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THE (A)POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MORETTIAN
ASCETICISM WITHIN CARABELLESE'S PHILOSOPHICAL
DOCTRINE OF CRITICAL ONTOLOGISM

Sommario

Questo articolo analizza le connotazioni storiche, speculative e biografiche dell'ascetismo filosofico di Moretti-Costanzi, concentrandosi principalmente sull'arco di otto anni che va dalla sua nomina ad assistente volontario di Carabellese durante il primo periodo romano fino alla morte di Carabellese nel 1948. L'obiettivo è chiarire l'origine di questo concetto e il suo assorbimento nel lessico speculativo e nel quadro teorico dell'ontologismo critico.

L'ascesi della coscienza, così come intesa qui, è un'idea originale di Moretti che svolge un ruolo cruciale nell'analisi tardiva di Carabellese delle forme di manifestazione immanentemente significative dell'Essere, ma il modo in cui è stata incorporata nella matrice speculativa dell'ontologismo critico ha suscitato critiche da parte dello stesso Moretti. Questa critica è seguita a un lungo dialogo con il Maestro, che Carabellese ha descritto come un "sodalizio" e Moretti, per rispetto e deferenza, ha definito un "discepolato". Questo articolo esamina quindi la traduzione di Carabellese del concetto di Moretti nel lessico "apparentemente" politico-filosofico – "apparentemente" perché, per Carabellese, rimane quasi interamente teorico. Questa analisi, quindi, affronta una singolare traiettoria di influenza che fluisce dal discepolo al Maestro, piuttosto che, come di solito accade, dal Maestro al discepolo.

Parole chiave: coscienza, ontologia, personalismo, neo-bonaventurismo, dialettica

Abstract

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This paper analyses the historical, speculative and biographical connotations of Moretti-Costanzi's philosophical asceticism, and focuses primarily on the eight-year span from his appointment as Carabellese's voluntary assistant during the first Roman period to Carabellese's death in 1948. The aim is to clarify the origin of this concept and its absorption into the speculative lexicon and theoretical framework of critical ontologism.

The asceticism of consciousness, as understood here, is an original Morettian idea that plays a crucial role in Carabellese's later analysis of the immanently significant forms of manifestation of Being but the way it was incorporated into the speculative matrix of critical ontologism has drawn criticism from Moretti himself. This critique followed a lengthy dialogue with the Maestro, which Carabellese described as a "sodalizio" (*partnership*) and Moretti, out of respect and deference, referred to as a "discepolato" (*discipleship*). This paper thus examines Carabellese's translation of this Morettian concept into the "apparently" political-philosophical lexicon - "apparently" because, for Carabellese, it remains almost entirely theoretical. This analysis, therefore, addresses a singular trajectory of influence that flows from the disciple to the Maestro, rather than, as is usually the case, from the Maestro to the disciple.

Keywords: consciousness, ontology, personalism, neo-Bonaventurism, dialectics

Introduction

It is an uncommon occurrence for a disciple's doctrinal developments to achieve such theoretical significance that the Maestro himself revises his speculative position and incorporates the disciple's suggestions into the very framework of his philosophical doctrine. Even more exceptional is the case in which the disciple, with both intellectual rigor and confidence in his position, demonstrates the philosophical and scientific objectivity necessary to engage - gratefully and respectfully - with the Maestro and his doctrine in a sustained dialectical dialogue. Such a dialogue, while often oppositional, avoids negation, and functions instead as a critical exchange or, more precisely, an enrichment of the original doctrine. Authentic, disinterested, and above all "true" philosophizing thus arises under the undisputed authority of the Maestro, who is rightly credited as the founder but always accompanied by a critical "I" — one that does not merely "repeat" but engages in dialogue, examines, reflects, and stays true to his own philosophical and personal development.

The relationship between Carabellese and Moretti-Costanzi illustrates this dynamic, with Carabellese adopting the foundational Morettian

concept of the asceticism of consciousness into his philosophical lexicon. In his only work directly addressing the pressing problems of reality, *Political idea of Italy*,¹ Carabellese dedicates particular attention to this concept, and sees in it a possible pathway for Italy as it struggles to find its own identity. Moretti deeply appreciated Carabellese's adoption and application of the concept; however, he did not fully endorse its reconfiguration. With a combination of reverence and critical engagement, he sustained an intellectual dialogue with the Maestro — frequently through his writings and recollections — long after his demise.

