

REVIEW ARTICLE
FORM, PERSON, AND INEXHAUSTIBLE
INTERPRETATION: LUIGI PAREYSON, *EXISTENCE,
INTERPRETATION, FREEDOM. SELECTED WRITINGS.*
TRANSLATED, AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY
PAOLO DIEGO BUBBIO.
DAVIES GROUP PUBLISHERS, 2009.

Peter Carravetta

The appearance of a substantial selection of Luigi Pareyson's writings in English is motive for a transnational celebration in the history of ideas. A thinker of the rank of Gadamer and Ricoeur, to whom he is often compared, surprisingly little has been known or written about him.¹ An original interpreter of existentialism and German Idealism, Pareyson developed an authentic hermeneutic in the nineteen-fifties, a time in which the Italian panorama was being shaped by growing Marxist hegemony and the turn toward the sciences, especially linguistics. Bubbio's fine Introduction (8-25) breaks down Pareyson's contribution into three areas, Existence, Knowledge and Interpretation, and the Ontology of Freedom; these obviously overlap and to some degree represent developments of some key ideas first fully theorized in his 1954 masterpiece, *Estetica. Teoria della formatività*. The great merit of this collection is that it gathers articles and selections from his books which cover the entirety of his career, from a 1940 article on the genesis of existentialism to a draft on suffering and faith found in his notebooks when he passed away in 1991. The volume thus constitutes an ideal introduction, and a starting point from which to begin the reevaluation of a major thinker of interpretation, especially in the areas of ontology, art, and ethics. In the following remarks, I will focus mainly on the Pareyson of his mature key writings from the fifties through the seventies.

1

First published in 1954 after studies on existentialism, Jaspers, and German idealism,² Pareyson's *Estetica*³ is the third and last (after Croce and Gentile's) of the great books on aesthetics written in the twentieth century in Italy, coming out at a time when this genre of writing seemed to have outlived its reason to be.⁴ The importance of this work rests on its being the first, at least in the Italian panorama, to deal with *the being of the interpreter* and *the being of art*, setting them in relation by means of interpretation itself, and describing the process in ontological terms. The key term (or critical "word/concept") in Pareyson is *Forma* in its dynamic, interactive sense.⁵ As such *Forma* is, at any one time, either *forma formante*, form as an enabling process which gives a specific

shape to whatever it is dealing with, or *forma formata*, form as what something exhibits when at rest, what makes it recognizable as such. The relevance of this supple model for an understanding of canon formation will become apparent. Pareyson anchors his vision in the heart of human existence, believing that humankind in its broadest sense is essentially a producer of forms (*E* 19-23 et passim). Thus Forma exists “as an organism living of its own life and inner legitimation, closed and open both within the definiteness that encloses the infinite” [come organismo vivente di propria vita e legalità interna, conclusa ed aperta insieme nella sua definitezza che racchiude l’infinito].

From these premises, art is described by means of a phenomenology of its realization or “coming into being” [nel suo farsi]. Here we discover that art is both *production* and *invention*, which means that in effect art is a making which invents its own manner or way of doing, realizing itself as a series of attempts towards a successful or fulfilled completion [tentativi verso la riuscita]. The focus is on the fact that one cannot produce art without inventing at the same time the means to “make it,” but by the same token, one does not invent anything unless it is also produced, made real. The activating principle is the *forming-activity* [formatività, literally “formativity”]⁶ which assumes a content, a material means, and an inner working law peculiar and specific to it (*E* 22-27). Among the preliminary findings of this position is that, above all, it respects the alterity of the work, “protecting” it so to speak from blind insight or misguided appropriation. But if art is forming-activity both specific and intentional, then the question arises: how do we distinguish it from the rest of experience, if our entire existence is made up of this forming capacity?

