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Abstract: Here, an account is provided, in autobiographical form, of the path of the author toward philosophy, as a calling, from the choice of university faculty to the first experiences as researcher, until her encounter with the theme of metaphor, true love at first sight, and beyond. You can read about the birth of her form of thought: “impertinent thought,” including the contamination of genders and the philosophy of daily life, founded upon political and feminist awareness. While the perspective of gender came relatively late to the academic writings of the author it would not be abandoned. Its implications are always borne in mind, as in the case of feeling of friendship, to which all philosophical tradition assigns male traits denied to women.

Keywords: Philosophy, autobiography, metaphor, “impertinent thought,” female friendship

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My Way to Philosophy

FRANCESCA RIGOTTI

Early Days

It was a time of hesitancy. Generally, when we take our first steps, it is so. We proceed cautiously, rather unsteady on our feet, like toddlers. Others leap into the “fray”—their vocation being quite clear to them from their earliest days. They have decided early on that they will become historians, musicians, astronomers or philosophers. That was Maria Zambrano’s way. Not mine.

That said, during my high-school years, I did enjoy studying philosophy, as I encountered Zeno’s paradoxes and the Platonic myths. I then decided I would go for philosophy at the university, and not archaeology or medicine (it was a blessed time when there were no *numerus clausus* rules). A young woman with a reasonable academic ranking was generally pressured into aiming high and going for the more arduous disciplines. I was lucky. My mother consented. Had my father been still alive at that time, things might have been different. “Philosophy doesn’t fill your stomach,” he would have said.

I studied at the Department of Philosophy of the Università Statale in Milan (I ruled out the Università Cattolica from the start). My teachers were such highly committed and renowned figures as Mario Dal Pra, Ludovico Geymonat, and Enzo Paci. Dal Pra was an anti-fascist partisan, historian of philosophy, and founder of the *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia*. These preceptors were among my better-known teachers, but there were others, and they were no less punctilious. I took up my studies, of course, during the turbulent times of the early 1970s, when lecture halls were often occupied and the streets rang with the cries of protesters (myself often among them). However, at 8 o’clock in the morning, when Dal Pra taught, it was a moment of clarity and filled with a fervent desire to learn. The world was still an orderly place. I attended many history of philosophy courses (philosophy of the ancients, of the middle ages, and of modernity, as well as contemporary thought). I studied the works of key thinkers, and attended courses on theoretical or moral philosophy, philosophy of science, philosophic historiography, and so on.

After graduating, I struggled for a while to keep pace with developments. A key factor in this was my thesis supervisor, Professor Maria Assunta Del Torre, and her power to influence matters. She was unable to further the progress of her students because, as a woman and as a professor without tenure, she had little of that academic power that alone counted (and still counts) in Italy’s “baronial” system.

In any case, her example as a supervisor was not forgotten: she displayed such painstaking, eager attention to detail. I realized this when I, in turn, began to deal with my own students. It was, in a sense, by chance that I landed up in Naples, thanks to a study grant from the Istituto per gli Studi Storici (Institute for Historical Studies), a Crocean institution. In Naples, I studied and conducted research work on what was to become my first book (a monograph on the idea of progress and perfectibility from Condorcet on; indeed, I hope to return to Condorcet in the near future).¹ From Naples again to Milan, with a grant from the *Fondazione Feltrinelli*. It was within this philosophical-political context that I encountered and came to love metaphors. My interest in metaphors is constantly present, as a part of my philosophical approach, as I point out in one of my books:

I cannot say exactly when metaphors became a part of my life. I cannot evoke the moment in time

¹ Francesca Rigotti, *L'umana perfezione. Saggio sulla circolazione e diffusione dell'idea di progresso nell'Italia del primo ottocento* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1981).

