

Obituary

Eugenio (Enio) Benedetti



Professor Eugenio Benedetti 1935–1998

On the 2nd of August 1998, Prof. Eugenio Benedetti died following cardiovascular complications. The scientific work of a scholar, in particular in the field of the economic sciences, is always a hard-fought battle, above all if one constantly questions one's own convictions in order to remain faithful to oneself. Eugenio Benedetti, known as 'Enio' to his friends, was one of those scholars who were always dissatisfied with models and theories, in their continuing search for a perhaps unattainable scientific truth. His intolerance of scientific dogmas was also visible in his relationships with people from whom he asked loyalty, as this was his way of working.

He was born in Schio in 1935 of a well-to-do family. After attending Scientific High School he enrolled at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Padua, where his entire scientific career was based. Padua was also where he made his home. He graduated brilliantly and from 1959 to 1973 was a volunteer assistant to the chair in Political Economy at the Faculty of Law in Padua and then ordinary assistant

in Political Economy at the Faculty of Political Science of the same university, initially focusing his interests on industrial economy. In 1962 he wrote a long essay in collaboration with Marco Toniolli entitled *Le contraddizioni economiche nell'indennizzo dei trasferimenti delle attività elettriche all' ENEL in base ai valori di borsa* (Economic Contradictions in Compensating the Transfer of Electric Supplies to ENEL Based on Market Values) and the following year another long essay written again with Marco Toniolli on *Strutture produttive e valori economici* (Production Structures and Economic Values).

His principal work is the book written with Marco Toniolli *L'Esportazione d'Industria nella Teoria dello Sviluppo e della Produzione* (The Export of Industry in the Theory of Development and Production). This book, published in 1968, is considered an original attempt to interpret the phenomenon of the multinational company, applying a strict statistical and mathematical methodology. Also in 1968 Enio became Professor of Regional Economics in the faculty.

From Industrial Economy Enio Benedetti's interests moved towards the topic of development as demonstrated in the work *Strutture dualistiche, progresso tecnico e intreccio rendita profitto* (Dualistic Structures, Technical Progress and Rent-Profit Connections) which appeared in 1975 in the volume edited by Augusto Graziani *Crisi e Ristrutturazione nell'Economia Italiana* (Crisis and Restructuring in the Italian Economy). This major work highlights the shift in interest towards themes linked to technological progress and the discontinuity produced by it.

Scientific work in the field of industrial economy was instrumental to his becoming a professor of Political and Financial Economics at the faculty of Political Science of Padua in 1980 and then to being appointed full professor in 1984. In the second half of the eighties he was appointed Director of the Institute of Economics and of the faculty. The ideas which, up until then, he held forth are found in his analyses of the economic development of the "peripheral" econ-

omy integrating in a single approach problems related to the productive decentralization and those relating to the influence of economic relations and international finance systems on the development paths of peripheral economies, paying particular attention to the industrial districts. The fruit of these reflections is contained in the book *L'Apertura Internazionale di un'Economia Periferica* (The International Opening of a Peripheral Economy) which appeared in 1983.

By now his scientific interests were very much based on the theme of the singularity of developmental paths, which stimulated a series of research projects on industrial districts and local economies. While pursuing his scientific interests towards the evolutive economy, Enio also dedicated himself to founding the Department of Economic Sciences at the University of Padua, an institution which was finally established in 1990. He was then appointed President of the Economic subjects of the Faculty of Political Sciences at Padua.

With great enthusiasm he worked at organising an international congress in 1987 dedicated to "Technological Mutations and International Conditionings" the acts of which are contained in a volume which Benedetti himself edited carrying the title of the congress. Unfortunately it was during this congress that he suffered an eye infection, which was incorrectly treated, and led to the loss of the eye. For a scholar this is a grave disability, but Enio succeeded with great courage and strength of character to overcome the crisis and continued his studies, creating a

small group of intellectuals interested in the theme of development from an evolutionary point of view. His interest was dedicated to investigating questions related to self-organisation, autopoiesis and change. The works written in collaboration with Solari entitled "Evolutionary Systems and Long Run Economics" (*Human Systems Management*, Vol. 15, 1996) and "Levels of Description in the Hermeneutics of Economic Theory" appeared in 1997 in the volume edited by Salanti and Screpanti *Pluralism in Economics*, and an essay written together with Barbara Di Bernardo with the title "Networks: A New Paradigm?", which also came out in 1997 in the volume *Teorie Evolutive e Trasformazioni Economiche* (Evolutionary Theories and Economic Transformations) edited by Benedetti himself, Mistri and Solari. His work on a paper with Mistri and Solari to present at the next congress of the EAEPE, has been left incomplete by his sudden death.

One cannot but remember his desire as a scholar to remain open to new and almost heretical methodological approaches, however always with respect for methodological rules. As a person one cannot but remember the passion of his relationships with others and his affection for his students who were always encouraged and stimulated, at times gruffly, to give the best of themselves.

Maurizio Mistri
Stefano Solari