The short answer is: *Art has no pre-established end*, that is, it is not a forming-activity-*of_* or *-for* anything in particular, but form which aims at becoming *Form*, and that’s all. Notice how this sounds very much like what was postulated by such diverse and indeed strange bedfellows as Benedetto Croce, on the one hand, and Gertrude Stein, on the other.⁷ But this ought not to be seen as a contradiction or inconsistency as much as the fullest exploitation of what both the Idealistic tradition and the idealism behind the theorizing done by artists in general have yielded as unshakeable premises of cultural humankind: every person is an idealist at one time or another; a truism reinforced by the fact that the term “idealism” contains the root notion of idea, *eidōs*, vision. However, we will also see radical divergencies among these positions, once we explore other aspects. For instance, Pareyson says that thinking and ethics, though subordinated to the “formation principle,” interact with it, so that the forming-activity [formatività] is directed at a given action or phenomenon by taking into consideration thought—i.e.: that which thought has formulated, the *forma formata*—while at the same time respecting its alterity and availability to tradition, to further interpretation. This argument rests on the fundamental ontology of the *persona*, or person, which in Pareyson embodies the opening or disclosedness as the co-occurrence of self-relation and hetero-relation (*EIF* 106, 109). Person, in short, can be thought of as the recognition of alterity, and is therefore eminently social, interpersonal. It can be seen that the argument is leading toward a dialogics of sorts. But to defer this discussion, it should also be clear that art *may*—(it doesn’t *have to*)—incorporate the contribution of thought (of ethics, ideology, politics), without sacrificing its primary ideal, which is to become Form.

On the other hand, even in terms of action guided by what sounds like a very pragmatic telos—whether it regards shaping an idea, or a simple constructive gesture, or even just going through the rituals of everydayness handed down through history—people always try to do things “aesthetically.” In the original Italian Pareyson relies on the idiomatic expression: “fare le cose ad arte,” literally “to make [or do] things as if they were a work of art,” or what may correspond to the American dictum, “to do it right,” namely, according to the inner necessity to do things well, perfectly and beautifully. In art there’s a shaping-activity which seeks the Forming process itself: though each and every human action is forming-activity [formatività], the work qua work of art is Formation [formazione], “in the sense that the work intentionally aims at Formation, and thought and action intervene only in order to insure that it reaches it” (*E*, 23). The work of art is also intrinsically matter/substance, in Italian “materia,” a concrete entity that denies the genitive to art insofar as it must evidence itself as pure form. As such, the material aspect of the work sets up a polarity with respect to the shaping principle of the artistic process, which is identified as “puro tentare,” literally authentic trying, attempting, or even groping.⁸

This calls to mind another vector; the pull of interpretive dynamics, the seeking of a path guided by a Form which is not yet there (and is therefore unknown, ungraspable, invisible so to speak) and must therefore be guessed or divined:

The divination of form is thus only a law guiding the execution in progress, a law that cannot be explicated in terms of precepts, but rather, as an inner norm of the action aiming at its successful completion [alla riuscita]; thus it is not a single law valid for all artistic cases, but a rule which is immanent to the one specific process in question. (E 75)

For Pareyson, this is consistent with the traditional notion of art as a making, admitting both *techné* and *poiein*, as well as with the more (historically) recent idea of *lo stile è l'uomo*, the style is the man, a very fortunate ideogeme crucial to the understanding of Modern, especially post-Romantic, aesthetics.⁹

2

If everything in life and therefore in understanding depends upon this formative process, the notion of making, of *fare*, assumes paramount relevance, and must be examined closely. For the Italian philosopher, any given action is the specification and the instancing of one activity, which is at the same time the concentration of all other possible activities. More than that, we form things by “making” and by “inventing” the way things can be made:

The artist must *make* what does not yet exist, and must therefore *invent while executing*, whereas the reader must *gather* [cogliere means also: grasp; perceive] what exists already, therefore *execute while recognizing*. (E 249)

The proper evaluation both of the difference and the distinction between artist and reader has always been a problematical point in interpretation theory. We must remember that, especially in the wake of “committed” art (or art specifically intended for a particular end, message, or effect), the reestablishment of a boundary between art as totally free and preoccupied solely with Pure Form, and reading (i.e., criticism) as bound and committed to an extra-aesthetic task, has basically given legitimacy to the epistemological approach to art and interpretation, and has indeed contributed to that artistic “alienation” which characterizes the Modern period. There are, however, several places in the *Estetica* where from the point of view of understanding there is no distinction between artist and critic, it being simply a question of position or emphasis: the artist will strive toward the realization of Pure Form, the reader toward the comprehension of the same. Yet the underlying ontology suggests a difference of degree rather than of kind. The infinite possibilities open to the work of art rest upon what Pareyson in a later work—*Verità e Interpretazione* (1972)¹⁰—calls the *ontology of the inexhaustible* [ontologia dell'inesauribile]:

Not nothingness, but being, not absence but redundancy ... not the *Abgrund* but the *Urgrund*.¹¹

This is an important consideration in light of the fact that Pareyson's thought is also typically interpreted, especially, to my way of seeing it, for its more existentialist traits, as already post-metaphysical, in that contrary to his contemporaneous thinkers, it stresses the *Abgrund* (or the *Un-grund*) of being in close connection with what he elsewhere terms the “ontology of freedom” (cf. *EIF* 218-260). I see here a potential for developing a thought away from Heidegger's nihilism, which in his later years finds a possible path through his notion of recalling, or *An-denken*, and more toward the fallen *Dasein* who must in any case believe this recalling is of actually construed “versions” of Being, that is, mythologies, which have a fundamental role in the evolution of cultures. For the very possibility of an ongoing (i.e. historical) thinking of Being whose relationship to existence is marked by endless revelations [rivelazioni] about a reality that, no matter how we define it, is “gratuitous” [gratuita], must speak the language of events which have already taken place, what in other philosophies are called monuments, tradition, or the collective unconscious. This is an open door to the discourse on the *arché*

and origin. The constructions (the hypotheses, the wars, the revolutions and the archives) which we cast and haul about in our “real” world suspended between *necessity* and *possibility* do indeed expose their weak side to a possible “anthropomorphism,” but they also allow us to re-trieve those forms which, though no longer believed to be universal, did however express a will to some notion of universality or totality at various points in our history. These are, or have been, what Gadamer would call “effective history.” Although Pareyson has made an almost categorical distinction between mythical and rational discourse,¹² what is here suggested is that the notion of *Urgrund* does not have to be automatically read as a teleological, absolute (perhaps “Hegelian”) and foundational gesture, because the *telos* here can be de-limited, circumscribed, localized, and above all personalized.¹³

Perhaps what is important to bear in mind at this juncture is the problem of reality and the responsibility of the single individual, issues which existentialism treated in depth but in the past few decades have been too often dismissed or forgotten. If it can be argued that Pareyson still harbors a “spiritual” component to his foundationless ontology (which can be traced, besides to Kierkegaard and Jaspers, also to his teacher Augusto Guzzo), it is significant that he often also employs the language of transcendental phenomenology (though that does not make him either a Kantian or a Husserlian). Thus, another point useful to us concerns the notion whereby humankind itself is *originary*, and as such the human agent is to be distinguished from the *subject*: a human being is always a person [*persona*], which leads the philosopher to assert that no philosophy is plausible which is not above all a “philosophy of the person,” where both the subjective and objective genitive obtain. The discourse thus far rests upon these premises:

Above all, [is] the principle according to which every human doing is always both receptivity and activity, and secondly according to the principle whereby every human doing is always personal. (*E* 180; *EIF* 102)¹⁴

On the same page we read that:

I *must* indeed act and decide, but also: *I cannot not decide*: there is, in the freedom I have with respect to myself, an initial necessity—which is the sign of my being principled, of my limits, and of my finitude—for a constitutive receptivity with which I may be given over to myself and my initiative is given over to itself. (*Ib.*, transl. modified with respect to *EIF* 102)

In the same context the philosopher says in fact that “the form itself of receptivity is an activity” though human making/doing [*operare*] is not, initially, creative. To accept the dialectic of stimulus-response does not mean subscribing to deterministic passivity, but rather that the dyad receptivity-activity is always active, connective and developing according to other intentional premises.

3

Perceptive knowledge [*conoscenza sensibile*] can grasp (or gather) reality only insofar as it is marked by *prefiguration*, therefore only insofar as it can “produce and form” an image, “more to the point, an image so well executed [*riuscita*] that it reveal, better, that it *be* the thing itself” [*un’immagine così ben riuscita che riveli anzi sia la cosa stessa*]. In other words, the intention to capture or penetrate the item in question implies, solicits and even exacts the productivity which will literally figure out the image.

