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## THE EDUCATED PERSON AND THE NEW CAPITALISM

*Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life, and your most noteworthy achievements as an educator/scholar/citizen. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.*

I had at least four different careers: translator and editorial consultant, as a young man (with Publisher Einaudi, Turin), 1944-1946; business associate (with Adriano Olivetti, 1948-1960); as an international diplomat (at the OECE, in Paris, responsible of the *Facteurs Sociaux* and Head of the Human Sciences Section; 1957-1962); as a Member of the Italian Parliament (1958-1963). But finally, my only real career—some sort of underground current unifying my whole life experience—has been the career of university professor at the University of Rome, *La Sapienza*, having, by a stroke of good luck, reinvented, as it were, a discipline that had been eliminated from any academic curriculum by Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile during fascism (the same thing happened in Germany during Nazism), that is sociology. As a Member of Parliament I was obviously independent, belonging to the *Gruppo Misto*, to the left of the Christian Democrats. My main target consisted essentially in changing the prevailing, political and intellectual attitude of the Italian élite, traditionally prone to adopt an old-fashioned rhetorical posture in dealing and trying to tackle specific issues and to dissolve ethical problems into aesthetic, if not theatrical, gestures.

Why sociology, one might ask? To put it bluntly: because it was no longer there (psychologically speaking, a clear consequence of my Ulysses' complex). Secondly, and more seriously, because I was in the best condition to make the rediscovery of sociology. In fact, after the five years of elementary schools, (6 to 11 years of age), I was basically a self-taught student. At 15 I achieved my *licenza ginnasiale* as a *privatista*, or private scholar, and two years later my *maturità classica*; then, at the university of Turin I took my *laurea* in the department of History and Philosophy with a dissertation on the sociology of Thorstein Veblen, although no courses in social science were offered; later, in 1951 at Chicago University, where Veblen had studied and taught, half a century before. During my formative years, I was blessed by my relative solitude. Being a private student and scholar, I was neither infected by

the prevailing neo-idealistic philosophical climate nor by the spiritualistic (Catholic or neo-Thomistic) outlook. Without being fully conscious of it, I was ready for sociology, that is something less abstract than the ongoing philosophy and not so dry as political economy. In 1960, when the first full Chair in Sociology was established in the Italian academic system, I was the 'natural' winner. As regards what so far appears to have been the most fateful decision in my life, I recall when, in 1963, I decided, against the advice of many good friends, to abandon active politics. A most difficult, anguishing decision—but I could already see the growing wave of political corruption, the fact that a policy-maker must decide before having in his/her hand the reasons justifying the rationality of the decision. Moreover, the fact that in the university milieu a new social type was emerging: the 'academic gangster', turning the professor into a shady business dealer. Thus, I did not stand for re-election and devoted myself completely, without reservations, to teaching and research.

No doubt that I am a man of books, afflicted by the strange disease of 'bookishness'. My father hated books because he feared, with some good reasons, that I would become a 'man of paper', that is what the Germans would call, perhaps more appropriately a *Luft-mensch* (a man of air). I have written many books (too many?), but I have read a great deal of books also. Leaving aside the great books of the classical sociological tradition (including, together with the official founders Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, and the epigone Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, there are some books that had an impact on my early education. I would give, in this connection, a passing mention to Charles Péguy, *La Thèse*; Léon Bloy, *La Femme Pauvre, L'Âme de Napoléon, Sueur de Sang*; Max Weber, all his works, but especially his last two lectures, 'Politics as a vocation', 'Science as a vocation'; I would mention also the works of Max Scheler and especially of Julius Langbehn, *Der Geist des Ganzen*.

