

Alienation and nihilism in the “affluent society”. The topicality of Augusto Del Noce

Salvatore Muscolino*

Università degli Studi di Palermo
salvatore.muscolino@unipa.it

Revista Cultura Económica

Año XXXIX • N°102

Diciembre 2021: 68-81

<https://doi.org/10.46553/cecon.39.102.2021.p68-81>

Abstract: Del Noce’s thought unravels over several decades on the stimulation of the great historical events in the 20th century (Totalitarianism, the Second World War, the Cold War, the Second Vatican Council, the Historic Compromise in Italy, etc.). Del Noce tackles the major philosophers of his time in this long journey of meditation: from Maritain to Gilson, from Gentile to Gramsci, from Löwith to Lukács and from Voegelin to Croce, not forgetting the dialogue with the classics from Descartes to Rosmini, and Marx to Gioberti. In this paper, I will concentrate mainly on his reflections around the so-called “affluent society” where he has gathered together, prophetically, those nihilist and anti-Christian traits which we are now experimenting in all their dramatic power.

Keywords: Augusto Del Noce; Affluent society; Alienation; Nihilism; Christianity

Alienación y nihilismo en la “sociedad opulenta”. La actualidad de Augusto Del Noce

Resumen: *El pensamiento de Del Noce se despliega a lo largo de varias décadas sobre el estímulo de los grandes acontecimientos históricos del siglo XX (totalitarismo, Segunda Guerra Mundial, Guerra Fría, Concilio Vaticano II, Compromiso Histórico en Italia, etc.). Del Noce aborda a los grandes filósofos de su tiempo en este largo viaje de meditación: de Maritain a Gilson, de Gentile a Gramsci, de Löwith a Lukács y de Voegelin a Croce, sin olvidar el diálogo con los clásicos de Descartes a Rosmini, y Marx a Gioberti. En este artículo, me concentraré principalmente en sus reflexiones en torno a la llamada “sociedad opulenta” donde ha reunido, proféticamente, esos rasgos nihilistas y anticristianos de los que ahora estamos experimentando todo su poder dramático.*

Palabras clave: *Augusto Del Noce; Sociedad opulenta; Alienación; Nihilismo; Cristiandad*

I. Introduction

What makes the thought of Del Noce particularly interesting is the explicit rooting in a philosophical perspective with a Christian orientation (perhaps it would be more appropriate to say “Catholic” today) against which he thematizes the “crisis” of the West. We can say that, in the case of Del Noce, philosophy with a Christian orientation means a certain anthropological view and a realist concept of knowledge.

On a hermeneutic level, it is precisely by starting from these two facts, which I have only touched on here, that it is possible to find the *Leitmotiv* in Del Noce’s thought despite the multiple corrections and/or changes of perspective that took place over the years: from the youthful closeness to the integral humanism of Maritain as a way to reconcile Christianity and democracy to the comparison with Marxism to then arrive, in the years of his maturity, at the analyses on the consumer or technological society of the second half of the twentieth century.¹

It is precisely in contemporary consumer society, defined by Del Noce as “affluent society”, that the two elements mentioned earlier, i.e. the Christian anthropological view and the realist concept of knowledge, are abandoned in favour of an accomplished nihilism. In order to satisfactorily understand these themes that deeply concern our world of today, it is now necessary to analyse the comparison that Del Noce entertains with Modernity, understood not as a chronological category but as an axiological one and how philosophy and Catholic theology should relate to it today.

II. Atheism and philosophy of praxis in Karl Marx

As is known, the interest of Del Noce in the Italian political history of the twentieth century depends on a specific historical/philosophical premise: the Italian one represents a paradigmatic case of the development of Western societies towards nihilism or, to put it in more specific terms, towards the “suicide of revolution” (Del Noce, 1978: 7). If we quickly return to Del Noce’s thesis, this expression refers to the fact that the culminating moment of Modernity on a historical/philosophical level is represented by Marxism, which has its specific trait in the idea of Revolution. “Revolution” in the case of Marxism means the will to create a new socio-political order where the universal and the particular can be reconciled in a Hegelian manner. Nevertheless, Marx is aware that one has to go beyond Hegel to do this, in the sense that philosophy must necessarily be transformed into political praxis.