As a result, human knowledge in general has an intrinsic interpretive character. Interpretation, says the philosopher,

is a type of knowledge exquisitely active and personal: its active nature explains its productive and formative character; and its personal nature explains how it is essentially movement, restlessness, a search for syntony or resonance, in sum, *endless figuration*. (*E* 179-80; my emphasis)

One can see how at this particular juncture Pareyson's position comes very close to some recent readings of both Freud and Nietzsche as the thinkers of interminable analysis or interpretation. Moreover, coming from a totally different background, by underscoring figuration, his theory is proleptically in tune with much of what postmodern hermeneutics advocated. We will return to these considerations further down.

At this point we have established that interpretation is based upon the person, which coincides with the knowing being, the forming being, whereas the work (*opera* in the Italian, not a minor detail, suggesting process, temporality, indeed "working") is what is known, what is already formed. Interpretation then is *formante* or "forming," the work is *formata* or "formed." Said metaphorically, interpretation is "a seeing which lets itself be regarded, and a regarding that aims at seeing ... a hearing which lets itself be listened to, and a listening that means to be heard."

In order to reduce the risk of stray or biased interpretation, it is important that interpretation be sensitive to the question(s) raised by the object or the work in question and that, moreover, it organize itself in such a way as to be able to construct freely, "developing and elaborating, opening up and revealing the interpretand itself" [sviluppendo e svolgendo, cioè interrogando, aprendo e rivelando l'interpretrando]. Thus, without forgetting the person, the Interpreter, who does the interpreting, the human being who, in giving account of something is constantly trying to "figure things out," as it were, we are also attuned to the possibilities of constant figuration which the interpreting *act* elicits.

Now this notion of interpretation as tightly connected to the idea of *persona* is more fully developed in Pareyson's above-mentioned later work entitled *Verità e Interpretazione*. Here we find another crucial term, *pensiero rivelativo*, which we can literally render as "revealing thought" ("revelatory thought" in *EIF* 145). According to Pareyson, "that the word is revealing is a sign of the validity of a thought which is intrinsically speculative yet not oblivious to being, and that the word is expressive is a sign of the historical concreteness of a thought that has not forgotten time" (*VI* 23; cf. *EIP* 144-45). And it is in this context that he claims: "in revealing thought the task is infinite, because truth offers itself to the word inasmuch as it is not completely expressible, and makes discourse possible only so long as, while present, it is not exhausted ... [being] a continuous revelation" (*EIP* 145).

4

On the basis of the foregoing sketch of the basic tenets, it can be said that though the Italian philosopher is moving cautiously among many of his contemporaries, there is no doubt that he is here also staking out his own theoretical horizon.¹⁵ His conception of Being does leave one facing a yet untried possibility, one with which we may argue. Mainly, Being is equated with truth. Being, says Pareyson, is not a value, otherwise it would be subordinated to the values instituted by mankind, and would tend to classify itself as either lasting or provisional. Rather,

Being has no particular reason to prefer what lasts to what is momentary ... *The problem is to recognize the presence of being in history*, and therefore to distinguish in that which exists *what is equally* historical and expressive in one's time: between what is *only* historical and expressive, and what is *also* ontological and revealing, between that whose nature and whose value are exhausted in historicity, and that whose historicity is disclosure and medium of being and thus locus of its apparition. (*VI* 42; first emphasis mine)