While it may be unconventional to begin an introduction by quoting the very core of such a significant work — a work that, given its depth of theoretical analysis, warrants careful contextualization and its own dedicated prefaces — there is one statement by Carabellese that succinctly captures the essence of the critical-ontologist absorption of this concept and its adaptation in a way that Moretti considered impersonal and, therefore, distant from the concept's original vision: «The political reconquest of the Idea must, therefore, be a political asceticism».² Carabellese emphasizes here that the political idea of Italy, in its broader sense, represents the political personality of Italy, which seeks its path through its spirituality. This same spirituality signifies absolute concreteness and does not refer to any content that, in its dialectical opposition to subjects, could compromise the formation of such an identity, established through consciousness, within consciousness, and above all consciously, from the perspective of the wholeness of the personal self.

Moretti, in fact, frequently emphasized that the profound sense of disorientation, rooted in his own lived experiences and coupled with an unending desire for renewal and life, drove him to deeply contemplate and ultimately propose his concept of asceticism.³ The journey toward the unity of a shared identity, built upon countless pillars of possibility for such unification, naturally led to the concept of asceticism but also left open the question of its speculative nature and the modalities of its expression.

To fully comprehend the development of Moretti's later neo-Bonaventurism, as well as the evolution of Carabellese's philosophical

¹ P. CARABELLESE, *L'idea politica d'Italia*, Signorelli, Rome 1946.

² Ivi, p. 253.

³ See, e.g., «Avvertenza» in T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *L'Asceta Moderno*, in T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Opere*, edited by E. MIRRI and M. MOSCHINI, Bompiani, Milan 2009, p. 13, dated April 25, 1945.

thought — particularly during the final decade,⁴ when Moretti established himself as an active and credible interlocutor and collaborator — it is imperative to investigate the origins of the concept of asceticism in Moretti's work, alongside the specific characteristics it acquires during its formative stage. Such an inquiry is essential to understanding Carabellese's critique of this concept and his subsequent redefinition of it within the framework of its application to the political dimension of reality.

Furthermore, to elucidate the concept's evolution within Moretti's philosophical trajectory, it is necessary to analyse Moretti's response to Carabellese's speculative reinterpretation, because over time, the concept underwent a transformation from its initial negative connotations to a more positive vision of the world's redemption, thereby aligning, in certain aspects, with Carabellese's approach. This examination ultimately illuminates the reasons behind Moretti's rejection of Carabellese's expansion of the concept, and identifies points of convergence with Moretti's later, more substantively positive reconceptualization of the same.

1. *The emerging concept of asceticism*

It is well-documented, both historically and biographically, that Moretti's concept of asceticism was first solidified in his 1945 work *The Modern Ascetic*⁵ and that its origins, closely linked to the tragic historical and geopolitical circumstances that deeply affected him, including the personal loss of his father, trace back to earlier years. This loss overlapped

⁴ The gradual development of Carabellese's doctrine, along with an exploration of its features across different stages of his philosophical speculation, serves as a key criterion for analyzing his thought within an increasingly complex ontological vision of reality. A significant contribution to the historical-philosophical and speculative contextualization of Carabellese's work can be seen in the presentation of his writings from various phases of his intellectual journey, accompanied by thorough, comprehensive, and critical analyses of their content, the relevant historical context, and biographical details that, to varying extents, shaped his theoretical framework. See F. VALORI, *Saggio introduttivo*, in P. CARABELLESE, *La coscienza morale*, Carabba, Lanciano 2014; *Saggio introduttivo*, in P. CARABELLESE, *L'essere e la sua manifestazione. Parte I: La dialettica delle forme*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Naples 2003; *Saggio introduttivo*, in P. CARABELLESE, *L'essere e la sua manifestazione. Parte Seconda. L'Io*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Naples 1998.

⁵ In various parts of his «Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi: un profilo» in T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Opere*, cit., E. Mirri highlights the pivotal role of this work in shaping the concept of asceticism; see, for instance, pp. XVII-XVIII.

with an already profoundly challenging period, both existentially and personally, shaped by the time and place in which Moretti lived.

