



## Eurozine Review

### In monad's land

*Wespennest* tries to make sense of Italian affairs; *Reset* invokes a higher, cosmopolitan power; *Dialogi* explores Jewish–Christian relations; *Le Monde diplomatique* travels Albania's expensive new motorway; *New Humanist* reads a God book of a different order; *Esprit* re–considers sperm and egg donors' right to anonymity; *Glänta* watches 49 hours of censored film; *Springerin* choreographs knowledge; *Blätter* is not celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the German constitution; *Lettera internazionale* prepares for a new world–system; and *Vikerkaar* reads Estonia's parallel histories.

### Wespennest 155 (2009)



"If I have been interested in political life of late, it is in order to go on working as an entrepreneur and not to be put into prison." Since 1993, when Silvio Berlusconi uttered this, his motivations haven't changed, [writes Jan Koneffke](#) in the new issue of *Wespennest*, entitled "Italian affairs" (*Italienische Verhältnisse*).

Why, Koneffke wonders, do the majority of Italians not take offence at a politician who disregards democratic rules, who bends the law to his liking and publicly tells tasteless, racist and sexist jokes? Two major characteristics of Italian society provide a clue: the obsession with surface, with *bellezza* and the primacy of style over substance; and the obsession with oneself:

Berlusconi's dominance is only possible because he embodies a social ideal. Everybody wants to be called Berlusconi — or at least a majority of Italians. The identification works perfectly because the so–called 'man on the street' has nothing else on his mind than his individual interest. [...] Berlusconi is the populism of the monads, and Berlusconi is the impersonation of individual interest. Nobody represents decaying society more than he.

**Not a normal country?** Isn't there anything else? What about the heroic past of labour disputes, general strikes, the glorious history of Italy's Left, the Italians' famous anarchism? In interview, the controversial rightwing Italian intellectual Marcello Veneziani gives his analysis:

Our country is not a normal country. [It is] a highly ideologized country with one of the strongest communist parties in the West — we have paid for this ideological difference to other countries with greater political

mobilization, which extended to areas far beyond politics. Berlusconi is to some extent the counterbalance, the collateral effect of this ideologization. With him we have entered a decidedly post-ideological era, and probably even, in the broadest sense, a post-political era.

**Also:** [Peter Moeschl](#) muses on the German word *Wettbewerb*, which implies not only competition but also betting, and therefore speculation. And writer Kathrin Röggla consults "the fictitious" to find out where the current chaos will lead us.

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### Reset 112 (2009)



Italy's Democratic Party is in an extremely fragile state, writes *Reset* editor [Giancarlo Bosetti](#). Morally sensitive issues cannot be left to the Right in a Catholic country such as Italy, he warns. In the political vacuum of faded ideologies, bio-ethical questions can serve as a surrogate. A politics that is losing its credibility tends to employ "inflammable material". Bosetti pleads for a political concept

that discards aggressive secularism and shows more tolerance towards religion as a part of public life.

Alessandro Ferrara disagrees: "The register of political caution" very quickly comes up against limits, at least in a country that is only formally a democracy. Genuinely "moral questions" are those concerning virulent corruption or the head of government's clash of interests. These are the root cause of Italy's social blockage. The Democratic Party MP Sandro Gozi has also called for more clarity and focus in the party's engagement with their political opponents, instead of reflexively entering into stand-by mode and trying to mediate between different positions.

**Rights, borders and cosmopolitanism:** [Daniele Archibugi](#) and [Seyla Benhabib](#) consider moral cosmopolitanism to be inadequate, given that national sovereignty has long been challenged by international economic and military inter-connections. In today's world, what is needed are structures with a higher authority, be they to regulate migration movements in the interests of North and South, or to guarantee minority rights in nation-states. Archibugi and Benhabib invoke Kant, in whose *Eternal Peace* the idea of an institutional, legal and political cosmopolitanism was already developed.

