



Luigi Barbieri

(aggregato di Storia dei rapporti tra Stato e Chiesa nella Facoltà di
Giurisprudenza dell'Università degli Studi di Teramo)

**De Mammona iniquitatis. Spiritually poor: the Sturzian roots
of the Encyclical "*Caritas in veritate*" of Benedict XVI ***

*I have neither gold nor silver,
But all I have I give it to you
(Att. 3-6)*

*"... It is our duty, in the fields of practical realizations, of
thought and economics, of religion and politics, to prepare
the true revolution that will guide us towards an organic
economics without capitalism, and toward a working class
policy without communism nor class struggle"*

Luigi Sturzo

SUMMARY: The spirit of the present contribution: "the economics as if the person would count"¹ – 1. Essential notes on the "popular capitalism" in the thought of Luigi Sturzo - 2. The economical liberty and the rules' liberalism – 3. Synthesis considerations.

1 - Essential notes on the "popular capitalism" in the thought of Luigi Sturzo

For the interpreter of the ecclesiastical sciences it is appropriate, although with the awareness of the limits in the economic matters, to express some brief considerations about the economic and social implications produced by the Magisterium of the Church with the publication of the *Caritas in veritate*².

From the methodological point of view it could seem that the matter of study of the ecclesiastical law would be not appropriate, or

* The present work has been done for the scope of *Study in honor of Professor Franco Bolognini*.

¹ L. BRUNI, S. ZAMAGNI, *Dizionario di economia civile*, Città nuova, Roma, 2009, *Introduzione*, p. 12.

² The Encyclical (henceforth, CV) has been printed in the Vatican Editor Bookshop in Latin on 16-9-2009 and it is available on the Holy See www.vatican.va.



that it would be irrelevant comparing it with the law of the economic science³. The divergence is purely outward.

In fact both subjects converge in finding research tools aimed at the comprehension of the phenomena of the human person's centrality, from both the religious and moral point of view, and the strictly economic implication, which cannot prescind from the ethical criteria and principles⁴. The present contribution will then try to find the connections between the ecclesiastical law's science⁵ and the economic theory⁶, as it is localized in the papal document, with a completely original key to the reading, that is, reading the principles of the Encyclical on the side of the catholic-liberal⁷ thought of Luigi Sturzo, the Sicilian sociological and political priest, who by the early thirties proposed in a rich scientific and public-law related production (mainly sociological) an economic model based on the ethics and morality in the economic field. The Sturzian thesis has been improperly defined as the *third* way of the supportive economics⁸. More properly, it is about the

³ For an updated and general oversight presentation cfr. **P.A. SAMUELSON, W.D. NORDHAUS, C.A. BOLLINO**, *Economia*, McGraw-Hill, Milano, 2009; **G. RODANO, E. SALTARI**, *Lineamenti di teoria economica*, Carocci ed., Roma, 2006; **G. DI GASPARE**, *Diritto dell'economia e dinamiche istituzionali*, Cedam, Padova, 2003.

⁴ "The good law" in fact "is not the law which is in the only service of the economical reasons, rather that which can contrast with them, by avoiding the mercantilism of the society and the identification (and the exhaustion) of the civil rights and natural human rights together with the economical ones, even if they were of property's nature or contextual entrepreneurial": **P. PERLINGIERI**, *Mercato, solidarietà e diritti umani*, in *Rassegna di diritto civile*, 1995, p. 82.

⁵ Beyond the manualistic notion, contained in the last texts, we refer to **G. CASUSCELLI**, *Diritto ecclesiastico e attuazione costituzionale tra de-formazione e proliferazioni delle fonti*, a relation presented at the Meeting on "Il riformismo legislativo in diritto ecclesiastico e canonico" at the University of Studies of Naples Federico II, 27-28 May 2010, today in *Stato e chiese e pluralismo confessionale*, Rivista telematica (www.statoechiese.it), 12-7-2010; **C. MIRABELLI**, *Qualche considerazione tra diritto e religione tra passato e futuro*, in **AA. VV.**, *Diritto e religione. Tra passato e futuro*, Atti del Convegno internazionale, 27-29 november 2008, Aracne, Roma, 2010, p. 39.

⁶ In the Italian idiom there is a certain ambiguity in the word *economy*, it indicates both the economic deeds (economics in English), and the economic theory (economics in English): cfr. **L. BRUNI, S. ZAMAGNI**, *Dizionario*, cit., p. 10, in the economics of the present work the term is mainly used with the second meaning.

⁷ **L. STURZO**, *Il pensiero economico* (by G. Palladino), *Il Sole 24Ore*, Collana Mondo Economico, 9-10-2009.