The Modern Ascetic was written between the spring of 1942 and the fall of 1943, revised in the spring of 1944, and finally published the following year. This timeline holds doctrinal significance, as it shows that this work was conceived during the closing phase of Moretti's first Roman period and later revised during his return to Pozzuolo. This revision process began shortly after the death of his father and in the midst of the atrocities Moretti witnessed in his surroundings and firsthand. As Mirri notes, Moretti's first Roman period was far less weighed down by the harsh realities of the time — a situation that would change profoundly under the impact of the events he soon came to witness.⁶

1.1. *The first Roman period. Foundations of critical-ascetic ontologism*

What is known in Moretti's biography as the first Roman period is particularly significant because it marks the establishment of a speculative framework of what would become critical-ascetic ontologism. This framework not only legitimizes and justifies the use of the term "critical ontologism", drawn from Carabellese's work, but also highlights the distinctive elements of Moretti's approach — elements that would later underscore the necessity and relevance of adding "ascetic" to the existing term.

During this period, Moretti engaged deeply with Schopenhauer and, at Carabellese's suggestion, with Varisco.⁷ He absorbed Varisco's ideas to such an extent that he explicitly noted how Varisco's problems had largely become his own.⁸ At the same time, Moretti maintained a strong sense of intellectual autonomy, critically assessing both Varisco's speculative framework and Schopenhauer's, which he adapted into a Christian-oriented vision of reality.

In the preface to the first edition of *The Modern Ascetic*, Moretti clearly acknowledges his doctrinal foundation in Carabellese's work but the very conceptual structure of the text makes it evident that he was introducing a new element to Carabellese's speculative framework: the concept of

⁶ Ivi, pp. XI, XVII.

⁷ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Il problema dell'uno e dei molti nel pensiero di B. Varisco*, Perella, Rome 1940.; *L'importanza di Bernardino Varisco nel pensiero contemporaneo*, in «Segni dei tempi», 2, 1941.; *Noluntas*, Perella, Rome 1941; *Schopenhauer*, Edizioni italiane, Rome 1942., now in T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Opere*, cit., pp. 1961-2317.

⁸ E. MIRRI, *Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi. La vita e le opere*, Carabba, Lanciano 2012, p. 46.

asceticism, which Moretti presents within the context of a confessional-philosophical tradition — a tradition that distinguished him from Carabellese far more than from Varisco.

Several components of critical ontologism both shape and provide the theoretical foundation for Moretti's speculative intervention in Carabellese's ontologism, while also marking the initial phase of the genealogy of the concept of consciousness in Moretti's work. The first key element is the abstraction from the concrete, where this "distancing" from Being becomes a defining characteristic of Moretti's early conception of asceticism, profoundly influenced by Schopenhauerism. In this framework, the articulation of the principle of consciousness — another foundational component of critical ontologism that plays a pivotal role in this phase — necessarily proceeds through abstraction "from" the concrete, rather than engagement "with" or "within" it, as would later shape Moretti's mature thought. Additionally, with the recognition of the primacy of Being as a further foundational aspect of Carabellese's system, Moretti underscores the necessity of conceptualizing consciousness through the doctrine of its gradation.

The convergence of these elements, combined with the Schopenhauerian underpinnings of Moretti's worldview at this stage, gives rise to an understanding of asceticism as a means of confronting the emptiness and nihilism of life, its transience, and its often apparent meaninglessness. Moretti conceives of human life — its endeavours and its searches for questions and answers — as largely futile efforts directed toward union and yearning for a wholeness that remains perpetually out of reach, as structurally unattainable through the immanent frameworks of the world.

Although Moretti's perspective already demonstrates a marked departure from Carabellese's thought, he has not, to this point, situated these issues, as he would later, within the theoretical categories of redemption and salvation. Consequently, a distinct boundary continues to persist and operate between the immanent realm of the lived world and the transcendent dimension of its ultimate Principle. At this stage, Moretti's thought, in fact, advances through the opposition of world and God, wherein the nullity of the former is revealed in contrast to the fullness of the latter.