As far as my own books are concerned, I would emphasize the underlying interest for power, power-makers, power-holders, and power victims. This is already apparent in my early *Il Dilemma dei Sindacati Americani* (1954) and *La Protesta Operaia* (1955). The main thesis is easily summarized: no power without counter-power; no power without formal legitimation; but, at the bottom of any legitimation, there is an act of illegitimate, pure violence. Hence, from power my interest shifts to violence as a sudden interruption of the dialogue, whether interpersonal, inter-institutional and international; violence as a void of values; violence as hypnosis. Most important contributions include: *Alle Radici della Violenza* (1979); *L'Ipnosi della Violenza* (1980); *Il Potere come Relazione e come Struttura* (1980); *Rapporto sul Terrorismo* (1981). Thus, violence, although at the origin of society, denies in principle the existence of the community. Hence, a dichotomic view of society, with a commanding élite and a subjected majority. This holds true not only in the domestic scene, but also as regards immigration with its inevitable consequences, that is a multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious, racially discriminating society. In this connection, see my *La Tentazione dell'Oblio* (1993), dealing with anti-semitism, racism and neo-nazism; but, for the

Italian domestic scene, see also *Roma da Capitale a Periferia* (1970); *Vite da Baraccati* (1974); *La Città come Fenomeno di Classe* (1975). From the analysis of racial discrimination, class division and basic social inequality, the issue of rebuilding a sense of community comes to the fore: the public at large feels the need of a new community. How? By finding or by recuperating the value of human relations as having a value in themselves and not in the utilitarian, or market, perspective. But then, what is free from the market logic and its intrinsic utilitarian considerations? The only answer is: the sacred. Hence, my trilogy: *Una Teologia per Atei* (1983); *Il Paradosso del Sacro* (1983); *Una Fede senza Dogmi* (1990), preceded in 1978 by *Studi sulla Formazione Sociale del Sacro*. With the book, *Il Senso del Luogo* (2010), I have recently summarized my reservations about globalization. I have especially dwelt on its basic principle, usually neglected even by its most vocal critics, that is: *a-territoriality*, the indifference to historical variability and to the specific community as a prerequisite for a socially and culturally irresponsible predatory activity all over the world.

*Q. What are some of the key educational ‘problematics’ that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?*

It might sound obvious or trivial, my general answer is ‘academic freedom’, that is to say no immediate subordination of curricula to the practical needs of the economy, no matter how vocally claimed by governments and policy-makers. The most urgent, and serious, problem that is today confronting educational systems the world over is how to educate independently thinking human beings, not to train them for a given job, remembering that you can only train animals; in human beings you can hope to wake up and reinforce their subjective consciousness.

Business and economic needs, quite legitimate in their own sphere, tend to prevail and to condition the whole intellectual climate of any given society. The idea of the ‘two cultures’ (scientific and humanistic) is misleading. The only human culture possible and desirable lies in the ability to pass a reasoned, and global, assessment of any given situation. The *esprit polytechnicien* does not lead anywhere. It confuses instrumental with final values. Technology is perfection without a purpose. A society can be technically advanced and humanly barbaric.

Financial and economic potentates are heavily conditioning higher learning institutions in every country, naturally in different ways according to historical variability. In general, in Europe also, state universities are being privatized through a severe reduction of funds and the consequent necessity for professors to spend time and energy in finding financial resources for Masters and Doctorates. On a different occasion, I had the opportunity to ask myself what are the characteristics of Europe, *vis-à-vis* the United States, Japan, and China. Leaving for the time being China and India aside, given their recent emergence as world players in this field, especially as regards manufacturing and electronic industries in China and computer components

and special software in India, we see convergences as well as major differences among the three cultural milieus mentioned above. No doubt that, roughly speaking, the basic convergence is given by science and technology. The major differences, on the other hand, have to do with the underlying values. I submit that the most serious shortcoming of the present day thrust toward a worldwide economic globalization concerns the neglect or the inability to understand such distinction.