⁸ "The social doctrine of the Church is not a third way between liberalistic capitalism and Marxist collectivism, neither a possible alternative for the other less radically contrapposed solutions: it is an independent category. It is not an ideology, rather the accurate formulation of the results of a precise reflection on the complex realities of the man's existence, in the society and the international context, in the light of the faith and the ecclesial tradition. Its principal aim is to interpret these realities, by



civil economics⁹, an economic scheme based on the donation, the reciprocity, the gratuitousness. This study hypothesis and these concepts have been deepened, modernized and brought up again, with the authority of the Magisterium, by Benedict XVI, in the *littera*, the object of the present note.

examining the conformities or differences with the teaching principles of the Gospel regarding the man and his earthly and transcendent vocation, in order to direct the Christian behaviour. It does not belong to the ideology field, but rather to the theology, specially the moral theology" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, § 41); cfr. **G. MORRA**, *L'Enciclica "Laborem exercens" di Giovanni Paolo II e la sociologia di Luigi Sturzo*, in **AA. VV.**, *Luigi Sturzo e la "Rerum Novarum"*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 1982, p. 102 and following. On this point see also *La civiltà cattolica*, 19-4-2009, n. 3822, p. 460, for the editorialist the Pope's Encyclical: "must not be considered as a sociology or economics text, neither as a proposal of an ideologically defined third way". The locution *third way* is however contiguous to the Sturzian thought, since it is referred to the thought of Röpke, who is the proposer of an enterprise economics based on the free market, not on the simple capitalism. Cfr. on this point **F. FELICE**, *L'economia sociale di mercato. Origini, relazioni con la dottrina sociale della Chiesa e implicazioni attuali*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2008.

⁹ Luigi Sturzo has been considered one of the first proposer of the civil economics, in fact his biography is well cited in the referring dictionary of civil economics of Bruni e Zamagni; it is common knowledge that his scientific thought mainly develops between the two World Wars. During this period ,it is proposed again by the economists, among them also L. Einaudi, the tradition of the economical thought about the civil economics, which starts from Tommaso d'Aquino and the Franciscan school. Cfr. **A. MARINI**, *Francesco, i francescani, i poveri, l'economia. Considerazioni conclusive*, in **AA. VV.**, *I francescani e l'uso del denaro* (by A. Cacciotti, M. Melli), EFB, Milano, 2011. With civil economics we must intend the economic theory that proposes a humanism with several dimensions, in which the market is not fought nor controlled, but it is considered as a place - not necessarily physical - as the other places, as a moment of the public sphere that, if conceived and lived as a place open to the principles of reciprocity and gratuitousness, can build the town. The proposal that is promoted is then again that of reconcile the dimensions of the human being, by uniting the research for utility with the values that come from the relations with the others based on fraternity: friendship and market relationships cannot be divided. The challenge is not to consider the charity work, the no profit, the third sector as complementary and divided elements, but rather as realities able to positively contaminate, with the power of the donation, the economic action. On this point see **L. BRUNI**, **S. ZAMAGNI**, *Dizionario*, cit., *Introduzione*; **F. FELICE**, *L'economia sociale di mercato*, cit., the Author asserts that the Sturzian work must be situated in the so called ordoliberal school, "where it is considered the role and the function of the State, but at the same time [it is opposed] every form of government control" since "the market order is a *constitutional* order, that is to say, an order characterized by a constitutional frame, with constitutional choices (explicit or implicit). The ordoliberal caught the idea that the concurrence order is a public good, thus it must be safeguarded ... it is a school that helps us to understand that there is an institutional dimension of the liberal paradigm, a dimension which is absent from almost all the liberal literature with libertarian root".



It is not weird that the reflection on the papal document is proposed after two years from the promulgation (29 June 2009). The incidence of such a text in the socio-cultural environment is evaluated in long times.

At this proposal it is appropriate to highlight the considerable delay¹⁰ of the ecclesiastical literature in the exploration of such a new field of research, since the cataloguing of the values in dialectical relation between ethics and economics cannot be unconsidered for the human being's liberty rights¹¹, among which the religious liberty is the main one¹².

The religious economics¹³ is still at the primordial state; nonetheless the wide research program that deals with the relation between economics and ethics, should be observed by the jurist, who must feel involved in the delicate duty of control towards the incidence

¹⁰ Apart from the recent contribution of **M. D'ARIENZO**, *La Chiesa e l'economia*, in *La Chiesa in Italia oggi*, by G. Leziroli, Pellegrini Ed., Cosenza, 2011, p. 38 and f., there is no other work between the ecclesiastical science and economics.

¹¹ «We believe that the pendulum of Foucault is going to privilege the relation between economics and philosophy, and we can understand why: in the phases of accelerated transition – as the actual one – the mathematical-physical sciences do not have much to offer to the economical matter. Rather, they are able to give answers, but not to make the right questions – and this is what the economics mostly needs today. Firstly the question on man. This explains the recent resumption of the economical debate about matters such as ethics and anthropology. And it is also clear the disorientation felt among some economists, who seem to regret the loss of the old certainties – those certainties which only the economics' general theories seem to give. Since some decades the economic science is not able to produce any general theory, but only "local theorizations". Maybe now is the moment to start to really research»: **L. BRUNI, S. ZAMAGNI**, *Dizionario*, cit., p. 13.

¹² "Law and religion can appear as two different worlds...one opposite to the other. But where the law is the expression of the order for the mankind, and the religion is considered as the way that brings to the question about the foundation, the sense and scope of our living, we can understand the bond that unites them. Law and religion are so bound between them that, on the one side the law has pre-purposeful foundations, which in the western thought are the liberty and dignity of man, upon which it is built the concept of subject of law; on the other side the religion, to be professed, needs the juridical acknowledgment of the fundamental freedom of cult and consciousness": cfr. **H. SAMBECK**, *Diritto e religione. Una domanda di ontologia giuridica e un problema di etica del diritto*, in **AA. VV.**, *Diritto e religione*, cit., p. 49.

