

General

Maurizio Ferraris was born in Turin in 1956 and is currently Full Professor of Theoretical Philosophy in the Philosophy Department of the University of Turin. He was head of department from 1997 to 2001 and is now director of the interuniversity Centre for Theoretical and Applied Ontology (CTAO) and programme director of the Collège International de Philosophie, Paris.

As contract lecturer, he taught Aesthetics at the universities of Macerata (1983-5) and Trieste (1984-7) and then as associate professor (Trieste 1987-95) before becoming full professor of Aesthetics at Turin (1995-9) and subsequently transferring to Theoretical Philosophy.

He has been a research fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung at Heidelberg (1993-5) and visiting professor at many universities in Europe and in the United States. He is author of 29 volumes, one of which in co-authorship with Jacques Derrida, and of more than 500 learned articles and 1,000 articles on cultural magazines; he is editor of the *Rivista di estetica* and on the editorial board of *aut aut*. Since 1989, he has contributed to the cultural supplement of *Il Sole 24 Ore*. A selection of his more recent articles may be consulted at <http://lqxserver.uniba.it/lei/rassegna/ferraris.htm>.

His research has concentrated on three principal areas: hermeneutics, aesthetics and ontology. His volume on the history of hermeneutics (*Storia dell'ermeneutica*, Milan, Bompiani, 1988, pp. 484) has reached its eighth edition and has been translated into English and Spanish; it is the first comprehensive overview of the discipline and has been updated in his *L'ermeneutica* (Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1998, pp. 130), which too has been translated into Spanish.

In his *Estetica razionale* (Milan, Cortina, 1997, pp. 648) and *Experimentelle Ästhetik* (Vienna, Turia und Kant, 2000), Ferraris has put forward a view of aesthetics as a science of sensory experience that has been widely accepted on the international scene.

ÉCOLE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES EN SCIENCES SOCIALES

A l'attention de Alexander Von Humboldt-Stiftung

Je connais MAURIZIO FERRARIS, je suis et j'admire son travail de philosophe depuis près de dix ans. Nous avons participé à de nombreux colloques ensemble, parfois à de grandes rencontres internationales qu'il avait organisées lui-même (à Urbino, à Naples, à Turin, à Paris, à Royaumont, à Cerisy-la-Salle). Nous avons publié des entretiens ensemble, collaboré à de nombreuses publications communes, et entretenu une discussion philosophique qui m'a constamment été précieuse. Cette discussion a été favorisée lors de séjours d'études que M. Ferraris a effectués à Paris, à l'EHESS, où j'ai eu plusieurs fois l'honneur de le recevoir, et lorsqu'il a donné au Collège International de Philosophie, en 1988-89, un séminaire très suivi et très remarqué sur "La philosophie et l'esprit vivant". M. Ferraris n'est pas seulement un chercheur exceptionnel, il sait, dans son université de Trieste, aussi bien qu'à l'étranger, en France et aux États Unis notamment, enseigner, communiquer et animer la recherche. C'est une personnalité philosophique rayonnante.

Je crois avoir lu tous les livres de M. Ferraris: une oeuvre déjà considérable, une dizaine de volumes qui font de lui un des philosophes européens les plus connus et respectés aujourd'hui. Ces travaux sont rigoureux et informés, remarquables en particulier par la façon dont ils assurent la continuation la plus vivante de la grande tradition herméneutique allemande que Ferraris connaît bien et sait renouveler en l'ouvrant à des affluents de pensée italienne et française, mais aussi américaine. Ce que j'admire le plus, c'est la façon dont, comme ses travaux l'attestent, il sait croiser les recherches de philosophie, de poésie littéraire, d'esthétique et d'histoire des idées, etc.

C'est à l'occasion d'entretiens, de traductions (M. Ferraris est aussi un traducteur très sûr et de grand talent; je peux l'attester car il a traduit bon nombre de textes de moi) et lors de la préparation d'un ouvrage qu'il a bien voulu me consacrer (*Postille à Derrida*, 1990) que j'ai pu mesurer les immenses qualités du candidat: lucidité et générosité du lecteur, talent de l'écrivain, curiosité et exigence questionnante du chercheur.

