**Young people and work between projects and uncertainty … in the world**

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I thank SIESC and UCIIM for having me invited to this Round Table and I take that opportunity to tell you some things from the point of view of AIDU, the Association of university teachers of Italy, which I have the honour to preside, and also of Luciano Corradini, who would have liked very much to be with us today.

I’m going to divide the topic which was entrusted to me in three parts: **1**. The uncertainty and the rights of young people in the globalized world; **2**. The change which happened in the international distribution of work, which has opposed planetary regionalization to globalization; **3**. The projects for facing the uncertainty and the fears of young people: a new humanism and the school for a new society.

The UN has recently concluded that the projects in progress now have little chances of success.

**1 The uncertainty about the possibilities of work and the rights of young people in the globalized world**

The world’s population amounts to 7,3 billions of persons. At the end of the 19th ct. it amounted to 1 billion, in 1950 about 2,5 billion, almost 6 billion in 2000 and now it will reach 9 billion in 2050. At the moment 19% inhabit the rich countries of the OECD, 30% are found in the fast-developing countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa; 41% in the developing countries; 60% of the population live in Asia. In the next 40 years the Indians will increase from 1 to 2 billion. The 700 million inhabiting South-Sahara Africa will double within 30 years.

The world’s population shows great economic inequalities. 33% gain 66% of the income and 8% possess 82% of global riches. The most disquieting fact, however, is that during the last 20 years (those of the globalization of the markets) the degree of inequality has risen. That’s why besides the rich countries of the North and the West (the *First World* formed by democratic, capitalist, industrialized, and economically advanced countries), a bloc of countries basically aligned with the United States, and the *Second World* of the countries of Eastern Europe, less democratic, industrialized, but economically less endowed, a *Third World* has been added, even less democratic, and a *Fourth World* inhabited by indigenous tribal populations, peopled by the poor of Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

The pressure on the natural resources of the planet is rapidly becoming dramatic and it announces that for the natural environment the growing homologizing of the consumer patterns of the fast-developing countries to the countries of the *First* and *Second Worlds* is unsustainable. The economic growth of China has indeed reduced global poverty by half. That’s why the green encyclical by Pope Bergoglio *Laudato si* is topical. But poverty and above all the indifference of the rich countries which encircle it are the ground for great questions which the young people face and they show us clearly that you can only avoid the contradiction between growth and sustainable development thanks to a new distribution of income and riches.

The world’s population of 0 to 25 years constitutes 48 % of the total. On the other hand the young people (10 – 24 years), who today are 1,8 billion (never so numerous in history), correspond to one third of the world’s population. 90% of these young people live in developing countries and are confronted with great obstacles to their realizing their right to formation, to work, to health and to security. 515 million of them live on less than 2 dollars a day, and that explains why apart from the search for political asylum poverty is the highest motivation for mass migrations. Moreover, those young people will live in a world which quarrels over climate change and the realization of women’s rights: from health to formation, from certainty of work to gender equality in the fields of dignity and participation.

Among the young people 74 million are unemployed and 57 million don’t attend schools. But not only the percentage of unemployment makes the critical situation of the labour market of the young people obvious, the alleged *NEET (Not in employment, education and training,* i.e. those who do not study and don’t work either) even represent potential resources who don’t find an effectual occupation either in studies or in the world of professions. In the countries of the OECD they are a mass example of the “theory of the discouraged worker”. That is one of the most important reasons for the misery of the young people. It makes manifest how much work is necessary to give a meaning to life, even if it is sometimes accompanied by situations of exploitation.

The situation of young people in the work market is one of the most discussed topics in the political and economic discussion, and it is still more there since the economic and financial crisis started in 2008, because of the hypothesis that the impact of the crisis was more important for the new generations, who represent the *outsiders* in the work market in comparison with the previous generations, who represent the *insiders* in the work market. For the new generations showing up in the work market significant expressions have been coined, which Mr Balsamo has already partly recalled, such as *“sacrificed generation”, “generation zero”,* “*generation 1000 euros”*, etc. In November 2013 the Financial Times used the expression *lost generation* because of the reduction of the starting salaries of English youngsters. A recent book by Robert Putnam, entitled*“Our kids. The American Dream in Crisis”,*is dedicated to the breach of the social generation pact on the equality of possibilities, even in the economically most advanced countries.