In the reading of Del Noce, this is the true innovative character of Marx as clearly emerges in the famous *Thesis on Feurbach*: in other words, “Marxism is *the assumption of politics into the language of philosophy*” (Del Noce, 2010: 249).

Del Noce observes that one of the first to understand this revolutionary character of the philosophy of praxis of Marx was the Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile in a youthful work of his in 1899 entitled *The Philosophy of Marx*. Going back to the reading of Gentile, Del Noce insists on revealing the two fundamental aspects of theoretical Marxism: historical materialism and dialectic materialism. This concerns two aspects that reveal the contradictory nature of Marxist theory and help to understand the philosophical and political evolution of the twentieth century, which progressively leads to the affluent society.

Del Noce shows how historical materialism comprises the radical criticism of all values, every form of transcendence, and also the contemplative view of philosophy. As already mentioned, it is starting from these premises that the philosophy of exquisitely speculative knowledge must be destroyed to become political action for the radical transformation of reality.

Nevertheless, historical materialism must be put alongside dialectic materialism to protect the universalism of Marxism from its potential relativist outcomes. In this sense, Del Noce also reveals the presence of “religious”² motives in Marxism where a future society without conflict and forms of alienation is imagined, i.e. a society fully reconciled with itself.

In order to understand what Del Noce now means when he talks of revolution as an “ideal category”, one must bear in mind these two moments from which the two aspects of Marxism descend and which generate its crisis at a certain point:

The revolutionary idea entails the unity of two moments, the negative as devaluation of the traditional value order, and the positive as the establishment of a new order. Suicide happens, if the two moments separate in the process of realisation, and if they must necessarily do that. Now, instead of the passage to the new order, we have a relapse into the old order, but completely deconsecrated (Del Noce, 1978: 6).

Considering these first facts, one can summarise the original interpretation of Del Noce on Marxism as follows: firstly, Marxism represents the conclusion of modern rationalism insofar as it takes on an anthropological position opposed to the Christian one, which is characterised by the dogma of the original sin, as a starting point; secondly, the *becoming world of philosophy*, besides representing that Hegel and the previous philosophical tradition have been superseded, implies atheism as its necessary premise, i.e. the negation of every transcendent instance or one that can be attributed to man and his action; thirdly, given the co-presence of the two moments indicated beforehand (historical materialism and dialectic materialism), the Marxist project cannot be superseded dialectically by any other philosophy and therefore Marxism becomes the keystone for understanding contemporary history as *philosophical history*, i.e. how to deploy an essence or rather the one of positive atheism;³ and fourthly, the dissolution of dialectic materialism leaves only the materialistic one in the field with its criticism that denies every value and every ideal and consequently concerns that form of thought which “today is the philosophical justification for the most a-religious and also conservative society that ever existed, the so-called affluent or consumerist society, or society of well-being” (Del Noce, 1970: 52).

The whole of Del Noce’s journey, from the end of the Second World War until his death, starts from these elements. All the issues tackled by him are fed by this wide-ranging reflection on the central role of Marxism on a historical-philosophical level; from the interpretation of fascism as realisation of Marxism to that of Gramsci interpreted as a communist thinker which, nevertheless, dispels the revolutionary component of Marx (Del Noce, 1990; 1978); from the criticism of the dialogue between Christianity and Marxism⁴ to the one against the various forms of post-conciliar theology which is increasingly subordinate to the philosophy of history with a progressive mould (Del Noce, 1970: 4; 43 note 1; Del Noce, 1982: 28-29).

Since I am unable to go in depth into these issues and the interconnections between them, I intend to focus my attention only on Del Noce’s reflections on the affluent society as the goal of modern society’s secularisation process. As mentioned previously, I believe that they appear, especially today, rich in suggestions and intuitions for whoever wants to tackle the issues of technology and the relationship between religion and society, nihilism, etc.

