

In memoriam

## Giuliano Massimo Barale, 1941-2015

Massimo Barale passed away on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015. His sudden death left us all (his students, his friends and family, his colleagues, and the philosophical public at large) dumbfounded.

Barale was not a flashy intellectual or a fashionable philosopher. He was rather the best example of a committed teacher and serious thinker who took to heart his mission, and the endless expressions of love and gratitude he received from generations of students and innumerable colleagues after his disappearance are the worthiest tribute to what he intended to be. It is not far-fetched to say that he left an irreplaceable void in Italian philosophy.

Barale was born in Verona in 1941 and grew up in Verona and Vicenza. He enrolled at the University of Bologna before transferring to the University of Pisa after two years. There he worked with Arturo Massolo, Giorgio Colli, and Francesco Barone. He took his Ph.D. at the Scuola Normale Superiore in 1967, and spent one year at the Sorbonne and the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1964.

He became assistant professor in History of Philosophy and then in Moral Philosophy at the University of Pisa. Later he was appointed associate professor in Education (Pedagogia) and Philosophy of History, as full professor in Moral Philosophy at the University of Genoa (1994-1997), until he finally returned to Pisa, first as full professor in Moral Philosophy and then, as of 2001, in Theoretical Philosophy.

Barale was not only a committed teacher who inspired and educated hundreds of students to the point he kept on teaching even

past his retirement; he was also a tireless organizer. He directed several research projects supported by the Italian Ministry of Education over the years, was instrumental in bringing to Pisa the Eleventh International Kant Congress in 2010, and helped found the Società Italiana di filosofia teoretica of whose organizing board he was a member. Together with Claudio La Rocca, he directed the journal first founded by Silvestro Marcucci *Studi kantiani*, which under their direction acquired international standing and recognition, and was the Editor-in-chief of the *Rivista Internazionale di Filosofia e Psicologia*.

For all his merits the University of Pisa awarded him the *Ordine del Cherubino* in 2011, a special honor for select outstanding faculty of that University.

Barale's following was considerable, but his prose could be forbidding, as both his students and readers can attest. To him, it was the uncompromising and rigorous style that best expressed his unique way of thinking. His scientific production focused on classical German philosophy, especially Kant and Hegel (but in his office hung portraits of Fichte and Schelling as well); on French philosophy of the twentieth century, especially Sartre; on models of philosophical ethics; on theories of subjectivity and reason; on Husserlian Phenomenology; and, more recently, on Cognitive Science.

In a description of his work he once submitted to the University of Pisa's website, he divided up his production in four areas. He called the first one Theories of reason and experience, and grouped his book *Immagini della ragione. Logos e ratio all'alba della scien-*



*za moderna* (Naples 1983) and the two volumes he edited *Materiali per un lessico della ragione* (Pisa 2001) under it. The second area concerns theories of subjectivity, and is represented by the book *Filosofia come esperienza trascendentale. Sartre* (Florence 1977) and by the volume he edited under the title *Dimensioni della soggettività* (Pisa 2008). The third area, on models of ethics, is represented by books such as *Il tramonto del liberale. Sartre e la crisi della teoria politica* (Naples 1981) and *Ermeneutica e morale* (Pisa 1988). The numerous essays on Kant and classical German philosophy form the fourth group out of which stand his three books *Kant e il metodo della filosofia. I: Sentire e intendere* (Pisa 1988, unfortunately not followed by the planned volume II), *Il Dio ragionevole. Percorsi etici e ontoteologici del primo idealismo tedesco* (Pisa 1992), and *Betrachtungen über den geschichtlich-philosophischen Hintergrund und den systematischen Ort von Kants Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Pisa 1997).

Stressing the rich, multifarious and diverse nature of his work, however, should not make us lose sight of the underlying unity that holds every aspect of his thought together. Philosophy is a critical and transcendental examination of the scientific as well as ordinary forms of human experience. This is why the collection of thirty-three essays by friends and colleagues on the occasion of his seventieth birthday is called *Critica della ragione e forme dell'esperienza. Studi in onore di Massimo Barale*, (edited by L. Amoroso, myself and C. La Rocca, Pisa 2011). This is more than a convenient title chosen because it provides a more or less adequate summary of his interests. There is nothing non-descript or vague to Barale's take on, even fervent defense of, reason or transcendental philosophy. For him all ontological positions and epistemological assumptions are to be understood in the framework of a philosophy which does not only reflect on itself, but, more to the point, is an experience that grounds its own possibility. Unlike all readings that understand transcendental philosophy as a regress to the condi-

tions of possibility of experience, and thereby take the expression "transcendental experience" as a misnomer or a poorly designed construct, Barale was convinced since the opening pages of his first book (*Filosofia come esperienza trascendentale*) that transcendental experience was the only candidate to the claim of absoluteness, the unconditional experience of conditions and of possibilities (this is how he understood Sartre's consciousness and *pour-soi* as a form of intentionality that resisted all reification).

