

# Giovanni Reale (1931-2014)

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## Giovanni Reale (1931–2014)

Giovanni Reale died suddenly on October 15 of this year. Despite his advanced age (he was 83 years old) he indefatigably worked till the end: a day before his death he was working on a new translation of and comments on Plato's early dialogues and proofreading *Cento anni di Filosofia. Da Nietzsche ai nostri giorni*, a two-volume book which Reale coauthored with Dario Antiseri and which is planned to be published in the first half of 2015. Symbolical as his final activities are for his philosophical *opus* they indicate the two directions in which Reale developed his thought: on the one hand it was his profound and sincere interest in and admiration for Ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Plato, and, on the other hand, his interest for contemporary issues, especially those concerning medical, ethical, and political questions, for which he believed that philosophy can offer a lot of valuable insights. Besides his university obligations and academic publications, Giovanni Reale regularly published texts and interviews in Italian newspapers and periodicals. His *History of Ancient Philosophy* (as a 5 and a 10 volume edition) had more than ten editions, and his 14 volume *History of Philosophy* (written together with Dario Antiseri) has become a standard handbook of the history of the Western philosophy from the ancient times till our days, known among students as "Il Reale". His most important book on Plato, *Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone alla luce delle "Dottrine non scritte"*, has been republished in twenty two editions as of 2010. He directed three series of book publications. His books have been translated into thirteen languages. His death was commemorated in the Italian Parliament a day after, and the President of the Republic extended his written condolences to Reale's family. Reale was one of the most important and influential Italian "historian of philosophy", as he preferred to be called.

Reale's main tenet was a conviction about actuality and validity of Ancient Greek philosophy. On the one hand, he believed that Ancient Greek philosophy, poetry, historiography etc. produced fundamental categories and systems which enabled successive developments of Western philosophies, sciences, and cultural, artistic and technical endeavours. On the other hand, Greek philosophy – and especially Platonism – was a fertile ground for the novelty of Christianity. Two moments of radical changes in the intellectual history of the Western world were particularly in Reale's focus: the first was the meeting between philosophy and Christianity, and the second was the

scientific revolution of the Early Modern period. In his writings Reale's quite often claims to rely on hermeneutical method as it was developed by H. G. Gadamer, with whom Reale was also personally acquainted.

At the end a personal note. Giovanni Reale, whom I had the honor of meeting in 1994, played a decisive role in my academic development. I met Reale as a student who was just about to graduate classics and quite skeptical about philosophy. It was Reale's passionate and yet gentle leadership – first as the director of my MA and later my PhD thesis – that invoked in me thitherto-unknown pleasures of reading Plato and Aristotle.

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