III. Alienation of man in the “affluent society”

The category of alienation, as is known, is central in the Hegel-Marx tradition, and more generally, that area of research known as social philosophy, which originates from the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Honneth, 1994; Jaeggi, 2017). In other words, it concerns all those authors who reflect on the social genesis of the various forms of man's alienation in modern society. In an ideal line that goes from Rousseau, via Hegel and Marx, and reaches the Frankfurt School and the various developments of Marxism in the twentieth century, the category of alienation plays a fundamental role in articulating critical thinking on modern society, which is characterised by the spread of the capitalist economy.⁵

Developments in philosophy and social sciences in the twentieth century have nevertheless made the use of the category of alienation problematic, at least in the forms in which it is used in modern thinking. Because of the crisis in the essentialist concept of human nature, the reference term "objective" (i.e. the assumption of a certain human essence!), against which to ascertain any situation of "alienation", is lacking. In order to understand the importance of the question, I remember that recently, in context of the Frankfurt critical tradition, attempts were made to defend this category from the now very widespread anti-essentialist objections without obviously falling into metaphysical type concepts that are now considered very weak given the predominance of post-metaphysical and/or post-modern perspectives (Jaeggi, 2005).

It is precisely on the background of this debate that I believe it useful to dwell on the particular way with which Del Noce uses the category of alienation with regard to the socio-existential situation that was created with the passage of modern bourgeois society to the "affluent" one of the second half of the twentieth century. This decisive passage has deep philosophical/religious roots in Modernity, the reconstruction of which also allows Del Noce to reformulate some of his previous positions.⁶

Del Noce takes up the expression "affluent society" from his friend Franco Rodano who had written an article on this issue in the context of an Italian debate that was also in those years revolving around the publication of the book by John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, (1959) (Mustè, 1999). For Del Noce, the affluent society is one where "one manages to remove the dialectic spring of revolution and bring alienation to the maximum" (Del Noce, 2010: 314).

On the basis of this first brief definition, one must now clarify what Del Noce means with the term “alienation”, given that he considers the affluent society as one where it is present to the maximum degree. In order to understand the link between these two elements (affluent society and alienation), it is appropriate to clarify that the affluent society for Del Noce simultaneously constitutes the moment of crisis and the only possible development of Marxism. This apparent paradox is explained by the fact that once dialectic materialism (which, as mentioned previously, is one side of the same coin together with historical materialism) is missing; there is only space for radical historicism that refutes any transcendence, idealism or reference to a supersensitive logos or external values. The affluent society or technological society is for Del Noce the only possible post-Marxist solution because it brings the negative moment of the criticism of any metaphysics, which is the true message of Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach*, to its extreme consequences.

In conclusion, for Del Noce, the contradiction inside Marxism would emerge in the twentieth century:

There is a clear contradiction between the negation of every eternal principle and the practical search of the absolute. Therefore, the passage from Marxism to a radical positivism, which in the disciplines concerning man is manifested as sociology or absolute relativism, is presented as extremely easy and irrefutable (Del Noce, 1970: 92).

With the crisis of dialectics (which is accompanied on a historical/political level by the failure of real socialism!), the possibility of founding or directing praxis from outside or on the basis of some “objective” or “ideal” criterion also enters into crisis and philosophy must therefore necessarily be nullified leaving space for what Del Noce defines as “sociologism”, i.e. the radical denial of any metaphysical truth in the name of a wholly immanent knowledge. The spread of “sociologism” explains why, for Del Noce, the affluent society cannot be considered a development of Christian society or even a liberal one, but instead represents a new reality which prepares a new form of totalitarianism and alienation of man.

Compared to Christian society, the difference is a chasm: whilst the latter is based on the ideas of providence, salvation and spiritual progress of man, affluent society is instead characterised by a radical historicism that is incompatible with the Christian concept of existence. On the other hand,

affluent society is detached from liberal society because the “democratic” element in it completely supplants the “liberal” one (Del Noce, 2010: 316-318).

The specific traits of this new form of society become clear:

The express or tacit refusal of the values that have been said ensures that the only value is reduced to pure sensitive efficiency; in the society of wellbeing, men are reduced to the simple economic dimension of being mere tools of an activity that is not dependent on anything else. Hence the tedium that assails the person in this society as soon as he/she has left his workplace behind him/her; the feeling of falling into the void, into the most complete irrationality, as well as the egoism and activism that characterises this society: the other is reduced to a bundle of needs that must be satisfied, or better must be artificially multiplied, so that the person can be established; and this absence of communication of universal values ensures that the person can only feel him/herself in the exasperated individual search of the superfluous (Del Noce, 2010: 319).

