tecniche e paradigmi della salvezza*, Milan, Spirali, 1983.

11. Semerari returns to Dilthey on several occasions throughout his career. Particularly interesting are his reflections on the Husserl-Dilthey relationship. Semerari highlights, despite differences and contrasts, and as Husserl himself recognizes in his letters to G. Minsch of 1929-30, the numerous links and reciprocal influence between the two philosophers. In this case also Husserl's position is antihistoricist, which reveals, especially in his later production, increasing attention to problems of history and historiography: see G. Semerari, "Husserl e Dilthey" (1985), in F. De Natale and G. Semerari, *Skepsis. Studi husserliani*, Bari, Dedalo, 1989, pp. 265-283.

12. *Cf. K. Löwith, "Storia e storicismo," Rivista di filosofia*, 1954, p. 142.

13. See among other things the chapter "L'analitica esistenziale," in G. Semerari, *Scienza nuova e ragione, cit.*, and G. Semerari (ed.), *Confronti con Heidegger*, Bari, Dedalo, 1992. [See review of *Confronti* in this issue of *Differentia*. Ed.]

14. M. Heidegger, *Was ist die Metaphisik*, It. trans. Milan, 1946, p. 99.

15. G. Semerari, *Storicismo e ontologismo critico, cit.*, p. 46.

16. G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni*, Fasano (Bari), Schena, 1992.

17. Concerning Husserl, Semerari, in "Il problema della storiografia filosofica," in F. De Natale and G. Semerari, *Skepsis*, observes that "Husserl never formulates explicitly the question, posed by Leibniz and by Schelling and which was subsequently to become the fundamental question posed by Heidegger, his *Hauptfrage*: why I being in general and not rather nothing? This question lies at the foundation of phenomenology and comes to the fore-

ground when in *Ideen I*, Husserl concludes that nothing can justify in the absolute "that there must be a world, anything" and that the possibility of non-being is latent "in the essence of all physical transcendence" (*op. cit.*, p. 159).

18. Cf. G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni*, cit., pp. 28-29.

19. M. Heidegger, "Perché i poeti?," [*Wozu Dichter?*] in M. Heidegger, *Sentieri interrotti*, It. trans. by P. Chiodi, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1968, p. 259.

20. On the conception of time in Carabellese, see chapter IV, "L'essere oggettivo: il tempo" by G. Semerari, *Storicismo e ontologismo critico*, cit., p. 56-82, where it is confronted with the more significant conceptions in modern thought, from Kant to Bergson, to Heidegger.

21. Cf. G. Semerari, *La sabbia e la roccia*, cit., p. v.

22. G. Semerari, *Storicismo e ontologismo critico*, cit., p. 81.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 108-113.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 217-245.

25. See also the paragraph "I limiti dogmatici dell'ontologismo critico" in the section dedicated to Carabellese's critique of the concrete in G. Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty*, cit., p. 147-154.

26. G. Semerari, *La sabbia e la roccia*, cit., p. 66.

27. G. Semerari, *Storicismo e ontologismo critico*, cit., p. 24.

28. *Cit.*, p. 187.

29. Cf. *cit.*, p. 191.

30. *Cit.*, p. 23. See also the important chapter "Lo scandalo linguistico," in G. Semerari, *La sabbia e la roccia*, p. 59-99.

31. Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, Paris, Nagel, 1948; It. trans. by P. Caruso, *Senso e non senso*, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1962, pp. 117-118.

32. It. trans. in M. Merleau-Ponty, *Segni*, Il Saggiatore 1967. See the section "Studi sulla filosofia dell'ambiguità di Merleau-Ponty", in G. Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty*, Urbino, Cappelli, 1962.

33. G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, cit., p. 195.

34. *Cit.*, p. 196.

35. G. Semerari, "Il neoidealismo nella filosofia italiana del primo '900. Neoidealismo e fascismo," in *Matrici culturali del fascismo. Seminari promossi dal Consiglio Regionale Pugliese e dall'Ateneo Barese nel Trentennale della liberazione*, Bari, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, 1977, p. 7; this text has now been included in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano*, cit., pp. 47-68.