1.2. The second Roman period. Delineation of Moretti's philosophical autonomy

Moretti's return to Rome, shortly after the front shifted from Cassino, during the resumption of suspended courses from 1943/44 — in his case, *Moral Philosophy* and *Aesthetics* — marks the beginning of Moretti's second

Roman period. The publication of *The Modern Ascetic* coincided with this early phase of the second Roman period, which already demonstrated a substantial degree of autonomy from Carabellese.

During this second phase, Moretti frequently highlighted Carabellese's pivotal role in his process of self-analysis, his discovery of his own philosophical identity, and the articulation of the profound religious and spiritual foundations through which ontologism was subsequently redefined.⁹ The defining traits of Moretti's personalism become increasingly clear at this stage, as he reinterprets Carabellese's foundational doctrine of the many "I"s into a conception of many thinking, living persons. It is therefore indicative that Moretti engaged with Spinoza precisely during this period.¹⁰ For Moretti, in fact, what unites critical ontologism with Spinoza's work is their shared insistence on a unifying principle of existence, to such an extent that the anthropological element vanishes and dissolves into the universality of Being itself. Still under the significant influence of Schopenhauer, Moretti found in this parallel an additional theoretical foundation for his initial ascetic vision of the world, where the escape from the world — or more precisely, from life itself — becomes the path toward an authentic vision of the *fundamentum*. The fulfilment of life, in this view, can only be defined in opposition to such a principle, primarily in a privative sense and not in the redemptive or inclusive one that asceticism would later take on in Moretti's philosophical worldview.

Further legitimacy for Moretti's engagement with Spinoza, aimed at solidifying the concept of asceticism, lies in the fact that, despite the dissolution of the anthropological element into a much broader vision of the *fundamentum*, Spinoza himself gave considerable importance to asceticism: *De intellectus emendatione* and the fifth book of his *Ethics* stand as evidence of this claim, which ultimately became an indispensable theoretical pillar in Moretti's critical-ascetic ontologism.

As Mirri notes, Carabellese's concreteness of consciousness now definitively takes on the qualifier "ascetic", as this concreteness is inseparable from the process of asceticism embedded in its very

⁹ Particular attention is warranted for the unpublished work *L'ontologismo critico di Pantaleo Carabellese*, in which Moretti observes: «Carabellese finds in me a disciple with both soul and intellect, not merely a kind of spokesperson» (cited from E. MIRRI, *T. Moretti-Costanzi*, cit., p. 64). Additionally, the 1948 conference *Ontologismo critico e cattolicesimo sul problema di Dio*, though published a year later, deserves mention, as does *L'asceta moderno Pantaleo Carabellese* from 1949, now compiled in *Opere*, cit., pp. 1909–1932.

¹⁰ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Spinoza*, Universitas, Rome 1946.; now in *Opere*, cit., pp. 2319–2490.

definition.¹¹ Moretti, in turn, critiques the modern scientific view of reality, fully aligned with Carabellese's efforts while also incorporating important personalist elements. Moretti's critique of science focuses on its failure to adequately grasp otherness and, consequently, its lack of a concept of personhood.¹² By contrast, Carabellese's critique was rooted in the sectorial nature of scientific thought and the nullity of any philosophy that does not take Being as Being as the central object of its inquiry.

Mirri also underlines that the dichotomy between science and philosophy in Moretti's thought inherently points toward the idea of a gradation of consciousness, even though this term had not yet appeared explicitly in his philosophical vocabulary.¹³ Despite the fact that the introduction of the concept of the person into critical ontologism challenged the foundational assumptions of ontologism itself, as the concept of the person had no prior place within it and Carabellese would never have accepted a definition of God as a person, this notion still remains aligned with the foundational principles of critical ontologism, particularly with the assumption that what is referred to as the gradation of consciousness is neither a psychologistic addition nor is the asceticism of thought merely a transcendental, abstract elevation of the subject.

The mutual ontological interdependence of the subject and the Principle, as interpreted by both Carabellese and Moretti, aligns with Spinoza's redefinition of "thought" as the explication of Being in itself, within the structures of the world and the existing reality. What will later be understood as the gradation of thought here becomes a way of explicating the First Principle — God — through the dynamics of reality and its inherent laws of existence. For Moretti, asceticism, while still understood as being "from" the world, is increasingly transforming into an asceticism "of" the world itself — emerging from within — as part of the process of self-realization of the person toward a higher state of consciousness.¹⁴ The concept of asceticism, at this point, starts to

¹¹ See E. MIRRI, *Teodorico Moretti-Costanzj*, cit., p. 72.

