



Citation: R. Diodato & A. Mecacci (2017) Foreword. *Aisthesis* 10(2): 3-5. doi: 10.13128/Aisthesis-22402

Received: April, 2017

Accepted: September, 2017

Published: December, 2017

Copyright: © 2017 R. Diodato & A. Mecacci. This is an open access, peer-reviewed article published by Firenze University Press (<http://www.fupress.com/aisthesis>) and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Foreword

ROBERTO DIODATO & ANDREA MECACCI

(Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano) (Università degli Studi di Firenze)
roberto.diodato@unicatt.it andrea.mecacci@unifi.it

The present issue of *Aisthesis*, dedicated to Italian Aesthetics, aims at mapping some specific orientations, trends and discussion pathways of the national aesthetic debate spread throughout the historical context ranging from Italy's Unification (1861) to World War II.

Along with and beyond the macro-polarities set by the agreement or disagreement with the philosophies of Croce and Gentile, this volume highlights the heritage and pays tribute to the plethora of authors, themes, stances and “places” (both physical and mental) that set the basis for the foundation of an autonomous aesthetical consideration prompted by the Unification and fed by the historical contingencies occurred thereafter.

The opening essay, signed by Paolo D'Angelo, focuses on the peculiar methodology of Giovanni Morelli. Moving from the art critic's philosophical and scientific background, the transition from a romantic to a positivistic approach is shown along with the contingent query about the actual valence of Morelli's empirical-observational model and his overturning of the hierarchical relation between general impression and characteristic forms in the process of attributing a painting to an artist. Thus, it is suggested that the original contribution of Morelli shall not be found in the well-known epistemological proceeding of the “detail”, but rather in the belief that everything implied in experiencing a work of art must be revered as equally worth of consideration.

The contribution of Francesco Valagussa examines Francesco De Sanctis' *Lectures* on Dante held during his exile in Turin and Zürich. Within the framework given by a problematic reworking of Hegelian aesthetics and a comparison between the specific space of poetry and the plastic space of figurative arts, De Sanctis tries to illustrate how Dante could unify body and concept, moving from allegories

and personifications towards figures and real people such as Beatrice, Francesca, Vanni Fucci and Ugolino.

Three essays are dedicated to the aesthetics of Benedetto Croce. The first one, here presented for the very first time in its Italian translation edited by Giuseppe D'Acunto, was written by Alfred Baeumler in 1922. Baeumler's excerpt belongs to the larger conceptual laboratory that would result in his work *Das Irrationalitätproblem in der Ästhetik und Logik des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zur Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1923), aimed at the construction of a systematic project concerning a "logic of individuality". This concept emerges with the birth of modern aesthetics thanks to the definitive version of the notion of "judgment of taste" given by Kant in his third *Critique*. By examining Croce's aesthetics, Baeumler underlines the problematic unity between historical judgments and gnoseological preconditions. The essay encloses an introduction by the curator, Giuseppe D'Acunto, in which the role played by the taste as concrete manifestation of the individuality of man is brought forward to the attention of the reader through the means of a retracement of Baeumler's main contributions to aesthetics reflection.

The second essay of this series has Luciano Mecacci focusing on Croce's criticism of the experimental aesthetics of Gustav Fechner. Framed in the context of German experimental psychology's reception in Italy, the interpretation given by Croce accounts Fechner's thesis as a merely reductionist and naturalistic one. Croce would indeed refer to Fechner's theory as exemplar whenever he was to explain limits and features of what he would call "empirical aesthetic". To the contrary – thus showing a wider and livelier cultural scenario – Agostino Gemelli defended the experimental value and the theoretical relevance of such research perspective in determining the laws of aesthetic preference and judgment, proposing, therefore, a double-faced aesthetics: on one side analytic, focused on simple objects as basic geometrical patterns, and, on the other side, synthetic, suitable to account for complex objects such as works of art.