To put it succinctly, while technology seems to be basically the same in its practical implementation, irrespective of the peculiar characteristics of each specific community or locality into which it is being imported in a more or less coercive manner, cultural values, in the sense of cultural orientations and patterns of behaviour active in each historical context, are likely to be widely divergent and to require an *ad hoc* examination. Thus, we may observe the overpowering sense of the community at work in Japan, to the point that the idea of the individual as a free agent is hardly tenable, or we may realize that in the American society the utilitarian principle and the money-making ability, linked with a technical efficiency or workman ship factor, are by far the most important tenets for moral justification and for social respectability, that is to say for attaining a good standing in the community.

The European scene appears to be more complex. In the first place, history and historical consciousness here play a role much greater than anywhere else. Secondly, and consequently, the past carries a decisive weight in terms of the educational process as a way to achieve the formation of the responsible individual person or, to put it more precisely, of the *personality* of the person. Here, as we may learn from Greek culture and Christian testimony, the conscious participation of each individual requires that the entity in which we desire to participate represent a hierarchic scheme or a symbolic concentration, whereas in utilitarian societies participation is not in terms of systems of meaning representing the ultimate reality. These societies are interest-based and participation in them refers primarily to the process of making decisions concerning the various practical interests. However, in Europe, the prevailing concept of culture is still essentially individualistic in the classical sense. We, as Europeans, have not been able so far to go beyond traditional humanism.

*Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country/region?*

Limiting my examination to authors endowed with a specific sociological inclination, I would mention, first, Thorstein Veblen, whose *Theory of the Leisure Class* I translated after the Second World War and was published by the Turin publisher Einaudi on 3 January, 1949. Secondly, an author whom I feel on the same wave length is undoubtedly Max Weber, taking especially into account his life-long ambivalent attitude towards active politics and pure research. Among recent writers, I would mention Leo Strauss, with whom I entertained a good friendship in Chicago, in particular during the time he was writing *Thoughts on Machiavelli* and *Natural Law and History*. But during those early Fifties I was especially involved with the International Labour Project, together with Clark Kerr (chancellor of Berkeley

University), John T. Dunlop (Harvard University), Charles Myers (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Frederick Harbison (University of Princeton). For the Italian scene, these experiences had some weight in underlining the importance of field work as well as the relevance of inter-disciplinary approach. This was of a decisive impact on a culture such as the Italian and European one. Here, the educated person is still conceived in Greek terms as an individual *kalòs kai agathòs* or, to put it in Ciceronian terms, *vir bonus dicendi peritus*.

Needless to say, this concept is far from adequate for an industrial mass society. The elaboration of a European educational 'space' requires, in the first place, the transition from the concept and practice of an élite culture, whereby the educated person asserts herself against and over a mass of illiterate persons, *òì polloi*, who can be said to be human only in a zoological sense, to a new concept of culture, corresponding to any value or selective criterion. It rather points to the need of a new *paidéia* and a new selection based on a broad social basis which raises inevitably two issues: (a) the overcoming of the question of the so called 'two cultures', especially as expounded in the famous and misleading pamphlet by C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*; and (b) what are the methods and avenues to express, from within an industrial mass society and its mass culture, adequate *criteria of excellence*?

The transition from Greek *paidéia*, founded on the idea of aristocratic *arête*, to the 'democratic', advanced education as advocated, among others, by John Dewey, in obviously a difficult one. A new image of man is required and should be conceptualized. The three images recalled and elaborated upon by Nietzsche in *Unzeitmässige Betrachtungen*, that is Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer, cannot be considered sufficient in view of the present day 'knowledge-societies'. They are important, however, in so far as they point out the necessity of rejecting, on the one hand, pure technology as a basis of the new education (being aware that technology is nothing but perfection without a purpose) and advocating, on the other hand, an articulated unity of natural and cultural sciences in which a positive cross-fertilization between them would be insured.