¹³ Not to be confused with the *economics of religion*, that is, the other branch of the science that studies the problems of the so called *religious market* and the individual economical switches due to the mass conversions from a religion to another, caused by the massive migrations or sudden social changes; this produces, for example, in the world finance a different penetration of the Islamic system. On this matter see a recent meeting in Rome at the Institute L. Sturzo on June 30th and July 1st 2011 on the theme *Islamic finance in Europe*, the acts are going to be published.



of the theological thought on the formation of categories and theoretic structures of the economics¹⁴.

Since a considerable time, the doctrine underlines in fact the necessity of integration between economic and juridical analysis.

“The categories of the juridical knowledge are developed on the basis of a methodological criterion, by following the opposite scheme of *something of the law*. They are the different forms of knowledge through which the law is considered: the classical forms of philosophy of law and history of law have been surrounded by the law sociology, law policy, juridical cybernetic, juridical ethnology and the last *law economics*”

2 - Essential notes on the “popular capitalism” in the thought of Luigi Sturzo

Christianity according to Sturzo has been the first thought movement that considered the moral and ethical problem of property.

“Christianity, by predicating the equality of all the men in front of God, erased the basis to the conception that the diversity among the several social orders would be a natural condition; by predicating the love for the neighbor, it introduced a new value in the moral relationships, and it gave to the concept of justice the most solid foundation and the largest extension”¹⁵.

This revolutionary position¹⁶ of Christianity should produce its effects also in the economic system. From this point it derives the

¹⁴ In the discipline of the law economics the position of the ecclesiastics should be that of circumscribing a sub-sector of the branch, since «with law economics we must not intend the economical analysis of the law, the application of a methodological way ... neither an interdisciplinary analysis ... [but rather] the law economics wants to be a proposal of analysis of the phenomena that start from the behaviour of the economical operators ... from the “private” (or the “market”), to allow a research on the law used by the operators, which sometimes is different from that codified by the judges and doctors»; in this point the law economics differs from the *economic analysis of law*. This is the idea of E. SANTINI, *Il commercio. Saggio di economia del diritto*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1979, which is resumed from Galgano in note.

¹⁵ F. GALGANO, *Lex mercatoria*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2010, p. 237, No. 32

¹⁶ L. STURZO, *La società sua natura e leggi. Sociologia storicistica* (second edition), Zanichelli, Bologna, 1960, p. 117.

¹⁷ “Which operated in the centre of the soul. In the moral consciousness, and by highlighting this consciousness, it almost seemed that it gained a new virtue, a new spiritual quality, that had been absent in the humanity until that moment”, as affirmed B. Croce in his essay of 1942, citing the theological writings of the young



necessity, for the Sturzian historical sociology, to find the epistemological foundations of the economic science.

To reach the delimitation of the economics' object of study, strictly from the sociological point of view, Sturzo starts from the etym of the term, which derives from archaic Greek, and it is the fusion of two words; **direction** of the **home**, oikonomia (oikos=home; nomos=direction, norm). The sociologist asserts that the economics can be considered according to two meanings, each one consecutive of the other, that is, as the influence in living in the society¹⁷, or as a proper form of sociality¹⁸. In the first case, economics is considered as a

Hegel, **B. CROCE**, *Perché non possiamo non dirci cristiani*, in *La Critica*, 20-11-1942, now in P.F. Quaglieni (by), Utet, Torino, 1998.

¹⁸ Economics according to Sturzo is the social science of richness, intending the whole of the thing that accomplish the man's needs. In the Sturzian production there is no systematic comparison in the theoretical-economic whole composed by the neoclassic, Keynesian, Marxist systems. Sturzo will compare these systems randomly: "Sturzo is not Pareto, is not Einaudi, he is not a liberalistic neither of the right side nor the left, he does not look for constitutional spaces of freedom. The liberalism for him is an idea, not a religion; anyway, he categorically refuses the separation between economics and State, in the name of an organic reform ...", asserts **F. PIVA**, *Autonomie municipali e regionali nel programma e nell'azione del PPI*, in **AA. VV.**, *Saggi sul Partito Popolare Italiano*, Edizioni Cinque Lune, Roma, 1969, p. 16.

¹⁹ From the strictly intellectual and speculative point of view, Father Sturzo has been a sociologist; therefore, he considers the economics from the economics sociology' point of view, that is, with the meaning to restore the economical phenomena in the social life context. With this method, Sturzo excludes the epistolary classifications of the terms *production, distribution, circulation and richness consumption*, which changed in the last part into *Science of finance*. Sometimes the author will use improperly in a manualistic way the concepts of social economics, political economics, market economics, mixed economics. "The denomination of some economists of social economics instead of political economics was already present since before; they believe that it is based on the market freedom, while the social economics would be based on the social interventionism. Among many public and private economics, many of them are bankruptcy". Nevertheless one of the bigger contemporary economists of Sturzo, Pareto, defined the economics observations of the Sicilian thinker as "true science", "... I admired the certitude of the doctrines, the science that they showed, and I had to persuade myself that there where many things to be considered as very good, or good; few things to be contrasted, or without exploit": cfr. **AA. VV.**, *Il valore della laicità nel pluralismo della cultura democratica. La lezione della sociologia sturziana nella società contemporanea* (by E. Moroni), Rome, 2010, p. 113. Moreover, just after the second post-war period, one of the founding fathers of the western German economical thought, L. Erhard, defined Sturzo as "the biggest economic writer in Europe ...", cfr. **M. DE GIROLAMO**, *Da Sturzo a Novak. Itinerari etici del capitalismo popolare*, Ed. Dehoniane, Bologna, 2001, p. 112.