– that is, if there actually was such a defining moment – in which I realised that language by images, this allusive language, this evocative, obscure, and yet so very truthful language, constituted firstly a field of research, then a philosophical method, and then, finally, a way of looking at the world. Of course, I was struck by Hans Blumenberg’s works: *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, *The Laughter of the Thracian Woman*, and *Shipwreck with Spectator*, which I even translated. But I am sure that my interest in this theme, and the attraction it held for me, go back further in time. I know that my interest was rekindled thanks to my discussions with the scholarship holders, scholars, and teachers who frequented the *Fondazione Feltrinelli* in Milan in the late 1970s (the years that made the greatest impression on me, developmentally speaking, and that were the most intellectually stimulating). In any case, I do not know when... and perhaps it matters really rather little. What is important, however, is that metaphors exist and that they present themselves to me, displaying the things that they indicate – or, rather, evoke – in a manner that alludes to hidden depths. Metaphors urge us, as it were, to go beyond the appearance of similitude. It is as though “below” or “behind” metaphors – or wherever else – there is something else. It is as though, while hiding the other, metaphors would enable me to perceive that other, which, like cloth draped over a person, is not there to reveal the person underneath but rather to cover him or her. And yet I can intuit or “eke out” the forms under that very same cloth.²

So, as to metaphors, I sometimes choose to explain them using Pablo Neruda’s words in the film *Il Postino-The Postman* (Massimo Troisi and Michael Radford, 1994):

Mario: Don Pablo?

Neruda: Metaphors.

M.: What are those?

N.: Metaphors? Metaphors are...How can I explain? When you talk of something comparing it to another.

M.: It is something you use in poetry?

N.: Yes, that too.

M.: For example?

N.: For example when you say, “the sky weeps” what do you mean?

M.: That it’s raining.

N.: Yes, very good. That’s a metaphor.

M.: It’s easy then.

Words that are decidedly Blumenbergian in spirit, as per his works, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, *The Laughter of the Thracian Woman* or *Shipwreck with Spectator*. Both in my two doctoral thesis essays dedicated to them (for the European University Institute in Fiesole, 1984) and in the thesis for qualification as a university teacher (at the Department of Political Science of the University of Göttingen, 1992), I studied the manner in which metaphors work, as we think as well as in the language of political philosophy. The two theses were published as monographs. The former appeared in Italy. The latter both in Germany and Italy.³ In the meantime, I moved to Göttingen with my companion, still at my side today, and had four children—a big challenge, without a shadow of doubt! Life as an academic abroad with no preceptors or support of any kind is anything but easy. Briefly, a period in Göttingen as an assistant and scientific collaborator (1981-1994); qualification as a university teacher (*Habilitation*); and a proposed political philosophy professorship in Göttingen (*Fiebingger-Professur*), which I turned down since I did not want to teach and write in a language I was not fully fluent in.

²Francesca Rigotti, *La filosofia delle piccole cose*, (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), republished as *Nuova filosofia delle piccole cose* (Novara: Interlinea, 2013), a new edition of the previous essay, amended.

³Francesca Rigotti, *Metafore della politica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989); *Il potere e le sue metafore* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1992) and *Die Macht und ihre Metaphern. Über die sprachlicher Bilder der Politik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag, 1994).

Furthermore, I did not want to become a part of Germany's scientific community and thus risk sacrificing, or in any case weakening, my own personal (linguistic and cultural) bearings. Then came the Heisenberg-Stipendium – my five years of glory (1992-96) as a researcher without the burden of teaching commitments, thanks to the generous financial support of the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*), which sustains scientific work in all disciplines that may lead to the awarding of a full professorship. The full professorship never materialized since, following my Heisenberg engagement, a Swiss university offered me a contract in 1996, valid to this day (2020). My activities as a teacher and as a researcher—which, when I qualified as a university teacher, I swore I would dedicate my life to – were not backed up. However, I forged on, as I still do today, unsupported and unfunded, as per my contractual teaching engagement. Accordingly, I cannot supervise M.A. theses or join faculty committees. Again, a big challenge!

