

## **Editors' Introduction**

*This collection of essays is a response to a challenge that is undoubtedly paradoxical: to introduce in Italy an author who is already known and appreciated by scholars who have encountered his work, and, often, followed his teachings. While the transmission of knowledge has traditionally been through both exoteric and esoteric teachings (the former intended for the general public, and the latter for a small group of researchers), this divide is reproduced constantly through the distinction between 'institutionalised' knowledge found even in 'philosophy manuals', and the knowledge that animates the research and discussions of researchers. If we keep in mind this distinction, we will undoubtedly better understand the influence and role of the work of Jean Greisch (born in 1942), within the Italian hermeneutical tradition from the second half of the last century. If on the one hand, the work of this philosopher is still not much known to the general public (owing to the lack of Italian translations), on the other hand it is difficult, if not impossible, to meet a scholar in the field of hermeneutical tradition who has not been engaged with at least some of Greisch's works, and who has not suggested or not recommended their reading to junior researchers interested in acquiring hermeneutical reason. This gradual dissemination of Greisch's work has led to the building of a growing community of scholars gathered around his work, a community that goes beyond all pretentious 'Rubicon' divide between German and French hermeneutics.*

*Jean Greisch is thus a philosopher capable of stirring philosophical passion that transcends 'nationalistic' boundaries which are often arbitrarily imposed in philosophy; a philosopher who cannot be ignored by the many Italian researchers who have already encountered him*

*through his lectures as well as his books. If this volume is born of a paradoxical challenge for the reasons just mentioned, the paradox intensifies when one realises that it is edited by group of scholars working between Italy, India, and England, and who have assumed the good risk of embarking on this adventure, with the hope that it will foster the dissemination and translation in Italy of this vast philosophical oeuvre.*

*'Vast' because Greisch's philosophical itinerance started in the 1970's with an analysis on the relationship between hermeneutics and grammatology, and has now arrived at foraging a new understanding of the term 'meta' in his latest book Transcender. Libres méditations sur la fonction méta (published in 2021), thus accomplishing the arc of an reflection which, instead of following trends, swims against philosophical currents.*

*In fact, after its incipit which tackled themes whose novelty in philosophy was indisputable in the 1970's, Greisch's work bravely developed against the mainstream, affirming its passion for hermeneutics in a French philosophical milieu that was preoccupied, if not dominated, by structuralism, humanities, and later on by phenomenology. This non-conformist practice of doing philosophy is evident in his commentary on Sein und Zeit (one of the most extensive and widely quoted commentaries of this work), as well as in his studies dedicated to the free-spirited genius Stanislas Breton. Ever faithful to this freedom of mind, Greisch has devoted much effort to understand the relationship between philosophical and biblical hermeneutics, as is evident in the trilogy Le Buisson ardent et les Lumières de la Raison (2002-2004), and Entendre d'une autre oreille. Les enjeux philosophiques de l'herméneutique biblique (2006). There is yet another time that he swam against the current (and how can we not recall this?), and that was when in the age of post-truth, Greisch authored a book in which truth itself is presented as inescapable*

*because of the 'rendezvous' it makes with every human who chooses to listen. A post-truth to which Greisch proposes a new age of reason that finds its fulfilment in the concepts of responsibility and testimony, one that fits within the very same framework of his French translation of Hans Jonas' work. Again, in the post-human or trans-human era, Greisch wrote his phenomenological reflections Qui sommes-nous? Parcours phénoménologique vers l'homme (2009); and when the so-called new realism was striving to impose itself in philosophy, he published L'herméneutique comme sagesse de l'incertitude (2016), and Désirer comprendre. Court traité des vertus herméneutiques (2019).*

*These are but a few of the volumes that trace the arc of a work so vast that it cannot be summarized, except perhaps with the fragment of Archilochus: "the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing, but it is famous." In fact, while commenting on this excerpt in Le Buisson ardent et les lumières de la raison Greisch applies it to himself stating "For better or for worse, I belong more to the race of foxes than to that of hedgehogs!" (Greisch, 2002-2004, vol.1 p.8). The Minimal Bibliography that we publish in this issue will witness to the one who belongs to the "race of foxes", and enabling the reader to grasp the full extent of this philosopher's work; an oeuvre to which no Introduction would ever do justice. But if Greisch's work can neither be summarized, nor presented, then how best to justify this collection?*

*This question becomes even more urgent when we realise that there is no dearth of tributes to Jean Greisch, and that his thought-provoking work has received numerous recognitions. Worth noting are the two major collective publications, Le souci du passage (a Festschrift offered by his friends and colleagues, and edited by Philippe Capelle-Dumont, Genevieve Hebert, and Marie-Dominique Popelard in 2004), and Jean Greisch, les trois âges de la raison. Métaphysique, phénoménologie, herméneutique (edited by Stefano Bancalari, Jérôme*

*de Gramont, and Jean Leclercq in 2016). As regards his academic career, Greisch was a Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Institut Catholique de Paris, where he also served as Dean (1985-1994). He also held several prestigious academic chairs worldwide, notably, the Hans Georg Gadamer Chair (Boston College, 2006), the Chaire de Philosophie Chretienne (Villanova University, 2007), the Chaire Cardinal Mercier (Institut Supérieure de Philosophie, Louvain-la-neuve, 2006), the Guardini Lehrstuhl (Humboldt University of Berlin, 2009-2012), and the Chaire Etienne Gilson (2011-2012). His active participation in numerous scientific committees and conferences (too long to be enumerated here), should not be overlooked. To these tributes we must also add the Doctorate honoris causa conferred on him in 2016 by the Pontificio Istituto Sant'Anselmo, Rome. Such being the case, we return once more to our question: how best to justify this edition of *Critical Hermeneutics*?*