After the opposition to the State economics, Sturzo will focus on most of his cultural and political battles, observing that: "the only State economics paralyzes the initiative spirit, the sense of risk, the spirit of gain, in order to transform the citizen



research and supply of subsistence's material means, while in the second case, economics becomes a form of organization that exceeds the pure familiar-individual activity, to turn into a form of organized group, that is, "organized social form". From this conception it arises one of the several expressions – probably the most important – of the solidarity principle, according to which the economics becomes a moral factor of the common life. Therefore, the economic science is not autonomous and it does not have a proper aim, since it is solely a fundamental component of a certain form of society, so the science necessarily entails the analysis of the switchover from *the utility to the ethnicity*¹⁹.

Pope Benedict XVI writes: "*The economics needs ethics for its correct operation; not any ethics, rather an ethics which is friend of the person*" (CV, n. 45). This consideration is already present in the Sturzo's works. The sociologist priest will confute the theory of the economics as an autonomous and finalistic science as follows:

"Nobody doubts that economics, based on the physical elements and powers, is itself submitted to the material world's laws. But the man factor, with his intelligence and will, contributes to the economic causality as a main agent, he can regulate it through his effort; sometimes he can also dominate it and make it useful for his

into an official; the private operator undergoes a disloyal concurrence of the State, its organizations and monopolies", in Sturzo, in the manual of the good politician. On this point, cfr. for a deep historical reconstruction of the so called mixed economics **F. GALGANO**, *Lex mercatoria*, cit, p. 189 and following; **F. FELICE**, *L'economia sociale di mercato*, cit., *passim*.

²⁰ With the help of mathematics and its related functions, we could transform the economics in a system of formulas, also to foresee the next developments; economics would then become a right science as physics and chemistry. Sturzo goes against this conception, since this theory contrasts the conception of abstraction of the *homo economicus*. In the present phase of research, there is a rethink about the formal-mathematical trend, since: "the present dominant trend in the economical research, the formal-mathematical one, should consider a return to this path [the economical ethics] as a progress. At the same time, it could be possible to discover that the anthropological works, mainly of Ropke, Rustow e Muller-Armack are extremely modern": cfr. **J. SARBATTY**, *Soziale Marktwirtschafts*, Tübingen, 1996 (not translated in Italian), against cfr. **G. RODANO**, **E. SALTARI**, *Lineamenti di teoria economica*, Carocci, Roma, 2006, p. 21: "this separation between economics and ethics can be judged as a cause of impoverishment of the discipline. In fact, someone, Amartya Sen thinks in this way, and writes important pages on the matter ... nevertheless almost until today ... the economical science went on without ethics". Even if we do not have any specific competence on this matter, we do not agree with the assertion concerning the considerations. The same author, in the following page, believe that the economical subject needs rationality, that is, philosophy, they need the *rationality* of the economical behaviour, that in economics has a public, then ethical, implication.



needs. The synthesis of the two factors, man and nature, generates the human economics, neither completely free, nor completely deterministic”.

Benedict XVI writes in his Encyclical:

“... It is not the means that has to be involved, but the man, his moral consciousness, and his personal and social responsibility...the economic sphere is neither ethically neutral nor inhuman or antisocial for its proper nature. It belongs to the man’s activity, and since it is human, it must be structured and institutionalized ethically” (CV, 36).

The *ethical, psychological, anthropological and political* values for Sturzo have a fundamental function in the economics. Therefore economics does not have an autonomous and deterministic structure, and its study does not follow a pure science; it is rather the product of the synthesis nature-man, physical laws and social and human volunteer value²⁰.

“Economics as an abstract science of the economic laws – used to be presented in mathematical formulas, in order to show it in its laws outside the human influence – is applied to the material whole of earth’s richness and energies, as they have their proper absolute rhythm. This speculation tends to find the laws of the economics to be used in the practical applications, but it does not exhaust the science of the economics, rather it can falsify it, if it does not consider the man factor, which corrects, modifies, and alters the richness’ material laws, by means of using them for egoistic and individual aims, as for collective and politic aims”²¹.

Concerning this issue, one of the most contemporary theologists writes:

²¹ Sturzo asserts that in the environment of the confession order, there must be an economical structure to defend, affirm, and develop. Even the structure of the social form of the Church needs the supply of the means for survival as a necessary element; the material means can be reduced to the minimum, but they cannot be totally absent, as it happened in the Franciscan poverty, or in other orders. In fact this is the system preferred by St. Paul, that, by reminding in the Gospel that the worker is worthy of his reward, worked manually as curtains producer not to burden on the community. Sturzo finally reminds that, since the first proto-Christian legislation (edict of Milan in 313 ad.: here there are the first prescriptive references for the places of worships’ expenses). About the Church and the material goods, see **S. BERLINGÒ**, *Giustizia e carità nell’economia della Chiesa. Contributi per una teoria generale del diritto canonico*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1991, *passim*.