Closing the triptych, the essay of Rosalia Peluso offers an insight on the aesthetics of Croce seen as a theory of knowledge by the starting point of 1931's essay *Le due scienze mondane. L'estetica e l'economica*, in which Croce described the birth process of modern aesthetics as "logic of the senses". Moving from a quick comparison between such theory and Gilles Deleuze's "logic of the sense" or "surface thought", Peluso argues that Croce plainly deserves to be recognized among the authors who never ceased pursuing the overcoming of knowledge dualism (mind/body, internal/external, spirit/nature). Aesthetics, in Croce's solution, is philosophical in a double sense, since: an improved definition of its gnoseologic terms – with particular reference to the nexus between intuition and expression – has a positive impact on philosophy as a whole; and it also actually constitutes the auratic form of spiritual life.

Some unique aspects of Giovanni Gentile's aesthetics sit at the core of the essay signed by Roberto Diodato. Using some crucial passages of his works (namely *Sistema di logica come teoria del conoscere*, *Filosofia dell'arte*, *Introduzione alla filosofia* and *Genesi e struttura della società*) as building blocks to its development, the paper discusses the role and significance of the notion of "feeling", offering some intriguing insights on the ideas of "aesthetic logos", synthesis of logical immediacy and phenomenological immediacy, exhibition of a radical negativity beyond any conceptual understanding.

The contribution of Domenico Spinosa revolves around the concept of "occasionalismo sensista", also known by the expression of "formalismo sensista", that the Italian philosopher Adelchi Baratono was proposing in the '30s and '40s of the twentieth century. Against the absolutization of the subject claimed by Giovanni Gentile, Baratono affirms the profound otherness of subject and object in front of which philosophy is bound to be wrecked. In this perspective, the "sensible world" for Baratono is in itself, regardless of the knowing subject, because everything is resolved in the "world within and around us". Consequently, Baratono affirms that this is what feeling is all

about, that is something without which are neither perception nor the concept and even the idea. The feeling, therefore, far from being considered the first stage of knowledge, is the real existence.

The paper of David Micheletti pays homage to the figure of Carlo Michelstaedter. Starting from Michelstaedter's rearrangement of the ancient discord between philosophy and poetry as thematised in Plato's *Republic*, Micheletti sheds light on the crucial nexus between the personal life of the philosopher born and raised in Gorizia and his historical-philosophical reflection. By juxtaposing names such as Parmenides, Sophocles, Socrates, Christ and the Ecclesiastes in an anti-genealogical manner, that is fathers against masters as well as sons and disciples, Michelstaedter acknowledges in every philosophy intended to reconcile the absolute and relative the rhetoric artifice aimed at concealing an original *aporia* which can only be dishonestly swayed, rather than overcome.

Musical aesthetics is the main topic of Giacomo Fronzi's contribution. In the midst of the generally poor state (if not the complete absence) of a proper Italian aesthetics of music in the earlier XX century, Fronzi finds in Fausto Acanfora a "non-aligned" intellectual, who firmly tried to give musical studies an aesthetic-philosophical basis, on the one hand, and a much needed rigor in the early twentieth century Italy on the other.

Maria Antonietta Spinoso presents an analysis of the philosophy of Mariano Campo based on both historical and unedited sources, with particular regard to his aesthetic considerations.

The role played by *feelings* will emerge as pivotal to human aesthetic experience: it is through feeling that we experience a *transfiguration* of reality, which happens paradigmatically when, in front of an artwork, we appreciate it as an integral whole, a totality.

Closing the issue, four essays compose the "Varia" section: *What is the aesthetic in China?* by Gu Feng and Dai Wenjing provides a comparison between Chinese and European aesthetics aimed at highlighting both the specific features of the first and the common grounds with the latter, namely by the figures of Plato (sense of beauty), Baumgarten (aesthetics as perception) and Hegel (philosophy of art); *Etica ed estetica dell'improvvisazione coreutica* by Davide Sparti proposes an exploration based on the performative model of tango about the topic of improvisation, understood as the ability to produce something new, under the special conditions of a performance; *Problems with Musical Signification: Following the Rules and Grasping Mental States* by Marianela Calleja moves from Wittgenstein's reflections on music to critically examine the thesis on the signification of musical meaning proposed by Ahonen and Scruton; *Baroque Sherlock: Benjamin's friendship between «criminal and detective» in its fore- and afterlife* by Alice Barale presents an analysis of BBC's tv-series *Sherlock* ideated on the basis of a group of notes that Walter Benjamin wrote for his project of a novel based on the character of a detective.