In short, no evidence of Being can be given which is not at the same time historically configured: Being does—and must—appear in history. The above-mentioned notion of ontological inexhaustibility is now given body and contour: the interpreting person will insist on both the co-presencing in time of a historical and revealing act, as well as the experience of the open-ended discourse ever in proximity of other possible "figural" formations. In this context, another key notion in Pareyson's thought is Tradition, which already in the 1954 *Estetica* was conceived as existing within the work of art. Tradition is crucial because it supplies the plenum between the

interpreter and the work within which interpretation can be configured. The interpreter's position within this slippery, groundless, apparently elusive critical horizon required, in the earlier book, that in approaching the concrete work, the artifact, we had to be exposed to at least three concerns: the school or current that nourished the work, its living reality (its socio-historical instancing, we might say), and "the original result of the working interpretation which the work itself yields up" [il risultato originale dell'interpretazione operante ch'essa ne dà], which is to say the spontaneous claim made by the work with respect to how it wishes (or exacts) to be understood.¹⁶ Again we have an operative trilateral cognitive model which the work elicits upon the interpreter's approaching it, disclosing an enabling capacity, we might even say the agency to spur a dialogue with whoever comes into contact with it.

It may be opportune to recall that this rooting of tradition in the work itself is not peculiar to Pareyson. In fact, it is not foreign to the literary hermeneutics as elaborated, in their different ways, by both Gadamer and Peter Szondi, according to whom, and with particular reference to Biblical exegesis, the history of a text is also the (hi)story of its interpretations. In particular, Gadamer's notion of tradition as *Überlieferung*, or trans-mission, is also not too distant conceptually from Pareyson's. It is significant that Gadamer and Pareyson both are behind (and seem to come together in) Gianni Vattimo's notion of *Verwindung*, wherein tradition is understood as a necessarily twisted and distorting appropriation of what precedes, never an over-coming, or *Überwindung*.¹⁷

5

Even from this synthetic sketch one can grasp how Pareyson's thought can be very suggestive for future analyses, both in ontology and ethics, and perhaps even colonial studies. For instance, to take up the notion of tradition briefly once again: Tradition is to be distinguished above all from the notion of Revolution (today this is anachronistic, but, again, let's not forget how "timely" this issue was in the wake of World War Two). Tradition, we learn, is the exact opposite of revolution, not because it counterfoists to it some variant of conservation, but because revolution means to start all over at the beginning, which means its object is the past (an invented pure past projected into an unlikely future), whereas tradition (and interpretation through, and indeed as, tra-dition) is the regeneration of an ontological necessity; it aims at recapturing the origin, and its object is Being. We can infer that interpretation, and the notion of tradition it espouses, is therefore never utopic, dreamy or nostalgic (in the sense in which these three words have something incoherent and dismissible about them). Interpretation is, on the contrary, topical, desired, at worst melancholic, though this latter only signals its being sense-oriented (or "sensitive"), a type or way of knowing *nevertheless*—at best a work of art itself.

Pareyson has also written that the "quarrel" between philosophy (as thinking) and art (as creating) need not and is not at all a contradiction, an oxymoron, or a reciprocally exclusive dyad of forces where only one in the end conceals the Truth. That has been the metaphysical illusion, the technocratic desire, the rationalist fallacy: to believe that *only* philosophy—and, on its tails, science - could speak to the truth, that poetry just couldn't be trusted. Pareyson certainly speaks favorably to this possible dialogue, and attempts to bridge the chasm between poetry and philosophy. As he writes in another work of the sixties,

In the arts there's a diffuse distrust of philosophy. They fear that the autonomy of art is compromised and that art may disappear. They feel that the cold speculative rigor of philosophy contrasts sharply with the emotional shudder of poetry. But this means ignoring the character of philosophical thinking. There are in philosophy aspects which, if adequately emphasized, make of philosophical meditation genuine and earnest poetry, to the point that it becomes impossible to gauge the speculative value without accounting for its reality as an artform. The search for and discussion about truth, thinking as a personal experience, the liveliness of imagination which underlies philosophical thought: these are so many aspects of philosophy which, if rendered evident, can confer upon it an artistic aspect. They might even elect to consign reason to the essential [insostituibile, lit. unreplaceable] expression of poetry rather than to the precise utterances of reason.¹⁸

Pareyson's theory of interpretation rests on three elements. First, that interpretation in its active verbal acceptance, as *interpreting* [*interpretare*], is always a process of transcending. Second, that the notion of originality—novelty of the person and of time, the “new” of the avant-gardes and Modernism, we might add—is the same as the notion of being originary, as derived from the primordial ontological rapport, which is constitutively “originating,” or, as I like to translate the notion, enabling. Therefore, to be original is to be the purveyor of an enabling force, which plays into the inexhaustibility of the ontological project. And third, that “interpretation is that form of knowledge which is *at once* and inseparably historical and truthful [veritativa], ontological and personal, revealing and expressive (VI, 53).

