



The theme of “Conformity and Dissent” raises deep questions about individual responsibility and social cohesion. A society that does not tolerate dissent is oppressive and almost certain to stagnate. By contrast, a society that does not insist on a certain degree of conformity will disintegrate. Unfortunately there is no formula by which to determine how much dissent to allow and when to allow it. The essays in this collection look at the issue of dissent from a number of perspectives: historical, philosophical, literary, and theological. Although no single conclusion follows from these discussions, one cannot help but notice how dissent has emerged in places where one would not expect to find it. The papers were read and discussed in a Conference which was held in Pisa on March, 23-24th, 2011. Unfortunately two texts discussed during the Conference – the papers of Giuliano Campioni and of John Wynne – could not be published. The Conference was organized in the frame of the partnership between Northwestern University (above all the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of Classics) and Pisa University (especially the Department of Philosophy and the Department of History of Ancient Worlds).

Il tema “Conformità e dissenso” solleva profonde questioni riguardo alla responsabilità individuale e alla coesione sociale. Una società che non tollera il dissenso è oppressiva e condannata alla stagnazione. Al contrario, una società che non prevede un certo grado di

conformità, o anche di conformismo, è destinata a disintegrarsi. Sfortunatamente non c'è una formula capace di definire quanto dissenso può essere permesso e quando lo si può permettere. I saggi contenuti in questo volume affrontano il tema del dissenso da numerose prospettive: storica, filosofica, letteraria e teologica. Sebbene non vi sia una conclusione definitiva, non si può non notare come il dissenso venga ad emergere in luoghi in cui uno non si aspetterebbe di trovarlo. I contributi qui raccolti sono stati letti e discussi nel corso di un convegno tenutosi a Pisa il 23 e 24 marzo 2011. Purtroppo due testi letti nel corso del convegno – quelli di Giuliano Campioni e di John Wynne – non sono potuti essere inseriti in questa raccolta. Il convegno è stato organizzato nell'ambito della convenzione tra l'Università di Pisa (in particolare i Dipartimenti di Filosofia e di Scienze Storiche del Mondo Antico) e la Northwestern University (soprattutto il Department of Religious Studies e quello di Classics).

Kenneth Seeskin, Adriano Fabris

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Kenneth Seeskin

Biblical Rebels

pp. 7-14

One would not normally turn to the Hebrew Bible for insight into rebellion that raises the character responsible for it in our estimation because the Hebrew Bible is usually associated with heteronomy; with the submission to God's will which is made explicit in a series of revelations. The essence of sin is the human tendency to rebel against that will. Still, this reading has been adopted to serve theological interests of which the Bible is largely innocent. Drawing on the stories of Abraham, Moses, Job and Amos, this paper wants to show that the Bible not only praises rebellion but even seems to require it in some cases. Moreover, these biblical rebels are acting not just against human authority, but against divine authority as well. In view of this, one might say that the Bible offers a kind of theology of rebellion.

Bruno Centrone

“Irridere i costumi”. Conformità e dissenso nelle biografie dei filosofi antichi

pp. 15-25

The argument of conformity and dissent with respect to generally accepted customs is very vast if one discusses it within the context of the transformative potential of theoretical ethics.

Therefore, I will examine one particular aspect of this immense area of study: what does the biographical information available to us tell us about the influence of the theoretical break with conventions and practices on the actual life of ancient philosophers? To what extent does theory have an impact on life? I will examine briefly the case of ancient Pythagoreanism, of Xenophon's and Plato's Socrates, of Diogenes the Cynic, of the "mad" Socrates and of Plato. I will try to demonstrate that theoretical innovations within ethics can lead both to the rejection and to the full acceptance of the living as of the practices and traditions in vigour.

