

Introduction

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Biographical notes

Paolo Parrini, born in 1943 in the small Tuscan town of Castell’Azzara in the province of Grosseto, left an indelible mark on the world of philosophy before his passing in Florence in 2020. Parrini’s reputation as a distinguished philosopher was firmly rooted in his groundbreaking contributions to theoretical philosophy and epistemology, areas in which his intellectual rigor and originality continue to resonate.

Paolo Parrini’s academic journey reached a pivotal moment in 1981 when he was appointed Full Professor of History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy at the prestigious Università Ca’ Foscari in Venice. However, it was in Florence, the city where his career truly flourished, that Parrini made his most enduring contributions. Returning there in 1982, he began a long and fruitful tenure at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, where he taught until 2011. Over nearly three decades, his lectures and mentorship shaped the intellectual development of countless students, many of whom have gone on to become influential thinkers in their own right.

Parrini’s intellectual reach was anything but provincial. His influence extended far beyond Italy, underscored by his prolific output, active participation in international scholarly institutions, and collaborations with leading academic journals across Europe and beyond. These connections facilitated an ongoing dialogue between Italian philosophy and broader currents in analytic philosophy, a dialogue to which Parrini contributed with unflagging enthusiasm and insight.

At the heart of Parrini’s work was a profound engagement with contemporary analytic philosophy, particularly its historical development and unresolved questions. In a field often dominated by abstract technicalities, Parrini brought a

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rare courage and clarity, tackling subjects that had been underexplored or even disregarded in Italy. His efforts to bridge the analytic and continental traditions, particularly through his explorations of epistemology and the philosophy of science, positioned him as a pioneer. He played a pivotal role in introducing Italian audiences to these disciplines, challenging long-standing intellectual insularity and broadening the horizons of the nation's philosophical discourse.

Parrini's scholarly pursuits were remarkable for their breadth and depth. His studies spanned 19th and 20th-century scientific and epistemological thought, providing new perspectives on figures ranging from Immanuel Kant to logical positivists like Rudolf Carnap. His early works introduced a novel interpretation of logical positivism, re-examining its ties to conventionalism and Kantian philosophy. This synthesis garnered international acclaim, placing Parrini among the foremost interpreters of these intellectual traditions. His ability to weave historical analysis with rigorous philosophical argumentation gave his work a timeless quality that continues to inspire.

Epistemology formed the core of Parrini's intellectual output. He delved into fundamental questions about realism, the nature of a priori knowledge, and the mechanisms of epistemic justification. His methodological approach, which combined historical-philosophical research with analytic precision, allowed him to navigate these complex topics with extraordinary clarity. His magnum opus, *Conoscenza e realtà* (*Knowledge and Reality*), remains a landmark in philosophical literature. In this text, he articulated his vision of "positive philosophy," a perspective that sought to reconcile hermeneutic and analytic approaches to questions about logic, truth, and the nature of reality. This concept has had far-reaching implications, influencing debates about the role of philosophy in understanding scientific and everyday knowledge.

Parrini's intellectual legacy is also marked by his prolific publication record, which encompasses more than one hundred articles, essays, and books. His ability to write with equal fluency and depth in Italian, English, French, and Spanish ensured that his ideas reached diverse audiences. Key works such as *Empirismo logico e convenzionalismo* and *Fare filosofia, oggi* illustrate his commitment to addressing both historical and contemporary philosophical issues. These texts exemplify Parrini's talent for making complex ideas accessible without sacrificing their nuance, a quality that has earned him enduring respect among scholars.

Beyond the written word, Parrini's impact was amplified by his international presence. He was frequently invited to deliver lectures and participate in conferences across Europe and the United States. These engagements were more

than mere academic exchanges; they were opportunities for Parrini to build bridges between intellectual traditions, fostering a global conversation on the fundamental questions of philosophy. His ability to engage with diverse audiences—whether through erudite debate or his approachable teaching style—highlighted his belief in philosophy’s universal relevance.

Throughout his career, Parrini maintained a steadfast commitment to philosophical inquiry as both a personal vocation and a communal endeavor. He was a mentor to generations of students and scholars, many of whom credit him with shaping their intellectual paths. His leadership extended to the broader philosophical community, exemplified by his active involvement in organizations like the Italian Society for Analytic Philosophy. These roles allowed him to champion philosophy as a dynamic and evolving discipline, one that must constantly reexamine its foundations while remaining open to new challenges.

