

Profiles of humanism in post-secular society

Italian Lessons

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ENZO BIANCHI - MASSIMO CACCIARI

The tragic humanity of humanism. The crucified humanity of Christianity. *Dialogue or disputatio?*

19 November, 2018

ENZO PACE - LUCA DIOTALLEVI

Rethinking humanism on the horizon of multicultural and multireligious identities.
Globalized Western societies between democratic ethos, crisis of the Christian monopoly and
resilience of religion

THE REASONS OF A COLLOQUY

How can we restore meaning to the word 'humanism'?, Jean Beaufret asked in 1946. Heidegger, receiving an answer that condensed the outcome of more than a century and a half of philosophical reflection on the one hand and, on the other, would be determining to a considerable extent the thought of decades to come. The crisis of the philosophy of consciousness, in fact, has long been internalized by philosophical thought as the irreversible decline of every possible form of humanism. The hegemonic advent of technique seems to break the significance of self-understanding and human self-determination. Even the word, human being's mark of excellence, is exposed as a social control mechanism or as a sense drift in that textual proliferation that is seen as the cognitive mode of being in the world. The form-humanity is expelled from the hermeneutic representation of reality to autonomize itself as a legally and politically binding ethical device in human rights.

The cleavage between the absoluty of the ethical device and its philosophical non-thinkability is, however, a fracture that affects the effectiveness and legitimacy of the device itself: if human rights become a non-interpretatable postulate, a non-negotiable "value of values", the notion of human dignity implodes into a formula which is too generic to avoid being ambiguous, too abstract to have an effective impact on the factually given human, too linear to have a potential of promotion of the human to come.

The paradox of the current situation is therefore that the new and indisputed juridical and political primacy of human rights corresponds to an eclipse of humanism, of a critically articulated thought, able to think of this centrality of a human perspective in a world increasingly regulated by the systemic imperatives of technique and of economy, and by the following progressive subordination of the instances of democratic self-determination and anthropological self-representation (a phenomenon that has a symptomatic evidence in the dramatic decline of *humanistic studies*).

Our five "Italian Lessons" call together five scholars to talk about this paradoxical situation, not suggesting answers or solutions but lines of reflection around the hypothesis that to revive today a thought with humanistic profile it is necessary to give up a unitary and unified vision, that aims to get a definition of *humanism*, embracing rather a polyphony of paths within the human, which critically elaborate different dimensions, determined by differences of gender, religious belonging, belief, and social order, reaching a *dialogue of humanisms* that is built precisely in the confrontation, which understand themselves as processes of understanding and representation rather than as content condensations.

If it is true that the category of humanism marks the 'birth' of modern society as a 'rebirth', in which renewing continuity with the past constitutes the condition for creating something radically new, reconnecting with the great tradition of Italian humanism is then an indispensable step to start this journey towards the future. Philology is the essential dimension of a thought recognizing itself as a dialogical and procedural, arising from the critical encounter with the past to produce proposals of interpretation of the present.

Focussing this passage is in our proposal entrusted to the contribution of Professor Cacciari, author of a fundamental study on Italian humanists, which presents itself as a historical-philological introduction to a humanistic thought of the present. Since in his reconstruction Professor Cacciari shows how the dialogic nature of humanistic reflection does not only concern the interlocution with past authors, but also that with the man of the future, in a tragic radicality (because confronted with an impossible challenge) that forces the reason to question the reasons of faith, in a non-pacific but restless and painful interview, in a dialogue that is also irreconcilable and endless dispute, this complexity will be more effectively transmitted if it is not formulated solely in terms of content, but also in the form of their sharing, so that Professor Cacciari's intervention is conceived in the mode of a dialogue-dispute in which confront, collide and meet two traditions, two images of the future, two human resources - reason and faith. The philosopher Massimo Cacciari and the lay monk Enzo Bianchi are invited to talk about tragic humanity and crucified humanity, asking each other how 'sustainable' is a humanity devoid of future, who dispairs, in recognizing its own tragic condition, and how 'sustainable' is a humanity who scandalously claims to be able to hope precisely starting from the cross, giving itself a future starting from death.

Lucetta Scaraffia will highlight how among the humanisms to be constructed in a dialogue between different and not necessarily reconcilable voices, the woman's voice cannot be missed as a form of expression of subjectivities that in the millennial history of humanity have been confined to mere biological function and to a condition of subordination and social mutism, in the radical removal and mortification of their symbolic, ethical and anthropological autonomy. No humanism can be born again in our time if an unmistakable woman's voice will not be heard in it.

Sociologists Enzo Pace and Luca Diotallevi will respectively develop a reflection on the impact of the growing social and cultural relevance of Islam, in Western societies characterised by the massive decline of Christianity's religious monopoly, and on how society can and ought faces this pluralization of religiously transmitted man's images. How to renew social forms cut out on cultural and axiological uniformities that no longer exist, without abdicating from the common ethos indispensable for the proper functioning of democracy?.

The speakers

Enzo Bianchi

Enzo Bianchi, the founder of the monastic community of Bose, is a lay monk, theologian and essayist. His community proposes a choice of Christian life oriented to the evangelical radicality, combining the monastic tradition in an ecumenical key, welcoming Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox monks. Work, prayer, meditation of the Word in the *lectio divina*, and catechetical preaching are the main charisms of this monastic Rule. The Bose Community is not a religious order, but an association of faithful who bind their community life to the rules of fidelity to the Gospel, communion of goods and celibacy. Author of a large number of books, regular contributor to numerous newspapers and magazines, consultant to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Enzo Bianchi is one of the figures of reference of Italian Catholicism: the new humanity that emerges from the encounter with Christ is incarnated in his life and in his word as a luminous testimony of faith in Christ and of faithfulness to man and to Church.

Massimo Cacciari

Professor Emeritus of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Vita-Salute University San Raffaele in Milan, of which he was co-founder and first President. He has been a professor of Aesthetics at the University of Architecture of Venice and Director of the Department of Philosophy at the Academy of Architecture in Lugano from 1998 to 2005. He was co-founder and co-director of some of the magazines that marked Italian political, cultural and philosophical life between the '60s and '90s, from *Angelus Novus* to *Contropiano*, from *Laboratorio Politico* to *Centauro* and *Paradosso*.

Internationally known, he has taught at various European universities and his works are translated into many languages. He has always combined the scientific and cultural activity with a strong civil and political commitment that has led him to cover the positions of European Parliamentarian and Mayor of Venice.

Luca Diotallevi

Ordinary Professor of Sociology at the University of Roma TRE and Director of the Master's Degree in the Sciences of Culture and Religion of the same university. Regular *Huffington Post* contributor, he also writes for *Corriere della Sera* and *Il Foglio*. His main research topics are secularization processes, the relationship between Christianity and democracy, the alternative between *laïcité* and religious freedom, and his current work is in particular devoted to the new forms of religiosity in the post secular society and to the crisis of confessional Christianity.

Enzo Pace

Ordinary Professor of General Sociology at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Padua where he is also Professor of Sociology of Religion and Complexity Theories. He also teaches "Islam and Human Rights" in the European Master on Human Rights and Democratization.

He was General Secretary and President of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR / SISR) and Coordinator of the AIS Section - Sociology of Religion. For this Association he is currently chairman of the Editorial Board of the Social Compass. He is a member of the Editorial Committees of the reviews *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* and *Socijalna Ekologija*. In addition to pioneering studies in the field of religious fundamentalism and Islam, professor Pace has produced leading work on intercultural dialogue in contexts of multiethnic and religious pluralist societies.