I remember vividly his irritation when I sat with him to translate his essay on Husserl into English<sup>1</sup>: he was dismayed by the unforgiving and, to his eyes, inflexible structure of the English syntax which, as opposed to French and German which he preferred, hardly allows for what he took to be of primary importance, the substantivization of an adjective. "The transcendental," without qualifications or a subject, was to him the hallmark of all speculative philosophy he wanted to work with. Differently stated, "the transcendental" retained, indeed valued the plasticity of a program which he variously but consistently brought to bear on Hegel's dialectic, on Husserl's phenomenology, and especially on Kant.

To me, one of his greatest philosophical virtues was his ability to detect the ambivalence that often threatens to obscure ambitions we would be well advised to treasure and bring back to life. This holds for the ambivalence he found in Sartre's allegiance to hardly compatible motivations in Bergson and Husserl in his first book, for Hegel's difficult relation between speculation and language, for Husserl's transformation of the *cogito* as a self-enclosed sphere into a monad, a psycho-physical and temporally constituted subject rather than a merely constitutive consciousness. More poignantly, it is the heart of his reading of Kant. Kant inaugurated a style of philosophy which he could not in the end be thoroughly faithful to: he discovered the problematic nature of a thought which has itself as its object without ontological as-

sumptions or realistic presuppositions, but was still struggling, in Barale's reading, to get rid of his own intellectualistic prejudices: notably, the rigid unicity of experience as it is portrayed in the Transcendental Analytic of the first *Critique*, and the doomed identification between knowing and representing underlying the exclusive model of thought at work in the unification of a manifold expressed in categorical judgments. This is tantamount to constraining the claims of reason to those of the understanding. To that form of naturalism (whereby what is natural is not, as for some neo-Kantians, Newton's physical world, but the traditional apophantics deriving from the Aristotelian tradition that mars Kant's a priori) Barale invariably opposed the importance of the Transcendental Dialectic as an alternative and more comprehensive approach to reason, and later the perspective of the third *Critique* on the reflective power of judgment. In the third *Critique*, claims Barale, Kant realized he had to abandon the exclusive stress on the understanding's legislation of nature in favor of a notion of form as a principle of formation and interpretation of a now liberated and ever revisable experience. The third *Critique* is, in other words, at once the admission of failure and the paving of a new way to philosophy that Kant offers us.

Even in the last phase of his production, in which Barale took a stern interest in some proponents of the contemporary philosophy of mind and of cognitive science, he showed how indispensable it is to understand the postulates silently at work in positions which flaunt their freedom from metaphysical presuppositions, in particular three postulates about the idea of knowledge tacitly assumed as valid (the mathematical model of analysis

of givens, the naturalization of properties, the materialization of reasons) and not understood in their problematic core.<sup>2</sup> Again what is missing is reason, the reasonable capacity to orient ourselves in and project our experiences before we can start talking about reason's calculative power or *ratio*.

In all of Barale's work one could feel the incredible vitality of a mind which never rested content with relative truths, tentative solutions, and especially shallow criticisms. Barale's acuity and ambition illustrate the passion and rigor of philosophical life.

Personally, I owe Massimo Barale more than I can acknowledge here for the simple reason that I did learn from him many philosophical lessons, but more important to me is what I learned from him as a friend, a mentor and a person, and that is neither here nor there in a public statement. Let me only say that the rare and generous gift of his trust in my potentialities and the example of his maturity at handling conflicts began to cure me of what he once aptly called the ferocity of youth.

Massimo Barale leaves his beloved wife, Ingrid Hennemann Barale, his two daughters, Natalia and Esther, and his two grandchildren.

He will be sorely missed.

*Alfredo Ferrarin*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> M. BARALE, *Transcendental Phenomenology and Life-World*, in: A. FERRARIN (ed.), *Passive Synthesis and Life-World*, ETS, Pisa 2006, pp. 165-197.

<sup>2</sup> See for example M. BARALE, *Sfondi e confini ontologici delle contemporanee filosofie della mente*, in: «Nuova civiltà delle macchine», vol. XXIV, n. 1, 2006, pp. 79-104.