¹² In this context, the appendix of Moretti's later work, *L'uomo come disgrazia e Dio come fortuna* (Alfa, Bologna, 1972), is particularly notable. It includes the publication of a conference titled *Scienza e filosofia*, held on May 13, 1947, at Palazzo del Drago.

¹³ See E. MIRRI, *Teodorico Moretti-Costanzj*, cit., p. 73.

¹⁴ The qualitative meaning of the asceticism of consciousness, which does not withdraw from the world but instead elevates it to a higher vision of thinking and living consciously, is explored with particular theoretical and speculative depth in M. MOSCHINI, *Ascesi della mente e recupero del mondo nell'ontocoscienzialismo*, in «Il Pensare – Rivista di Filosofia», II, 2013, pp. 77-96. The author elaborates

encompass the modes of establishing and explicating reality within the dynamism of existence, beyond the purely volitional sphere of the subject, which is itself redefined and existentially grounded in the concept of personhood.

2. *Implementation of the concept into critical ontologism*

In accordance with one of the earliest speculative premises of critical ontologism — that the notion of the Idea “in” and “with” our consciousness represents the arduous and exhausting effort to move toward the true objectivity and concreteness of reality — Carabellese introduces the concept of asceticism, framed within a vertically oriented metaphysics grounded in a Platonic vision of reality. He also refines this concept into a more specific notion — “active asceticism” (*ascesi operosa*) — which moves beyond the dichotomies of a dualistic view of reality, where the opposition between subject and object, or in this case, body and spirit, action and contemplation, remain a valid premise of the approach. Carabellese rejects such a dichotomy and reclaims the theoretical meaning of action, «its infinite theoretical nature, that is, the awareness it offers of the Principle underlying all conscious action».¹⁵ Dualism is thus resolved here in the active immanence of living, feeling, and willing. Since these are the foundational characteristics of the concept of person, it is reasonable to assert that critical ontologism adopts certain distinctly Morettian connotations.

2.1. *In dialogue between two positions*

Carabellese’s *Political idea of Italy* was written when *The Modern Ascetic* had already been completed, revised, and ready for publication. Carabellese worked on his piece from September 1944 to January 1945, while Moretti, as previously mentioned, revised his work in the spring of

on the positive significance of asceticism, fully developed within a mature neo-bonaventurian framework: «Asceticism, then, of myself over myself; not as estrangement from the world or an escape from it, but asceticism within the world and with the world, in striving to know more and qualitatively better. It is I who elevate myself, I, with my singularity, within the societal and communal dimension that this implies. Asceticism ‘of myself’ and of myself ‘with other thinkers,’ in which consciousness reclaims its connection to its environment, its objects, and its capabilities, through the shared knowledge of the foundation of the world», pp. 83-84.

¹⁵ P. CARABELLESE, *L’idea politica d’Italia*, cit., p. 251.

1944 and published it in 1945. This is further corroborated by Moretti's critical essay *Pantaleo Carabellese* (1964),¹⁶ where he remarks that such a concept of asceticism can be traced back to the dialogue with the Maestro at the time of the first edition of *The Modern Ascetic*.¹⁷

Moretti here reveals the simultaneity of his conceptual development of asceticism and its incorporation into the lexicon of critical ontologism by Carabellese himself. Mirri observes that «to the framework of the concreteness of consciousness, there is added — and ultimately made dominant — the ascetic dimension of the same, which was, in reality, foreign to ontologism. Carabellese was positively struck by this and devoted some attention to it in a passage of *Political idea of Italy*».¹⁸

Equally noteworthy is the harmony between Moretti's focus on the concept of person and Carabellese's interpretation of Italy's political situation as that of a person searching for its identity. The idea of a personality in search of itself, yet still undefined within the highly complex landscape of political, existential, and other forms of consciousness, reflects Carabellese's view of this fundamentally immanent issue which, in his speculation, transcends the immediate reality, and finds renewal in the concreteness of consciousness through an awareness of its metaphysical foundation.¹⁹