²² **L. STURZO**, *Politica di questi anni (1946-1948)*, in *Opera omnia*, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1958, v. IX, p. 188.



“since ethics is categorical and not hypothetical, universal and not particular, does not know any *areas or levels which are not subjected to it*, as some economists suppose: they accept the ethical-political reference systems for the national area, but they refuse them for the international one ... against them it must be affirmed that to claim dogmatically *economic conceptions without any ethics* is not economics, rather economic reductionism, *economicism*. However, we cannot assign to success the primacy of ethics”²².

It is common knowledge that the ethical origin of economics starts with Aristotle, according to whom the economics cannot be disunited from the man's aims; therefore, the study of this subject is aimed at understanding firstly the achievement of richness, secondly at explaining that the pursuing of richness (*Kremata*) must not be an end in itself, rather it must be directed toward other goals of ethical nature: from here it starts the intradisciplinarity of economics with the other branches of ethics and political philosophy.

Thus the strictly engineeristic nature of the economic science is rejected by Sturzo as a research method, also to avoid that mathematics as means of analysis could turn out to be the object of the analysis itself²³.

Even if Sturzo knew the charm of the Cartesian philosophy – which applied the mathematical method, with its absolute precision, its logical structuring and its abstract efficiency, also to the human sciences – reminded to himself that the *esprit de géométrie* is inseparable from the *esprit de finesse* (Pascal). According to Sturzo, mathematics and social engineering, by reducing the solution of the problems to the pure quantistic aspect, with a series of abstract formulas they could bring the economic analysts towards pseudo-clarity and an apparent efficiency²⁴.

The statistics, the *econometrics* with the quantum mechanics must be working tools of the analysts, not for a research end in itself, since an economics based only on mathematical models is far from the real and

²³ Cfr. H. KÜNG, *Onestà. Perché l'economia ha bisogno di un'etica*, Rizzoli, Milano, 2011, p. 185.

²⁴ It is not a case that the first work of A. Smith, father of the modern economical science, deals with the theory of moral feelings.

²⁵ After all, in the informatics age, the situation could complicate even more. This happened in the 2008 global crisis, the most negative economic crisis from the crisis of tulips in Netherlands (1639). Nevertheless the defenders of the nomofilactic origin of economical engineering could not foresee the Argentinean default and the actual crisis.



concrete sense of the events of the economic life of the person and groups²⁵.

It is not a case that Benedict XVI writes:

“the conviction to be self sufficient and to eliminate the evil present inside the history only with his proper actions, has brought the man to make coincide happiness and salvation with immanent forms of material wellbeing and social action. The conviction of the *need of economic autonomy* [our cursive], that must not accept any moral influence, brought the man to abuse of the economic tool even in a disruptive way” (CV, n. 34).

The political institutions (firstly the State), religious institutions (beginning from the Catholic Church), and the other intermediate organisms (family), if they considered the economics as an end in itself, they would forget every moral sense in the goods' pursuit, and they would greedy accumulate the material richness. This phenomenon occurs nowadays in the so called *pure liberalistic* systems²⁶ in which: “the problem switches from the pure economic field to the political one, and it is subjected to the refractions of other crisis and of other serious breaches. The different decisive tendencies develop in the economic field and are projected onto the political field: the purely individualistic tendency, which concerns the issue of the game of free powers, with the elimination of the weak, and the victory of the strongest²⁷.

Moreover, according to Sturzo, if economics is considered as synonym of richness, it becomes the main aim of the social activity, it becomes chrematistic:

²⁶ On the point we must cite *Contrappunto* document of the **CONSIGLIO PER L'ECONOMIA POLITICA E SOCIALE ELVETICO** of 11-5.2008: “the economics is not an end in itself; it is useful to promote the wellbeing of the community and the loyal life of human beings in the liberal-democratic civil society in which we wish to live. Indeed, it can work in a long term only on the basis of the society's principles and values. In brief, a true economics is based on the values and transforms them in the reality”: v. in **H. KÜNG**, *Onestà. Perché l'economia ha bisogno di un'etica*, cit., p. 188.

²⁷ **A. ALESINA, F. GIAVAZZI**, *Il liberismo è di sinistra*, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 2007: “what Sturzo proposes is not the elimination of the economical liberalism, but its ethical overtaking of the political liberalism ... according to Sturzo, as to Einaudi, the necessary foundation and completion of the liberalism is liberalism, as a political system based on the religious doctrine of the natural human right and the inviolability of his consciousness ...”; cfr **G. MORRA, G. PALLADINO**, *Quale liberismo, quale capitalismo nel pensiero di Luigi Sturzo*, Ed. Cinque Lune, Rome, 1998, p. 7.

²⁸ **L. STURZO**, *La società*, cit., p. 122, the liberalistic or new liberalistic system considers the profit and the market laws as absolute parameters at the expense of the dignity and respect to the human being, with the isolation of the weak; on this point see also *Centesimus annus*, no. 56.



“then, the society that alters its aims, by directing its research towards hedonistic satisfactions, begins to deteriorate, and disrupt its ethical-social synthesis; it begins to diminish until it will lose the efficacy of collective consciousness”.