Flavia Monceri

Beyond the Rules. Transgressive Bodies and Political Power

pp. 27-45

My main assumptions in this article are: a) that the notion of transgression should be understood not simply as "breaking" but as "overcoming the rules"; b) that the concrete body of each one of us is the first and most privileged site of transgression; and c) that rather than as a form of resistance, each act of transgression as the overcoming of rules should be thought of as an actual political act, implying the exercise of individual power, from which new rules can and do emerge. To argue for such assumptions, I first consider the notion of transgression with reference to conformity and dissent, trying to show that it should be considered as an exercise of *power* rather than a form of *resistance*. Then, I introduce the idea that bodies are sites of transgression, and briefly consider some concrete cases of "transgressive bodies". My conclusion is that we should take seriously the idea that "the individual is the political", whose

relevance and effective viability clearly emerges from the analysis of transgressive bodies' political incidence in contemporary complex societies.

Regina M. Schwartz

Truth, Free Speech, and the Legacy of John Milton's *Areopagitica*

pp. 47-58

The protection of freedom of speech is not only a question of protecting freedom for its own sake, but also a tacit protection of truth. That is, censorship is not only a weapon in a political struggle; the stakes are higher, the suppression of Truth itself. The supreme value of truth that informs the commitment to free speech helps to explain how what begins as John Milton's tract against prior censorship, *Areopagitica: A speech of Mr. John Milton for the liberty of unlicensed printing to the Parliament of England*, turns into a tract on liberty and this, in turn, becomes an extended rumination on the process of discovering Truth. Still, it would be wrong to turn Milton into a spokesman for liberalism. His understanding of toleration, of leadership and even freedom of speech falls short of liberal ideals. But rather than castigate him for his shortcomings, in this article I suggest that as an early modern thinker, who predates the Enlightenment, Milton is poised to offer us a unique and I believe salutary blend of classical and liberal thought, one that embraces the good rather than neutrality.

Adriano Fabris

Religion as Transgression

pp. 59-69

The purpose of this paper is to examine from a particular point of view – that of philosophy of religion – the structure of the behaviour and the character of being a religious human being. Insofar this structure gives expression to a relation in progress, it is a rather dynamic and ambiguous structure. In what follows, I will explore the different forms this structure can take. My thesis is that religious human beings, as beings in relation between two different spheres – the human and the divine – live this relationship in the form of transgression. Or rather, religion itself is a place of constant transgression because the relation that characterizes religious human beings is a dynamic relationship: not a state of affairs, nor a fact or a destiny.

Henri Lauzière

Conforming to Salafi Standards: The Dilemma between Unity and Exclusion in Early Twentieth-Century Islamic Reform

pp. 71-83

This paper presents a brief overview of some of the internal tensions and transformations that took place within the Salafi reform movement. At the beginning of the 20th century, those who claimed to be Salafi of creed often claimed to tolerate a certain amount of theological diversity. Over the course of the 20th century, modern reformers gradually forfeited or lost their ability to promote their progressive and tolerant views. Why? This paper outlines three factors that explain, in part, the gradual triumph of the Wahhabis' purist interpretation of Salafi standards. First, modern reformers had to walk a tight rope from the beginning. It was no easy task to strike a balance between Enlightenment ideas of tolerance and the exclusive claim to orthodoxy that characterized Salafi theology. Second, the promising potential of the young Saudi state in the late 1920s changed the situation and convinced some of the most important modern reformers to reconsider their earlier conceptions of Salafi tolerance. Third when the struggle against colonialism came to an end from the 1950s onward, it became virtually impossible for postcolonial Muslim reformers to defend an Enlightened interpretation of Salafi standards in the name of Muslim unity.

Sandra Lischi

Trasgressioni audiovisive: il dissenso della videoarte

pp. 85-92

Audiovisual dissent has many forms: going from the stories of many films, to the inquiring look of various documentaries and the different works in which the hybridization and the mixtures – made possible by digital technology – set normativity against transgression, order against disorder. Video art often chooses poetry, music and painting to manifest its disagreement with the media landscape. Its transgressive language is characterized by the indifference towards traditional narrative, by the focus on the simultaneity of images, on transitions and overlays, by the non-naturalistic use of sounds and visual effects, etc. because it is impossible to say new things without using a new “scripture”. A critical reflection on the audiovisual world often transforms itself in a critical thinking about the world itself. In this paper I have chosen some audiovisual works of “dissent”: *News* by Ursula Ferrara (Italy 2006), *The Reflecting Pool* (USA 1977-79) by Bill Viola, *Nine to Five* by Tero Puhja (Finland 2008), *Naufrage* by Clorinde Durand (France, 2008), *F* by Ethem özguven (Turkey, 2004). These works articulate not only an ethical and civic dissent, but also an aesthetical one. They are not compatible with mainstream cinema or television, but ask us to look in a different way: with a gaze capable to go beyond and to dissent.