*Q. If I could just echo back to you your important statements that 'technology is perfection without a purpose', and that 'society can be technically advanced and humanly barbaric'—how does this conviction speak to similar arguments made by Adorno, in his memorable essay 'Education after Auschwitz', where he argues that education can never be the same in the light of the Shoah?*

The Shoah does not concern only the Jewish People. It involves also, in even bigger numbers, nomads, especially Roms, Armenians, political opponents, and all sorts of minority persons and groups. There are old and new genocides. The simple fact is that the persecution of the Jews should be understood as a special instance within the broader category of intolerance for minorities and the historical elimination of the 'different' generally. This phenomenon goes well beyond racism as it is usually conceived. What remains to be seriously considered is that the mass

murder of the Jews by the middle of the twentieth century has attained an exemplary, paradigmatic value as an attempted 'final solution'. The Shoah is striking and original in the technical efficiency, cold-blooded, bureaucratic organization and businesslike book-keeping of the whole operation.

This aspect of the Shoah should not be overlooked. It is historically unique and a perfect case of the crime industry. Revisionist historical comparisons equating the Shoah in importance with historical tragedies such as the Soviet Gulag, fail to hold up to examination. It is well-known that history has recorded many gruesome mass murders and wide-reaching criminal operations conducted against harmless and defenceless populations. None of these enterprises, however, was as scientifically, rationally, or routinely planned as this one.

Despite the efforts of Nolte, in his *Three Faces of Fascism* (1965), as well as of Romano, in his *An Outline of European History* (1999), and of other commentators, the Shoah raises a question that transcends a specific historical situation and certainly cannot be explained away, as quite unexpectedly Arno Mayer also attempted to do in his *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? The 'Final Solution' in History* (1988), resorting to the notion of a Hitler made angry by defeats on the Russian Front.

'Revisionists' cite the Crusaders, the Inquisition, and Stalin's purges, overlooking the fact that the Holocaust has not been one among many genocides, concerning not only the Jews but mankind as a whole. Moreover, while classical sociologists such as Hebert Spencer emphasized that industrial societies would be more rational and radically different from traditional military countries, the Holocaust has proved beyond doubt that rational planning can be used to serve a criminal purpose of massive proportions. The Holocaust has taught us that technology per se is nothing but perfection without purpose and that a contemporary society can be technically advanced and humanly barbaric.

To understand the essence of the Shoah or Holocaust, it is necessary to move beyond the mere counting of victims, important as this is to keep their memory alive, economic considerations such as the confiscation of Jewish estates, and the legal and political significance of long-term Jewish persecution, to the religious meaning of this event. Nazism was forced to view Jews as the enemy par excellence, the real *hostis* to be destroyed, because Judaism is based on absolute respect for human life and the equal dignity of every human being in front of God. Through the concept of universal, divine fatherhood, Christianity has perfected this heritage without always acknowledging its regard; such values represent the complete opposite of the Nazi doctrine as revealed in the official statements and text of Hitler's *Bewegung* and *Gauleiter*. Notions of individual responsibility and moral conscience are denied in the name of total obedience to the *Führer*. No principle of equality is admitted; the only ethical obligation involves complete service to the Aryan race as the *Herrenvolk* or 'People of the Lords'. The rest of mankind must accept a subordinate position as slaves or be exterminated. The white Aryan race is the only Nazi God; no other God is recognized or theoretically conceivable. Jewish monotheistic religion, linked to

the Jewish race, was the enemy to be destroyed and replaced by the new neo-pagan, Nazi, secular religion. Jews must be suppressed like obnoxious, parasitic insects. Contrary to the revisionist view of Hitler's persecution of the Jews as an unfortunate turn at the end of his career, in my *La Tentazione dell'Oblio* (1993, 1994) I believe I have demonstrated that he had already thought of eliminating them while writing his *Mein Kampf*.