On the contrary, in an economics of fair type, every effort must be directed toward the participation of each member to the richness produced that circulates in the society, by means of disciplining with ethical-juridical principles the relations that arise in the economic field, so as to close the way to excesses and egoism, both individual and collective. In this process, the material fact becomes moral; the economic relation finds a collocation also in the juridical systematic²⁸.

The Pope explicitly refers to the Conciliar teaching formalized in the no. 61 of *Gaudium e Spes*, and he writes:

“I wish to remind to everyone, especially to the governors committed in a renewed profile according to the world’s economic and social structures, that *the first capital to be safeguarded and enhanced is the human being, the person in his integrity*: the man is the author, the centre and the aim of all the economic and social life” (CV, n. 25)²⁹.

Therefore, both for the Papal Magisterium, which refers to the social doctrine of the Church, and for the Sturzian thought, the economics must be included in the “*moral sciences*”³⁰.

²⁹ From here Sturzo starts to criticize the Marxist theories on economics. “The error [of Marx] is not in the analysis of the influence that material causes can generate on the person and society, but rather in doing material causes thus – a logic consequence – in giving him a characteristic of necessity ... we do not deny the economical influence on society, we deny that is it the only historical social causality and that it is a deterministic causality. In our opinion, economics influences the forms of sociality, so as to become one of the basic elements and one of the direct aims of the social activity” ... “a communist conception that transforms the State into an economical enterprise, that subjugate every human activity to this scope, can be based only on a fundamental materialistic conception of life, with the total abolition of the human personality ... hence the ethical repugnance of such a conception”, L. STURZO, *La società*, cit., p. 124.

³⁰ The teaching of John Paul II is similar: “if once the production decisive factor was the soil, and later the capital, intended as a whole of machinery and of capital goods, today the decisive factor is ever more the man himself, that is to say, his capacity of supportive organization, of understand and satisfy the need of the others” *Centesimus annus*, n. 32.

³¹ Cfr. L. BRUNI, S. ZAMAGNI, *Dizionario*, cit., p. 6 of *Introduction*.



3 - The economic liberty and the rules' liberalism

According to the catholic liberal thought the property – intended as the extension of the human individuality to the things, to the material goods – is licit, both in the individual and collective forms. It is present in the most ancient documents: the Bible, the Genesis³¹. The incapacity (Sturzo prefers the term *weakness*) of some individuals, such as minors and elderly people, to spend their energies for the supplies, makes the collective property licit, in a system of social solidarity³².

The labour force is consequently strictly related to this idea of property. In particular, the production work must be mainly safeguarded in this conception, since it is the referent of specific forms of society, such as the enterprise, intended as secondary form of

³² "Genesis says that Joseph, at the beginning of the predicted famine, sold the grain collected in the granary of the king and gained the money. The year after, since the people did not have any more money, Joseph exchanged the grain with the cattle; the year after, since the people had no money not cattle, Joseph buys all the lands, that became in this way lends of the king, except the priests'. In this way, the Egyptians became colonists and slaves of the king; they had to give to the king the fifth part of the grain harvest, and the other four parts were used for the seeds and food of each family": L. STURZO, *La società*, cit., p. 114. Sturzo cites as one of his masters also Rosmini, who defined the property in his *Lezioni di filosofia del diritto*: "the private property truly expresses that strict union of a thing with a person ... This kind of union called property is always between the person and the thing, and implies a domination of the first over the last. The property is a principle of the derivation of juridical rights and duties. The property constitutes a sphere around the person, and the person is the centre; nobody else can enter this sphere" (A. ROSMINI, *Filosofia del diritto*, Utet, Torino, 1865, p. 228); these concepts were confirmed also in the texts of the last Conciliar meeting: "the private property or another power on the external goods, assure to everyone an essential area of personal and familiar autonomy, and must be considered as a necessary continuation of the human liberty", *Gaudium et spes*, n. 71.

³³ In the economics of the present work, there is no space for the analysis of the controversy against Marxism in the thought of Sturzo; here we underline that the Author believes that: "the hypothesis of an evolution from a primitive communism to an economical specification toward the property is not confirmed by reliable data": L. STURZO, *La società*, cit., p. 111; and also: "the communism has become a faith for some people, a nightmare for some other; for everyone a parameter to measure good and evil. On this perspective the human solidarity is eliminated and exchanged with the dictatorship of the proletariat that becomes only the dictatorship of a new oligarchy, with the help of bureaucracy and police. There will be no more free citizenship, nor supportive brotherhood, but rather moral and economic servitude, with no hope for better fortune": L. STURZO, *Diritti e doveri nella solidarietà*, in *La via*, 3 Jan. 1953.



sociality³³ and as a fundamental mean for the cooperation in the economic society.

Cooperation and enterprise for Sturzo are the right tools to face the risks of the stable property, as hoarding or violent conquest of the goods, limited to some privileged groups, which are linked to political, economical and religious oligarchies.

According to Sturzo, the sociological basis of the individual structure and function of the economics implies the necessary coexistence of the individual and public property, individual and collective, common and undivided, following the main economical types.

“Therefore, if the communism is not considered in its integral aspect of abolition of every private property, neither the State socialism in its main characteristic of substitution of the State to the private initiative and socialization of every enterprise, we cannot admit the economical individualism, which excludes the social structure of the property”³⁴.

