

Book review

## *The path of humankind. Towards economics of salvation or salvation of economy - Aracne, May 2018*

Review of the book by Francesco Rizzo

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*The path of humankind. Towards economics of salvation or salvation of economy* is a new step over the research that Francesco Rizzo has been addressing to the issue of migration, integration, rebuilding of social fabrics and cities, since 1979<sup>1</sup> and with respect to which, this latter essay outlines essential scientific, heuristic and ethical foundations, in the framework of a narrative style that from 2004<sup>2</sup> has included

the existential layer in the cognitive itinerary.

Aimed at the “salvation of economy”, the essay outlines coordinates of theoretical economics (chapter 1, *The theoretical framework of the new economy*; chapter 7 *The monetary and financial energy takes the wrong path of speculation*; chapter 13 *The function of the communication process*; chapter 15 *Economics of hope or hope of the economy*) and applied economics (chapter 16 *Socio-economic engineering of the multi-inter-ethnic city*), confirming the decisive rejection of the neoclassical paradigm, recognized as the premise of the globalization of poverty and conflicts of which migration is the main evidence.

To this the author – who on the migratory phenomenon also provides geo-economics concepts of population distribution in the areas of “ecumene”, “an-ecumene” and “sub-ecumene” (pp. 155-157) – contrasts a new scientific paradigm, focused on a general value substance, able to take into account the phenomena of contemporaneity, and an adaptive valuation approach suitable to support the

government of transformations, both intended to the renewal of the cities crossed by *the path of the humankind*.

The actuality of the work consists in the clear stigmatization of a widespread *involution of feeling* determined by the constant and systemic rise of the “idolatry of money”<sup>3</sup> in the age of “venture capitalism” (p. 17), and above all by a planetary drift, which in the post-globalization era has led to two convergent phenomena: on the one hand the crumbling of the archipelago-economies; on the other, the outbreak of a hyper-individualist sub-culture, out-of-date and out-of-place especially in a climate in which, to the planetary environmental pressures, the social system must counter the “globalization of solidarity” (p. 151); this is not intended by Francesco Rizzo as a self-referential or abstract ethical recommendation, but as the only condition of the “salvation of economy”.

A secular pastoral inspiration (based on the “dialectic between descriptive critical-positivist and normative ideological-absolutist approach”, p. 33), and its interweaving with the existential and cognitive life of the author, form the connective tissue of this narrative experience, which is divided into two parts, the first one devoted to the renewal of the economic theory, which “plays an irreplaceable role of onto-anthropo-logical, existential, eschato-logical-logic” mediation (p.186), the other one to the operative tools of this path.

The first part, *The dynamics of history or the history of dynamics*, consists of thirteen chapters that consolidate the “prophetic” perspective of the myth of the Man’s path towards ... salvation ... (chapters 1-6) in the warp of a dense and reasoned anthology of the Scriptures whose many passages recalled and analysed with historical and exegetical rigor testify, in the Old Testament, the displacement, the crossing, the meeting, the commingling of the Elected People as a condition of its affirmation as such, and in the New Testament the path as energy of the “geo-dynamic of evangelization” (p. 85).

The transcendent ethical foundation of the scientific analysis

<sup>1</sup> Only monographs refer to: *Linee storiche di espansione urbana ed analisi delle teorie della città*, Facoltà di Ingegneria dell’Università di Catania, 1979; *Il capitale Sociale della città*, FrancoAngeli, 2003; *Un’economia della speranza per la città multietnica*, FrancoAngeli, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *Etica dei valori economici o economia dei valori etici*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

<sup>3</sup> Rizzo F., *Una nuova avventura tra l’idolatria del denaro e lo spirito dell’amore con compassione o viscerale emo-ra-zionalità* Roma, Aracne, 2017.

prevents the ethical relativism whose rhetoric has led to overthrowing *judgment* on who does own and who doesn't, in the *prejudices* of those who, considering the migrant as a bearer of misery and malice, insist on a model of development, the current one, which is sustainable only if it progressively widens poverty. "The human relationship is the great theme that must dominate the path of life" (p. 132).