**Also:** In view of the climate of fear in modern democracies faced with increasing religious diversity, [Martha Nussbaum](#) demands a culture of religious pluralism. The full [table of contents](#) of *Reset* 112 (2009)

### Dialogi 1-2/2009



The Williamson affair and the speculation it caused about the Vatican's new attitude towards Judaism is only one aspect of contemporary Jewish-Christian relations, writes Gorazd Andrejc in an editorial to the latest issue of Slovenian journal *Dialogi*. While academic literature in the Slovene language on Christians and Jews respectively is plentiful, little work has been done on relations between the two — a gap the issue

addresses.

The *Nostra Aetate*, issued by the Second Vatican Council in 1965, signalled a new starting point in the Catholic Church's relations with Judaism and is one of the most revolutionary official documents issued by any Christian Church in the twentieth century. Elisabeth Seitz Shewmon discusses its meaning and details its controversial background. The *Dabru Emet* is a Jewish response to the *Nostra Aetate* and to a range of changes that occurred in Christianity and its attitudes toward Jews and Judaism in the last fifty years. Cambridge theologian Edward Kessler evaluates its significance, noting how in it, the voices of otherwise varied Jewish sects speak in unity.

**Christianity and anti-Semitism:** In a group of texts on relations between Christian theology, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, Stephen Haynes reviews Christian Holocaust theology, which argues that, faced with the Christian roots of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, Christian thought must undergo a thorough transformation. Rosemary Rathford Ruether meanwhile represents the stance that "anti-Judaism is the left hand of Christology", one that has caused lasting discussions among the Christian theological community.

**In practice:** In a final article on the practical aspects of interfaith relations, Nina Beth (a former Rabbi) and Fayette Breaux Veverka (a Christian theologian) review the effects, techniques and limitations of the Jewish-Christian dialogue. They reveal how theoretical knowledge can be used as a guideline for the practical coexistence of both communities.

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### Le Monde diplomatique (Berlin) 5/2009



In Spring 1999, tens of thousands of Kosovo-Albanians, fleeing Serbian repressions following the Nato bombardment, streamed across the mountainous border between Kosovo and Albania. Ten years later, a motorway running from the border to Tirana is almost complete. Great for relations between Albania and Kosovo, yet the financing of the motorway is a controversial topic, [write Jean-Arnault Dérens](#) and [Laurent](#)

[Geslin](#) in *Le Monde diplomatique*.

A consortium between the US construction giant Bechtel and the Turkish company Enka has gone massively over-budget (the final cost will be upwards of a billion euros). Albania has taken out a loan with the Greek bank Alpha, but where has the money come from for the deposit? The Mafia connections of the former transport minister Lulzim Basha as well as US strategic interests — the road will eventually link the 5th US naval fleet in the Adriatic to the US military camp in southwest Kosovo — are causing intense speculation about this "motorway of national corruption".

**A public good?** In the financial crisis, politicians have been raising taxes with the justification that money is a "public good". What they really mean by "public good" is the monetary system — the fact that affluence can increase and even trickle down — and not the money that one person has and another does not, writes [Heiner Ganssman](#). As the daily press reveal to us with unpleasant regularity, "for some the monetary system is a good and for many pretty good, but for many more sometimes really bad".

**Tax havens:** Gábor Papp expresses similar concerns in his "Letter from Budapest": "No other country in the Union has such a low proportion of tax payers [as Hungary], and there is no other country in the former Eastern Bloc where the proportion of people on social benefits and state pensions is so high. I cross my fingers that the prime minister can bring the law allowing capital to be transferred to tax havens in line with Hungarian tax law. And I trust his competence in the matter. During his time as a businessman, he paid his taxes in Cyprus..."