The implications of this for critics of art and culture are evident: when approaching a text, comprehension is possible only insofar as the text reveals itself, but this revealing in turn needs the other (that is, the interpreting persona) in order to be expressed: to listen (look, sense) and to speak are inseparable: interpretation is not a game of silence, but the speaking that issues from the silence that enwraps the artwork. The fact that the revealing of the artifact and the speaking of the interpreter go inextricably together or, said otherwise, that interpretation is always a critique of something or other, brings us to yet another fine point in Pareyson's thought, one that has sweeping consequences for the “practical” aspect of criticism and commentary. When interpreting, says the philosopher, we are not striving for analysis, but rather for *synthesis*. This may trigger an alert signal, for it does resonate with similar idealist and historicist versions (like Croce's, for instance), yet it also beckons to Heidegger's “hearing the call of the poetical”; in fact, by minimizing the obsessive preoccupation with objectivity—the interpreter does not, cannot, “objectify” him/herself, nor can the work of art itself ever be thought of as being an “object”—it also avoids the relativism of methodologism, as well as arbitrariness and skepticism. In this fashion, hermeneutics turns away from the constraints of epistemology and is open to the possibilities of ontology, an eminently linguistic, “narrative” perspective. I believe this resonates with Richard Rorty's suggestion, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,¹⁹ that aesthetics should turn into hermeneutics.

What is open to the interpreter are the historical concretions of Being as they manifest themselves in specific events and by and large in cultural phenomena. What for many thinkers is sought as the unity in variety or the multiplicity of truth is, according to Pareyson, a false dilemma, because these different formulations do not exist *in* history, as if they were contents dropped into the abstract river of time, rather, they *are* history, so that each interpretation of these problems is but a singular exegetical concretion, which is as plausible as, and not exclusive of, many others that have actually come into being. The same can thus be said of the many and varied interpretations of works of art. This is particularly evident in the case of artworks that necessarily dilate the notion of interpretation, like drama and musical scores; these artistic phenomena are in fact interpreted each and every time they are performed [eseguiti]: the artwork in fact does not disappear amidst the multiplicity of interpretive reappraisals [esecuzioni], but remains true to itself even in the act of disclosing itself to the interpreter:

Much like interpretations, performances are always new; they do not aim at being unique and exemplary and totalizing, rather, they speak to all in the manner in which each one knows how to understand. (VI 67)

We can see now that the interpreter is not a “subject” that dissolves into the work, or, vice versa, that absorbs and dissolves the work in its interpreting act. The interpreter does not have to “depersonalize” itself in a vain—and unneeded—effort to be “true” and “distanced” from the artwork. For the interpreter is primarily a *person*, open and ever ready to disclose itself to other(s). In tune with this premise, the work is never an “object” which ought to be “represented” externally: the work is finally characterized by an intrinsic “unobjectifiability” [inoggettività] which derives from its needing to be activated, realized or performed (in the sense of “esecuzione,” or *mise en scène*). Thus even reading, according to Pareyson, is performing²⁰—and which cannot be reduced to any one of its performances or realizations.

What this entails, in more broad hermeneutic terms, is an overcoming of the “subject” that in turn neutralizes the subjectivistic attitude toward interpretation—which is present in both scientific and phenomenological

LUIGI PAREYSON, *EXISTENCE, INTERPRETATION, FREEDOM*

thought—with its tendency to universalize the impersonal by placing it as the foundation of thought itself. With the notion of *persona* as derived from Pareyson, on the other hand, we are co-involved in the irreducible distance of the artwork, but at the same time we rely on *its* unique and singular historical substance. And going against Kantian claims of impersonality, the disclosure of the text is *radically personal*, thus avoiding abstractions and theoretical relativisms of all sorts. Before the artwork, we must *listen*,

because truth is not something that man invents or produces, or that can be invented or produced in any fashion; one must *let truth be* without pretending to invent it; and if the person becomes the *means of its revelation*, this is above all in order to be *the locus of its occurrence* [sede del suo avvento]. (VI 84)

In sum, truth can issue solely from within one of its formulations, “with which each time it identifies itself, and within which it resides always as something inexhaustible.”