Paolo Parrini’s intellectual achievements were matched only by the depth of his character. Colleagues and students alike remember him as a thinker of exceptional rigor and integrity, whose passion for philosophy was matched by his generosity in sharing it with others. His enduring legacy lies not only in his written works but also in the countless conversations, debates, and collaborations he inspired. For those who encountered his ideas—or had the privilege of knowing him personally—Parrini’s influence remains profound.

Today, Parrini’s work stands as a testament to the enduring relevance of philosophical inquiry. His ability to navigate the complexities of epistemology, his innovative approaches to historical and contemporary issues, and his unwavering commitment to intellectual honesty make his contributions as vital now as they were during his lifetime. For anyone seeking to engage with the epistemological and theoretical challenges of our age, the works of Paolo Parrini remain an indispensable guide. His legacy is not merely one of academic achievement but of a life dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, truth, and understanding.

Introduction to the Volume

This issue of *H.M.* brings together contributions from the conference held in Florence in June 2023. On that occasion, distinguished scholars gathered to commemorate what would have been the 80th birthday of Paolo Parrini, reflecting on his enduring philosophical legacy and the key research themes that defined his career. Alongside the many contributions from that event, additional essays were later included by those who wished to pay tribute to Parrini’s philosophy through

their own reflections. The result is a collective volume, where voices from diverse philosophical backgrounds and generations come together to acknowledge the significance of Paolo Parrini's work—not merely by celebrating his substantial scientific achievements, but by engaging with his ideas in the spirit of rational dialogue, a hallmark of his intellectual approach.

The volume is organized into two sections: the first dedicated to scholarly contributions, the second to personal recollections. In a deliberate editorial choice, the essays in the recollections section have been published in their original language, Italian, to preserve their emotional authenticity. The volume concludes with a comprehensive bibliography of Paolo Parrini's works, meticulously compiled by his wife, Simonetta Ciolli.

This collection aspires to capture the multifaceted nature of Paolo Parrini's intellectual and personal legacy. The scholarly contributions offer rigorous analyses that explore and expand upon the philosophical themes Parrini championed, including his pivotal work in epistemology, his reinterpretation of logical positivism, and his distinctive concept of "positive philosophy." Meanwhile, the recollections provide an intimate glimpse into the profound impact Parrini had as a mentor, colleague, and friend, highlighting his extraordinary ability to inspire both critical inquiry and personal affection.

The article sections opens with the contribution by Roberta Lanfredini. In her article, Lanfredini argues that Paolo Parrini's concept of "positive philosophy" represents a third way in epistemology, mediating between the rigid formalism of logical empiricism and the relativism of post-positivist perspectives. She situates the "network model" as a paradigmatic example of this philosophy, highlighting its ability to reconcile empirical observation with theoretical frameworks. Lanfredini extends this analysis to propose a broader, meta-philosophical application of the network model, emphasizing its post-analytic or synthetic potential. Ultimately, Lanfredini presents the network model as a dynamic and context-sensitive framework that challenges the fragmentation of philosophical discourse, offering a cohesive approach to contemporary epistemological and metaphysical challenges.

In his contribution, Luca Oliva examines Paolo Parrini's interpretation of the Kantian *a priori* within the framework of logical empiricism. Oliva highlights Parrini's distinction between strong and weak rejections of Kant's *a priori*, focusing on the latter as central to the evolution of logical empiricism. He argues that Parrini aligns with neo-positivist thinkers such as Reichenbach and Carnap, who revised Kant's synthetic *a priori* into a relativized, revisable framework. Oliva

underscores Parrini's contribution to a historical and philosophical understanding of scientific rationality, bridging classical epistemology with modern logical analysis. This analysis situates Parrini as a pivotal figure in contemporary debates about the foundations of knowledge.

In his essay, Roberto Gronda revisits Paolo Parrini's conception of truth and objectivity, emphasizing its rejection of metaphysical realism and deflationism. Gronda explores how Parrini critiques Tarski-inspired approaches for their inadequacies in addressing epistemological concerns, proposing instead that truth and objectivity function as "empty categories." These categories gain meaning only within specific epistemic contexts, preserving their evaluative role while avoiding metaphysical commitments. Ultimately, Gronda argues that Parrini's approach offers a "third way" between realism and relativism, affirming the importance of intersubjective justification while acknowledging the contingency and historical situatedness of epistemic practices.

In his article, Pier Luigi Lecis explores Paolo Parrini's effort to reconcile hermeneutics with epistemology, focusing on the potential and limitations of such a dialogue. Lecis highlights Parrini's critique of the epistemological traditions derived from empiricism and hermeneutics, which often emphasize methodological or linguistic boundaries over interdisciplinary integration. He argues that Parrini's nuanced approach bridges the gap between these domains by identifying structural parallels in their treatment of truth and objectivity.