Ayant pris connaissance de ses projets actuels, je les trouve d'une nécessité et d'une originalité incontestables. Ils sont propres à réactiver ou à renouveler, à partir d'une relecture de la tradition kantienne, des enjeux centraux dans l'esthétique générale, dans la philosophie de l'art, la théorie de la mimésis et des oeuvres spatiales. Rares sont ceux qui aujourd'hui pourraient être aussi qualifiés pour mener à bien cette tâche. M. Ferraris allie à une solide culture classique une profonde connaissance de la philosophie et des arts d'aujourd'hui.

Je crois que M. Ferraris, à travers ce projet actuel et dans la ligne générale de ses recherches, est l'un des philosophes les plus authentiquement européens aujourd'hui. Il en a donné bien des preuves et je suis persuadé que si les conditions favorables lui en sont assurées, il rendra à la communauté philosophique les services les plus éclatants.

C'est assez dire ma confiance, comme la chaleureuse et admirative conviction avec lesquelles j'apporte ici mon soutien à cette candidature.

J. Ferraris
Jacques DERRIDA
Directeur d'études

Nomination of Maurizio Ferraris for a Humboldt Research Award

Barry Smith

Wolfgang Paul-Preisträger der Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung

Leipzig, 10 December 2003

Abbagnano, Eco, Vattimo, Ferraris

There have been three generations of internationally prominent thinkers in Italian philosophy since the second world war. The leading figure of the first generation was Nicola Abbagnano of Turin, and of the second generation Umberto Eco and Gianni Vattimo, also both from Turin. The leading figure of the current generation, and Vattimo's successor in Turin, is Maurizio Ferraris, who was already in 1988 described by *L'Espresso* (counterpart of *Der Spiegel*) as a child prodigy of Italian philosophy. Like Eco and Vattimo, Ferraris made his philosophical reputation initially through his association with postmodernism and hermeneutics and, more generally, with the main traditions of French philosophy. Thus for a long time he has been closely allied with, and co-authored works with, Derrida and Lyotard.

In 1993-95 Ferraris was a Humboldt Fellow, working with Hans-Georg Gadamer and Reiner Wiehl in Heidelberg. During this period he experienced a transformation, one might almost say *Kehre*, in his philosophical thinking, which led him to reject what he saw as certain relativistic implications of the hermeneutic approach and to embrace rather a doctrine of philosophical realism that is nowadays most characteristic of Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy.

In recent years Ferraris has begun to use his influence as the leading contemporary philosopher in Italy to initiate a transformation of Italy's institutions of academic philosophy. This transformation is designed to establish a new level of professionalism and also broader international and interdisciplinary interactions with analytically minded philosophers not only in Continental Europe but also in the English-speaking world. The University of Turin, with its 80,000 students, continues to play a central role in this transformation. In 2000 Ferraris initiated the project of a Centro intervunersitario di Ontologie Teorica e Applicata which now involves the universities of Turin, Vercelli, Bergamo, Verona, Trieste and Paris IV together with the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. The key to this endeavor is that philosophy should cease to be an inward-looking activity focusing primarily on its own history, and become recognized instead as a discipline with genuine results of its own, results which can *applied* beyond philosophy, including in other fields of scientific inquiry. His Centro includes correspondingly departments not only of philosophy but also of psychology (in Verona and Trieste), cognitive science (in Turin and Paris) and law (in Turin, Vercelli and Trieste). The Centro's goal is to create an intellectual forum in which philosophers and scientists can interact in ways designed to demonstrate the practical applicability of philosophy. It includes common doctoral programs, student and faculty exchanges and common research projects for instance on the ontological foundations of the law of intellectual property, and is collaborating with a Turin-based EU-sponsored project to establish a common core of European law.

The Scientific Achievements of Maurizio Ferraris

Ferraris is not merely a successful and ambitious philosophico-scientific entrepreneur; he is also a prominent public figure in Italian cultural and intellectual debates, and a brilliant and prolific scientist and scholar in his own right.

He is the author of some twenty books, translated into a number of different languages, including one book co-authored with Jacques Derrida, one of the most influential thinkers of our age.