*This issue does not pretend to offer an exhaustive presentation of Jean Greisch's work. As noted earlier, the extent of his philosophical engagement would not allow this, or do it justice. Neither does this issue claim to be a tribute on par with those that have already been rendered to his work. Rather, we wish to draw the attention to those Italian scholars, who have already encountered some aspects of the richness of his work, to the totality of his work, and thus promote further studies on this original interpretation of the philosophy of our times. The objective of these collected essays is therefore to diffuse Greisch's thought in Italy, which we would like to do by presenting the contributions that friends and former students have dedicated to him and on his work, in the hope that other contributions will be added later. These contributions will begin with a bilingual translation of the Prélude of his book *Rendez-vous avec la vérité*, trusting that this is a prelude to the translation of the entire book, as well as of his other works. The translations will be followed by articles that colleagues have*

*dedicated to him, as well as by texts that engage in a 'hand-to-hand' combat with his work. To announce some of these texts: Emmanuel Falque (Professor, and Honorary Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Institut Catholique de Paris), has dedicated in our philosopher's honour a text inspired by Greisch's research in the philosophy of religion entitled "Après la mort de Dieu et la mort d'homme: au fil conducteur du corps". Incidentally, this is Falque's third text in honour of Greisch; the other two– Le tournant de la facticité and Pascal et l'inquiétude de la foi – focus on Greisch's oeuvre.*

*Jean-Claude Gens and Christian Berner, two of Greisch's colleagues in the 'Hérmi-Herméneutique Mythe Image' research group, have also dedicated essays to him. Gens' essay "La pensée du corps dans le cadre de l'anthropocosmisme en Orient et en Occident" pursues the hermeneutical path in a perspective complementary to that of Greisch's, responding to Griesch's hermeneutics of the Bible with a "Book of nature". Berner's text "Accord et différence. La raison herméneutique entre écriture et oralité à la lumière du débat entre Gadamer et Habermas" extends the 'conflict' of interpretations, that Greisch highlights in L'âge herméneutique de la raison, by placing it at the heart of the tension between 'classical' hermeneutics and critical theory. As to texts that confront directly Greisch's work, we have Jérôme de Gramont's "Le testament perdu et la trace" (Gramont is Professor, and former Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Institut Catholique de Paris). Additional texts include that of Carla Canullo and Virgilio Cesarone, and as mentioned earlier, we expect to publish more articles on Greisch and his work in the forthcoming issues, as that of Annie Kunnath, Greisch's student in Paris, who proposes a re-reading of the philosophical fables with which the author engaged. And last but not least, in order to account for the magnitude of Greisch's oeuvre, and also as an indispensable source for researchers, we have published a Minimal Bibliography of the philosopher's works, that (as mentioned*

*earlier), bears witness to the attitude of a "fox" who "knows many things", an attitude which our philosopher recognises as his own. Now "these many things" that Greisch knows, while they cannot be summarised, at least converge in this current journal that the philosopher has tasked us with, a work that is only the start of a new beginning.*

*That is why, we conclude this Introduction with a new beginning, thus attesting and conforming to the open and inclusive nature of Greisch's work. It is the metaphysical culmination of a rich thought first initiated in *Le cogito herméneutique* (2000), where our philosopher continues the dialogue on the "meta-function" of transcendence, a dialogue initiated by Stanislas Breton and Paul Ricoeur. This is also the conclusion of his book *Transcender. Libres méditations sur la fonction méta*, which ends its six open reflections with the affirmation that the act of transcending is rooted in existence: "To exist is to transcend. In the context of philosophical experience, this verb can be understood in four senses – transascendence, transdescendence, transpassibility, and transpossibility. These six open meditations, which refer to the multi-millennial history of metaphysics, but which are also informed by art and literature, not forgetting the data of psychopathology, engage in a thorough investigation on the play of these four terms, with the view of deriving a new understanding of "meta function". By focusing on the different meanings of the prefix 'meta', which gave rise to the term 'metaphysics', these meditations challenge the widespread prejudice that metaphysical desire is henceforth without an object".*

*It will not be difficult to find in this issue of *Critical Hermeneutics* the themes outlined in the 'Call for papers' (and which resulted in this edition), namely, "Hermes and Hestia: the hermeneutic ellipse"; "Towards a new discipline: philosophical and biblical hermeneutics"; "The wisdom of uncertainty and the 'rendezvous' with truth and metaphysical passion"; "Narrating life: the philosophical and the extra-*

*philosophical". These are all themes that philosophy deals with, for they stem from existence; four thematic axes that this issue of Critical Hermeneutics intends to address so that other variations and open reflections can be carried out by attesting to the freedom of the act of philosophising that is at the very heart of Jean Greisch's work, and that he taught us and is still teaching us today. A freedom capable of defying philosophical trends, because its aim is nothing short of responding to the "rendezvous with Truth", a rendezvous for which it is now time.*

Carla Canullo

Annie Kunnath

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