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### New Humanist 3/2009



In *New Humanist*, editor [Caspar Melville](#) talks to *Economist* editor [John Micklethwait](#) about his new book, co-authored with Adrian Wooldridge, *God is Back. How the Revival of Religion is Changing the World*. Contrary to the secularization thesis, modernity does not mean the end of religion, argue the authors. Neither does religion contaminate the minds of all those who subscribe to it: think Poland and Burma. Secularists should accept that religion is here to stay. "History does not record the dwindling importance of religion", says Micklethwait. "Instead it's a story of people trying to push the issue aside — until September 11."

Nevertheless, the authors strongly support US-style separation of Church and State. "It is because of their (very *Economist*) emphasis on the benefits of religion as a kind of spiritual marketplace," writes Melville, "that the authors choose to end their argument with a clarion call for global disestablishment." Micklethwait: "The Archbishop of Canterbury is a decent man but there is no way you can defend the situation where we are the only country other than Iran to have clerics at the heart of our political system."

**Extremism:** [Paul Sims](#) reports from Blackburn in the north of England, where Pakistani and Indian immigrants and their descendents make up a fifth of the city's population. Into Blackburn's "unhappy mix" of unemployment and low standards of health and education comes religious extremism, writes Sims. Yet government-led strategies on extremism prevention are alienating people: "The actions of four individuals on 7/7 have come to define two million people," says one interviewee. "Now everything Muslim-related is extremism related. So if I'm sick, or my child isn't surviving child-birth, that in some way will be extremism related? If you are a Muslim organization looking for funding, it has to be about extremism."

**Also:** [Angela Saini](#) urges us not to swallow the scaremongering claims of the anti-GM lobby; and Michael Neumann says fear, resentment and complacency have undone English liberty.

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### Esprit 5/2009



Should children have the right to know their biological ancestry? A question once asked mainly in the context of adoption has been amplified by the rise in births through sperm and egg donation. As France looks towards a review of its bioethics law next year, it is also a good model for questions of identity and human nature that will repeatedly be raised by developments in medicine.

Gilles Séraphin looks at the longstanding right of women to give birth anonymously, leaving their new-born babies in the care of the state. The anonymity principle has been weakened recently, with new laws granting some scope for children to make contact with their biological mothers. A substantial minority consider it important to know their genetic identity, as do the children of sperm donation, who in America have begun finding each other online with the help of DNA tests. Any attempt to reduce the anonymity of gamete donors would undoubtedly reduce the already small pool of donors, argues Séraphin.

**Ethnic data-bases:** Plans to collect statistics on ethnic diversity have proved controversial in France. Some worry that the state could treat people differently depending on their race, reviving the discrimination of colonial Algeria or the Vichy era. Others fear that classification will encourage people to assign themselves a racial identity, and so will divide France into ethnic communities. Writing in *Esprit*, France's recently appointed Commissioner for Diversity and Equal Opportunity, Yazid Sabeg, dismisses these fears as "magical thinking". He argues that statistics on ethnicity will divide society no more than do statistics on inequality of income, health or education, and that understanding the extent of racial discrimination will empower those trying to eradicate it. Seven other contributors consider and challenge Sabeg's approach.

**Post-secular society:** Jürgen Habermas, long concerned with defending the liberal democratic state, is now trying to define a place for religion within it. Alexandre Dupeyrix explains that, with religion strongly influencing politics everywhere from the Islamic world to the United States, Habermas has felt the need to describe a form of modernity other than the highly secular version to be found in Europe.

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### Glänta 1/2009



At this year's Gothenburg Film Festival, the artist Markus Öhrn showed a work entitled *Magic Bullet*. It consists of all the cuts made by the public authority for film censorship in Sweden since it was installed in 1911 as well as the censors' written descriptions of the deleted scenes. The marathon piece — 49 hours all in all — gives an interesting insight into what was considered harmful at different times, and shows how contingent the foundations of censorship really are.