Franciscanism, in particular, provides Carabellese with a theoretical and speculative framework in which this intrinsically constitutive concept emerges as foundational. In contrast to the dominant political ideas of his time, Carabellese adopts the Franciscan microcosm as a model for the self-realization of Being within a holistically conceived reality. The invocation of Franciscanism is especially significant, given its role as one of the key intellectual sources informing Moretti's conceptualization of asceticism. For Carabellese, Franciscanism «affirms a will for social life», enabling a delicate balance between the asceticism “from” the economy and “of” the

¹⁶ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Pantaleo Carabellese*, in Id., *Opere*, cit., pp. 1945-1959.

¹⁷ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Opere*, cit., p. 1955.

¹⁸ E. MIRRI, *Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi*, cit., p. 72.

¹⁹ This dual aspect of political thought in Carabellese is strongly emphasized in M. CASUCCI, *L'(in)attualità politica di Pantaleo Carabellese. Alcune note su L'idea politica d'Italia*, in «Logoi.ph – Journal of Philosophy», VII, 17, 2021, pp. 15-29. In this work, the author underscores the urgency dictated by the concrete realities of life — namely, the need to contribute to the rediscovery of national and personal identity. However, in Carabellese, this endeavor is expressed through a metaphysical analysis of phenomenally given forms, which reflects the true essence of critical ontologism as it grounds all reflection on reality, insofar as it is real, in a unifying ontological principle.

economy.²⁰ In Moretti's interpretation, on the other hand, this balance will both be more explicitly emphasized and explored across a much broader philosophical landscape.

2.2. Carabellese and Moretti's Schopenhauerianism

The critical tone Carabellese adopts in addressing Moretti's concept of asceticism is closely tied to the negative connotations of asceticism that Moretti emphasized during this early phase of the concept's development. The version of Moretti's asceticism known to Carabellese — inevitably, given the chronological development of the later Neo-Bonaventurian Bologna school and the subsequent neo-Bonaventurism — was, at this stage, still distinctly Schopenhauerian in character. In his *Political idea of Italy*, Carabellese writes:

It is not merely a matter of moving forward but of ascending — and being fully aware of the ascent. The higher one climbs, the more the spiritual organism, through the strengthening practice of ascending, is uplifted by the infinite vastness of horizons and the fascinating marvel of achievements. The journey toward the Idea is not a simple path; it is an ascent, a climbing — an “active asceticism” (*l'ascesi operosa*).²¹

Carabellese explicitly references Moretti here, pointing to the Schopenhauerian nature of his concept of asceticism — which it indeed was, with *noluntas* highlighted as a speculative necessity for defining the term itself. He thus argues that this concept operates squarely within the dichotomy of body and spirit, when he writes:

It does not seem to me that my young friend, Prof. Moretti Costanzi, has moved beyond the alternative, as in *The Modern Ascetic* [...] he attempts to elevate Schopenhauer's *noluntas* to a conscious asceticism and believes he can deduce this elevation from critical ontologism. As long as *noluntas* is not abandoned, no rapprochement with critical ontologism is possible — only that of an asceticism that mortifies all activity [...].²²

The critique is entirely understandable, as the ultimate affirmation of *noluntas* would paralyze the very subject, or person, who would thereby aspire to realms that transcend corporeality and the immanent concreteness of reality itself. In this initial phase of defining asceticism, Carabellese perceived Moretti's Schopenhauerian influence as a «condemnation of this life in the name of another», and therefore as an

²⁰ P. CARABELLESE, *L'idea politica d'Italia*, cit., 258-259.

²¹ P. CARABELLESE, *L'idea politica d'Italia*, cit., p. 251.