This long quotation shows the specific characteristics of the affluent society which, on a careful look, coincide with the dominant traits of neoliberal ideology. Thus, it becomes clear what is the concept of alienation most in keeping for the “emancipatory” tendencies that are developed inside this new form of society:

Which makes you understand how this society is characterised by its own particular theory of alienation, completely different from the Marxist one: and this, because what interests it is the recovery of vitality. Hence the curious union of instinctivist primitivism and technology (Del Noce, 2010: 319).

In other words, any inhibition or repression of instincts is seen as “alienation” in this new affluent or consumer society, as consequently the link between this new “ideology” and technology becomes natural. In fact, it is technology that allows man to overcome every reality, every barrier and every limit.

According to Del Noce, it is for this reason that there is a radical irreducibility between affluent society and Christianity. In fact, technological civilisation is based on a *primacy of action* on the basis of which human knowledge only has a value if it is “useful”. This goes in the opposite direction to the Christian view of a pre-existing Logos which gives a meaning to

creation and which man *must* acknowledge (Del Noce, 1970: 86-87) to lead a life that is not “alienated”. The negation of this Logos and every value or sense pre-existing the praxis generates, as its necessary effect, the spread of an extreme individualism which, besides making real communication between people impossible, increasingly isolates them in the name of a consumer ethic in which the individual is involved without an escape route. This existential situation constitutes the true nihilism or, if we will, the true “alienation” to which the affluent or technological society leads in the lucid and prophetic analysis of Del Noce.

Del Noce proposes a recovery of the Christian concept based on the primacy of contemplation and tradition as an alternative to this nihilist outcome of contemporary history, which was defined by him in the last days of this life as the epoch of secularisation. On a philosophical level, this is declared by rediscovering that line of Catholic thought that starts with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas and reaches Antonio Rosmini via the complex issues of Modernity. Del Noce sees the thought of Rosmini as the best philosophical attempt in the nineteenth century for combating the errors of the various socialist/communist, utilitarian and atheist schools in light of a metaphysical concept that opens human reasoning to the Truth (Del Noce, 1970: 203-222).

I will not go into this subject in depth at this time but I will limit myself to noting that Del Noce sets the philosophical category of “Risorgimento” (Resurgence) against the one of “Revolution” in this recovery of the philosophical tradition that goes from Augustine to Rosmini (Del Noce, 2019). So far, I have limited myself to indicating what the philosophical/religious roots of the new form of “alienation” are with regard to man in the affluent or technological society. However, in the next section, I would like to dwell on the accusation that has often been brought against Del Noce, namely that he has undervalued the value of “democracy” in modern society. However, from my point of view, this type of accusation risks minimising the prophetic nature of Del Noce’s reflections.

IV. Democratic unrest between Tocqueville and Del Noce

One of the great intellectuals with which Del Noce had a critical dialogue was the Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio, who was one of the main exponents of the so-called Turin School in the second half of the twentieth century. This school held the monopoly on the Italian historiographic debate after the fall of fascism and set (via the lessons of Gramsci) the dominant “narrative” which

saw a sort of ahistorical “essence” in fascism that coincided with a reactionary instance which was hostile to every form of innovation. Starting from the fascism/anti-fascism pair, the Turin School imposed a reading of Italian contemporary history (but perhaps the perspective could be broadened today?) that saw “a mistake against culture” in fascism. In other words, the essence of fascism would contain a reactionary ideology which is contrary to the progressive path of history guided by the Enlightenment spirit that animates the various socialist, democratic and liberal currents with their project of making come true the great modern dream of emancipation initiated with the French revolution.

Against this reading, Del Noce puts forward an idea of fascism as “mistake of culture” because he conceives it as the extreme point of that historical/spiritual process that already has its origins in the Italian Risorgimento and consists of an axiological view of Modernity based on a rigorous immanentism which is hostile to Christianity and, particularly, to Catholicism. For Del Noce, the immanentist mistake does not therefore end with the historical end of fascism (and Nazism in Europe) but also persists in the entire antifascist movement that is the child of Gramscianism which, as I mentioned earlier, opens the door to that new form of totalitarianism, which is the affluent society.⁷

