



# *the* Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas



## Vittorio Possenti



**Date and place of birth:** 25 March 1938, Rome, Italy

**Appointment to the Academy:** 21 February 2004

**Scientific discipline:** Political and Moral Philosophy (other concerns: Metaphysics and Epistemology)

**Academic title:** Full Professor

### Academic awards and distinctions

Member of the National Committee on Bioethics, Rome (1999-); Member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (2003-); Founder and Director of Venice University Interdepartmental Research Centre on Human Rights; Director of the Institute for Philosophical Studies, Milan (1975-1981); Founding Member of Institut International Jacques Maritain (1974); Member of Steering Committee of SITA (Thomas Aquinas International Society); Consulting Member of the *Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo cum non-credentibus* (1992-94). 'Salvatore Valitutti International Prize' for the book *Il nichilismo teoretico e la 'morte della metafisica'* (1996); 'Capri san Michele Prize' for the book *Religione e vita civile* (2002); Member of Board of Directors: Review of World Union of Catholic Philosophical Associations; Member of the Scientific Committees of the 'Centro Studi Filosofici di Gallarate', and of the 'Institute Veritatis Splendor' (Bologna); Member of the editorial Board of the journals *La società* (Verona), *Sensus Communis* (Roma), *Per la filosofia* (Roma), *Sapientia* (Buenos Aires); Director of the series *Annuario di Filosofia* (1996-).

### Summary of scientific research

The main subjects of my research have focused on theoretical philosophy and on social philosophy. In theoretical philosophy the mainstream of my research has been devoted to the metaphysical and gnoseological realism, with several insights concerning the pivotal problems of intellectual intuition, concept of being and the idea of truth as correspondence or conformity. These aspects have been developed through the metaphysical tradition of philosophy of being, considered as the 'third navigation', a more perfect progress in historical development of Western philosophy after the 'second navigation' discovered by Greeks (mainly Plato). The philosophy of being recognises as a zenith the thought of Aquinas and of his great followers in the 20th century, who deepened the relation between natural task of reason and supernatural election of Revelation as a criterion of opening and fostering human research. A new interpretation of theoretical nihilism, understood as deep antirealism, refusal of intellectual intuition and oblivion of being, has been developed under the assumption that world philosophy, notwithstanding the huge amount of efforts devoted to this matter, is still lacking of a sufficient answer to the crucial question: what is (theoretical) nihilism? In recent years philosophy of being has been developed in the direction of a 'Principle-person', in the light of an ontological personalism, involved in bioethical questions and war-peace problems. In the second field an effort has been carried out for the scientific restoring of political philosophy, at risk of being dissolved by the attacks of behaviourism and of radical social sciences. In a critical dialogue with the neoliberal and neoenlightment traditions, the effort aimed at rediscovering central notions as practical reason, common good, people, democracy. Subsequently, close attention has been addressed to the question of political globalization, peace and the building up of political institutions capable of matching the new dimensions of common good, which now has world scope; and to the perspective of a religiously qualified 'new public sphere' where Christianity and democracy could meet. Importance has also been attached to the theologico-political problem from a twin perspective: the post-modern revival of a public role for the great world religions; the assumption that in the West the new public role for Christian faith can lead to a positive relation between religion and politics, different from the usual one in modern times, often marked by their deep separation.

### Main publications

**Books** *Frontiere della pace*, Massimo, Milano 1973; *Filosofia e società. Studi sui progetti etico-politici contemporanei*, Massimo, Milano 1983; *Giorgio La Pira e il pensiero di san Tommaso*, Studia Universitatis sancti Thomae in Urbe-Massimo, Roma 1983 (*La Pira tra storia e profezia*, Second revised edition, Marietti, Genova 2004); *La buona società. Sulla ricostruzione della filosofia politica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1983; *Una filosofia per la transizione. Metafisica, persona e politica in J. Maritain*, Massimo, Milano 1984; *Felice Balbo e la filosofia dell'essere*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1984; *Tra secolarizzazione e nuova cristianità*, EDB, Bologna 1986; *Le società liberali al bivio. Lineamenti di filosofia della società*, Marietti, 2a ed., Genova 1992; *Oltre l'Illuminismo. Il messaggio sociale cristiano*, Edizioni Paoline, Roma 1992; *Razionalismo critico e metafisica. Quale realismo?*, Morcelliana, 2a ed., Brescia 1996; *Dio e il male*, Sei, Torino 1995; *Cattolicesimo e modernità*, Ares, Milano 1995; *Approssimazioni all'essere (Scritti di metafisica e di morale)*, Il Poligrafo, Padova 1995; *Il nichilismo teoretico e la "morte della metafisica"*, Armando, Roma 1995; *Terza navigazione. Nichilismo e metafisica*, Armando, Roma 2004 (second ed.); *Filosofia e Rivelazione*, Città Nuova, 2a ed., Roma 2000; *La filosofia dopo il nichilismo*, Rubbettino, Soveria 2001; *Religione e vita civile. Il cristianesimo nel postmoderno*, Armando, Roma 2002; *L'azione umana*, Città Nuova, Roma 2003; *Essere e libertà*, Rubbettino, Soveria 2004; *Radici dell'ordine civile*, Marietti, Milano-Genova 2006; *Il Principio-persona*, Armando, Roma 2006; *Profili del Novecento*, Effatà, Cantalupa 2007. About 300 essays and articles. His books and essays have been translated in ten languages: English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Dutch, Czech, Lithuanian.