Thus for Sturzo, the economic system must be necessarily cooperative and fair, but it must also be at the centre of the whole development mechanism for the promotion of the human being; as a consequence, the economics must assume an ethical dimension.

In order to realize such principles, the sociologist has been one of the first promoters of the cooperative credit, by contributing during the twenties in its Catania province to the formation of the first agricultural credit banks³⁵. These banks must be founded on the principle of economic solidarity, which moves the little resources of the agricultural catholic world, related to the capillary parishes' organization. The inspiring reason of such an initiative was not that of gathering the economical resources spared through the familiar savings, rather that of making available for the agricultural entrepreneur, which operated at the borders of the big credit system, the resources for the daily activity of his farm³⁶.

³⁴ In the following paragraphs it will be highlighted how in the papal texts, it is preferred the economic expression of enterprise, instead of market economics. Cfr **AA. VV.**, *L'imprenditore fra i problemi economici e il messaggio cristiano*, in *il Mondo Economico*, 28-3-1985.

³⁵ **L. STURZO**, *La società*, cit., p. 125 and following.

³⁶ Cfr. **P. CAFARO**, *Banche popolari e casse rurali tra '800 e '900: radici e ragioni di un successo*, in **AA. VV.**, *Le banche popolari nella storia d'Italia* (by P. Pecorari), Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Venezia, 1999, p. 46 and following.

³⁷ The work, society and its nature and laws comes before the Church and the State; after the publication of *Rerum Novarum* Sturzo was a twenty years old seminarian, at



Even for the effects of the economics in the working field, Sturzo has a totally original proposal, which is to promote a trade union autonomous from the parties, in order to accept the cultural challenges of a society that was going to become modern, since the end of the First World War³⁷.

The Pope Ratzinger writes:

“the whole of social and economic changes leads the trade unions to experiment many difficulties in accomplishing their task of representing the interests of the workers, also because the Governments, for reasons of economic utility, often limit the trade unions’ liberty or the capacity to negotiate with them. The invitation of the Social Doctrine of the Church ... [is to] give life to the workers associations... to create new synergies, not only local, but also international...” (CV, no. 25); therefore: “it is still valid the traditional teaching of the Church, which proposes the distinction of roles and functions between trade union and politics. This distinction will allow the trade unions to individuate in the civil society the most appropriate environment for their necessary defence action and their promotion of the work, especially for the exploited and not represented workers, whose condition is often ignored from the careless eye of the society” (CV, n. 64).

Finally, with the agricultural reform, the abolition of the large landed estate, the redistribution of the property on the cultivable ground; the switch of the class of agricultural earners should have been done towards the co-participation and direct conduction of the funds, and the diffusion of actions among the workers³⁸.

the end of the nineteenth century, the world had seen only four democracies; there had never been any national experiment of real socialism: Leone XIII defined socialism not only as an evil, but also an evil designed for the failure; almost a century will pass before the humanity recognised that the Pope Pecci’s assertion was prophetic. Therefore, Sturzo’s sources are Toniolo, Meda, beside the classical such as Genovesi (Civil economics), Minghetti (Public economics), Lampertico (economics of States and People), Scialoja (Social economics). From the Church teaching point of view, the years of Sturzo’s formation correspond to the publication of *Rerum Novarum* of Leone XIII in 1891, of the *Quod apostolici muneris* in 1878 (about the errors of the Socialism), of the *Immortale dei* (1885) about the relations between Church and political communities, of the *Libertas* (1888) about the principle of liberty, until the *Quadragesimo anno* of PIO XI in 1931, **G. DE ROSA**, *L’orizzonte e il contesto di un’enciclica*, in **AA. VV.**, *I tempi della Rerum Novarum*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 1999.

³⁸ Cfr. **A. CANAVERO**, *I cattolici nella società italiana. Dalla metà dell’800 al Concilio Vaticano II*, Ancora, Brescia, 1995, pp. 17-27.

³⁹ *Latifunda Italiam perdidere*. Cfr. **L. STURZO**, *Riforma agraria nel Mezzogiorno (a proposito di un voto)*, in *Riforme e Indirizzi politici, Opera Omnia* (a cura di N. Antonetti),



In the Sturzo's thought the economic sociology is oriented toward a system of market economics, or rather an enterprise economics.

It must be aimed firstly to the lowering of poverty³⁹. Sturzo observes that the persistence of this plague in most of the world's populations is not due to the capitalistic system (otherwise it would not be explicable the high density in the pre-capitalistic countries), but rather to the difficulty in realizing a system of enterprise economics, in those countries where there are strong conflicts from few lobbies, that possess the production goods. After fifty years, Benedict XVI will assert:

"without love ... there is no consciousness nor social responsibility, and the social action is at the mercy of private interests and logics of power, with destructive effects on the society, even more in a society that is going to be globalised, in such difficult moments as the current one" (CV, n. 5).

At this proposal, Sturzo reminds also the difference between the concept of economic poverty and spiritual poverty.

"For most of us, being poor of spirit means stupid, or shy, or something similar, while the expression of the Gospel means to be *spiritually poor*, that is, not to possess with the spirit, with the bond of the spiritual effect, anything that forms the worldly richness ..."⁴⁰.

