



Morganti Carlo (2016). *Comunità e Stato, Europa e Occidente. La politica secondo Guardini* [Community and State, Europe and West. The Politics according to Guardini]. Firenze: Centro Editoriale Toscano, 290 pp.

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The “political thought” of Romano Guardini (1885-1968) cannot be described as a simple political aspect of his philosophical and theological thought, but must be considered as the result of the “fusion” of reflections and studies of the “various Guardinis”, i.e. the philosopher, the theologian, the observer of the politics of his time and, above all, the “man of faith”.

The volume by Carlo Morganti seems to fully confirm this approach, as shown in the *Introduction*: “Politics, State, Europe: three concepts of great relevance, today as in the first post-war period, according to the interpretation of Romano Guardini, philosopher and theologian, Italian in name and German in life. In the background, there is the political, economic and cultural crisis that upsets the German world between the beginning of the century and the day after World War I. A real political sense is missing in German society” (p. 11). In the words of Morganti we find the coordinates and the constitutive elements of the theoretical elaboration of Guardini: the three key concepts of his political thought, his condition of Italian-German, his “professions”, his interest in politics and his aversion to individualism and lack of values.

From a theoretical-political point of view, individualism and the loss of “political sense” are the basis of Guardini’s reflection of the concept of “community”, seen as “more than the sum of the individuals who constitute it”. Consequently, Guardini rejects Nietzsche’s conception, which wants to reduce the community “to an aggregate of personalities devoted to a mediocre life [...], in which the personalities of the individual are indeed cancelled and automatically levelled downwards”. On the contrary, in Guardini’s opinion it is not true that “community makes common people”, whereas “the community makes special individuals, [...] since it helps [them] in his path of knowledge and self-discovery” (p. 36).

Therefore the community represents, also from a spiritual point of view, the negation of individualism: “The inconsistency of any alleged isolation of the human personality is rooted in the link [...] with the eternal, in the light of which man he is able to give full meaning to his life and to show a special option for the community” (p. 38). This “special option for the community” becomes,

in Guardini's vision, a necessity of individuals and perhaps the only remedy for the lack of values mentioned above: "The aspiration to the community, strongly evoked by peoples affected by a political and spiritual crisis, in Guardini's vision it responds [...] to a dual direction: on the one hand to the definitive search for the homeland [...] and to the affirmation of the State, which is the instrument acting in the history of the community; on the other, the development of the supranational community, which gathers together peoples united by the same cultural-religious tradition" (pp. 87-88).

Thus the three key concepts come: Politics, State and Europe. The starting point is the "indissoluble bond" which, according to Guardini, "binds together politics, understood as the fertile ground on which a people makes its own social nature sprout, and that state which that same people then needs to express oneself and to realize oneself in its own historicity" (p. 110). The State, "the instrument acting in history", is therefore associated with the "political", considering the dimension in which "the associated life is fully given" (p. 246). Regarding the relationship between politics and the state, Morganti writes: "Between a Schmitt, who thinks that politics precedes the State, and a Kelsen, who claims instead that the pure Law, devoid of any ethical or political implications, is playing the lion's share and the State identifies with the legal system, Guardini chooses the intermediate way, stating that Politics and the State proceed together" (p. 246). Politics, Guardini argues, must therefore necessarily be recovered.

The State, the second key concept, is defined with equal clarity: "Guardini's State is the 'representative of God' in earthly things: in God, the only holder of truly sovereign prerogatives, there is the source of its authority. Meaningless the positions that the modern doctrine of the state has demanded to condense in the simplistic formula of 'popular sovereignty'. The limit that the State encounters in its action is also twofold: from above it is responsible towards God, of whom it is still representative of; from below, it is bound to respect the rights of men, persons and children, who belong to God and are not mere objects in its full availability" (p. 246).

Even Europe, the third key concept, is present in Guardini's thinking and is closely connected with the concepts of Community and State (and therefore of Politics): "Guardini aims at understanding the interweaving that binds community and state, exalting the community aspect without depressing the individual within a multi-level structure, focusing on People and State as important moments in the development of a community in view of an ever-larger homeland. [...] In parallel, Guardini develops natural human sociality by framing it in a path that leads the individual to embrace the community and the community to open up to other communities in a perspective of supranational solidarity and cultural and political community: in its practical translation, the inclusion of the individual in an increasingly broader political context, with a specific reference to Europe and, more precisely, to the Catholic and Western Europe" (pp. 88-89).

In essence, Europe is the final goal, it is the conclusion of a process of "unification", first of individuals within the community and then of the various

communities within the framework of a “supranational community”. The supranational dimension, among other things, is proper, for Guardini, of the medieval period: “The Middle Ages are [...] Christian, but also profoundly European. The signs of Christian supranationality are housed there” (p. 195).

The “process” that leads to the supranational dimension also appears to be able to contribute to the attainment of a permanent peace, based on the openness towards the “other”. Such an opening assumes a vision of the world that, within certain limits, overcomes the dated question of economic interdependence in the international arena and comes to touch what could be an embryo of “globalization”. Guardini states: “Already the young man learns today, while living in different parts of the Earth, to think globally. Already he feels that what happens in his city exerts its influence in all the cities; that what concerns his land also concerns all the lands. Where he feels this relationship with the whole earth, it is a question of his life situation: in science or technique, in art or in politics or in the economy - but somewhere he hears the appeal to the vastness of the earth and, if he is awake, even a responsibility for it” (p. 237n).

For Guardini, such responsibility is linked to fidelity, which must be “fidelity to a greater homeland”, which “does not imply total disengagement, but an even greater capacity for service and love” (p. 239). In fact, there is no loyalty, but a bond founded on a set of loyalties outlined by Morganti: “That link is found in the relational multiplicity peculiar to the great realities, which translates into a fruitful whole of fidelity that today we would call multiple: to the people and to Europe. This is made possible, especially for a German, in relation to the fact that the German people, while accepting in principle an underlying unity, has for centuries been politically divided into a myriad of more or less small state entities, linked only from the common juridical bond of loyalty to the Emperor of the Holy Roman Germanic Empire, an entity which in turn is quite distant from its subjects. Thus the German people develop a relationship of fidelity on various levels, allowing them to belong to multiple entities, hierarchically disposed: loyalty to their local prince and the Emperor, loyalty to their Land and to the Reich, to Bavaria rather than to Prussia or to Saxony and at the same time to Germany” (p. 237). In this double belonging it is possible to grasp some elements that are perhaps compatible with a federalist vision.

In any case, Europe is the main supranational reference of Guardini, the common homeland that has the task of undertaking a long journey towards a profound moral and political renewal that would inaugurate a season of “spiritual Eurocentrism”.

In conclusion, the volume, which stands out for its rigorous biographical, historical and cultural contextualisation and is also embellished by an extensive bibliography and an effective set of notes, offers the reader numerous points for reflection, also in an interdisciplinary key.