

Document

Introduction to Enzo Paci's Presentation at the 10th Triennial

Giovanni Anceschi

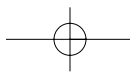
Translated by John Cullars

"Relation" and "experience" are two words that we hear all the time today. They are key notions belonging to those working in the most up-to-date design activity (Web site design as well as maintenance design). I heard them for the first time fifty years ago while attending the university lectures of Enzo Paci. These are two expressions—as we well know—that have very much to do with our "wetwear" (that is, our bodies).

Similar to Per Aldo Rovatti,¹ who may be considered one of Paci's most eminent pupils and perhaps his intellectual heir, I too have a very vivid memory of how he made his own body the vehicle and the fulcrum for his lessons on Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, beginning with the theatrical entrance of the imposing figure of this man, with his Etruscan profile, into a crowded, expectant hall and ending with the infinite revolutions around a large ashtray: each movement accompanied by a descriptive, critical, unbiased, that is, phenomenological observation.

Enzo Paci (1911–1976) was born in the province of Ancona, completed his studies at Cuneo, and became a precocious reader of the neo-idealistic philosophers Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, and of the ethico-political writings of Piero Gobetti. Enrolled in philosophy at the University of Pavia, he chose to transfer to Milan to take his degree with the prestigious professor Antonio Banfi.² A major scholar of Husserl, with an autonomous perspective that nonetheless privileged the speculative character of the *Logische Untersuchungen* [Logical Investigations] and *Ideen* [Ideas], Paci elaborated his own reflections on subjectivity, objectivity, and consciousness, especially beginning with *Cartesian Meditations* and *Crisis*, which brought him to a particularly harmonious attitude with Merleau-Ponty, on the one hand, and Sartre, on the other. Paci essentially interpreted phenomenology in exactly its *relational* sense, concentrating on the question of temporality, and situating it upon a horizon of the phenomenology of *experience*. Among his works after *Esistenzialismo e storicismo* [Existentialism and Historicism] of 1950 and *Il nulla e il problema dell'uomo* [Nothingness and the Problem of Man] of 1954, the originality of the essential *Tempo e relazione* [Time and Relations] (1954, revised 1965) should be pointed out. To this we add *Funzione delle scienze e significato dell'uomo* [The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man] (1963) and also

- 1 Pier Aldo Rovatti, "Che fine farà il nostro corpo? La filosofia (ancora) non lo sa," *Télema* 9 (Summer 1997).
- 2 Antonio Banfi's pedagogy was an essential and innovative presence in the Italy and Milan of the 1930s. In a cultural climate marked by fascism, often drenched with provincial spiritualism and idealism, his reference to, among others, Husserl and Simmel and the concrete capacity to form an authentic philosophical school (aside from Enzo Paci, Luciano Anceschi, Remo Cantoni, Giulio Preti, etc.), and to attract a group of young intellectuals and artists (from the sculptor Lucio Fontana to the poet Vittorio Sereni), took on the value of an extraordinary turn of events and an opening. See, for example, a theoretical and militant text such as Antonio Banfi, "Per la vita dell'arte" in *Corrente di vita giovanile* 4 (February 1939); reprinted in *Vita dell'arte: Scritti di estetica e filosofia dell'arte* in *Opere* (Reggio Emilia: Istituto Antonio Banfi, 1988, vol. 5). For a vivid and detailed description of the context, see Isabella Amaduzzi, *Io sono uno scultore: Lucio Fontana nella Milano degli anni Trenta* (Milano: Guerini e Associati, 2001).



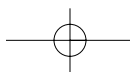
Relazioni e significati [Relations and Meanings] (1965) to conclude the course of his works with the perhaps neo-illuministic *Idee per una enciclopedia fenomenologica* [Ideas for a Phenomenological Encyclopedia] (1973).³

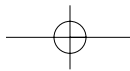
The Fabulous '50s were fifty years ago, which, in Milan, was the temporal background against which Enzo Paci delivered the lecture published here at the First International Conference on Industrial Design, October 28–30, 1954. Max Bill, Conrad Wachsmann, and Walter Dorwin Teague, among others, were invited to speak at this meeting. The meeting was proposed in the context of the 10th Triennale (1954). Its planning committee was composed of personalities representing speculative and critical culture such as Paci, the president of the group, and Giulio Carlo Argan but also Berto Morucchio; as well as representatives of industry and finance such as Ernesto Frua and Gino Martinoli; and obviously, exponents of design culture such as Marcello Nizzoli, Ernesto Rogers, Enrico Peresutti, and a very young Marco Zanuso. Reflecting an atmosphere of discovery and diffuse socio-cultural innovation, the meeting pivoted precisely on the design and industrial production of utility objects. In other words, Italian industry and the productive culture of Lombard furniture designers, who had begun to collaborate with Milanese architects, joined with the international *design* tradition. They took as their own certain principles of aesthetic quality and functional efficiency, whose institution in the Italian design prize Compasso d'oro [Golden Compass] was the most public manifestation (still in the framework of the 10th Triennale).⁴