As we look forward to the translation of *Verità e interpretazione*, we should hope that the entire *Estetica* will also be made available in English sometime soon. But of equal importance, now that much attention is dedicated to the complex knot of ethics and religion, are his writings of the last ten years of his life. In the meantime, we should all be grateful to Professor Paolo Diego Bubbio for this excellent rendition in English of a first extensive and balanced sampling of the Turinese thinker.

PETER CARRAVETTA holds the Alfonse M. D’Amato Chair in Italian and Italian American Studies at SUNY/Stony Brook.

NOTES

1. This being the first major appearance of Pareyson in English (hereinafter abbreviated in my text with *EIF*), Bubbio's Bibliography of works about the thinker is necessarily slim indeed, though one might notice that great attention to him has been paid by Thomas Munro, who reviewed six of the Italian thinker's publications for *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* between 1956 and 1975. Missing is my own article, "Introduction to the Hermeneutics of Luigi Pareyson," in *Differentia, review of italian thought* (Queens College, NY), 3/4 (Spring/Autumn 1989):217-241. This journal, which appeared between 1986 and 1999, is available in many large libraries, and will soon be republished in digitized format. As recent studies have been focusing on his ethics and religion (cf. Bibliography 29-30), I have updated my earlier article in order to demonstrate the originality of Pareyson's hermeneutic, which is crucial if we are to develop his thought and set it to dialogue with more well-known thinkers of interpretation in English.
2. Though we cannot get into extended details here, a reconsideration of Pareyson's pre-*Estetica* writings would be useful to determine how much his notion of *persona* owes to, and yet is a radicalizing of, German existentialism's emphasis on necessity and repetition, on the one hand, and French existentialism's stress on the contingent and on choice, on the other. See especially Pareyson, *Verità e interpretazione* (Milano: Mursia, 1971), 7-110. For his crucial distinction between Heidegger and Jaspers' notions of *existentiell/existentiell*, see in the same pages 207-258, as well as his very first book, *La filosofia dell'esistenza e Carlo Jaspers* (Napoli: Loffredo, 1939). The various versions of existentialism debated in Italy during and immediately after World War Two can be assessed by looking at representative period texts by Antonio Banfi, Nicola Abbagnano, Giulio Preti, and Enzo Paci. Pareyson's own take on the then-dominant debate was published in Antonio Banfi's quarterly *Studi Filosofici*, anno II (1941), now available in the 1972 Forni reprint, vol I, 113-206. For Croce's scathing reaction to the appearance of this journal, see *Critica*, I (1942): 48-49. For a balanced history and theory of Italian existentialism, see Antonio Santucci, *Esistenzialismo e filosofia italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1967), which attributes a major role to Pareyson. For an interpretive reconstruction within the Italian panorama, especially vis à vis the hegemonic idealist-historicist currents, see Eugenio Garin, *Cronache di filosofia italiana*, 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1975); and Giuseppe Semerari, *Novocento filosofico italiano* (Napoli: Guida, 1988).
3. Luigi Pareyson, *Estetica. Teoria della formatività* (Torino: Edizioni di 'Filosofia,' 1954), subsequently republished by Sansoni, Firenze, in 1974, and Bompiani, Milano, in 1988. I will cite from the Sansoni edition, abbreviating it with *E*, followed by page number; in my own text. All translations are my own.
4. A case may be made for Emilio Betti's *Teoria generale dell'interpretazione* (1955), though its being almost exclusively a treatise on juridical interpretation makes it less manageable in the realm of aesthetics, cultural studies and literary criticism. There is little echo of Betti's influence outside of jurisprudence and legal history. Thereafter, however, no one in the Italian panorama, with the arguable exception of Cesare Brandi's *Teoria generale della critica* (1974), and Umberto Eco's *Semiotica* (1975), has attempted to write a general, omnicomprehensive theory of art and interpretation which invests the totality of the human being.
5. Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom*, 107-09, from hereon cited as *EIF* in my text, followed by page number(s).
6. The English rendition of these terms is necessarily provisional. Hopefully, the awkwardness is offset by the need to distinguish in the pages that follow among the various terms rooted in Forma which constellate Pareyson's philosophy. Bubbio translated about sixty pages from the *Estetica*, mostly from later sections in the book.
7. In Croce, thought (or thought which is logical, or philosophical) is radically removed from the aesthetic act, which is understood as pure intuition and expression. See his *Aesthetic* (1902) [Trans. by Colin Lyas as *The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], chapter one. Similarly, on the side of art, in Gertrude Stein the search is for a rhythmic-expressive language mode which, though yet a speaking, is totally devoid of any "content," rational or otherwise (where content means or includes the referent). See for example her *Stanzas in Meditation* (1927) [Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 2000], one of the highest achievements of Modernism.
8. This aspect, which is revolutionary insofar as it simultaneously opens to the "originary" characteristic of all works of art, as well as to its material and pragmatic necessity, is also a basic potentiality for all human beings. It comes very close to Polanyi's heuristic imagination and tacit knowing. But it also makes one think of Sartre's description of how a poet operates in the first chapter of *What is Literature?* (1947) [see *What is Literature? and Other Essays*. Trans. Bernard Frechtman et al. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988], and though there is no direct or acknowledged connection, it should not surprise given the time the *Estetica* was written.
9. In fact, in Pareyson's philosophical universe one finds, besides Schelling, Goethe, Poe, Bergson, Valéry, and, significantly, Dewey.
10. This book, representing a second truly major work in Pareyson's production, is presently being translated into English by Robert T. Valgenti for SUNY Press.
11. In the original, "non il nulla, ma l'essere, non l' assenza ma la ridondanza ... non l'*Abgrund* ma l'*Urgrund*" (*Verità*, 40).
12. See in particular Pareyson's *Esistenza e persona* (Torino, Taylor, 1950) 14 et infra. This volume was reprinted by Melangolo, Genova, in 1992.
13. I am developing this aspect in a separate study.

