

App. II- Polemiche Campanelliane¹

Oscar Nuccio, *Falsi e luoghi comuni della storia*² (Arezzo, 2000); preface by Sergio Ricossa.

Professor Oscar Nuccio, is the author of, among other books, *Il pensiero economico italiano*, in five volumes of 1000 pages each, a work which has been described as *monumental* and *prodigieux* (*Revue Economique*). The aim of the work, in particular, was that of refuting the theses of Max Weber on the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. The results of Nuccio's researches on this subject are more briefly expounded in his other book, *La civiltà italiana nella formazione della scienza economica* (Milano, 1995).

Falsi e luoghi comuni della storia, his more recent work, is the *divertissement* of a scholar who, in forty years of historical excavations, has detected manifold errors in the works of celebrated historians, and has now decided to render a final account. Such errors, in fact, as Samuel Johnson once observed, 'passing from book to book acquire credit', and it was time for a Hercules to clean the Augean stables.

The criticisms of prof. Nuccio are always the product of his profound researches. For example, in the case of the *History of Economic Analysis* of Joseph Alois Schumpeter, he applies to that celebrated author the saying *aliquando dormitat Homerus*. Schumpeter, in fact, often *dozed*, probably because he was tired „owing to his labours as riding master and suitor of fine ladies“. When awake, he mostly used to write „making use of what had already been written by historians and writers in economics on this or that subject“ (p. 205).

His chapters on Italian economic thought, from the middle ages onwards, although genial and fascinating as usual, reveal second-hand material. This is now evident to the scholars, in consequence of the historical excavations of prof. Nuccio, who has read and interpreted about six hundred authors for his *Pensiero economico italiano*.

Among the authors whose *errors* have been detected by this implacable researcher and scourge, are M. Weber, E. Böhm-Bawerk, J. M. Keynes, J. Le Goff, J. K. Galbraith, R. H. Tawney, M. Nowak, J. T. Noonan, H. MacLeod, and many others. Their texts, mainly in economics, are severely scrutinized by Nuccio, whose attention nothing escapes, and whose criticisms are vitriolic.

Among the Italian historians a favourite target is Luigi Firpo, the 'celebrated philologist', the editor of Campanella's *Città del Sole*. Among his many activities, he never had time to read Campanella's thirty volumes of the *Theology*. But the *Città del Sole*, or 'poetical dialogue', argues Nuccio, is no more than an appendix to the *Theology*, its author's *majestic edifice*. Therefore, *Firpo was not in a condition to understand Campanella*. In 'Sociologia', no. 1-2 (1994), pp. 59-110, Nuccio had already devoted a brilliant and vigorous essay to Campanella and to Firpo, who emerged from it as a scholar with many limitations: too many, indeed.

But even Franco Venturi, certainly not a minor figure, and an historian of superior endowments, and well known in Europe, cannot avoid the lash of this tremendous iconoclast, for enlisting in the category of Utopism the 'pious abbot' Antonio Tocci, author of thousands of pages which, of course, prof. Nuccio has read in their entirety.

In a short review it is impossible to give anything more than a taste of the flavour of this exceptional book, which, in reality, is much more than an addition to historical literature. I wish to add that it grasps the core of the problem, showing readers how to understand both history and historians, and marks a vigorous step forward in historical knowledge.

The theses which the author maintains can sometimes be debatable, but no one who is interested in seriously understanding history will ignore them.

¹ Pubblicata in 2000. *The European Journal*, no.1, 2000, p. 8, nella rubrica 'Book in Review'.

² *Falsehoods and Commonplaces of History*.