²² Ivi, p. 253.

asceticism that is «contradictory, mortifying rather than uplifting, anguished rather than beatific even in suffering». It is, as Carabellese put it, «an asceticism that does not recognize the objective intrinsic nature of God in consciousness».²³

Carabellese thus rightly highlights what Moretti would later overcome with the evolution of this concept, which, in its later phases, would encompass the wholeness of the volitional dimension of reality in terms of the Franciscan divine.²⁴ This divine once again gives meaning to the earth and its status, which is ontologically significant for defining reality in its entirety. Despite Carabellese's seemingly decisive critique, it is worth noting that, in the same passage, Carabellese, in an almost Jaspers-like manner, removes the limits of all doctrinal constraints. This allows the substance of each doctrine, established in light of the Principle and through the Principle itself — keeping it in view at every step of the self-analysis of existence — to emerge as the unifying component of every diversity. At this point Carabellese continues with the following affirmation, still in a polemical tone against Moretti's Schopenhauerism:

Anyone who genuinely embraces asceticism may adhere to any philosophical theory about sense, will, or intellect, but they will not destroy their body to impose inaction. Instead, they will enliven it as an instrument for action — be it through feeling, will, or intellect. [...] We must achieve that immanentistic asceticism, which theistic objectivity both allows and demands. In this context, asceticism holds a much broader and deeper significance than mere negation of life.²⁵

²³ Ivi, p. 251-252.

²⁴ To properly contextualize the development of Moretti's thought, as well as to understand the concept of asceticism in the later, more advanced stages of his work and the transition toward defining the unique aspects of his speculative framework, see: E. MIRRI, *Ontologismo critico e ascesi di coscienza*, in «Giornale Critico della Filosofia italiana», 1, 1957, pp. 91 – 99.; *Il pensiero di Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi come un nuovo bonaventurismo*, in «Doctor seraphycus», n. 50, 2003, pp. 5 – 19.; *Pantaleo Carabellese. L'ontologismo critico*, in Aa. Vv., *Filosofie minoritarie in Italia fra le due guerre*, edited by P. CIARAVOLO, Rome 1985, pp. 87 – 114.; *La nuova scuola bonaventuriana bolognese*, in «Quaderni dell'Istituto di Filosofia» dell'Università di Bologna, 1, 1976, pp. 9 – 25.; M. MOSCHINI, *La coscienza. Note sul concetto di coscienza e sapienzialità*, in *Pensare il medesimo II*, edited by A. PIERETTI, ESI, Napoli, 2007, pp. 43–63; *La fedeltà a Rosmini come criterio della riforma dell'ontologismo critico in Moretti-Costanzi*, in «Rosmini Studies», I, 2014, pp. 93–107; and the same author's *La fede sapiente e la coscienza nel paradigma filosofico neo-bonaventuriano*, in «Rosmini Studies», 9, 2022, pp. 203–214.

²⁵ P. CARABELLESE, *L'idea politica d'Italia*, cit., p. 253.

For Carabellese, the effort of consciousness is an ascent toward the Idea, and asceticism, like any form of human action, is inherently spiritual. But rather than negating corporeality, it embraces and enriches it in the most profound speculative sense:

Every ascent toward the Idea is a form of spiritual asceticism — one that does not condemn the life of the one ascending as something evil but instead elevates it through the Idea and transforms it into its manifestation. It is an asceticism that breathes life into and animates every action that is genuinely human.²⁶

This statement encapsulates the reasons behind and the methods of Carabellese's critique of the early development of Moretti's concept. The transcendence of the distinction between subject and object is here, much like in Carabellese's opposition to Hegelian-leaning schools of thought, a key criterion for assessing the theoretical validity and coherence of a philosophical position.²⁷ This is framed through the notion of a unified Being of consciousness, which both enables and harmonizes every immanent manifestation of reality.

3. *Moretti's critique of the political use of asceticism*

In his reflection on Carabellese's incorporation of asceticism within the political spirit of philosophical thought, Moretti's position reveals two key aspects. The first is his significant attention to and emphasis on this speculative move, which he sees as a genuine expression of the deepest theoretical spirit of critical ontologism. The second, in contrast, is his fundamentally critical stance toward his Maestro.

Moretti thus describes Carabellese's political intervention as a "contamination" of the concept, and argues that Carabellese's introduction of this notion into the discourse "on the people" is both theoretically inconsistent and incorrect.²⁸ Carabellese's abstraction of subjects into a larger entity that, in turn, re-establishes itself as a person is, according to Moretti, unacceptable. Such an entity diverges structurally from what we are in accordance with our ontological status because —

²⁶ Ivi, p. 251.