While anti-Semitism exists throughout German history and European thought, to concentrate on the confused generalities of Nazi doctrine and minimize anti-Jewish persecution as if dealing with a *faute de mieux* occurring after military setbacks on the Russian eastern front would be a serious misunderstanding, as I have indicated extensively in my book referred to above. No doubt, Nazism and its pedagogy of 'education to death' contains a conglomerate of world visions, from Julius Langbehn, author of the *Spirit of the Whole*, who later converted to Catholicism, to Martin Heidegger, a passionate theorizer of the *Heimat*, not far from the cult of *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil).

*Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why?*

As far as higher learning is concerned, I do not see any major breakthrough in Italy. The economic crisis is having a negative impact. There is a widespread feeling that any academic endeavour should be useful and 'pay off' in practical terms. This leads to a serious weakening of the theoretical impulse. There is, at the present time, an abundance of raw data and empirical fragments that are waiting to be theoretically digested and interpreted.

I submit that the opening toward Europe, the United States, and the rest of the world, is a positive step. But a relative neglect of foreign languages and a difficult circulation of valid field research seem to prevent, for the time being, the full blooming of international cooperation which is, however, possible in the near future. Perhaps, although historically rooted and motivated, men and women of culture should learn how to be loyal inhabitants of the village and, at the same time, citizens of the world.

*Q. What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in the Mediterranean region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in our region?*

The Mediterranean is a peculiar sea. It is the 'sea among or in the middle of different lands'. Old Romans could call it *mare nostrum*. Actually, it is a sea that touches on many countries with a different language, different traditions, a great variety of cultural and behavioural patterns. Different patterns of culture imply different patterns of society. The Mediterranean touches and in a sense protects this extreme variety. As such, as some sort of custodian, it has a *maternal function*. It has

a feminine character—*la mer*—contrary to a river than comes down and ravages and destroys the environment with its unforeseeable floods. In fact, the Mediterranean is a *closed sea*. Gibraltar towards the Atlantic Ocean is a very narrow strait. On the other hand, before the Suez Canal had been opened, it was not possible to reach the Indian Ocean directly.

A concentration of diversities can be a source of strength and freedom, provided the different countries and cultures can learn how to communicate. This might have special difficulties for countries such as Italy, historically used to export manpower and, all of a sudden, finding itself a pole of attraction for immigrants from the less developed areas of the world, from central and Eastern Europe to North Africa and Asia. The old concept of ‘citizenship’ is bound to become obsolete. Neither the Greek concept of *polítes* nor the classical *civis romanus sum* are at the present time adequate. The very concept of nation seems to be excessively limited and exclusive. It seems necessary to elaborate a new concept of ‘inclusive’, if not transcultural, citizenship. The first step is intercultural communication. But communication is not only a verbal question dealing with linguistic differences. It requires *recognition*, a dialogue that does not confine itself to pure and simple information, based on a clear acceptance of specific values beyond the mere principles of individual preference. European history has already known an epoch-making attempt in this direction: Alexander’s Hellenism (see my *L’Enigma di Alessandro*). At the time of Alexander, the medium for intercultural communication was the Greek *koiné*. But, behind the language, values were there—different, and yet converging. The same values are today at the basis of what could be defined as a peculiar European ‘space’, moved by the common awareness that *no value can be regarded as an absolute* without denying its very nature; *no dogmatism*, no matter how grounded by religion or tradition, is admissible. The classical Greek *logos* is the first root of the European ‘space’. The second, the social equality of all men and women, as implicit in the Christian message. The third, more recent, the concept of the individual, the *persona singolare* of the Italian Renaissance, as handed down and philosophically justified by the Enlightenment. At a sober look, Europe does not strike one as a grand territorial entity. It is the ‘land of sunset’, the *Okzident*, that, both demographically and geographically, presents itself as a mere appendix of the Asiatic continental mass. Demographers can be cruel: at present, the European Union, demographically speaking, does not exceed the 6% of the world; in the years 2020-2030, in a world of about eight billion people, they calculate that Europe will come down to 4%, Asia will represent 58% and Africa will go up (AIDS permitting) to 25%.

