Images of Truth: From Sign to Symbol by Carlo Sini

Robert Burch
Images of Truth: From Sign to Symbol

By Carlo Sini.
Translated by Massimo Verdicchio.
Edited by Hugh J. Silverman and Graeme Nicholson.

With this translation of Carlo Sini's *Immagini di verità* (1985)—ably rendered by Massimo Verdicchio (University of Alberta), and provided with an introduction, footnotes, bibliography and index—not only for the first time does a text by this important Italian philosopher become available to English-speaking readers, but also, an original attempt to think through and beyond the fate of metaphysics and its distinctive questioning of truth is brought before a wider public. "Born out of the living experience of courses taught at the University of Milan" and deliberately retaining the "presentational style of the original lectures," *Immagini di verità* narrates an inevitable "stage" in Sini's ongoing philosophical "journey" involved with "questioning interpretation and the sign" (xxvii), inevitable since the meaning of interpretation and the sign belongs together with that of truth.

Ostensibly, then, philosophers ought to have common cause with the intent of this text, as "the philosopher is first of all the friend of truth" (xxviii). The thesis of this text, if one may speak in such terms, is that "truth may lie in the thorough thinking of nihilism . . . of what in nihilism, as Heidegger would say, 'makes us think' " (xxviii). The hesitation in talking about the thesis in this way derives from the thesis itself. "When interpretation takes on the form, as in this case, of 'infinite semiosis' " (xxviii), such that "what occurs in the interpretation is not the absolute truth" (137), then any singular statement of a thesis cannot be circulated free and clear. Yet it is precisely in the recognition of this interpretive liability—"that where the question of truth is concerned we are all debtors" (xxviii)—that the crucial truth of Sini's own interpretation lies. To the metaphysical ideal of "well-rounded truth" inscribed in the perfect identity of thinking and being, Sini / juxtaposes the thesis that "the world 'contains infinite interpretations' [Nietzsche]." Yet merely to affirm this thesis against metaphysics is to remain in nihilism and thus to "say 'no' to what metaphysics has for centuries said or tried to say 'yes' to, but . . . on the same premises" (80). Hence it is to affirm a "no" that "is equivalent to the metaphysical 'yes' it wants to destroy" (110). To assert with absolute authority that in the matter of truth there is no absolute authority is not then so much self-contradictory as nonsensical. "On the strength of its logic, conceived as the only possible one," nihilism is an answer to the metaphysical question "What is truth?" that robs the question itself of its very sense. Moreover, "nihilism contradicts common experience and the very structure of experience" (80) by leaving in the dark the enigma that there is for us an 'object'.

Sini's task is to provide "an assessment of the images of truth that have . . . characterized and founded our
overall history . . . to show the reasons behind this history and to explain eventually what new image of truth supports it" (xxviii-xxix). The first part of the book examines truth's images in the thinking of selected "great authors" (especially Parmenides, Aristotle, Hegel, and Heidegger) in order to show by these examples that the founding presupposition that constitutes the sense of metaphysics—the absolute identity of thinking and being—contains in all its "images" its own "catastrophe" (lit. kata-strophe "over-turning"). In our own age, this holds both of the nihilistic pursuit of unlimited knowledge and power and the ‘thinking of being’ that is meant to point beyond this fate and to leave metaphysics to itself. Yet such thinking “continues to wander around and within the ‘public places’ (truth, error, being, nothing) instituted by the public logos of metaphysics”, without “eyes for the non-metaphysical [and the non-public] ‘sense’ of experience” (144-45).

Sini’s own quest for a “new image” is thus not meant to shore up the fated metaphysical project in a new way, but to renew non-metaphysically the philosophical commitment to the sense of experience and to knowing what we are doing and why. In place of the “metaphysical will to dominate experience totally and to ‘resolve it’ completely in ‘public’ truths that are functionally effective and symbolically senseless” (153), Sini ventures to discover the original constitutive “finiteness of experience”, precisely not as its imperfection but as its “enchantment”, that is, its original symbolic character as “finite and perfect part” that “lacks nothing” (123-24). In this discovery may now lie the origin, justification and destiny of philosophy.

ROBERT BURCH
University of Alberta

Critica dell’ oggettivazione e ragione storica: Saggio su P. Yorck von Wartenburg
By Francesco Donadio.

For most philosophers, with the exception of the reader of Heidegger’s Being and Time, the figure of Count Paul Yorck von Wartenburg (1835-1897) remains little known. In section 77 of Being and Time, Heidegger uses some of Yorck’s more profound speculative theses concerning the concept of historicity. Heidegger constructs, as we know, his reading of Yorck, utilizing some significant texts from the Briefwechseln between Yorck and Wilhelm Dilthey, and Heidegger demonstrates as the programmatic task of a research on historicity, that the study of Dilthey’s own work must be undertaken “in the spirit” of Count Yorck.

One could single out in this second half of the 1920s the coming out of anonymity of Yorck and together with this the official and authoritative recognition of his philosophical depth. In fact, within the panorama of traditional academic philosophy, Count Yorck presents himself as an outsider: jurisconsult and member of the Prussian senate, administrator of