Metaphorology and Impertinent Thought

As I sought to subsume my activity into a unitary philosophical practice, and confine it within such bounds, I realized that my thought was impertinent, in the two main senses of this homonym. As we shall see, I was not alone. We find the two meanings in Italian as well as in English, French, and Spanish: impertinence as in “not pertaining to”; and impertinence as effrontery, impudence, insolence, and so forth. On such meanings, the most remote authority in time that I managed to find was Jean Cohen, the French literary critic of the 1960s who wrote on the structure of poetic language. Cohen introduces the concept of impertinence as “a violation of the code of speech,” or, in other words, an escape from the “domination” of language.⁴

This violation of the code of speech occupied my mind as I read texts philosophically and considered the philosophical approach to problems, analogies, and metaphors. This had been the case since my early days as a researcher and experimenter. Why impertinence? Because metaphors and analogies do not pertain. They do not pertain because they are mendacious—shamelessly and impertinently so. I shall use Kant's words to define analogy:

This doesn't involve (as the word 'analogy' is commonly thought to do) an imperfect similarity of two quite dissimilar things, but rather a perfect similarity of relations between two quite dissimilar things. By means of this analogy, we are left with a concept... that is detailed enough for us, though we have omitted it from everything that could characterize it absolutely or in itself.

Thus, for the analogy as for the metaphor, the latter being an impertinent liar, things are the way they are for us, for me, relative to the world of which I am a part.

With respect to truth, analogies may be granted the benefit of the doubt since, as a form, they explicitly declare a relation of similitude as opposed to coincidence (for example, “As iron is eaten away by rust, so the envious are consumed by their own passion”; this is a simile ascribed to Antisthenes, who lived in the fourth century BCE). Conversely, metaphors say “envy *is* rust,” lying brutally—and provocatively—one might say! Metaphors are more impertinent than analogies; they do not pertain; they lie, rudely or impolitely. All metaphors are a violation of logic and of Tarski's truth principle according to which “P” is true if and only if P. That is, the statement, “it's raining” is true if and only if it is raining. The claim that “envy is rust” is therefore clearly wrong, quite simply because envy is not rust.

⁴ Jean Cohen, *Structure du langage poétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1966), 114-15. The idea and the coining of the term, “impertinent thought,” also emerged in the work of Italian writers such as Marco Dallari, *In una notte di luna vuota* and Marnie Campagnaro, *Pensieri impertinenti*.

Contaminatio generum

The impertinence of thought is embodied also in the principle of *contaminatio generum*—a principle which I have implemented extensively. Indeed, I think it is reductive to engage in philosophizing on philosophical problems in the company of philosophers alone. I prefer to engage in these things with philosophers and with the world at large, which means including as part of my discourse authors, texts, suggestions, ideas, and propositions that may not belong to professional philosophers (political or other philosophers). So, I also turn to the men and women of letters and to their novels, and to yet other sources. I do so because philosophy concerns abstract and universal questions, ideas, concepts, postulates, problems, etc. They are universal since all periods and places come within their scope, and are abstract because they are “drawn away from” (Lat., *abstrahère*) instances of reality that are single and concrete. Indeed, literature looks at single, concrete instances, and tells a story of events that have not taken place or have taken place but only once. These single, individual, concrete instances are, in any case, important as an aid to the philosophical analysis of the universal, just as—and here I use an analogy—the maxims and thoughts of the “moralists” effectively aid us in our search for principles (e.g., ethical principles) that are universal in nature. In such cases, the individual, concrete, embodied actions – actions either taken or merely proposed by way of advice – help us shed light on theoretical and general problems. Thanks to the characters and stories of novels – or of mythology, the epic mode, comic strips, films, TV series, and pop songs – philosophy can, I believe, stoop to examine the events of this sublunary world of ours. Conversely, our everyday lives may ascend into the world of sublimely abstract thought, and deeply breathe in the rarefied air that is found at such heights.