It is therefore not by chance that Norberto Bobbio was one of Del Noce’s great interlocutors. Here, I would like to make a special mention of the criticism that Bobbio brought against Del Noce on the issue of “democracy”. According to Bobbio, Del Noce had not properly considered that democracy is also the child of that secularisation process so criticised by him and that he has also ignored the decisive contribution of the empiricist and Anglo-Saxon liberal (from Locke to John Stuart Mill) tradition in the construction of the modern liberal state. Nevertheless, for Bobbio, this liberalism is similar to the anti-perfectionism of reason defended by Del Noce in imitation of Rosmini. Thus Bobbio concludes

I do not intend to cast doubt on the sincerity of Del Noce’s liberalism or even the compatibility of the liberal ideal with a religious view of the world. But I cannot help noting that societies dominated by the Church tend somewhat to be theocracies. But I do doubt that the perfect implementation of the liberal ideal is only possible in a Christian society and that it is incompatible with a non-religious view of life. The so deprecated age of secularisation demonstrates precisely the contrary, because it is through it that the liberal state

is being formed on the ruins of the absolute states, which have all historically been Christian, at least in Europe; that liberal one, at the foundations of which stand the individual's civil liberties and politics, the negative or non-impediment liberty from which it is not an atomistic society that is born as Del Noce observes, but a society of the rights of man (Bobbio, 1995: 184).

Nearly thirty years have passed since these words of Bobbio and, from our standpoint, it can be affirmed that Del Noce's fears were well founded, whilst Bobbio's optimism had been excessive. With the end of the cold war and with the era of globalisation, the instance of secularisation, on which Del Noce prophetically insisted, has radically changed society because of the spread of neoliberalism which represents that nihilist ideology of the affluent society which is widespread in the West and is incompatible with a Christian view of existence and society. The level of conflict that is recorded today in western "democracies" on bioethical questions is a clear signal, for example, of how well founded the fears of Del Noce were regarding the dangers inherent to the affluent society and secularisation: the risk of alienation as an inability of man to transcend itself to the Absolute and/or communicate with its other fellow creatures.

Bobbio was convinced that the difference of opinion with Del Noce only fundamentally concerned the observation point: his "political", Del Noce's "philosophical" (transpolitical!). It is for this reason that he wrote:

The transpolitical view, which looks on the things of this world from on high, is not capable of understanding that, for those with their feet on the ground, there is a fundamental difference, which is discernible to those living there, and it is the difference between a regime that is based on the use of violence as a means of domination and a regime at the basis of which there are only rules that allow binding decisions to be taken for the whole community without it being necessary to resort to the use of force to settle social conflicts (Bobbio 1995, 181).

The philosophical/political debate over the last few years has unfortunately demonstrated all the limits of a purely procedural concept of democracy, like the one Bobbio refers to in the above-mentioned passage. One only has to consider the evolution of the thought of Jürgen Habermas, who, starting precisely from enlightenment positions that were perhaps more radical than Bobbio, recognised *de facto* the limits of liberal/democratic proceduralism in thwarting the nihilist outcomes of neoliberal ideology. It is

for this reason that Habermas, with the proposal of a post-secular society, today offers us a more articulate perspective than the one (defended by him in the past) of the theorists with a lay/enlightenment mould. According to this recent stance of his, Habermas hopes that lay thought could have greater consideration of the role that the great religious traditions can have in defending the values of liberty, equality, and social solidarity against the risks of neoliberal nihilism (Habermas, 2007; 2008).

These recent reflections of Habermas leave many questions unanswered and many issues unsolved, but are indicative of the German philosopher's awareness of the problem.⁸ The problem which seems not to have been fully grasped by Bobbio and which instead animates the reflections of Del Noce. However, I believe it concerns the same problem that an author like Alexis de Tocqueville was also aware of in his prophetic analyses on the complexity of Modernity and democratic society. It is precisely by referring to the contribution of Tocqueville that I would like to cast light on the right perspective to adopt in order to properly grasp Del Noce's speculative work beyond the criticism of Bobbio. In this sense, I would like to propose that a common thread linking the French writer and Del Noce is seen.