However, Europe will remain strong. Despite the American hegemony, and the economic rise of China and India, its presence will still be important. It is perhaps true that the Atlantic Ocean is being overcome by the Pacific Ocean. However, the Mediterranean continues to be an essential ‘cultural *carrefour*’. On a map, Western Europe does not look much more than an isthmus, some sort of light bridge. The great empires—Babylonian, Persian, Roman—have disappeared from the historical scene. Once colonialism was finished at the end of the Second World War, we have



the beginning of the technological colonialism through mass communication, the cultural industry, and globalization.

However, despite everything, Europe resists: a European ‘space’ seems impenetrable. Its limitations and shortcomings are well known. During the fourth century after Christ, when the lower strata of the population of the Roman Empire were desperately searching for a relatively independent expression, not even an innovator such as Emperor Constantine proved to be far-sighted enough to widen the scope and the horizon of the Greek-Roman culture. He accepted the Christian religion, mostly under the pressure of his mother, and to this day we do not know whether he did it out of persuasion or political opportunism. But he did not accept other languages than Latin. Europe, however, remains strong. Why? I respectfully submit, because Europe is varied, heterogeneous, diversified. Historically, this has been for Europe *not a weakness*, but a reason for strength. The European ‘space’ is based and defined by diversity. According to John Stuart Mill, in chapters three and four of his treatise *On Liberty*, nineteenth century China was a ‘negative model’ because it was self-enclosed in its ritualistic and static behavioural patterns. Europeans were not more talented than the Chinese. What made them a portion in progress of Humanity—in his own words, ‘an improving, instead of a stationary, portion of mankind’—was to be attributed to their diversity, to their ‘plurality of paths’. In other words, the strength of Europe lies in the *synergy of diversities* and in the *dialectics of differences*.

Hence, the essential characteristic, a really basic feature, of the European person, in the ability to move and to discern differences, the tendency to analyse complex phenomena and behavioural patterns, to use this analytical acumen in order to distinguish the various components and to grasp their final global meaning. The educated person in the European tradition is not a mere specialist, nor a specific technician. Rather, he/she is the person capable to see and to assess the global meaning—conceptual and technical—of a given situation. In a sense, the famous debate about the ‘two cultures’, as initiated by C. P. Snow’s pamphlet and to which reference has already been made, does not hold water. It is evident, however, that this type of educated person, as a person who passes judgment taking the different angles of a problem into consideration from a global interaction point of view, runs up against the prevailing pressure stemming from the present day capitalistic system of production and distribution. Capitalism has emerged as a winner from the ‘cold war’, together with its fundamental principle, i.e. the *division of labour and the consequent specialization of knowledge*, through a priority given to applied science versus pure science. In this perspective, a technically advanced economy as a market economy could become so powerful and all pervading as to give rise to an ‘economy-society’ in which all the relations end up being market relations, essentially utilitarian, narrow-interest gauged, and therefore no longer human (at least, in the sense that human relations have a value in themselves irrespective of their economically useful outcome). For this reason, effectively working behind the official facades, the educational systems all over the world are under stress, being subordinate and sub-

-serving the growing needs, defined and enforced by a rapidly changing technology that is inevitably upsetting curricula and educational standards and, at the same time, creating conditions of psychological stress, precarious jobs, uncertain career profiles and all this for a rather simple reason: because, I reiterate, technology is perfection without a purpose.