The globalization of the markets follows the catastrophic globalization of the nuclear and environmental risk, and it precedes the political globalization which can lead to a worldwide denationalization. It determines the frame of reference of our topic in a context of perverse distribution of income and riches, which concerns planetary areas, states, and local communities. The projects of the young people concern both their existential realization, influenced by the tensions between identity and the process of integration, and their professional realization connected to an increasing degree to the process of economic internationalisation. The consciousness of advantages and disadvantages accompanying those two processes is very important for facing the uncertainty of the issues associated with the personal choices of the young people in their formation time. The knowledge about the possibilities connected with the various courses of life can contribute to avoiding unwanted phenomena which have become manifest in a lot of countries, because of certain forms of bad adaptation and discouragement, which can rightly give rise to pecuniary and non-pecuniary costs of migrations or to the increase of the number of the *NEET.*

The uncertainty and the risks connected with the various choices of occupations (bad adaptation, discouragement, poverty) are important questions for the young people of today, but these alternatives are open and thus only considerable for the young people of the First and the Second Worlds. Those who belong to the Third and Fourth Worlds are often even deprived of the choice between the projects of family and work, between formation, work, and leisure time. In short, the young people of different planetary areas are measured against absolutely different situations, corresponding to the degree of development determined by the international division of work. That reality of inequality demands the commitment not only of the international institutions, but also of each of the advanced countries, and it ought first of all to be corrected by readiness for dialogue and by a common effort by means of institutional reforms on a global level, furthermore bound to a different anthropology compared with the one which has left it unsolved up till today. If not, instruction and formation (school, search for excellence), *governance* of the enterprises and of the financial sector, and reform of public administration will not be able to attain, above all in the developing countries, the objective of reducing the uncertainty and the fears of the young people.

***2 – The international division of work and planetary regionalisation***

The present international distribution of work in the globalized world gives rise to imbalance between demand and supply of work and to a *mismatch* between the work capacities offered and demanded, which develop in different ways according to the social spheres and the technologies of the countries. That situation is worsened by the *brain drain* from poor countries and by the *brain gain* of rich countries. In fact the internationalization of economies, which has increased a lot in the second post-war era, has not only paved the way for consistent benefices, static and dynamic ones, of the specialization in production – which are often mentioned in the handbooks of international economics –, but also for corresponding disadvantages, such as the dependence in production and technology, the *capital reversal* (tried by the Asian Tigers in the Nineties), the cultural diversification already mentioned and, quite often, political dependence, which is – wrongly - very rarely mentioned. While the advantages of the internationalization of the exchanges get the better in periods of international extension, the disadvantages imperil the dependent countries, especially during periods of tension.

The world has changed especially in the last 20 years of the globalization of the markets, favoured by the internationalization of exchanges and by technology, giving rise to a substantial reduction of the efficiency of domestic politics of every country. One must first mention that the countries industrialized in the last two centuries, following systems and procedures which one tends to eliminate from memory, because of the suffering caused for the populations in those centuries, have blocked – by means of the activity of international institutions – for the developing countries the possibility of taking the same way in order to reach the same objectives, for the sake of environmental obligations and standards of production. Those prohibitions are of less importance for the BRICS because of the power with regard to contracts which they have acquired in their rapid growth. Starting from the second post-war era one distinguishes between *politically correct* political manoeuvres and those which are no more so. That signifies that there are policies such as the traditional commercial and partly the industrial ones which can no more be used for the sake of “free exchange”, which besides allows the proliferation of multinational enterprises and the adoption of protectionist measures more sophisticated than the traditional ones (standards of production and environment, origin certifications, internal percentages of VAT), of course in favour of the rich countries proposing them. The petrol crises of the Seventies and the rise of the rates of international interests which have accompanied the re-evaluation of the dollar in the Eighties have given rise to the dramatic problem of the international debts of the developing countries*.* As a consequence these countries have had to adopt, contrary to the BRICS, patterns of development of the type *export-led,* which do not allow acquiring autonomy in production, not even in sectors being considered as strategic. That perpetuates their condition of dependence. They were no more able to follow the patterns of development of the type *import-substitution,* which would have freed them, though gradually, of that dependence. These obligatory choices are certainly reflected in the international division of work, which provides for the predominance of qualified work in the developed countries and of unqualified work in the poor countries, irrespective of the distribution of natural talents, which is supposed to be equal. In the end globalization doesn’t even spare the developed countries: the power of the international financial markets can even condition the domestic politics of countries in debts as far as to their being directed completely by others. It can, for ex., oblige them to abandon *welfare* politics and to adopt politics of social *dumping*.