In a bulging issue on censorship, Glänta publishes a selection of the unwittingly poetic comments by the censors: "6 September 1911 — Indian scalps agent [...] 28 August 1961 — striptease, fight in wardrobe, striptease auction, erotica involving call girls, homosex [...] 4 May 1987 — man tries to choke woman with giant teddy bear".

"After viewing *Magic Bullet*", writes cultural theorist Dave Boothroyd, "one really has to wonder what possible difference it could have made if none of the cuts to the films which it gathers together had ever been made." Today, however, another type of censorship is developing. The power that corporations such as Network Solutions or YouTube wield "produces a new form of subjectivity, one which is now characterized by self-censorship".

The problem with this type of corporate censorship, Boothroyd concludes, "is that one has no clear sense of who, or what, is censoring whom — the situation is in danger of developing into something more akin to that depicted in Kafka's *Trial* [and] the subjective intentionality traditionally serving as the foundation of a public sphere is being undermined. [...] Censorship could become, perhaps already is becoming, an internal feature and control mechanism of socio-technological systems of governance."

**Also:** Alongside a correspondence between Witold Gombrowicz and Bruno Schulz, Steve Sem-Sandberg writes on Bruno Schulz and his birth town Drohobych (today in Ukraine): "In his own mind he was solely an inhabitant of the regions of the great blasphemy: a place that cannot be found on any geographical or political map. Here the skies are low, all faces masks, and only that which is in decay can prevail."

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### Springerin 2/2009



The contemporary dance scene as laboratory and model for cross-sectoral work? As a field which (self-)critically reflects itself and its methods, its institutions and working conditions as well as its status alongside other art forms? The current issue of *Springerin* is dedicated to "Tanzquartier Wien", a Vienna-based institution for contemporary dance, performance and discourse.

Bulgarian cultural theorist Boyan Manchev makes a plea for abstract and unselfish knowledge, based on a speech held at Tanzquartier Wien in 2006. In times of a general tendency towards the "pragmatic reduction of knowledge", the "right of the idea as the expression of the irreducible singularity and complexity of thought to exist must be reclaimed. Every reactivation, every resuscitation of this possibility strikes us today as an act of resistance. Let us stick to our resistance: let us continue to think."

Manchev heavily criticizes recent developments in university reforms to reduce the relevance of knowledge to its immediate practicability; this tendency, he claims, has to be questioned above all from the standpoint of critical economic theory:

If cognitive capitalism itself is based on the models of knowledge production [...], then the idea of the pragmatic use

of knowledge, the reduction of knowledge to economic reality is regressive and in practice completely ineffective, especially in the long run — as we experience today, when the collapse of financial capitalism involves the world in a horrible crash test.

**Also:** [Geert Lovink](#) tells Franz Thalmair in an e-mail-conversation how easily visual perception can be manipulated; and Roland Schöny goes back to the days when radio still held the promise of being a communicative apparatus.

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### Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik 5/2009



The current issue of *Blätter* enquires into the context and intentions of the German *Grundgesetz*, the "provisional constitution" for the West German state that came into force in May 1949. The *Grundgesetz* was originally intended to serve until eventual re-unification. Yet in 1990, it was set forth without major alterations. As Hans Karl Rupp and Otmar Jung suggest, sixty years later a critical re-evaluation is long

overdue.

"Anti-fascism" was a cornerstone of the new, resilient West German democracy, writes Rupp, and meant expunging the remnants of Nazism. Yet under the pressures of the Cold War, "anti-totalitarianism" gradually took over as the official state doctrine. "An 'anti-fascism' oriented towards democratic ends could simultaneously serve as a protective shield under which former, 'converted' Nazis could return undisturbed to high-ranking positions of state. Though not the necessary consequence of anti-communism, it was the one that corresponded most to the zeitgeist."