LUIGI PAREYSON, *EXISTENCE, INTERPRETATION, FREEDOM*

14. This passage follows upon the first definition of interpretation we find in the *Estetica*: “interpreting [interpretare] is such a form of knowledge for which, on the one hand, receptivity and activity are indistinguishable, and, on the other, the known is a form and the knower is a person. Without a doubt interpreting is knowing ... since interpreting is gathering, capturing, grasping, penetrating.”

15. If historiographic triangulations are at all useful, we can suppose that the way Heidegger was reacting to the idealist strain in Husserl and the Marburg neo-Kantians, Pareyson was reacting to Croce and Gentile’s idealism, on the one hand, as well as to Banfi’s transcendental rationalism, on the other. The latter, in fact, was already an early reaction to the former; as Banfi published his *Principi di una teoria della ragione*, which discusses neo-Kantianism in great detail, in 1927.

16. This allows Pareyson to sidestep simultaneously the issue of the intentional fallacy as well as conundrums of authorial intention which besieged modern hermeneutics from Schleiermacher to Hirsch. Both become irrelevant; cf. *E*, 276-77.

17. Though Vattimo is also constantly harking back to the more “radical” Heidegger—the essay on *Verwindung* deals primarily with Heidegger—as well as to the Benjamin of the “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” See Vattimo, “*Verwindung*: Nihilism and the Postmodern in Philosophy.” *SubStance* 16.2: 53 (1987), 7-17.

18. Luigi Pareyson, *I problemi dell'estetica* (Milano: Marzorati, 1966), 47-49. Among the philosophers who straddle this divide, and create problems for interpreters who would like to situate them on one or the other side, Pareyson lists Plato, Bruno, Pascal, Vico, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. On Schelling in particular, see his *Conversazioni di estetica* (Milano: Mursia, 1966), 169-79.

19. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.

20. Consider the pages on reading in *Estetica* (219-226), *Conversazioni* (41-48), and *I problemi* (189-231).