Philosophy of Everyday Life

This more or less rounds off the biographical and methodological part of this essay. We shall in any case consider such questions once more when I deal with political philosophy. Let us consider now the philosophy of everyday life and political philosophy. Both of these philosophies were influenced and indeed molded by the dimension of the metaphor, to the point of becoming inseparable from it. Or, as Leibniz put it, “indiscernible”. I attempt—however arduous the task may be—to affect this separation. Let me add that the above remarks serve as a premise, thanks to which I managed to set forth my philosophy of everyday life, in book after book, and likewise in articles and very many speeches (many of which unpublished) at festivals and during debates, meetings, conferences, and congresses (of a more or less philosophical nature).⁵

Dealing with everyday life philosophically may be criticized as impertinent (in both senses, but with a slight shift in meaning). Everyday life does not pertain to philosophy, and the philosophy of everyday life “cocks a snook” at true, abstract theoretical philosophy.

Is this the case? Is philosophy of everyday life not, in itself, an oxymoron? A contradiction in terms?

Philosophy and everyday life exist on such differing planes. According to Nietzsche,

⁵ Here, I may mention *La filosofia in cucina. Piccola critica della ragion culinaria* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999, 2002 and 2012); *Il filo del pensiero* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002 and Naples-Salerno: Orthotes, 2018); *La filosofia delle piccole cose* and *Nuova filosofia delle piccole cose*; and, in part, also *Il pensiero pendolare* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2006); *Le piccole cose di Natale* (Novara: Interlinea, 2008), *Partorire con il corpo e con la mente. Creatività, filosofia, maternità* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2010) and, with Duccio Demetrio, *Senza figli. Una condizione umana* (Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2012). I also include *De senectute* (Turin: Einaudi, 2018).

philosophy inhabits the high ground—the peaks where the air is so bracing in its purity—whereas everyday life breathes the rather stiflingly still air of the lowland plains. The chances of conjoining the two are slim. But might we not instead lower the higher realm and raise the lower? Or, perhaps, seek some sort of balance, as though we were handling scales? Libra, the balance, is the symbol of justice (this comparison with scales is not casual). Weighing, pondering or considering carefully, assessing. Etymologically, we find here a key term in philosophy. The Italian verb, *pensare*, from the Latin *pendo*, is in turn related to the term *pondero*: to suspend, ponder, assess, weigh up. We thus bridge the gap between everyday life and philosophy (the former, where things are *weighed up*, it. *pesati*, and the latter, where our *thinking*, it. *pensiero*, is directed not only toward things but also toward concepts, ideas, and theories).

We bridged the gap by analyzing language. Indeed, if the two spheres are to perhaps overlap, we might consider where philosophical language actually comes from. Things of interest might be brought to light—which transcend the noble act of thought as such—rooted in the quotidian activities of weighing or pondering, ruminating or mulling. Likewise, reflecting and speculating—when these verbs are used to refer to the contemplation of philosophers—lead us to the mirror or looking glass. The mirror—seen in sheets of water and of metal before glass came to be used—provides philosophy with some of its weightiest and most pregnant words: to speculate/speculation, to reflect/reflection (that is, thought returning to itself, having been projected onto things or onto concepts and ideas of things). With terms linked to *speculum* and *reflection*, we indicate the mental process of deferring something for further consideration.