36. *Cit.*, p. 8; see also G. Semerari, "Gentile e il marxismo" (1975), in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano*, cit., pp. 13-46.

37. G. Semerari, *Insecuritas. Tecniche e paradigmi della salvezza*, cit.

38. Cf. G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, pp. 197-199.

39. G. Semerari, "Strategie del rassicuramento umano," in G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni*, Fasano (Bari). Schena, 1992.

40. Cf. G. Semerari, "Sulla metafisica di Vico," in *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, cit., pp. 252 and 271; on the Carabellese-Vico relationship see also G. Semerari, "Il Vico di Carabellese" (1982-83), in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano*, cit., p. 149-170.

41. G. Semerari, "Intorno all'anticartesiano di Vico," in G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, cit., pp. 239-240.

42. G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni*, cit., p. 20.

43. It. trans. by E. Filippini, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1961, 1968 3rd. ed. Cf.

G. Semerari, "La fenomenologia" (1989), in the forthcoming *Temi e problemi di filosofia contemporanea*, Palermo, Edizioni della Fondazione "Vito Fazio-Allmayer," p. 128. As far as "esthetic reason" is concerned, see the essay by G. Semerari entitled "Il carattere ideologico dell'estetica crociana" (1975), in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano, cit.*, p. 68-78, where he underlines the ideologico-social genesis of the conception of art as contemplation and intuitive transfiguration of the world.

44. Semerari returns to this note by Husserl in two texts at a distance of approximately thirty years from each other: this text originally appeared in 1960 in the collective volume *Omaggio a Husserl*, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1960, pp. 123-161 and republished in G. Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty, cit.*, (see *cit.*, p. 70) and in "La fenomenologia di Husserl," *cit.*, (see p. 125 ff.).

45. G. Semerari, "Il problema della storiografia filosofica" (1985), in F. De Natale and G. Semerari, *Skepsis. Studi husserliani*, Bari, Dedalo, 1989, p. 158-159; see also G. Semerari, "Husserl e la fenomenologia," *cit.*, pp. 128-130.

46. G. Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty, cit.*, pp. 67-68.

47. Cf. *cit.*, p. 65-69. See also chapter 2, "Le scienze nella crisi della ragione," by G. Semerari, in *La lotta per la scienza, cit.*

48. From this point of view, see the two initial chapters of *Scienza nuova e ragione, cit.*, "Narcisismo e masochismo della ragione" and "La scienza rigorosa," in G. Semerari, *Civiltà dei mezzi e civiltà dei fini, cit.*, pp. 23-69.

49. G. Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty, cit.*, p. 70.

50. Cf. G. Semerari, "La fenomenologia di Husserl," *cit.*, p. 135. See also G. Semerari, "La questione dell'ente-uomo in Heidegger," in G. Semerari (ed.), *Confronti con Heidegger*, Bari, Dedalo, 1992.

51. *Cit.*, p. 136.

52. G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno, cit.*, p. 246.

53. G. Semerari, "La filosofia scientifica di Galilei" (1965), in G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno, cit.*, pp. 147-176.

54. Schelling, *Werke*, ed. by M. Schroter, 3 Bd. p. 249-261 ff.

55. G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno, cit.*, p. 157-158.

56. Cf. F. de Natale and G. Semerari, *Skepsis, cit.*, pp. 97-139.

57. *Cit.*, p. 100.

58. Cf. J. Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, p. 74.

59. Cf. G. Semerari, "Crisi e critica della ragione," *cit.*, p. 103.

60. See *cit.*, p. 102-105. On the renewal of Humean critique in the sphere of Husserlian phenomenology, see G. Semerari, "Husserl e Hume" (1986), in F. De Natale and G. Semerari, *Skepsis, cit.*, p. 229-264.