*Q. The insistence on the normative in relation to technology—a leitmotif in your interview—draws us ineluctably towards a consideration of religion—another area of concern for your sociological analysis—and its intersections with education. What kinds of reflections would you like to share about this, given the relevance of this theme to our region?*

Weber's specific contribution cannot be legitimately conceived as a polemical reversal of Marx's historical materialism. Rather, it is a broadening of its scope to include religious experience and commitment, together with the economic interests, as a powerful factor in shaping society. Weber does not deal with theology *per se*. He wants to know and explores the consequences—social, economic and political—of religious ethics as a living experience, that is to say as it influences the everyday behavioural patterns. In this respect, Weber goes behind and against scholastic Marxism, notably against Stalin's *Diamat*, that tends to oppose economics and ideology, giving a clear priority to the economic structure over the ideal superstructure (*Unterbau versus Überbau*). What Weber could not see is the political use of religion or, more precisely, of religious dogmatism. Especially in countries such as the United States of America, the radical right, with the so called 'reborn Christians' and the 'Pro-life groups', has been having, as of recently, an important political role *without* facing specific political issues—a role grounded instead on a meta-political, theological outlook. At the university level as well as in all the major educational institutions, an irrational wave of anti-Darwinism has been mounting in the name and for the defence of 'creationism'. Biblical fundamentalism here seems to be the inter-face of Islamic fundamentalism in its most extreme forms. In Latin American and Mediterranean countries the influence of Catholicism is, in this respect, of decisive importance and, from the point of view of an open-minded attitude, quite negative. This is true especially as regards the financing of private (Catholic) schools, against and to the detriment of public schools.

*Q. Veblen has clearly been a major influence on your thought, from early on in your career, as you explained, right up to now. What is it about Veblen that informs your thinking generally, and about education specifically?*

Thorstein Veblen's specific and original contribution concerns the sharp distinction between industrial entrepreneurs, supposedly producing goods for the community, and financial businessmen, who would 'try to get something for nothing', that is to make money through pure manipulation of money. Moreover, Veblen has generally researched the role of 'honorific consumption' and 'conspicuous waste' in terms of 'invidious comparison' among individual persons

and social groups. In an sense, Veblen anticipates the critique of the Frankfurt School (in particular of Herbert Marcuse and Theodor W. Adorno) as regards late capitalism, that is a system no longer simply exploiting physically the subordinate workforce but trying to achieve some sort of ‘soul proletarianization’ with the ‘industrial culture’ in which intellectual ‘products’ would be equated to usual market goods. A special mention should be made also of Veblen’s book reflecting his unfortunate academic career but having a general merit also, especially from an educational point of view. This is *The Higher Learning in America*, that the author considers a ‘memorandum on the conduct of universities by businessmen’, containing an explicit and vitriolic value-judgment in that original education should be free from any constraint stemming from the needs of the business system and the market economy, lest it might produce servants of the prevailing economic groups instead of human beings capable of independent thinking. Naturally, Veblen tries to avoid any allusion to his own personal career while criticizing bitterly the academic system. He writes in the Preface: ‘It is hoped that no fortuitous shadow will now cloud the issue ... This allusion to incidents which have no material bearing on the inquiry may tolerantly be allowed, as going to account for a sparing use of local information and, it is hoped, to extenuate a degree of reserve and reticence touching divers intimate details of executive policy’ (Veblen, 1935, p.vii). Veblen’s critique is based on the specific right of the scientist to ‘idle, disinterested curiosity’. Hence, most university research, being subservient to the needs of the business community, is ‘not yet scientific’. In fact, ‘inquiries carried on in this spirit in the field of human institutions belong, of course, in the category of worldly wisdom rather than of science. ‘Practical’ questions occupy these scientists in great part, and practical, or utilitarian, considerations guide the course of inquiry and shape the system of generalizations in these sciences ... in such a way that the ideals of scholarship are yielding ground, in an uncertain and varying degree, before the pressure of business like agencies’ (*op. cit.*, pp.189-190).

Veblen distinguishes very sharply between the preparation and general attitude of a technician, that is of a pure expert offering his service to the best Bidder in the open market, and the scholarship of the ‘educated person’ in the proper sense. He allows, obviously, a degree of good use for the community by the specialized technicians, but at the same time he criticizes the unproductive predatory role of businessmen while lamenting the shortage of truly educated disinterested persons.

