

## GRATEFUL TO ECONOMY

## EDITORIAL

As a real process, economy is among the most meaningful forms of worldlization of human beings. To have a world always means also to work. Hence, the attitude toward economy can never be separated from the attitude toward the world in general. As there can be a *Weltverneinung*, a denial of the world, likewise there can be a denial of the economic forms that, time after time, worldlization assumes.

The discourse is thorny because it is never completely clear up to what point the defense of the world in itself (il)legitimately translates into a defense of a specific form of world, and up to what point the critique of a specific form of world (il)legitimately extends to a critique of the world in general.

According to a certain interpretation (of Christian descent) of the process of worldlization, one could say that *pro statu isto*—that is, at this time, and not for a time within history but for a time that lasts as long as history—humankind, marked by an original flaw, cannot produce forms of worldlization that are void of contradictions. Poverty and the other contradictions that belong to the economic systems we have observed so far are therefore historicized, that is, naturalized, with the important notice that at stake here is not nature but *natura lapsa*, fallen nature. This vision lends itself to even opposite interpretations: on the one hand, it is optimistic because it thinks of negativity as a transient event; on the other, it is pessimistic because such a transition ends up coinciding with the human adventure itself within history. On the one hand, it ends up ideologically justifying the current forms of exploitation because there can be no historical humanity that is free from exploitation; on the other, it incites and spurs change because the historical humankind is simply a distorted form of humanity.

Events such as the economic “crisis” awaken a general interest in the *aporias* of *Verweltlichung*, that is, of worldlization, in a manner analogous to the way in which *Angst* works in Heidegger as operator of possibility and impossibility.

Suddenly, we discover that the world contains unpleasant additions (such as subprime mortgages and derivatives). At times, as Plato invites us to do in the *Republic* with respect to the soul, we cleanse and scrape the world off of added things (and re-align finances with real economy). Other times, as Plotinus suggests that we do in the *Enneads*, we take a more radical way and follow the mantra “get rid of everything”—not only subprime mortgages, but also capitalism in general and, why not, economy itself as a form of worldlization, the world in general.

All of us more or less search for an operatively and ethically sustainable balance between these two extremes, namely: a pure and simple ratification of the existing form and a mere denial of it (a denial that does not hint at other concretely possible forms but rather fades into the unformed, into the general absence of form).

Between the current world and no world, compelled by necessity we search for the corrections needed so as to be able to be in the world (even in the economic world) otherwise. In doing so, we suspend judgment. We act as if a world completely void of exploitation (in part or as a whole) were possible even if we know that the general configuration of our being in the world escapes our control.

Briefly, we search for ways of traversing contradictions. Since we cannot remove them, we navigate them in the quest for better forms, or even just for an improvement of the current form. For some, this is not only delusional, but also constitutes the first lie, the source of all illusions.

Traversing contradictions liberates, among other things, energies for social imagination. The economic bubble has been the fallen form of imagination; to it, one responds not with no imagination but with good imagination. New phenomena such as co-housing seem to indicate that under conditions that one then needs to specify, “unions” are amplifiers of space on site and constitute precious economic resources that are capable, through a change in social relations, of creating an added space. Such added space can remedy the scarcity of resources. The next years could even see the flourishing of economies of unions and politics of unions. Under certain conditions, unions are dignifying (under other conditions they are humiliating) and the whole becomes truly greater than the sum of its parts. The example of the European Union is even too much of a given; now one should start thinking of a wider union, a Euro-Mediterranean union that unifies the peoples that on the two sides of the Mediterranean have historically self-identified with the different religions of the Book.

The production of added value belongs to economic activity. If, despite everything, we are grateful to economy it is because of its extraordinary ability for addition, to which great human achievements are due. The problem is that economy externalizes addition, that is, it can only produce it to the detriment of someone or something whereas more and more pressing is the request for a political economy, that is, for an internalization of the addition, for a production of additions to a zero degree of historical temperature, as Lévi-Strauss would say. That is, for a widening of space on site, with no damage to thirds.

If, as we observe, increasingly often economy prevails on politics, the alternative is not simply the re-establishment of reciprocal boundaries but rather different, this time virtuous forms of contamination. Economy must become politics and politics must become economy not in the sense that bankers should rule states but rather in the sense that capitalism should decisively embrace its social stage of development. The second part of the twentieth century has been the epoch of the construction of welfare thanks to the collaboration between economy and politics. Today, the forms of economic activity should assume the democratic political moment as constitutive of their *raison d'être*. Economy cannot be a bond for politics if at the same time politics is not a bond for economy. Political and more generally social sustainability should become the first requirement for all economic activities, a sort of taboo, in the same way in which economic sustainability is by now a taboo for politics. In sum, politics and economy should work as reciprocal taboos. This reciprocal taboo would constitute, as it were, a shared constitutional bond, which would enable the “parts,” namely politics and

economy, to confront each other in a harsh yet fair dialectics rooted in reciprocal recognition.

The essays contained in this issue of *Spaziofilosofico* share the work of navigating, the effort of indicating viable alternatives; that is, they share the mediation between a simple No and a simple Yes to the known forms of economic worldization. With even very different emphasis (with respect not to the diagnosis as much as to the prognosis and therapy), philosophers and economists reflect on issues raised by the current economic situation and look for an exit. Albeit problematic, such an exit is closer than one would think. This is so not simply in the sense that it is on its way, as we indeed wish, but also in the sense that the establishment of a new order is possible, as Benjamin would say, not by changing the world with violence but rather by adjusting it minimally. The major issue consists in identifying the concrete forms of such “minimum.” This will require, as it seems, not only an effort at circumscribing reality but also a creative effort. The bursting of the speculative bubble has certainly disclosed the impossibility of multiplying bread and fish with some sort of a *creation ex nihilo* of wealth. This does not eliminate the fact that we always and still need added space, we always and still need multipliers; that is, we always and still need economy.

*Enrico Guglielminetti*

(translated by Silvia Benso)