61. See *cit.*, p. 113-114.

62. See cited volumes *Scienza nuova e ragione* and *La lotta per la scienza*, unified in *Società dei mezzi e società dei fini, cit.*

63. Cf., G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni, cit.*, p. 105.

64. Cf. *cit.*, p. 101, note 46.

65. Cf. G. Semerari, "Husserl e Spinoza" (1977), in F. De Natale and G. Semerari, *Skepsis, cit.*, p. 201-228.

66. G. Semerari, *I problemi dello spinozismo*, Trani, Vecchi & C. Editori, 1952.

67. G. Semerari, *Benedetto Spinoza*, Milan, Marzorati, 1968 (in *Grande Antologia Filosofica, Il pensiero moderno*, vol. XIII). Semerari's Italian translation of Spinoza's brief treatise should also be remembered.

68. Cf. G. Semerari, "Rigenerazione e comunione in Spinoza" (1959), "L'ambiguità di Spinoza" (1964), p. 428-438, now in G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, cit., p. 57-84 and 129-146.

69 In "L'ontologia della sicurezza in Spinoza" (1982), in G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni*, pp. 35-57, Semerari presents Spinozism as "a model of the ontology of certainty, a model, that is, of legitimation and philosophical formalization in the techniques of reassurance produced by man to the end of overcoming existential insecurity ...]" (p. 36).

70. G. Semerari, *I problemi dello spinozismo*, cit., p. 57.

71. A connection is also established between morals and science, between ethics and the science of nature, in net contrast with Kant and his separation between the world of natural facts and the world of morals (see G. Semerari, *Benedetto Spinoza*, cit., p. 97).

72. G. Semerari, *I problemi dello spinozismo*, cit.

73. G. Semerari, *Interpretazione di Schelling*, Naples, Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1958.

74. G. Semerari, *Introduzione a Schelling*, Bari, Laterza, 1971.

75. See, cit., p. 223-241, dedicated to the history of criticism.

76. G. Semerari, *Interpretazione di Schelling*, cit., p. 14-15.

77. Cf. cit., p. 18.

78. Cit., p. 101 and 104.

79 . Cfr. G. Semerari, *La filosofia come relazione*, Edizioni del "Centro Librario," Sapri, 1961.

80. Cfr. G. Semerari, *Interpretazione di Schelling*, pp. 286-287.

81. Cit., p. 107-108.

82. See, for these aspects, pp. 112-121, which are fundamental for reflection, occasioned by the Schelling/Spinoza confrontation, on the indissoluble relationship between finite, difference, relation, on one hand, and temporality on the other.

83. Cit., p. 140.

84. G. Semerari, *Introduzione a Schelling*, cit., p. 122-178.

85. Cit., p. 173.

86. G. Semerari, "Teoresi e poeticità. La semantica schellinghiana della natura," in G. Semerari; *Sperimentazioni*, cit., p. 119.

87. Cf. G. Semerari, "Pascal, Nietzsche e la scienza" (1963), in G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno*, cit., p. 113-128. However the germs and presentiments of the existential approach to consciousness and reason are no doubt present in Pascal, says Semerari, for example in the Pascalian conception that there is no difference in nature but only in character between reason and passion (cf. cit., pp. 121-122).

88. See, in particular G. Semerari, *Responsabilità e comunità umana*, cit., and *Società dei mezzi e società dei fini*, cit.

89. G. Semerari, "Pascal, Nietzsche e la scienza," cit., p. 123.

90. Semerari dedicated much thought to these aspects, for the problem of the foundation of the sciences explicitly dealt with by phenomenology is already anticipated by Nietzsche.

91. Cf. G. Semerari, the paragraph "Il valore," in the second part of *Scienza nuova e ragione*, cit.

92. Cf. G. Semerari, *Esperienza e predicazione*, lesson notes, cit.

93. G. Semerari, "Teoresi e poeticità. La semantica schellinghiana della

natura" (1985), in G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni, cit.*, p. 111.

94. *Cit.*, p. 113.

95. Cf. G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni, cit.*, p. 31; see also G. Semerari, *La filosofia come relazione, cit.*, p. 78.

96. J. P. Sartre, *La Nausea (La nausée)* (1938), It. trans. by B. Fonzi, Milan, Mondadori, 1971, p. 196.

97. G. Semerari, "Sartre: l'umanesimo disincantato" (1983), in G. Semerari, *Sperimentazioni, cit.*, p. 64.

98 Cf. G. Semerari, *Responsabilità e comunità umana, cit.*, p. 159-166.

99. *Cit.*, p. 175. Such coincidence between historicism and Sartrean existentialism is also indicated in G. Semerari, *Storicismo e ontologismo critico, cit.*, p. 192 and note 3.