The economic problems regarding poverty cannot be divided from those regarding inequalities. According to Sturzo, there are differences that are contemplated in the projects of Providence, such as age, physical talents, and intellectual capacities. When someone wants to eliminate these natural differences by means of an economics of equalitarism, it starts the socio-economical failure. The history of the countries with a State economics, with its consequent hyperbolic collapse of finance, taught us that the equalitarism is itself a source of poverty.

p. 115. On this point we refer to recent history manuals of history of Italian agriculture: E. BERNARDI, *La riforma agraria in Italia e negli Stati Uniti*, Bologna, 2006; AA. VV. *Storia dell'agricoltura italiana*, Marsilio, Venezia, 1991.

⁴⁰ G. BONI, *Chiesa e povertà una prospettiva giuridica*, Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano), 2006.

⁴¹ L. STURZO, *Lettere non spedite*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1996, p. 131.



Finally, to defend the enterprise economics, Sturzo observes that the logic of profit must not be exchanged for the idea of exploitation⁴¹. At this proposal, Sturzo recommends a legislation which can give sufficient guarantees against the exploitation. On the contrary, for the ethical economics, the profit must be used as an incentive for the investments and the production, and consequently for the creation of new working places. On this matter Benedict XVI asserts:

“the profit is useful if, as a means, it is oriented toward an aim which gives it a sense, both on how to be produced, and to be used. The exclusive aim of the profit, if badly produced, and without the common good as final aim, could destroy richness and produce poverty “ (CV, n. 21).

The Sicilian thinker could not go too far.

He writes to fight the good battle against the totalitarianisms that caused destruction in Europe from the thirties on, in the pre-Conciliar period. The socio-political context is characterized by a certain reluctance of the majority of the catholic world for the State, for the catholic movement committed in politics, that is to say, with scepticism for the idea of democracy as a government system, since it is considered a heritage of the French revolution. The catholic thinker died on 1959, just before the big reform of the Catholic Church⁴².

From this date, the society has come under a deep transformation in every sector⁴³, included the election of two non Italian Popes. It must be reminded that the election of K. Woytila is not only the election of a non Italian cardinal – nearly five hundred years after – but also of a component of the Conclave that had dedicated all his pastoral commitment to fight, with love, the Marxist economical and state economics systems; in facts, in the *Centesimus annus*, at the centennial of the *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Woytila could affirm:

⁴² Many observers note that the idea of profit is incompatible with the catholic doctrine, since where there is profit, there is no soul salvation, says **E. SEVERINO**, *Fra Weber e Novak. È giusto arricchirsi per salvare l'anima?*, in *Corriere della Sera*, 27-6-1999. Cfr. **O. BAZZICCHI**, *Profitto e lavoro nella cultura cattolica*, in *Quale impresa*, n. 3-4-1986; **A. QUADRIO CURZIO**, *Per una riflessione sul profitto*, in *Aggiornamenti sociali*, XXXVI, 1985, pp. 675-686.

⁴³ **G. VECCHIO**, *Luigi Sturzo. Il prete che portò i cattolici alla politica*, ITL, Milan, 1997, who observed that Sturzo comes after the *Debellatio Stati pontifici* and just before the II Vatican Ecumenical Council. Cfr. also **G. DE ROSA**, *L'orizzonte*, cit.

⁴⁴ **G.B. VARNIER**, *Stato cattolico e Stato laico in Italia*, in **AA.VV.**, *Il principio di laicità nello stato democratico*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 1999, p. 197.



“if the capitalism is defined as an economical system that recognises the positive and fundamental role of the enterprise, of the private property’s market, and of the consequent responsibility for the production means, of the free human creativity in the economics sector, the response is surely positive, even if it would be more appropriate to talk of enterprise economics, or market economics, or simply of free economics. But, if capitalism is intended as a system in which the liberty in the economics sector is not figured in a solid juridical context so as to be useful for the whole human freedom, and to be considered as a particular dimension of this freedom, whose centre is religious, then the response is definitely negative” (*Centesimus annus*, n. 48).

In the *Sollecitudo rei socialis*, no. 20, the Polish Pope, by demonstrating a deep sense of political ductility, does not proclaim himself as the author of the Marxist systems’ fall; the collapse of the “opposed blocks” is due to the idea of a progress which is committed only to economics and technology, thus apart from the promotion of the human being.

The “popular capitalism”⁴⁴, professed by Luigi Sturzo already during the thirties of the past century, has founded its highest award.

4 - Synthesis considerations

Without any claim of exhaustiveness, these brief notes seem to give a key of reading to individuate the links between the Sturzian thought and the teaching of the Encyclical *Caritas in veritate*: maybe between the ecclesiastical law and economics.

For a more detailed and complete analysis, it will be necessary that the analyst considers that the *Caritas in veritate* does not want to be an economics treaty, rather a theological-pastoral document whose argumentations are in the point of conjunction between the social sciences and the Christian anthropology that judges and connects them⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ The expression belongs to F. FELICE, *Lo sviluppo umano nel nostro tempo*, in AA. VV., *Amore e verità. Commento e guida alla lettura dell’Enciclica Caritas in veritate di Benedetto XVI*, ed. Paoline, Milano, 2009, p. 59.

⁴⁶ F. FELICE, *Lo sviluppo umano*, cit., p. 41.