The international political and economic institutions, in their turn, (UNO, FAO, IMF, WB) haven’t been at the height of the objectives written down in their statutes and now China is creating new ones replacing them. For those reasons “*the world is not becoming flat”,* as Thomas Friedman said, in a not convincing way. The *digital divide*, the reasons of exchange, the crises are about to create planetary mountain ranges rather than plains. That makes it difficult even to lessen, let alone to overcome, the internal and external polarisation of the distribution of incomes and riches emphasized by globalization. Consciousness of that has driven the world to regionalization, that is to say to forming groups in the commercial and monetary fields which allow defending the populations against the perverse results of that globalization, which first of all penalizes the young people of the poor countries. In that process, which has extended to the whole world (NAFTA, MERCOSUR, APEC, ASEAN, MENA Countries in the Persian Gulf, ECOWAS in West Africa), the European Union was the pattern to follow.

Globalization has brought men and women closer together, by making the differences and the disparities intolerable. The financial crisis was caused by the international fraud perpetrated by creating financial titles. That has made wane the confidence which is at the basis of exchanges. It has shown that even the economic systems of rich countries are vulnerable confronted with moral degradation, speculation, wasting.

The dialogue between the Four Worlds, which was referred to, presupposes the meeting of different and respected subjects with respect to parity of instruments and possibilities between the peoples, otherwise it disguises a comparison and a commitment where the stronger one continues to impose himself by giving rise to a kind of colonialism continuing even under a false name. The situations of underdevelopment are not the fruit of chance or a historical necessity, but depend on human responsibility.

***3 – The projects for confronting the uncertainties and the fears of the young people: a new humanism and the role of the school***

The perception is widely spread that in the Occident, and first of all in Europe, the young people are exposed to a crisis of meaning, which in its turn is derived from a crisis of identity threatened by the relativism of values. It shatters its structure, down to the fundamental value of life. We are present at a harassing of the deontological ethics which comprises prohibitions and undefined prizes, which are incompatible with total markets, in favour of a consequentialist ethics where the categories of good and just are replaced by those of the advantageous. In Europe there are still distinguished two cultural identities, the Mediterranean one and the Northern European one, which inspire different ways of life and development, because they refer to different concepts of rationality. Those two ways differ, though in a more and more weak way, in their approaches with regard to holism and individualism, in their economic objectives with regard to development and growth, to wellbeing and income.

The young people, especially those who don’t have any religious creed, lack orientation because of a relativism which impedes ideology, which reduces the human being to a dimension which robs him of the ambitions of dream and meaning and which can lead to nihilism. The spreading and the increase of consuming alcohol and drugs among the young people is an important symptom of flight from reality and life. Even culture, understood as the totality of faiths, traditions, social norms, practical knowledge, products, peculiar to a people in a given historical period, is not exempt from this wish for diminishment, directed towards making it guarantee a purely materialistic, but otherwise uncertain wellbeing. In the post-modern society the process of growth of the young generations is endangered, for the fragmentation of the life of the adults does not make them catch sight of a chance of boarding.

*3.1 – A new humanism*

Humanism has given rise to an extraordinary experience. Modernity, however, supposes that the dignity on the human being does no more depend on his/her position in the order of the creation, but on his/her conduct in the course of time and on the capacity of constantly going beyond oneself. The *proprium* characterizing him/her is the free will, contingency, being open to any possibility of self-determination and being able to act differently all the time. The parable of modernity unveils its proper absurdity by abolishing the distinction between human and non-human on which it doesn’t agree to propose a moral judgment by declaring it to be right or wrong. With respect to that requirement all post-modern positions are weak as soon as they resign themselves to the paradox, that is to say the end of the human. In that context technology is not a potentially destructive instance, but on the contrary it becomes the inevitable diversity by means of which one constructs one’s proper identity. This anthropological horizon goes by the name of post-humanism and its theories can totally denaturalize the image of the human person.