It was and is often claimed that the absence of opportunities for referenda in the *Grundgesetz* stems from the experiences of the Weimar period. In fact, writes Jung, "the recourse to 'Weimar' was merely an official political cloak that could be used to disguise the concrete fears of politicians in the here and now." Since 1946, both East and West German communist parties had been making use of the plebiscite; the founding fathers feared that the German communist parties might exploit wide support for a united Germany to cater to Soviet demands for wartime reparations from Germany as a whole.

**A political career:** Horst Köhler, who has just been re-elected Federal German President, has recently publicly condemned the excesses of unfettered capitalism. Yet, as [Albrecht von Lucke points out](#), as state secretary in the German finance ministry from 1990–1993, Köhler oversaw the policies that allowed West German banks to profit massively from reunification. Later, as head of the IMF (2000–2003), his policies promoted state subservience to financial markets. "What appeared as a self-critical gesture of humility was in fact nothing other than an attempt at self-exculpation", writes von Lucke of Köhler's *volte-face*.

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## Lettera internazionale 99 (2009)



In *Lettera internazionale*, André Comte-Sponville discusses the relation between economy and ecology. "For the economy, ecology represents an outer limit. The planet is not for sale: it does not belong to the market." The logic of the economy is one of unlimited growth, the logic of ecology one of permanence. In the idolization of progress and growth on the one hand, and in the idea of a return to nature on the other, both sides are made into absolutes; yet what is needed today are changes so as to prevent the worst. "Sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs."

**The end of Kondratiev B?** Immanuel Wallerstein is in no doubt: the global economy has reached the end of the Kondratiev B stage. Because the sharp increase in the three fundamental factors of expenditure (personnel, production, tax) has significantly reduced the surplus value that can be obtained, the global economy has resorted to financial speculation that "always leads to ruin". "In my opinion", writes Wallerstein, "the crisis runs so deep that in twenty to thirty years the system will have disappeared and will need to be replaced by another form of world-system."

**The crisis of complex systems:** Sergio Bevenuto compares the current financial crisis to natural disasters such as forest fires and earthquakes. Bevenuto adds to the three Freudian ailments a fourth: that large-scale social occurrences exhibit a critical structure related to natural occurrences. Thus, in the same way as a physical science devoted to imbalance in the system is also a historical science, so economics must become a historical science. "Like Nietzsche," writes Bevenuto, "we must think of history *tragically*."

**Also:** In anticipation of the centenary issue of *Lettera* (due out soon), three historical texts (Jerome, Prigogine, Malraux) countering the western time arrow with another concept of time: that of *kairós* and opportunity.

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## Vikerkaar 4–5/2009



In the latest issue of *Vikerkaar*, Tõnu Õnnepalu's reflections on Estonian history offer a general introduction to a discussion of unemployment, political culture, civil society and the media. Estonia was ruled for centuries by the Germans, Swedes and Russians, who took turns to settle their accounts on the territory or arbitrarily lumped it together or split it with neighbouring areas. So how, asks Õnnepalu, could Estonia have an integrated history common to all its inhabitants?

"History is always *somebody's* history, it has an implicit protagonist (the people) whose story is studied and told," writes Õnnepalu. But the narratives of the Estonian peasantry, the Baltic German gentry, the Swedish nobility or the Soviet functionaries, although running parallel, do not have a common addressee. The narrative told by Estonians in exile, in the second half of the twentieth century, is also not easily reconcilable with the story of their compatriots back home.

The solution is a synoptic approach, says Õnnepalu. Instead of striving towards a single, continuous and comprehensive historical narrative, at least three different histories in three different idioms must be read in parallel. Thus the history of Estonia, although impossible to write in any one tongue or for any one nation, is tightly woven into the histories of its neighbours. Would this make modern Estonians more "European", help them find their place in the international arena? Possibly, Õnnepalu seems to say: history — or histories — have taught Estonians to adapt.

**Also:** Tõnis Saarts and Leif Kalev discuss Estonian political culture, highlighting an ability to put up with long-term insecurity as a resource that might help society deal with the effects of the current global economic crisis.

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