In his introduction to *Il problema dell'ateismo* [The Problem of Atheism], Nicola Matteucci writes that Del Noce has never properly reckoned with Alexis de Tocqueville and his reading of a modern democratic society characterised by the affirmation of the middle class. For Tocqueville, the principle of equality was generated in democratic society by the great changes, such as the affirmation of wellbeing as the main value of life, the destruction of the old moral codes, an individualism without solidarity, etc.; nevertheless, continues Matteucci, Tocqueville was still convinced that one could contain this tendency to standardisation through an alliance between the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion (Matteucci, 2010: XXVI).⁹

Besides the correct observations of Matteucci on the similarity between Del Noce and Tocqueville, I believe that there is an element that allows one to highlight a more historical/spiritual link between the two scholars. In some very important, but rarely read, pages of his *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville proposes what I have defined as a sort of "prophecy" elsewhere (Muscolino, 2019: 111). Tocqueville observed a great advance in Catholicism in American democratic society and this was due to the "extreme unity" that the Roman Catholic Church was capable of offering to the human consciousness in a context that was increasingly characterised by individualism. The hierarchical organisation of the Roman Catholic Church

therefore offered a reference point for the democratic citizen and it is for this reason that Tocqueville imagined that modern democratic society would in the future be divided into two categories: “some relinquishing Christianity entirely and others returning to the Church of Rome” (Tocqueville, 1997: Vol II, Chapter VI, paragraph 4).

When making this “prophecy”, Tocqueville had in front of him a Roman Catholic Church that was obviously prior to the Second Vatican Council. In his eyes, Catholicism with its hierarchy represented an element that could not be reduced to the levelling logic of modern democratic society which instead preferred (and seems still to prefer today) religious tendencies increasingly directed towards diversified forms of pantheism. It is for this reason that Tocqueville imagined that the democratic man would have been “Catholic” or non-Christian.

After the Second Vatican Council, with the supersedence or reformulation of some pre-modern elements, the Roman Catholic Church is no longer the one that Tocqueville knew and this perhaps explains how, in the secular society of today, Catholicism is in crisis and therefore the “prophecy” made by the French writer has not been realised.

Del Noce’s analysis can be of help in understanding this outcome: the affluent society is incompatible with the Christian view of life and the crisis of Catholicism after the Council also depends on certain changes fostered or generated by the Council season that have altered the physiognomy known and appreciated by Tocqueville to combat the negative effects of “materialism”.¹⁰

Del Noce, in his later years, reflects on “secularism” as a distinctive trait of nihilist Modernity that includes both the Marxist soul and the technocratic one of the affluent society, the roots of which must therefore be made to go back to Saint-Simon, Comte, etc. What Tocqueville saw as the real danger of democratic society, i.e. “materialism”, has today become the ideology of neoliberalism and technocracy. Like Tocqueville, Del Noce imagines that the Christian concept of life is the only possible alternative to the nihilist dynamics.

So, from this point of view and retrieving Del Noce’s intuitions, one must wonder how Catholicism should be placed today in a global society that is increasingly problematic, for certain aspects, compared to that of the years of the Council.

Del Noce's analyses help us to understand the historical/spiritual genesis of the affluent society which we live in. It is now our task to draw up new syntheses capable of combating its structural nihilism.