One basic anthropological reference point of the neoclassical economic research which has again become dominant during the last 40 years – at least till the outbreak of the international financial crisis – is the *homo oeconomicus* and his pattern of rationality. At the beginning of the 19th century John Stuart Mill defined by this term the behaviour of the economic subject opposed to that of the human being inserted in a certain socio-economic context. The behaviour of the *homo oeconomicus* imitates that of the *Universal Bogey,* the universal ogre described by Nassau Senior, during the same years as Mill’s, who follows, in an absolute way, the principle of individual economic profit. Senior despises the *Bogey,* being consciously preoccupied with the danger of contagion which his example constitutes for humanity. That ethical-social concept, which was going to be prolonged in the course of time, does indeed really and to an increasing degree characterize our societies. The *Bogey* is now no more an object of irony, of making fun and above all of contempt, because during the two last centuries his values have step by step impregnated the way of thinking and acting of a growing number of individuals, especially in the secularized occidental societies. If one wants to invert that tendency, it is, however, of no sense to execrate it: One must rather help the individual to reflect on the antisocial consequences of an egoistic and unlimited economic rationality, and convince him, above all, to abandon his anthropological model with the help of the example of altruistic choices.

In that context a new humanism is asked for in order to give back to the human beings their dimensions lived traditionally and now sacrificed to the weak thought. In the classical world there already appear the germs of a humanism which considers the human being as a human being, but it is asymmetric and ephemeral. It indeed gives privileges on the one hand to some of the ages of the human being, it is on the other hand more bound to “being there/existing” than to “being”. A human being who exists, but doesn’t “be”, refuses to search for transcendent justifications for such problems as the meaning of life and death. He/She exists by chance in a horizontal world marked by destiny and by aims set by others, which see him/her live and die without pursuing an aim that is subjective, even if shared by a segment of society. That human being who doesn’t accept a theology of the existence would not have to deplore, perhaps even to avert, the lack of meaning of his/her proper life. That’s why is it is not certain that there is an intersection with the totality of those who judge that they live a life full of meaning and are inclined to suggest it to the totality of those who live differently.

An important reference point for the reflexion on the possibilities and the difficulties of a return to a Christian humanism is given by *Caritas in Veritate,* which attempts a synthesis of the topic seen from the social teaching of the Church. The encyclical deals with three questions: the main one, the human being; two subordinate ones, environment and technology. It is evident, in the text, that the dominant preoccupation of the Pope is the anthropological one, the matrix of the global social question of development, but also of environment und technology, where freedom of action often is not combined with responsibility. It is connected with the reductionism derived from the rescission of the link between economy and moral sciences, which during the last two centuries has seen growing a scientific discipline not for the human being, but for the *homo oeconomicus,* whose behaviour is based, as said before, on the hypothesis of rationality and maximization of profit and individual utility. The dramatic consequences of that loss of vision of the integral humanism even by the scholars, in the name of the advantages of a specialisation of disciplines feigned *ad hoc,* and therefore instrumental*,* but not true, which favours a consequentially egoistic morale, are visible in the whole world, not only in the poor countries, but also in the rich ones concerned by the global economic crisis. To that epistemological folly the encyclical assigns the poverty of meaning and the contradictions of the individualistic and satiated occidental societies, which have a hard time in recognizing the basic importance of some goods in themselves, such as relationship, reciprocity, volunteering, understood as a personal vocation to gratuity, and certainly justice and peace.

However, in order to define a good human nature in a universal way, one needs a truth not accessible in a purely human way, which the human beings can only find in an act of faith, in a revelation which can direct their free will. The one “human family” is dispersed in a confused and boundless multiplicity of correlated subjects. In an absolutism of technology one is allowed to do everything one can do, separating progress from its moral evaluation and thus from its responsibility, which is removed by relativism. He who has lost his proper identity in a research on a technological level, so far as to no more recognize himself, inevitably also loses the capacity to perceive the identity of the other one. And the difficulty of recognizing the face of the other one causes the dissolution of our very faces, for it is only in relationship and mutual recognition that the faces achieve their features.