100. In J. P. Sartre, *Che cos'è la letteratura? (Situations I, II, III)*, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1963.

101. Cf. G. Semerari, "Sartre: l'umanesimo disincantato," *cit.*, p. 72-73. From this point of view, of some interest is the relationship established by Semerari between the theoretical gesture accomplished by Sartre in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in relation to dogmatic Marxism to reassert the humanistic instance of Marxian critique, and that accomplished by Carabellese against Hegelism with the aim of renewing the theme of the Cartesian Cogito.

102. Now in G. Semerari, *Esperienze del pensiero moderno, cit.*, p. 273-293.

103. Augusto Guzzo, *Croce e Gentile*, Lugano, 1953, p. 27 and ff. On Guzzi's critique of idealism and the attempt at reconciling idealism and Christianity, see G. Semerari, "La discussione intorno all'idealismo negli anni 1936-43," in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano, cit.*, p. 223-229.

104. G. Semerari, "La scuola di Milano," in a review of Fulvio Papi, *Vita e filosofia. La scuola di Milano: Banfi, Cantoni, Paci, Preti*, Milan, Guerini e Associati, Milan, 1990, in *Paradigmi*, (Bari) 27, 1990, p. 566.

105. Cf. *cit.*, p. 568.

106. "Il relazionismo di Paci" (1986), in Stefano Zecchi (ed.), *Vita e verità. Interpretazione di Enzo Paci*, Milan, Bompiani, 1991; also in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano, cit.*, p. 247-248. See also the "Prefazione" by G. Semerari to his *La filosofia come relazione, cit.*, particularly p. 14-15. On *L'esperienza e l'uomo* (1935) by Franco Lombardi, see the note by Semerari in pages 37-139 in this same book. "On discussing idealism, Lombardi set himself the aim of recovering man understood not as the Concept and the idea of man but as Kierkegaard's poor single existent man or as Feuerbach's finite entity, in other words, as man in flesh and blood of common everyday life" (G. Semerari, "La discussione intorno all'idealismo negli anni 1936-1943," in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano, cit.*, p. 219).

107. Cf. G. Semerari, "Il neoidealismo italiano," *cit.*, p. 283.

108. Cf. *cit.*, p. 282.

109. Cf. G. Semerari, "Genesi e formazione dell'esistenzialismo positivo," in G. Semerari, *Novecento filosofico italiano, cit.*, p. 171-208. Semerari dedicates pp. 172-185 of this essay to A. Aliotta's experimentalism, with particular reference to a book by the latter, *La guerra eterna e il dramma dell'esistenza*, Naples, 1917. Semerari had already concerned himself with Di Aliotta in *La filosofia come relazione, cit.*, p. 24-43.

110. A. Aliotta, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

111. Cf. G. Semerari, *Genesi e formazione dell'esistenzialismo positivo, cit.*, p.

197. Sull'esistenzialismo positivo, v. anche G. Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty*, cit., pp. 197-230.

112. G. Semerari, "Il relazionismo di Enzo Paci," cit., p. 252.

113. Cit., p. 252. On the relationship between positive existentialism and methodological empirism, see G. Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty*, cit., p. 231-34.

114. Cf. G. Semerari, "Il relazionismo di Enzo Paci," cit., pp. 249-51.

115. Enzo Paci, *Pensiero, esistenza e valore*, Milan, 1940. On the evolution of problematicism in U. Spirito, see G. Semerari, *La filosofia come relazione*, cit., pp. 156-57.

116. Cit., p. 262.

117. Cit., p. 240. On relationism, see G. Semerari, *La filosofia come relazione*, cit., and G. Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty*, cit., p. 234-46.

118. In G. Semerari (ed.), *Dentro la storiografia filosofica. Questioni di teoria e di didattica*, Bari, Dedalo, 1983, p. 64