Let us now return to the necessary and sufficient conditions for engaging in philosophy in everyday life, conditions that are attained by aligning these two tiers. One approach to alignment consists in affirming (see above) that much of the high-flown language that we use when talking of the theory of great things or Chief World Systems comes from the humble language that we use when referring to things and systems that are (or are considered) minor in nature. Another approach to alignment consists in exhorting everyday life, as in “No playing at being a Cinderella, please! Just grab your evening gown and put it on!” How? By seeking out what is “extraordinary in the quotidian,” or alternatively, as Stanley Cavell put it, “the uncanniness of the ordinary.” Cavell proposes bringing the Freudian concept of *Unheimliches* (“uncanniness” in English) into the quotidian. The quotidian is no longer reassuringly lowly in its monotonousness and repetitiveness. If we proceed, as is our intention here, engaging in a philosophy of everyday life, that which is ordinary shall experience sensations, giddily, of impending greatness and tremendousness. “*Un-heimlich*,” we shall feel “homeless” and out of our depth. We must indeed be capable of discovering the miraculous in what is normal or, as Kierkegaard wrote, discovering “the sublime in the pedestrian.”

According to Wittgenstein, the aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity (One is unable to notice something because it is always before one’s eyes). Wittgenstein was writing about quotidian things such as chairs and brushes, or apples, and pots and pans. He did so because he wanted more direct contact, a closer nexus with the experience that surrounds us, because he knew how to draw the forms of knowledge and language toward what is proximate to the circumstances of our normal lives, to situations that make up our experience of the quotidian, and to the world that we are.

Wittgenstein’s message has been elaborated upon by only a handful of writers. We have Stanley Cavell, mentioned above, who has studied Wittgenstein (and cinema) passionately, and with an offbeat approach. We also have Richard Rorty, and the Italians Aldo Gargani and Paolo Jedlowski. Jedlowski interprets Wittgenstein from the sociological angle, while Gargani looks at the epistemological side. However, both share a tendency to acknowledge the forms and the experience of human life that is normal, ordinary, quotidian, and that is all this because it repeats itself and comes back “every day” (*cotidie*); every day but ever-changingly, unceasingly the result of assumed acts and rites (instances of

automatism) interlaced with improvisation (instances of attention), like the variations on a musical theme followed by a return to the theme itself.

Engaging in “the philosophy of everyday life” therefore means, to me, projecting one’s thoughts onto the world of things and life, via two steps. One step requires that, in the manner of Husserl, I suspend my previous judgments and let uncustomary, new messages spring from the thing itself. Conversely, the other step musters up my array of knowledge, enabling an intuitive perception of the many links a lifetime of study has provided me with. The two steps entail, respectively, a “minus” and a “plus” (enriching interpretation to provide the whole picture).

Political Philosophy

The philosophical activities mentioned up to this point also emerge, in part, in my university courses and, above all, in my activities as a speaker at any number of festivals, debates, meetings, conferences, and congresses—which have been, to varying degrees, philosophical in nature—mainly in European countries. I can also mention my media presence: print, radio, TV, and the web (on-line reviews, YouTube sessions...).

This also holds for my engagement in political philosophy. My generation bore witness to 1968. I am a “daughter” of 1968 (a 17-year-old schoolgirl who fell in love with philosophy). I became a political activist. However, as a young woman (a shy and reserved one at that), I did not make my views known—and, above all, I did not speak out in public. I concentrated on transcribing my thoughts within the ambit of political philosophy, which received a great deal of attention at the time at the *Fondazione Feltrinelli* in Milan, whose scientific activities were directed by Salvatore Veca. The Foundation was, for me and the others who were lucky enough to frequent it, a “philosophers’ cooperative,” with *arché* and centre in via Romagnosi in Milan, where we met up before scattering out into the world, then to return to this centre, in the early days. Then to return no more. At that time, I was closest to the young women scholars. I will call us “the Via Romagnosi girls.”

We sought each other’s company. We called each other and met. Our bonds reflected our affinities, a sense of solidarity, friendship, and the need to provide encouragement as and when needed. The group included Cristina Bicchieri, Anna Elisabetta Galeotti (called “Betty” back then), Nadine Celotti, myself and, of course, Antonella Besussi (who caused a stir from the very start). With Antonella, I chose my pair of “Veca shoes.” We found a slightly pointed version of Salvatore’s shoes, suitable for women, with fairly high heels. Salvatore was always the elegant one, and a true gent, even when wearing jeans and a worn jacket. He wore brogues – brown leather and hide with laces. I still have my pair but I never wear them. With those heels, they are uncomfortable and, to be quite honest, *démodé*. But I still can’t throw them out.