Bibliographic References

- Bobbio, N. (1995). "Del Noce: fascismo, comunismo, liberalismo" [Fascism, Communism and Liberalism]. In: AA.VV. *Augusto Del Noce. Il problema della modernità* [The Problem of Modernity]. Roma: Studium, pp. 165-184.
- Borghesi, M. (2011). *Augusto Del Noce. La legittimazione critica del moderno* [The Critical Legitimation of the Modern]. Genova: Marietti 1820.
- Del Noce, A. (1970). *L'epoca della secolarizzazione* [The Era of Secularisation]. Milano: Giuffrè.
- Del Noce, A. (1978). *Il suicidio della rivoluzione* [The Suicide of Revolution]. Milano: Rusconi.
- Del Noce, A. (1981). *Il cattolico comunista* [The Communist Catholic]. Milano: Rusconi.
- Del Noce, A. (1982). *Secularizzazione e crisi della modernità* [Secularisation and Crisis of Modernity]. Napoli: Istituto Suor Orsola Benincasa, ESI.
- Del Noce, A. (1990). *Giovanni Gentile. Per una interpretazione filosofica della storia contemporanea* [For a Philosophical Interpretation of Contemporary History]. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Del Noce, A. (2010) [1964]. *Il problema dell'ateismo* [The Problem of Atheism]. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Del Noce, A. (2019). *Rosmini e la categoria filosofico-politica del "Risorgimento"* [Rosmini and the Philosophical/Political Category of the "Risorgimento"], inedito a cura di G. Nocerino. <https://www.rosminiinstitute.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Inedito-di-A.-Del-Noce-a-cura-di-G.-Nocerino.pdf>.
- Jaeggi, R. (2005). *Entfremdung—Zur Aktualität eines sozialphilosophischen Problems*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Jaeggi, R. (2017). *Sozialphilosophie. Eine Einführung*. München: Beck (with R. Celikates).
- Habermas, J. (2007). *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press (with Joseph Ratzinger).
- Habermas, J. (2008). *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Honneth, A. (1994). "Pathologien des Sozialen. Tradition und Aktualität der Sozialphilosophie". In A. Honneth (Hrsg.) *Pathologien des Sozialen. Die Aufgaben der Sozialphilosophie*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, pp. 9-69 (vgl. B.9).

- Matteucci, N. (2010) [1964]. *Introduzione ad A. Del Noce, Il problema dell'ateismo* [Introduction to A. Del Noce, The problem of Atheism]. Bologna: il Mulino, pp. IX-XXVI.
- Muscolino, S. (2019). *Tra immanenza e trascendenza. Saggi teologico-politici "su" e "oltre" Carl Schmitt* [Between Immanence and Transcendence. Theological/Political Essays "on" and "beyond" Carl Schmitt]. Milano: Albo Versorio.
- Mustè, M. (1999). "Fra Del Noce e Rodano: il dibattito sulla società opulenta" [Between Del Noce and Rodano: the debate on the affluent society]. *La Cultura*, XXXVII (1), 93-11.
- Rasmussen, D. C. (2008). *The Problems and Promise of Commercial Society. Adam Smith's Response to Rousseau*. University Park (PA): The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Tocqueville, A. de (1997). *Democracy in America* (Vol. II, Chapter VI). Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia. https://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/ch1_06.htm

¹ A useful reconstruction of the various stages of Del Noce's thought is in Borghesi (2011).

² Obviously, a "secular" religion (Del Noce, 1981: 55).

³ "If one believes in the power of ideas in history, one must say that the new fact in our century is the manifestation of that positive atheism, of which the becoming-world of philosophy is the formula, characterised by that particular relationship between theory and practice, which will be discussed later; and that consequently 'contemporary history' is philosophical history, because it is the deployment of that essence, and the various positions facing each other can only be understood in relation to this first reference point [...]. We are therefore taken back to the analysis of the philosophical essence of atheism as first problem" (Del Noce, 2010: 333).

⁴ Not just on the theoretical level but also on the political one. The constant comparison with his friend Franco Rodano, the main advocate of this ethical/political line, is important on this aspect. See the essays collected in Del Noce (1981) about this.

⁵ On the hostility of Rousseau towards the market and modern economy, see Rasmussen (2008).

⁶ For example, the use of the category of secularisation after 1968 is explained thanks to the comparison with the work of Eric Voegelin which allows him to welcome a new gnostic instance that is affirmed after Hegel and is in direct opposition to Christianity (Del Noce, 1982: 14-15).

⁷ This different reading of fascism by Del Noce is based, as mentioned earlier, on a wide-ranging comparison with the actualism of Giovanni Gentile and his relationships with Marxism and fascism as well as with Croce, Gramsci and the tradition of the Risorgimento. For these aspects, see Del Noce (1978; 1990).

⁸ I reflected on these Habermas issues in Muscolino (2019: 180-181).

⁹ I would like to point out that in the unpublished paper quoted by me in note 23, which is the text of a report at a meeting in 1983, Del Noce acknowledges the deep similarity between the problems of Tocqueville and those of Rosmini. Or rather, Del Noce asserts that the only possibility of overcoming the pessimism of Tocqueville is represented by the thought of Rosmini.

¹⁰ I have already mentioned Del Noce's criticisms of the various forms of post-Council theology, which are too dependent on the Marxist categories or the "progressivism" of the modern philosophies of history.