*3.2 – The school for a new pattern of society*

The gap between words and behaviour has estranged the people from politics and institutions, in a very obvious way. Even if that detachment is not a consequence of the financial and economic crisis which we still live in today, its dimension, its duration, and the duration of its consequences emphasize it in a particular way, as was shown to us by the dramatic experience of Greece. Thus the problem poses itself of determining a virtuous course capable of redressing the fracture between words and facts. From there derives the importance of the method in school and educational environment. One model which the teachers know very well is John Dewey’s, who laid down the basic features of his thoughts on education in “School and Society” of 1899. That is a basic point of reference for fixing the terms of a dialogue of the school for a new pattern of society. In those years Dewey already made conspicuous that the school could not stay alien to the profound transformation of society; on the contrary it must be interlaced intimately with social progress, changing its appearance radically. The change of the school happens in a parallel way to the change of society. Finding out the needs of young people, intercepting what is significant and human in them, paves the way to follow, in order to initiate motivation and to find again horizons of meaning. The problems of *paideia* are constituted by the difficulties of rearranging the reasons and of giving motivations to the young people by reconciling them with the need of knowledge capable of giving a meaning to life, knowledge orientated towards the truth and therefore free of instrumentalization. One also asks for a serious formation of the teachers, so that in their activity of thinking and transmitting their proper thoughts they can renew the contacts with the realities outside school.

*Education* therefore is one of the centres of the anthropological question of today. A positivist mentality which rejects metaphysics doesn’t address the person in his/her totality, nor, still less, agree to leading a dialogue, nor to opening up to a vaster cultural world. One often talks about *educational emergency*, but lacking fundamentals it is not possible to introduce into school ethical-moral sensitivity only through knowledge. The school must become a community in miniature, keeping close contact with the environment and the social reality of work. Its objective is the respect of the dignity of the person, of every person, but also the protection of the sensitivity for the other one and above all of the innocence of the children and the natural development of the adolescents: That’s why one must exclude any gratuitous information which is factious and inadequate to the stated cognitive needs.

School is the privileged place for the formation of the human being, but often one has finished by exchanging the right to work by the right to training. That’s why at least outside obligatory education one must call for the return of selection, to ward off the lack of commitment and of the sense of duty and to penalize laziness and sometimes bad education. The Italian school is weak because it gives little space to merit and above all because it takes only little account of the world of production. Saint Benedict said “*Ora et labora”,* to us he would say “*Disce et labora”.*

***4. Conclusion***

Even in a regionalized world the future sees the roles of planetary regions connected with the dynamics of population: Europe is in decline because of that as well, while the population is increasing in the fast-growing countries, still more in the developing countries, but also in the USA. The control of negative social, economic and environmental impacts is becoming more and more difficult for the Occident. One has become conscious of the fact that every person is of value in him/herself and for him/herself and not only for the function he/she can fulfil. Every person is an aim that is of an absolute value and not just a means that is of value for the utility it can offer; every person is absolutely unique, a unity of body and spirit that cannot be replaced. One can classify knowledge for doing, one doesn’t classify knowledge for being.

Cesare Beccaria - a lawyer, philosopher and economist of the Italian Enlightenment - stated: “There is no freedom whenever the laws allow that in certain events the human being stops being a person and becomes a thing”. That’s why the important transition is the transition from a “methodological” perspective to a “metaphysical” perspective according to the idea of Benedict XVI.

As in the case of the prodigal son the rediscovery of a direction promising humanism demands reflection, readiness to retrace one’s steps. With regard to that it is interesting to observe that both the *Philosophical Investigations* and the *General Theory* are arrival points of the way back performed by LudwigWittgenstein and by John Maynard Keynes respectively between the two wars. Keynes’ way goes from economic orthodoxy to the “Keynesian revolution”, in other words from the inefficiency to the re-evaluation of economic policy. Wittgenstein’s way between the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* goes from the negation of philosophy and metaphysics to their re-evaluation. In their works which testify their revision of the theory compared with the contents of their earlier synthesis, which one finds in their first writings, at the end of their intellectual turn that precedes the revolution of their theory, they develop, in the diversity of the circumstances of their disciplines, an organic analysis based on non-demonstrative logics. It is interesting to search in the Book of Job for a trace of that model of general psychology for representing a being born again. If one is inclined to its absence, one strengthens a pessimistic thesis which sees the *homo oeconomicus* moving more and more away in time from the *homo sapiens,* starting from the Occident. If one on the contrary admits its presence, it is possible to conclude that Job and the *Universal Bogey* both have all the time been part of the history of the human being both in the Occident and the Orient.

The consciousness must find its place that beyond all physical, cultural, religious differences all human beings are equal, because they all belong to the same destiny and that their history is not a long march to nothingness, but a course which in spite of all has a meaning and a value. It is a long way, but it is worth while running it, since obviously one doesn’t see an alternative way for gaining global justice and peace.