Cristina and I were real chums. We have gone our separate ways since then. Such is life... She helped me choose a dress for a speech I was to make in Modena at the Fondazione San Carlo in October 1980. It was a meeting concerning one of the issues we debated with Veca, namely, rationality in the social sciences. Among the other speakers were Claudio Pizzi, Stefano Zamagni, and Marco Santambrogio. Veca spoke on rationality in Max Weber. I mainly dealt with rationality in Leibniz. I wore the bright red dress chosen for me by Cristina. This was because I am not tall, and because I am reserved to the point of disappearing before the public. In bright red, my presence would in any case not go unnoticed! In Modena, Cristina dealt with individual rationality and collective choice. Her interests were already shifting, toward economic action and away from pure logic.⁶

One fine day, Elisabetta Galeotti, “Betty,” turned up at the *Fondazione Feltrinelli*. Betty was a

⁶ See C. Bicchieri et al., *Modelli di razionalità nelle scienze economico-sociali* (Venice: Arsenale, 1982).

real scholar (admittedly, we were all rather too scholarly), intelligent, vivacious, creative, and, furthermore, with her ebony-black hair and sky-blue eyes.

Energy and charm. Betty lived in Pavia, close to Milan (she then moved to Turin). She was a friend of Antonella Besussi and Gianni Francioni. After heated discussions with her on political philosophy, we would then drift into gossip. We considered the affairs of the heart of this or that person of our acquaintance. None of us had turned thirty.

Veca was our philosophy master, a father figure for us, and a source of authority whose words inspired awe. He was punctilious. Even the invitations sent to outsiders to take part in our seminars had to be submitted to him first for approval. He was a force to be reckoned with (in our eyes, all-powerful). It was only much later that we realized who he really was—a big brother (about ten years older than the rest of us, or less...). His force was maieutic; and absolutely unacademic. Talking with him was an education in itself, an intellectually enriching experience, an explosion of creativeness. We gained culturally and saw ourselves as the beneficiaries in this arrangement. However, it was not one-directional at all. It was reciprocal.

Having benefited so greatly from the creative atmosphere of those times and thanks to the encouragement received during my exchanges with Veca, my political inclinations (which had come to the fore during the student revolts) could be vented in my research, essays, and monographic works. These activities intertwined with metaphorology. I frequently wrote essays for reviews and collective book publication, reflecting this field of interest and area of study, a field that provided me with an opportunity to exchange ideas with Veca, who was my teacher in such things. It all started out with a criticism of Marxism. In my case, this took the form specifically of opposition to the foregrounding of economic structure to the exclusion of all else, accompanied by a tendency to focus largely on the cultural superstructure, language, metaphors, and etymology.

We must remember that at that time (the late 1970s), philosophy was distancing itself from *pensiero forte* (strong thought). Aldo Gargani's *Il pensiero senza fondamenti* (Thought Without Foundations) was published in 1975. In 1979, Gargani edited a collection of essays, *Crisi della ragione* (Crisis of Reason),⁷ containing writings by Bodei, Badaloni, Viano, Ginzburg and others, and an essay by Veca called "Modi della ragione" (Ways of Reason). Philosophy was also distancing itself from Marxist thought, in regard to which Veca published *Saggio sul programma scientifico di Marx* (Essay on Marx's Scientific Program), in 1977. Veca was still fully aligned with the principles of Marxism. Then came his *La società giusta* (The Just Society) in 1982 and *Questioni di giustizia* (Questions of Justice)⁸ in 1985. What had happened in the meantime? Various stimuli led Veca toward Rawls, whose *A Theory of Justice* (1971) had set the English-speaking world alight.

