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insulaire d'Ibiza<sup>107</sup>, afin de dépasser l'image d'un paysage phénicien urbain et maritime au profit d'une étude approfondie des occupations dans leur environnement.

Élodie Guillon

Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès (UT2J)

PLH-ERASME - Maison de la Recherche

5, allées Antonio Machado

31058 Toulouse Cedex 9

eguillon31@gmail.com

## *Tradition de la pensée politique*

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### **Tragedy and History. About a Recent Book on Arnold Toynbee<sup>108</sup>**

Vito LIMONE

The main aim of this book by Federico Leonardi is to propose a new view of Arnold Toynbee's philosophy of history, tracing its roots back to a little known lecture the British historian delivered in Oxford on May 1920, *The Tragedy of Greece*. In fact, the book's appendix contains the first Italian translation of the lecture (*The Tragedy of Greece. A Lecture Delivered for the Professor of Greek to Candidates for Honours in Literae Humaniores at Oxford in May 1920*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1921). In this conference Toynbee sketched his view of the civilization, that later he applied in his masterpiece, *A Study of History*, whose twelve volumes were composed and immediately edited by Oxford University Press between 1934 and 1961. Critics always agreed that Toynbee was irenic and they dismissed his mix of history and theology, whereas Leonardi puts forward that Toynbee was tragic and consequently to understand history is to recognise its tragedy and to seek an alternative, a reconciliation.

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<sup>107</sup> C'est l'objet d'un programme de recherche de deux ans financé par l'IDEX ATs Patrimoine de Toulouse: «Phéniciens et Puniqs à Ibiza. VII<sup>e</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> siècles av. J.-C. Patrimoine archéologique et modélisation spatiale».

<sup>108</sup> Federico LEONARDI, *Tragedia e storia. Arnold Toynbee: la storia universale nella maschera della classicità*, Aracne, Atene e Gerusalemme 9, Roma 2014, 160 p.

The book is divided into three parts: firstly, an introductory essay reconstructs the most important topics of Toynbee's lecture on the basis of his cultural and philosophical personality; secondly, Leonardi reports a detailed, although selected bibliography of Toynbee's works in which he lists not only the most remarkable books, articles and essays about different questions, from ancient civilization in general to Greek-Roman civilization, but he also suggests to the reader the corresponding Italian translations and the most useful critical literature; finally, the last and very interesting part consists in the first translation into Italian of the above mentioned lecture, *The Tragedy of Greece*, and of another lecture which he gave in Madrid on October 1951 (*Cómo la historia greco-romana ilumina la historia general*, Rústica, Madrid 1952), while he was accomplishing his *A Study of History*. Leonardi's choice of editing these two lectures, the first dated 1920, the second 1951, is not accidental: in fact this allows the reader not only to compare Toynbee's ideas before the redaction of his masterpiece with his ideas at the end of his project, but also to recognize that his philosophy of history and his image of the civilization are almost the same from 1920 to 1951. And Leonardi's essay, which is a convincing critical presentation of this philosophy of history and this image of civilization, helps to acknowledge this conceptual continuity.

As Leonardi clearly shows in the first part of the book, Toynbee's philosophical position, especially his interpretation of the historical process, must be comprehended considering the cultural context, e.g. French, German, British historiography among 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the first and most significant works about this topic was F.R. Chateaubriand's *Essai historique sur les révolutions*, published in 1797 (whose following English translation, *Historical, political and moral essay on revolutions*, was published in London in 1815, immediately after Napoleon's fall): in this book Chateaubriand insisted on the identity between revolutionary Athens, on the one hand, and revolutionary Paris, on the other hand. Nevertheless, B. Constant in his *De la liberté des Anciens comparée à celle des Modernes*, an address delivered at the Athénée Royal de Paris in 1819, and F. De Coulanges' *La Cité antique*, published in 1864, stated that one of the most evident mistakes of 18<sup>th</sup> century historiography was the wrong stance about the political and cultural identity between ancient and modern societies. However, although 18<sup>th</sup> century historians thought that there was no difference between ancient and modern political systems, they introduced an important principle of historiography, i.e. the analogy. In fact they argued that ancient people, particularly Greeks, had a political system similar to modern politics, particularly French politics, because of an analogical comparison. The analogy became an important background through which to analyze historical events.