²⁷ The concept of "plural unity" (*unità plurima*), identified here as a distinctive feature of Carabellian theorization, is examined in detail by F. VALORI in *Le sfere e i punti luminosi: la quantità spirituale in Pantaleo Carabellese*, in «Il Pensare – Rivista di Filosofia», 10, 2020, pp. 150–161.

²⁸ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Opere*, cit., p. 1955.

Moretti argues — we are not “social organisms”²⁹ but rather “persons”. These very features also shape Carabellese’s work itself, as «*The political idea of Italy* — the last work published during Carabellese’s lifetime — seeks to be a contamination and a convergence, inherently impossible, between the idealist concept of the people and onto-conscious philosophy».³⁰

Moretti is, here, in a positive sense, both radical and distinctly contemporary. His critique of Carabellese remains grounded in the deconstruction of concepts such as “the people” and “nation,” and aims to weaken identity-based distinctions that hold significance only — and thus are entirely insignificant — within the inauthentic phenomenal realm of experience. According to Moretti’s interpretative position, these distinctions cannot serve as an adequate criterion for an authentic philosophical inquiry into the concept. This is also, for Moretti, a latent error that deviates Carabellese significantly from the genuine onto-conscious premises of speculation and places him in alignment with schools of thought — particularly the idealist ones — from which he not only distanced himself but toward which he maintained a consistently critical stance. Carabellese fundamentally criticized these schools for their differentiation between subject and object — a distinction that ultimately led to a form of subjectivism manifesting as «protagonists of history in the form of grand identities such as nations or peoples».³¹

Moretti therefore refers to Carabellese’s *Theological Problem* as the point where Carabellese correctly directed his philosophical focus toward Christian mystics, which was also intended to serve as the endpoint of an onto-conscious interpretation of this concept. At the same time, Moretti does not hesitate to affirm that Carabellese never, in a manner authentically aligned with the concept of asceticism, devoted himself to such a philosophical and speculative outcome. This ultimately led to the concept being transferred into the sphere of politics, where it does not properly belong.

Conclusion

The relationship between Carabellese and Moretti emerges as a singular and exceptional dynamic, rarely paralleled in the history of thought. The adjective (a)political, in which the privative element is associated with a

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ibidem.

positive quality and thus highlighted, while ambiguity persists and remains unresolved, aptly reflects the doctrinal influence Carabellese absorbed from his disciple. However, Carabellese reinterpreted it in an entirely new and distinct manner — so original that his disciple, at least in the specific context of asceticism (considered here as a defining criterion of their relationship), did not endorse such an innovative reinterpretation. In the disciple's judgment, it exceeded the speculative boundaries of its philosophical meaning.

Asceticism, in this context, does not serve as a corrective or a mere supplement to Carabellese's critical ontologism: a corrective would imply a repudiation of certain foundational premises, while a supplement would suggest an external addition, not inherently rooted in the original articulation of the doctrine.

Instead, Moretti undertakes an internal process of integration and refinement — better understood as a profound unfolding of the theoretical matrix from which the doctrine originates. While this integration might be perceived as overly shaped by the disciple's personal worldview, it gains legitimacy through the Maestro's partial acceptance, alongside his continued philosophical engagement with, and often through, these (new) perspectives. This engagement includes the assimilation of conceptual elements presupposed by Moretti's interpretation with the pronounced personalistic overtones characteristic of his approach that remain, to some extent, external to the original ontologist framework, as they are neither explicitly present nor fully explicated in its foundational formulation.

Carabellese's interpretation of Moretti's notion of asceticism, as noted, is not strictly political but rather ontological, framed within a broader practical perspective. More significantly, this interpretation is shaped less by a confined disciplinary focus and more by the political demands of the historical context in which it emerged. Although Carabellese's interpretation is far removed from a strictly political application and cannot be classified as conventional political philosophy, Moretti objects to his abstraction of the concept into generic, cumulative forms of persons. For Moretti, persons are singular, unique, and unrepeatable, engaged in open dialogue that is both existentially grounded and Edenically concrete. Cumulative social forms lack the substance required to serve as true interlocutors — beings with whom one can genuinely engage — and instead reduce to abstract and hollow concepts, devoid of both theoretical enrichment and practical value to the understanding of persons as such.

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