Lars Tønder

Remember Tolerance Differently: Kant and the Politics of Becoming Tolerant

pp. 93-108

This essay questions the linear conception of history which often accompanies the way contemporary democratic theory tends to disavow tolerance's discontinuities and remainders. In the spirit of Foucault's genealogy of descent, the idea is to develop a new sense of tolerance's history, not by invoking a critique external to contemporary democratic theory, but by witnessing the history of tolerance paralytically, with an eye to what it obscures and yet presupposes.

Robert W. Wallace

Mass versus Elite: Dissent or Cooperation in Archaic and Classical Greece

pp. 109-120

With one fundamental exception, dissent and competition were pervasive Greek qualities. In contrast to the cooperative, hierarchic ideologies and of Rome's senatorial and lower classes, Greeks were often competitive and independent minded. Countless examples show that dissent drove the Greek military, physical, political, intellectual and religious life. One fundamental exception disrupted this pattern of dissent, decision, and concurrence. Many aristocrats did not like to concur. If they did not prevail, they continued to oppose, sometimes resulting in violent social strife, which sometimes in turn provoked a constitutional reform that restricted some democratic freedoms. This explains why in the early fourth century democratic politics were marked by an unusual degree of unanimity: Athenians might still disagree in Assembly debates, but concord was their watchword and conservatives or anti-democrats mostly stopped criticizing the democracy in public and retreated into their private clubs. Only one important anti-democrat refused to stop criticizing democracy: Socrates. But after 404, such talk was dangerous or even treasonous, as is evidenced by his trial and conviction.

Margherita Facella and Andrea Raggi

Political Dissent and Inscriptions in the Roman World: a few notes

pp. 121-139

The present article investigates how dissent against Roman political authorities (in particular emperors) might have expressed itself in Greek and Latin epigraphic sources of the Late Republic and Empire. The first part of the paper is dedicated to more general questions and to the discussion of a few inscriptions where traces of political criticism have been detected. The

analysis then focuses on graffiti which have been either uncovered or which are known through literary authors. The several examples of politically dissenting graffiti show how this form of protest did not pass unnoticed by the authorities, who however accepted it with a certain tolerance.

Joseph A. Raho

Conformity and Dissent in Clinical Medicine: Bioethics and the Physician-Patient Relationship

pp. 141-153

Until recently, patients had little say in the direction of their medical care because physicians were presumed to have technical and moral authority. Dissent in medicine has brought about a fundamental change in our ideal of the physician-patient relationship: the paternalistic medicine of the past has given way to the ideal of “shared decision-making.” This article explores the implications of this development. Although dissent in medicine has brought about tangible gains for patients, these gains are only partial. After exploring the roots of medicine as a helping or healing art, I show how human values are linked to technical judgments throughout the trajectory of disease. These human values – derived from the experiences of both physician and patient – should not only shape, but also inform medical treatment in the process of returning to natural equilibrium. The physician-patient encounter, on such an interpretation, ought to be understood as modulated by both conformity and dissent.

Eva De Clercq

The Celebration of Transgression: A Problem of Imagination. The Adventures of the Body within the Contemporary Art World

pp. 155-167

In his latest book *The Winter of Culture* [L'hiver de la culture] the French art critic Jean Clair claims that transgression itself is becoming a market value in an art world ever more dominated by speculation. In this paper I want to examine this claim by discussing Gunther von Hagens' *Body Worlds* [Körperwelten] and *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* of the French performance artist Orlan. By means of their works, I will show that what is problematic about some of today's so-called "transgressive" art is not so much that speculation is running rampant, as Clair contends, but that it is partaking in the general trend of emptying the body of its symbolic meaning.