

The Whole Breadth of Reason

Rethinking Economics and Politics

Edited by

Simona Beretta and Mario A. Maggioni



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To the Reader

The present volume, “The Whole Breadth of Reason: Rethinking Economics and Politics” is part of the ASSET series of publications resulting from the ongoing work of education and research carried out by the Alta Scuola Società Economia Teologia of the Fondazione Studium Generale Marcianum, with the support of the Fondazione di Venezia.

The International Summer School, from which the present contributions arose, was an occasion for public reflection on the themes which are central to the research area “*Economics, Governance and Institutions*” coordinated for ASSET by Prof. Simona Beretta, co-editor of this volume together with Prof. Mario A. Maggioni.

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INTRODUCTION

Why an International, Interdisciplinary Summer School on the Whole Breadth of Reason

Simona Beretta, Mario A. Maggioni

The financial and economic crisis and the rapid geo-political transformations we are experiencing, including the recent developments in Middle East and North-Africa, urgently call for their broad and realistic understanding.

«The different aspects of the crisis, its solutions, and any new development that the future may bring, are increasingly interconnected, they imply one another, they require new efforts of holistic understanding and a new humanistic synthesis. The complexity and gravity of the present economic situation rightly cause us concern, but we must adopt a realistic attitude as we take up with confidence and hope the new responsibilities to which we are called by the prospect of a world in need of profound cultural renewal, a world that needs to re-discover fundamental values on which to build a better future. The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. The crisis thus becomes an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future. In this spirit, with confidence rather than resignation, it is appropriate to address the difficulties of the present time». (Caritas in veritate, 21)

The 2011 ASSET summer School was a small but significant step in re-planning our journey, starting from the very beginning: from re-thinking the notions of human reason, especially economic and political “reason”. The inadequacy of the dominant paradigms – reducing economic reason to rational

calculation on one side, and politics to mere *realpolitik* on the other – is all too evident and has crucial ethical implications. To adopt a realistic attitude when facing economic and political crises requires other than mechanistic and disciplinary approaches.

Cardinal Angelo Scola, former Patriarch of Venice and Grand Chancellor of *Studium Generale Marcianum*, in his book on the possibility and reasons for a “good life” within the social community (A. Scola, *Buone ragioni per la vita in comune*, 2010), maintains that the current socio-economic and socio-political crises find their roots in the dominant anthropological and cultural dimensions. They ensue from ultimately removing from the public discourse the idea of person and community being the actual protagonists of the economic and political spheres (p. 58). Being protagonists requires freedom: not only the sort of freedom which is referred to in the political dimension – when we consider political freedom of peoples and nations – but first of all freedom in its inner relationship with truth. True freedom, in facts, implies the freedom to adhere to truth (A. Scola, *ibidem*, 43).

The aim of the ASSET Summer School 2011 was focussing on human reason in ways that are “sensitive to the truth”, examining the complex links between rationality and freedom, economics and politics, and exploring how best to develop and foster reasonable practices in the economy and in politics within a “wider” interdisciplinary perspective. Academics, researchers, professionals, journalists were called to reflect upon the full breadth of human experience, mind and heart, courageously overcoming narrow disciplinary perspectives.

The ASSET Summer School was organized as a residential, full time initiative involving academics, postgraduate students, Ph.D. students and Post-Docs; practitioners, policy makers, and entrepreneurs. Morning lectures, held by invited speakers, were followed by debate with discussants and participants; afternoon