It is to Salvatore Veca's merit that he soon came to acknowledge the brilliance of Rawls' thinking, as a writer capable of wedding liberal principles with the principle of equality, subsuming all under the umbrella of justice. Veca found himself on common ground with Sebastiano Maffettone and Marco Mondadori in their attempt to revamp Italy's cultural scene, to innovate by positing a social-democratic paradigm, in the broad sense, to replace the existing historicist-Marxist-Catholic melange.

So, in his office at the Foundation, we discussed with Veca the theory of justice and the role of the Enlightenment vis-à-vis reason and truth, and carried on our discussions as we headed off on our own pilgrimage-like summer holiday trips to Cambridge (England). Rawls' advantage was that his was a "realistic utopia." It was reasonable and doable. We all openly became Rawlsians, to varying

⁷ Aldo Gargani, *Il sapere senza fondamenti* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975) and the edited volume *Crisi della ragione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1979).

⁸ Salvatore Veca, *Saggio sul programma scientifico di Marx*, *La società giusta* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1982); *Questioni di giustizia* (Parma: Pratiche Editrice, 1985).

degrees, since we could no longer consider ourselves fully Marxist. This encounter with the justice paradigm was an enlightening experience both for Veca and for us as we investigated and discussed this new development, which fostered “a left-wing view that kept faith with a base nucleus of values and revoked its faith in the conservative zealotry of ideological devotion.”⁹ This led to the construction of a public philosophy,¹⁰ with the debate tackling theories of social justice, such as those set forth at a later date for example by Anna Elisabetta Galeotti, in accordance with the parameters of multiculturalism and—together with Ian Carter and Emanuela Ceva—with those of the theory of equal respect. Decades later, there were those who tried to, as it were, kick Rawls upstairs into the same attic from which a banished Marx would never return. They did so in the name of a non-egalitarian paradigm of justice (represented by Harry Frankfurt, among others). Rawls and Marx are no doubt happy to share the same room—but, rather than an attic, it is a book-lined haven in which they can compare notes and perhaps receive a visit from Kant from time to time! Kant, too, knows something about what such banishment means and about those who—however courteous their “goodbyes” may have seemed—could not wait to see the back of him!

Thanks to Veca’s intervention, Rawls’ masterwork was translated into Italian (by the publishing house il Saggiatore), reaching the bookshops in 1982, with Sebastiano Maffettone’s preface. While these developments were underway, I looked at metaphors in political language: *fraternità* (brotherhood, or siblinghood) and paternalism, the home (the shared European homeland), the round table and the myth of symmetrical communication, medical language and the imagery of the classical Roman world during the Fascist era, honor, shame. Hence, my more decidedly political books: *L'onore degli onesti* (The Honor of the Honest) in 1998, some themes of which I returned to and elaborated upon in *Onestà* (Honesty), in 2014; and my more recent research into migration and metaphor, *Migranti per caso: Una vita da expat* (Migrants by Accident: Life as an Expat), in 2019.¹¹

Feminism

Something would be missing from this account of my philosophical activities were I not to briefly round off at least with some thoughts about the feminist approach. Feminism—namely a vision and interpretation that sees the world through “the lenses of gender” (the expression I use is a bit dated)—notes and draws to our attention the fact that men, who grant to themselves rights which entail duties for themselves and others, have for a long time—indeed, sometimes even to this day—denied such (*de jure* and *de facto*) rights and duties to women. I see a turning point in the way I thought and wrote at the turn of this century. I’ve always been a feminist but I never thought I would write about the issue as part of my scientific work. The change came in 2000, when the (ongoing) Islamic headscarf debate was gathering steam. Until then I thought that wearing the veil was an expression of cultural identity to be protected, but on reflection I decided that it was instead a way to suffocate women and keeping them mute. The veil on the mouth has become in my eyes an equivalent of genital mutilation: a deprivation of the possibility of expressing oneself by feeling pleasure.