Other key topics of this first part are:

- the reflection on liquidity (pp. 21-25), a typically monetary property that supports the "hyper-modern" age capitalism, characterized by the dissolution of the link between monetary value and real underlying, hastily stigmatized in worries about the rising "liquid society", which the author intends instead as an "adaptive society";
- a broad reflection on capitalism (chapters 2, 4, 7), and on its evolution in the direction of the progressive increase in value of the monetary value of the economic assets, and of the self-referentiality of the processes of capital increase in value that allowed a disproportionate concentration of wealth by accentuating the differences between poor and wealthy areas, both at the local scale (city-countryside, p. 33) and at the planetary (South-North in the world); here an effective reference to the "cities of nothingness" as "Babylon ... capital of impiety and idolatry" draws, in the shadow of the solitude of greed, the fate of the historical centres of high and low localization tension, both empty in different and opposite ways;
- a precise analysis of abstraction from goods to money, starting from Marx's thinking, re-evaluated in a post-Keynesian and then personal key, in particular in the connection between the concept of liquidity, the most advanced foundations of thermodynamics and the theory of information and communication that underlie new economics (chapter 13);
- a unitary axiological imprint related to the unity of the transcendental (True, Right, Beautiful etc.), which supports the "historical, artistic, philosophical, scientific category" of Love with respect to which the merit and method of descriptive and operational models to be used in evaluations and economic and territorial planning (chapters 4, 9, 14);
- the reform of the welfare state through an adequate redistributive policy based on capital progressive taxation (pp. 177-179), with reference to the relationship between divine and human justice – "God and Caesar" (p. 78);
- the consequent reinterpretation of "development, the new name of peace", towards a renewed economy, and a functional, not self-referential finance (pp. 69-70) in which the value of trust, that is the premise of the monetary economy, is reaffirmed (p. 170);
- many epistemological, and in particular linguistic and hermeneutical issues are explained and assumed as the premise of the reciprocal, welcoming and peer communication that presides over the meeting of peoples (p. 171).

The second part, *The settlements of the cities or the cities of the settlements*, starts from the city, place of the places and ideal centre of the relationship between "economy and the world" (p. 221) then as the place of "com-unication" and where the formation of the values (in an economics re-signified and reinterpreted – p. 218) including that of acceptance (as an opening to the best of all possible worlds - ib.).

The multi-inter-ethnic and multi-racial city (§ 14.2) is the inspiring center of this part and the perspective of a cultural and scientific renewal, for the formation of an inclusive urban meta-culture "founded on education to love (acceptance of the other and ethics of responsibility) "aimed at overcoming" ungovernability, instability and conflict" (p. 221). Also in this case the author proposes basic references to the foundations of economic theory, in particular in the thought of A. Smith, of which he recalls, among other things, that "among men, the most dissimilar talents are mutually useful" (p. 223) and that solidarity makes cities the place of the "social capitalization of happiness" (p. 227).

Many other suggestions and references on the integration of solidarity and distributive rigor conform the reasoning on acceptance to the logic and to the constraints of the management of public affairs in chapter 15, where the relationship between epistemology and ethics is critically recalled starting from the epistemological antidogmatism of J. Dewey; here the author focuses on the relationship between perceptions and concepts (empiricism) and between pleasure and value (utilitarianism) (p. 239) and implicitly between judgments of fact (individual) and of value (inter-subjective) "extend[ing] the epistemological conclusions to moral reflection" (page 240).

The last chapter presents motivations and contents, premises and aims, of the theoretical-methodological model of the city proposed by Francesco Rizzo, in multiple editions, from time to time enriched and updated.

This model arises in the context of the dialectic between the structural-functional approach by T. Parsons and the functional-structural approach by N. Luhmann, identifying the gaps of extra-systemic and intra-systemic (or inter-sub-systemic) communication as responsible respectively for the ecological-environmental issue and the social issue. In this dialectic the approach to value and evaluations, based on the "black box" (p. 270), that is the "trans-information process" assumes *Natural, Bio-genialogical* and *Historical-cultural surpluses* as the forms of wealth created or destroyed, and terms for assessing the adequacy of the economic process with respect to the objectives of the salvation of economy.

On this basis the author extends his own city model, he proposes in the form of an "interactive matrix" whose contents (criteria) articulate fundamental axiological and ethical principles, attributable to the essential characteristics of the cities interpreted as *dissipative structures, auto-poietic units, historical-artistic and architectural-environmental systems, political-administrative systems, multi-interethnic systems* (pp. 272-279).

Many other aspects concerning the fulfilment of this prophetic writing can be found in the reasoned listing of the tools of the urban system policies (§ 16.2), with which the essay concludes.

This book is mainly intended for attentive and sensitive

people who, without prejudices, rise to the challenge of solidarity and in that they get mature.

It is, above all, a precious gift for those who, if intimidated by the domination of individualism and greed, look for voices to support their own and others' good will.