

## THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY AND THE TOPICALITY OF AUGUSTO DEL NOCE

With the publication of "The crisis of modernity", edited by Carlo Lancellotti (Mc Gill-Queen's University Press, Montreal&Kingston-London-Chicago, 2015), a selection of Del Noce's texts are finally available in English language.

Augusto Del Noce (1910/1989) is probably the most important Italian catholic intellectual of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, though well unknown yet. He was philosopher and a political thinker. The book (published by McGill University Press) presents some significant topics of his doctrine.

Correctly the editor says that the synthesis of Del Noce's thought is "the connection between social and political developments" with "philosophical and religious ideas" (p. IX). This is the transpolitical interpretation of contemporary history, id est: "there is no minute detail of human life that does not reflect, or to be exact, does not 'symbolize' a general conception of life (*ibidem*).

Del Noce was the author of many essays and books. Among them we can remember: *The age of secularization* (1970), *The problem of atheism* (1964) and *The suicide of revolutions* (1978).

In the book's *Appendices* one can find an important interview: "The story of a Solitary thinker" (pp. 263-271); solitary, because he was an original philosopher and most of his thought was not-accepted by egemonic culture, especially in Italy: "My thesis on the philosophical interpretation of contemporary history set me apart from the majority of scholars, from those on both the right and the left, from both the Marxists and the secularists, and also from the prevalent Catholic culture and from the forms of progressivism, at times moderate and at times radical, that this culture generally professes" (p. 73).

The fundamental idea is that the "Crisis of Modernity" is the decomposition of Marxism and the creation of "a new ideology: the management technique at the service of the strongest" and a new Totalitarianism composed by scientism, eroticism and theology of secularization (pp. 83-84): it's a new radical bourgeois regime, in which "Totalitarianism is the novelty of completely including ethics within politics" (p. 65).

In Del Noce's opinion, the Modernity is the "process toward a radical immanentism" against the Christian's idea of supernatural and against every form of Jewish-Christian tradition:

from Descartes to Nietzsche! Fascism, Nazism and Communism belong to this Modernity, and also Nihilism and secularization belong to this Modernity.

But in Modernity there is also a different and irreducible line of development: a metaphysical (and religious) line, from Descartes to Vico, and from Vico to Rosmini; and in my opinion also from Rosmini to Del Noce.

The book includes three different parts, plus *Appendices*: the first is about the idea of Modernity and especially focuses on the term "Revolution" (pp. 1-84); the second part is the description of "The advent of the Technocratic Society" (pp. 85-186); the last regards especially the concept of "Authority" and its opposition to the "Power" (pp. 187-260).

*Appendices* contain three texts, one dedicated to religious thought, another one about "Eric Voegelin and the Critique of the Idea of Modernity" and, finally, an interview of 1984.

Augusto Del Noce died in Italy in December 1989, after the fallen of Berlin's wall, however his thought is deep and actual: he defends human dignity against old and new ideologies and affirms the importance of Catholic Thought for a "new and present Christianity"; he described the "Predicament of the West" as well as the relationship with Islam: "Today Islam, surprisingly in its most traditionalist version, seems to be the only worldwide force capable mobilizing young people, to the point of pushing them to the slaughter, to the front line. Conversely, there seems to be nothing left for Western youth except the cynical desire for a career and an outlook on the future so pessimistic that it is reflected, for example, in a clear will not to have children" (p. 270).

Augusto Del Noce was not just an intellectual, but also an important actor of Italian public life, and a witness of catholic mentality, close to the ideas of Pope John Paul II and friend of the movement "Communion and Liberation"; he was convinced that: "It follows that the dangers of the permissive society cannot be overcome by political means alone. A religious reawakening is needed, because religion, country, and family are supreme ideals and not practical instruments. And it is certainly a valid point that the formula *corruptio optimi pessima* to the deterioration that befalls these ideals when they are viewed, at least primarily, as pragmatic instruments of social welfare" (p. 156).

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