Inclusion of feminist issues in a book or monograph nevertheless had to wait until 2002 when I published *Il filo del pensiero* (The Thread of Thought). The thread (it. *filo*) of thought was spun (it. *filato*) and woven, yet again under the umbrella of metaphorology. To which I add, more importantly, not only *Partorire con il corpo e con la mente* (To Give Birth with Body and Mind) in 2010 – the year was 2010, how time flies –, but also *Senza figli* (Childless) in 2012, *Una donna per amico* (A Woman as Friend)

⁹ Salvatore Veca, in *L'immaginazione filosofica e altri saggi* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2012), 105.

¹⁰ See Salvatore Veca, *Una filosofia pubblica* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1986).

¹¹ Francesca Rigotti, *Migranti per caso. Una vita da expat* (Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2019).

in 2016,¹² and *De senectute* (On Aging).

In these works, I deal with the universal issues of engendering/generating (children and ideas), childlessness, or remaining childless, friendship, and old age. I wondered what this meant not only for the males but also the females of our species. I shall return here only to the issue of friendship, which philosophical thought has dealt with extensively, even when explicitly, and also paradoxically, denying this sentiment to women. Women do not know what friendship is – this is the traditional view that is still with us today – because friendship necessitates strong feelings, requiring in turn mental and physical energies such as are lacking in women because they are so weak. The “weaker sex” relates with men. It is realized through men. For hundreds of years women were not considered worthy of taking part in friendship. In classic friendship discussions, women are excluded. Their friendship was not taken seriously also because women are realized, says a legend that is still with us, through their men: fathers, husbands, children. The argument of the importance, for a woman, of being loved by a man to be realized, contributes to the belief that women themselves are incapable of making friendships. In the pairs of friends that have dotted literature since its beginnings there are no women. We find—in a list that is certainly not exhaustive—Orestes and Pilade, Achilles and Patroclus, Theseus and Piritous, Diomedes and Glauco, Armodius and Aristogiton, Epaminondas and Pelopidas, Euryalus and Nisus in epic poems and history; Antonio and Bassano, Hamlet and Horace in Shakespeare; Athos, Portos and Aramis, Sherlock Holmes and Watson, Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer, Narciso and Boccadoro (in Hermann Hesse); Santiago and Manolin in (Hemingway), Pablo Neruda and Mario the postman and so on, in literature as in real life.

And philosophy, how did it read the position of the woman in friendship? It did so by contemplating only the possibility that the woman could be friends with a man, like the dog. Or rather that a man can make friends with a woman, because it is from him that all activity and initiative come. Friendship with other women is merely of the *ersatz* kind, a replacement for an unsatisfactory relationship with one’s partner, as in the 1995 film, *Thelma & Louise*. Finally, the film, however bold and proactive and anticipating the times, falls partly into the stereotype that says that women exist and have lives and stories in relation to men, while men are realized through themselves.

To such an extent—and I’ll round off with this point—that not even the relationship between the evil, obscure side in Lila (also known as Lina) and the calmly clear side of Elena (also known as Linù), in the four-book series by Elena Ferrante (a pen name), can bloom into true friendship, with its full share of complicity, of solidarity, and of serenity; as if friendship of women among themselves could not cover what are the characters of friendship tout court (that between men): the desire and the need to tell the friend and the pleasure of being together; the sharing of interests and ideals, gratuitousness, free choice, equality, trust and loyalty. But does female friendship really follow a specific pattern? Does it really differ from the traditional model, which is masculine? Could the friendship between Lila and Elena provide a new model, a new kind of friendship, which we could argue is to be grounded on the feminine? I am not sure it can. But just the murky aspect of this friendship between women makes me think that the author of the saga can be... a man, or if not a man, a woman who has deeply introjected the masculine stance.

¹² Francesca Rigotti, *L'onore degli onesti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1998); *Onestà* (Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2014); and *Migranti per caso. Una vita da expat* (Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2019).