

**Fausto Bertinotti**  
**SEMPRE DACCAPO**

Conversazione con Roberto Donadoni  
Marcianum Press

“Sempre daccapo” is the printed edition of an extensive interview by the managing director of Marcianum Press, Roberto Donadoni, with Fausto Bertinotti, a well-known Italian politician who led the Communist Refoundation Party (*Partito della Rifondazione Comunista*) from 1994 to 2006 and served as President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 2006 to 2008.

Translated into English, *Sempre daccapo* reads as *Starting All Over Again* which is an expression used by the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) referring to what he described as the crisis of the European approach to the search for knowledge. Bertinotti, who retired from politics after the collapse of the Italian communist movement in the 2008 general elections, has been one of the most intriguing figure in the political scenario of the so-called Italian *Second Republic*. He was a staunch believer in communism and yet he loved to wear expensive clothes, and his aristocratic manners were in stark contrast with his political stance. He was a regular guest of television talk shows displaying an elegant turn of phrase and the poise and bearing of a blue-blooded gentleman.

In the interview Bertinotti admits that communism, wherever it has been in power, has failed to change society for the better but he still believes in it. Capitalism was able to regain momentum thanks to the globalization of markets but it has transformed human work into a commodity by moving production wherever labour is cheaper. This has relatively improved the economy of traditionally poor countries but to the detriment of the workers in developed countries who are gradually losing their hard-won rights and decent working conditions. There is, in fact, according to Bertinotti, a return to a 19<sup>th</sup> century form of capitalism with all the injustices and inequalities suffered by the working class of that time.

About politics today, the former communist leader says that its role must be reconsidered and that it should not be confused with that of religion. Politics, in his view, is not about providing happiness but ensuring that there is no abuse of man by man while religion looks after the inner wellbeing of the individual, and the two sides must not overlap. The US Constitution, says Bertinotti, is a negative example because it tends to confuse the sacred with the profane while the Italian constitution rightly proclaims the independence of the two principles. In actual

fact the US Constitution, in the First Amendment, makes sure that politics does not interfere with religion where it states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." It is Bertinotti who confuses the US Constitution with the Declaration of Independence which repeatedly cites the Creator without reference, though, to any specific religious belief.

For Bertinotti religion has an important role to play in controlling that «politics does not become all-encompassing as there is always the risk of such eventuality, especially when politics aims at creating a new man».

What then of the future? Bertinotti suggests that people «should endeavour to counter the current drift, opting for a revolution that has as the objective of creating, perhaps for the first time, of a society without a "Prince" to refer to». And the new politics should not be about "power" but "service" rendered to «a collective consciousness that must be built from within a critical subjective commitment».

Bertinotti's judgement of the three recent Popes is surprisingly positive from a self-professed nonbeliever. He says that Wojtyla made us embrace the world, Ratzinger created a discontinuity breaking down the wall of the power of the Roman Curia with the statement of his own frailty and Francis is building a new dialogue on this break putting us, in some way, in touch with the world.

The final questions posed by Donadoni seem to affect deeply Fausto Bertinotti who, while «living as if God did not exist», looks beyond death to the memory that his loved ones will keep of him and his legacy, delegating his conclusion to the words of the Apostle Paul: «I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith».

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