

Introduction

by *Matteo De Toffoli*

This is a very large and somewhat anomalous issue of *Materiali di Estetica* (8.2), at least for the topic it takes its name from: “The political is symbolic”. Such a choice, still, testifies to two meritorious characteristics of the journal’s editorial line: on the one hand, its willingness to welcome reflections that appear to be distant from its initial phenomenological vocation; on the other hand (but not least), its openness to the work of young researchers, who have found herein a way to measure themselves with the question of the interconnection between the dimensions of the political and the symbolic. A problem that has always been topical, for it concerns not only the constitution of “political” reality in the strict sense of the word, but also that of human societies as a whole, which derive their meaning and direction precisely within symbolic universes.

As usual, the first section of the issue is devoted to the titling topic, which is addressed from many different points of view. At first, Stefania Barile presents an essay on Pablo Picasso’s political commitment, interpreting the Spanish artist’s work through the reflections of Antonio Banfi and Dino Formaggio. Federico Casella, instead, looks at Plato, with specific reference to the metaphors and the symbols used to represent the “mass” and the “multitude” in the *Republic*. The editor’s contribution reflects on some pivotal elements of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s theory of signification, where the necessity of symbolic unification passes through decisions pertaining to the order of the political. Viviana Galletta’s essay is devoted to the role of myth in Georges Sorel’s *Reflections on Violence*, analysing its centrality for the concepts of utopia, violence and general strike. Also Soim Lee examines the question of symbolic unity, comparing the post-Marxist

proposals of Ernesto Laclau and Claude Lefort in the light of their relationship with Carl Schmitt. An essay by Massimo Mezzananza, then, moves through the work of Eric Voegelin, and highlights the centrality of the symbolic dimension in the constitution of an ontology of the political. Alessio Porrino and Alessandro Volpi propose a reflection on the clock and the calendar, in order to analyse the different (if not antithetical) symbolic functions that these instruments of time measurement play in Walter Benjamin's thought. Pier Giuseppe Puggioni centres his paper on Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*, with the aim of identifying and pointing out the political and juridical elements present in the opera. Two other concrete cases of the interaction between the political and the symbolic are represented by the essays by Sara Romani and Roberto Rossi, which respectively address the construction of Swiss national identity through the photographic work of Carl Durheim and the use of the category of Renaissance in the current political rhetoric. At last, Luca Serafini explores the post-symbolic nature of images in platform capitalism and its consequences on an "impolitical" aesthetic space, while Chiara Zamboni focuses on the politics of the symbolic, observing its origin and significance within feminist thought.

The second section of the issue hosts some of the papers presented at the *Conversazioni di Estetica*, the cycle of seminars held by Fondazione Corrente between October and November 2021. The theme, "Bello-non-bello", is addressed from a variety of perspectives: Silvana Borutti presents a contribution on the experience and the dynamics of the gaze, Serena Feloj observes the "disgusting" through the Freudian lens of taboo, Tomaso Kemeny proposes a *Pentalogue* in favour of beauty, Maddalena Mazzocut-Mis retraces the long journey of the ugly within the history of aesthetics, Gabriele Scaramuzza investigates the dialectic between Beauty and Ugliness in the works of Dostoevsky, Wagner, Verdi and Kertész; finally, Nicola Vitale articulates a rich reflection focused on the revaluation of beauty in art.

As usual, a special section is devoted to Fulvio Papi's "Fogli sparsi": the third of this issue, which includes a remembrance of Salvatore Veca and a reflection on *Formazione e musica* by Elena Madrussan.

We then come to "Contributi speciali". In this fourth section, Manuele Bellini devotes an essay to Luciano Parinetto twenty years after his death, Giuliano Boccali comments Franco Chiereghin's *Il Grande Oltre*, Tiziana Canfori reports on the 2021 "Levanto Music Festival" by focusing on Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* op. 89. This is followed by two essays by Alessandro Quattrone and Cristina Muccioli, which respectively review the latest works by Maddalena Mazzocut-Mis (*Teatro da leggere. Mito e conflitto*, 2021) and Nicola Vitale (*La filosofia di Biancaneve. Spunti per i tempi che cambiano*, 2021). Luca Natali, Paolo Karapedian and Sofia Elena Merli propose three interventions in memory of Guido Davide Neri, paying attention to the documents of the homonymous Fund kept at the University of Milan. Emilio Renzi and Gabriele Scaramuzza also join in remembrances by devoting their essays to Salvatore Veca and Marcello Conati. Another essay by Emilio Renzi returns on Salvatore Satta's *Il giorno del giudizio* (1977).

The section "Segnalibro" gathers contributions by Silvana Borutti (on the new edition of the *Marx Engels Dictionary*), Roberta Guccinelli (on *Questioni di senso*, by Antonio Delogu), Emilio Battisti and Franca Fazzini (both on *Il vento ce lo disse*, by Lucia Bisi), Dario Sacchi (on the latest issue of the journal «Metodo»), Gabriele Scaramuzza (on the journal «Archivi delle emozioni» and the volume *Per Mario Benedetti* respectively) and Gianni Trimarchi (on *Travail et pouvoir d'agir*, by Yves Clot). Finally, the "In memoriam" section host two writings by Gabriele Civello and Gianni Trimarchi, which remember Enrico Berti and Egle Becchi.

The issue also presents the call for papers for the next number of *Materiali di Estetica* (9.1, to be published in September 2022), which will be devoted to the “School of Milan” and the institutions that have carried on its legacy: the Fondazione Corrente and the Casa della Cultura.

In conclusion, I cannot but thank the editorial board of *Materiali di Estetica* for the opportunity of editing this issue, the authors of the essays for having contributed to its realization, the reviewers for their courtesy and helpfulness and the Archivio Mario Giacomelli for the kind concession of the cover image. Good reading to everyone.

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