In her article, Roberta Corvi examines Paolo Parrini's interactive conception of knowledge, focusing on its systemic and transdisciplinary potential. She begins by exploring the historical roots of the interactive approach, tracing its development from logical positivism and Kantian epistemology to more contemporary systemic theories. Corvi highlights Parrini's rejection of metaphysical realism in favor of empirical realism, emphasizing that knowledge is both a dynamic and incomplete process shaped by the interplay between the knowing subject and reality. Corvi situates Parrini's epistemology within a broader cultural context, advocating for interdisciplinary dialogue as a means of addressing the complexity of contemporary knowledge systems. Her analysis reaffirms the enduring relevance of Parrini's thought for modern epistemology.

In his paper, Kenneth Westphal engages with Paolo Parrini's "third way" in philosophy, which seeks to reconcile empirical realism with conceptual flexibility. Westphal examines Parrini's nuanced use of holism, highlighting its semantic, methodological, and justificatory dimensions. By analyzing the foundational differences between Carnap's and Quine's perspectives on

semantics and ontological frameworks, he underscores Parrini's insights into the limitations of both approaches. Westphal extends and reinforces Parrini's arguments, demonstrating how they provide a robust philosophical framework for understanding truth, objectivity, and scientific progress in ways that transcend conventional dichotomies.

In his paper, Felice Masi investigates the profound intellectual exchange between Rudolf Carnap and Felix Kaufmann between 1928 and 1934, focusing on their discussions of generalities, a concept central to both their philosophies. Masi highlights how Kaufmann's distinction between empirical and specific generalities significantly influenced Carnap's work, particularly in relation to the Vienna Circle's philosophical projects. Kaufmann's introduction of phenomenology into the discourse on generalities, contrasting it with the logical empiricism of the time, is a key theme of Masi's analysis. By tracing the trajectory of this intellectual confrontation, Masi sheds light on the significant, though often overlooked, impact of Kaufmann and Carnap's interactions on modern philosophical thought.

In his contribution, Francesco Pisano explores Paolo Parrini's innovative integration of Johann Friedrich Herbart's concept of *Bearbeitung der Begriffe* (the treatment of concepts) into contemporary conceptual engineering. Pisano traces Parrini's synthesis of Herbart's functionalist, anti-foundationalist re-reading of Kant with 20th-century analytic philosophy, positioning Parrini as a pivotal figure in this evolving dialogue. Pisano concludes that Parrini's approach offers a robust and ethically grounded alternative for addressing the demands of contemporary epistemological and metaphysical challenges.

In her article, Caterina Del Sordo explores the intersection of Rudolf Carnap's philosophy and Edmund Husserl's phenomenology through what she terms the "Florentine perspective," a conceptual framework she derives from Paolo Parrini's philosophy. Del Sordo highlights Parrini's innovative synthesis, which reconciles the methodologies of logical empiricism and phenomenology while rejecting their metaphysical presuppositions. By focusing on material a priori statements and their transformation under the influence of neutral monism and Machian anti-metaphysics, she identifies a "third way" that balances Carnap's scientific realism with Husserl's phenomenological neutrality.

In her contribution, Rosaria Egidi examines the relationship between Moritz Schlick and Ludwig Wittgenstein on ethics and voluntary actions, with a particular focus on Schlick's *Problems of Ethics*. Egidi highlights how Schlick sought to align ethics with empirical sciences, proposing a naturalistic and

utilitarian framework grounded in psychological and sociological methods. This approach diverges from Wittgenstein's conception of ethics as ineffable, as articulated in the *Tractatus* and the *Lecture on Ethics*, where ethical propositions are seen as transcending factual language. Ultimately, Egidi positions Schlick's work as a precursor to contemporary analytical ethics and its dialogue with cognitive science.

As previously announced, the volume concludes with recollections from friends and colleagues. This section features contributions from Alberto Peruzzi, Giambattista Gori, Massimo Mugnai, Arnaldo Bruni, and Giovanni Mari. We refrain from summarizing their memories here, as doing so would risk diminishing their depth and authenticity. Instead, we invite readers to immerse themselves in these heartfelt tributes, where personal affection and life events intertwine with the theoretical discussions that Paolo Parrini so passionately engaged in with those around him. These recollections offer a vivid and intimate portrait of Parrini, reflecting not only his intellectual rigor but also the profound human connections he fostered throughout his life.