While in France the historiography alternated a successful judge about the analogical continuity among Ancients and Moderns and an austere criticism regarding this continuity, in England the publication of E. Gibbon's *The history of the decline and fall on the Roman Empire*, between 1776 and 1788, imprinted a confirmation to the application of analogical method to historiography: the idea of the *Commonwealth*, for instance, seemed to have been preceded and anticipated by the Delian League, built by Athens in 5<sup>th</sup> century b.C. Moreover, in Germany, some years later, the historiography became a proper *Altertumswissenschaft*, particularly according to E. Meyer's *Geschichte der Altertums*, published between 1884 and 1902, in which he extended the historiographical observation not only to Europe, but also to eastern people, and he strictly associated the historiographical research with the sciences of antiquity. These were the premises on the basis

of which Toynbee formulated his idea of history, in particular ancient history: a) there is no identity between ancient and modern civilizations, but analogy, and an analogical relationship implies that, although there must be lots of similar topics in common between the civilizations which are compared, there must be also some differences; b) the research in antiquity and in ancient history is proper a science and it interacts with other sciences of antiquity, e.g. the philology, although its method is analogical. This entire cultural context is well expressed by Leonardi in his introductory essay, and it suggests to the reader a clear image of the ideological and literary environment which influenced his works, included the lecture *The Tragedy of Greece*.

Toynbee's view of history, as Leonardi states, is based on two main ideas. Firstly, he believes that Greek-Roman history is the model according to which the entire history of Europe can be interpreted. Leonardi explains that this concept is expressed by O. Spengler in his masterpiece, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, published in two volumes in 1918 and 1922, where he focuses on the so called "Faustian Civilization". According to Leonardi's hypothesis, Toynbee's idea that the Greek-Roman history is the model of the entire history and that it is possible to build a universal history on this basis depends on Spengler's image of the "Faustian Civilization". The other main idea of Toynbee's philosophy of history is the "tragicity" of Europe, which, on the one hand, tries to create a universal and total image of history, also on Greek-Roman model and, on the other hand, can not enclose the events into an inclusive and conceptual model. This contradiction, which is analyzed by Toynbee, is well expressed by F. Nietzsche, particularly in his *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, published in 1872, and *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, composed between 1873 and 1876. Spengler and Nietzsche, as Leonardi clearly argues, are the two main sources of Toynbee's conception of World History and of Ancient History. Moreover, according to these two premises – the world history's claim to totality and the "tragicity" of this cultural project – Toynbee defines his image of Greek-Roman history. In particular, since the lecture that he delivered in 1920 he declares that the entire Greek-Roman history can be divided into three acts: 1) the first act corresponds to the period between 9<sup>th</sup> century b.C. and 431 b.C., during which there were the birth and the evolution of Greek civilization, the increase of the *póleis*, the Greco-Persian Wars, the foundation of the Delian League as defense against external enemies; 2) the second act corresponds to the period between 431 b.C. and 31 b.C. and consists in the succession of different sovereignties, i.e. the Athenians, the Spartans, the Thebans, finally the Macedonians and the Romans; 3) the third act corresponds to the period between 31 b.C. and 7<sup>th</sup> century a.D., which is entirely characterized by the supremacy of Roman Empire and its final, necessary decline.

Leonardi suggests that, according to Toynbee's interpretation of history, the civilization is always at a crossroad and is constantly bound to make choices: on the one hand, the civilization has the opportunity to go beyond its boundaries, extend its power and be always involved into war; on the other hand, each civilization has the opportunity to mediate with other civilizations and so benefit from the results of this mediation. History, as Leonardi clearly explains, is always a history of civilizations, and each civilization is always at a crossroad and can either choose its own destruction, which results from its extension and the growth of its power, or its salvation, which comes from its mediation with other civiliza-

tions and, in other terms, a limitation of her its power. The history of civilizations is essentially tragic, i.e. is always called to opt her ruin or its salvation.

Leonardi gave us a new image of Toynbee's philosophy, without sparing some hard critics to the British historian. Nevertheless, highlighting Toynbee's virtues and flaws, Leonardi dares to hint at a new philosophy of history, balancing the relation between classical antiquity and the future of the West.

**Vito Limone**  
Università Vita e Salute San Raffaele  
Via Olgettina 58  
20132 - Milano (Italia)  
vitolimone@alice.it