‘The professional knowledge and skill of physicians, surgeons, dentists, pharmacists, agriculturists, engineers of all kinds, perhaps even of journalists, is of some use to the community at large, at the same time that it may be profitable to the bearers of it. The community has a substantial interest in the adequate training of these men although it is not that intellectual interest that attaches to science and scholarship. But such is not the case with the training designed to give proficiency in business. No gain comes to the community at large from increasing the business proficiency of any number of its young men. There are already much too many of these businessmen, much too astute and proficient in their calling, for the common

good. A higher average business efficiency simply raises activity and avidity in business to a higher average pitch of skill and fervour, with very little other material result than a redistribution of ownership; since business is occupied with the competitive acquisition of wealth, not with its production. It is only by a euphemistic metaphor that we are accustomed to speak of the businessmen as producers of goods. Gains due to such efficiency are differential gains only. They are a differential as against other businessmen on the one hand, and as against the rest of the community on the other hand. The work of the College of Commerce, accordingly, is a peculiarly futile line of endeavour for any public institution, in that it serves neither the intellectual advancement nor the material welfare of the community' (*op. cit.*, pp.208-209).

Given such situation, it is evident that the preparation of the 'educated person' in the affluent business society encounters special difficulties. Everybody seems to be obsessed with the need to prepare young students and scholars for job opportunities eventually offered in the market. Veblen bitterly remarks that:

'Pushed by this popular prejudice, and themselves also drifting under compulsion of the same prevalent bias, even the seasoned scholars and scientists—Matthew Arnold's 'Remnant'—have taken to heart this question of the use of the higher learning in the pursuit of gain. Of course it has no such use, and the many shrewdly devised solutions of the conundrum have necessarily run out in a string of sophistic dialectics. The place of disinterested knowledge in modern civilization is neither that of a means to private gain, nor that of an intermediate step in 'the roundabout process of the production of goods'.

As a motto for the scholars' craft, *Scientia pecuniae ancillans* is nowise more seemly than the Schoolmen's *Philosophia theologiae ancillans*. Yet such inroads have pecuniary habits of valuation made even within the precincts of the corporation of learning, that university men—and even the scholarly ones among them—are no more than half-ashamed of such a parcel of fatuity. And relatively few among university executives have not, within the past few years, taken occasion to plead the merits of academic training as a business proposition. The man of the world—that is to say, of the business world—puts the question: What is the use of this learning? and the men who speak for learning, and even the scholars occupied with the 'humanities', are at pains to find some colourable answer that shall satisfy the worldly-wise that this learning for which they speak is in some way useful for pecuniary gain' (*op. cit.*, pp.199-200).

The bitterness of Veblen's strictures is revealing. It points to the gap between the sad state of higher educational institutions and his idea of an 'educated person'. This idea is never, to my knowledge, fully expounded by Veblen. It has to be extracted, as it were, from his polemical observations. It seems to me that for Veblen man is a project for man. In other words, man must be conceived as a goal, and therefore as a value in himself, never as an instrument for no matter what kind of goal. To put it succinctly, the function of a citizen or subject may vary from society to society, and the system of training, or adaptation, or instruction may vary with it. But the function

of a man as man is the same in every age and in every society, since it results from his nature as a man. The aim of an educational system is the same in every age and in every society where such a system can exist: it is to improve man as man.

This improvement appears to be both desirable and possible. Human nature, in fact, is conceivable neither as a dogmatic a-historical construction, according to most religious doctrines, nor can it be seen as a purely historical phenomenon, according to a purely relativistic conception. After all, if everything is relative, the truth of relativism itself is necessarily relative. I respectfully submit, by differentiating my position from natural righters and absolute relativists, the idea of 'historical horizon', as defined by the average moral consciousness acquired in a given historical phase. In this respect, man is conceived both as a historical being and at the same time as a meta-historical value, that is some kind of *Grenzbegriff*, or limit-idea, to be perfected and eventually reached through educational efforts.

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