In general, the cultural climate of Milan was the optimistic one of the second phase of postwar Italy: the so-called reconstruction. This was the period that saw an energetic reactivation of productive structures and of forms of political and social organization. The cultural life of Milan, the propulsive center of industry and publishing as well—which was truly extremely lively—as two such “provincials” of that time, the Piedmontese Umberto Eco and the Sicilian Mario Spinella—was particularly characterized by an attitude and by a life style that was extremely open and hospitable, and by a period that was extremely multidisciplinary and enamored of cultural hybridization and cross-fertilization. At the mythical Bar Jamaica in Brera, as in the most exclusive salons, the future movie star Mariangela Melato would sit next to the proto-cybernetics scientist Silvio Ceccato, the ultra avant-garde painter Piero Manzoni next to the experimental writer Germano Lombardi, the journalist Paolo Murialdi next to the musicologist Roberto Leydi, the graphic designer Max Huber next to the model Fleur Jeggy, the architect Vittorio Gregotti next to the electronic poet Nanni Balestrini, and the silversmith next to the mime, the industrialist next to the philosopher. The philosophical figure of Enzo Paci was very much present in this panorama. His activity was completely disposed toward the de-provincialism and the criticism of culture. His efforts tended to

3 For an in-depth study of Paci's character and works, see Amedeo Vigorelli, *L'esistenzialismo positivo di Enzo Paci, (1929–50)* (Milan: Franco Angeli Editore, 1987) and Alfredo Civita, *Bibliografia degli scritti di Enzo Paci* (Florence: la Nuova Italia, 1983) and, particularly, *aut aut*, 214–215 (July-October, 1986), including a biographical and bibliographical form.

4 See Anty Pansera, *Storia e cronaca della Triennale* (Milan: Longanesi, 1970).





attribute the accomplishment of the function, constantly renewed, of juxtaposing ever more strictly and judiciously the most distant areas of knowledge and cultural activity to philosophy and relational thought.

But we cannot present an image of Paci without speaking of what doubtless was his most agile surveying instrument, of interconnection and intervention in the world of cultural and creative activity: the journal *aut aut* [either...or] whose fiftieth anniversary occurs this very year. Regarding his theoretical and cultural interventions, we may refer to the heading that Paci himself tenaciously championed, "The Sense of the Words,"⁵ which concerned his presentations and critical remarks, always anticipatory and against the current, on positions and productions emerging from national and international culture. Let's allow Gillo Dorles, who was the sole editor of *aut aut*⁶ to draw up a long list of intellectuals and thinkers invited to participate that went "from Paul Ricoeur to Giuseppe Semerari, from Charles Morris to Adriano Buzzati-Traverso, from Luciano Anceschi to Ludovico Geymonat, from Ernesto Grassi to Ernesto de Martino" and then "Luigi Dallapiccola, Niccolò Castiglioni and Luigi Rognoni" in music, "Herbert Read, Ernst Gombrich, and Max Bense" for art history, and many others.

The sign of a deep scientific curiosity that rebels against "analytical, neo-positivist, scientific, and methodological tendencies" is manifested in a little essay on design that cites Pierce's tripartite division of linguistics (semantics, syntax, and pragmatics), but it is not an episodic fact: from the very first number of *aut aut*, the heading "Methodology and Analysis of Language" would be upheld by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, Charles Morris's pupil.⁷ These tendencies, as Paci would say at a later time, are only resisted when we aspire "not only to establish a method in philosophy but to condemn philosophy in the name of technicalities and the treating as absolutes of 'particular' problems."⁸

5 See Enzo Paci, *Il senso delle parole*, Pier Aldo Rovatti, ed., (Milan: Bompiani, 1987).

6 Gilles Dorles, "Aut-Aut, idee controcorrente," *Corriere della sera*, (Wednesday, November 28, 2001).

7 See the reprint of the first number of *aut aut* in *Cinquant'anni di aut aut*, (September-December 2001, Commemorative Number).

8 Enzo Paci, "Aspetti di una problematica filosofica," *aut aut* 55 (January 1960).

