

Introduction

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The subheading of the present issue evokes two conceptual categories more or less explicitly widespread “all over the world”, within the scientific reflection on the emerging training processes in the current age of “globalization of markets”: *creative destruction* (Schumpeter) and *capability* (Sen)².

The adjective “creative” (placed at the beginning of the expression with which Schumpeter has moulded a successful and popular characterization of entrepreneurial action) evokes, with all the allure of a slogan, a prominent aspect of the persistent rooting of the “spirit of capitalism” – and of the “animal spirits” emanating from it – in the worldwide context. Despite the problematic outcomes often deriving from it, the entrepreneurial culture retains in fact a persistent appeal, because – among other things – in it the worth of the *initiative* is raised and exalted. And the concept of “initiative” – whether you configure it in an individual or community, private or public sense – contains crucial references to the

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² The two conceptual categories are by now of public domain. Here, they are referred to in their current meaning, without detailed references to the works of the authors who have coined them. However, it does not seem superfluous to point out that Schumpeter, in *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung* (1912; normally considered the first issue of his general view on economic development), reveals some affinity with the perspective of “fight for survival”, more evident in at time already famous Sombart theory (see *Krieg und Capitalism*, 1913) and unfortunately confirmed, in many aspects, by the next war events of the last century.

category of *individual person* which, at least since alexandrine age, is one of the most consistent and interesting archetypes of our history. In this sense, action and re-action universally appear as deliberateness to survive and are directed towards resilience and adaptation. In fact, it is only by continuing to act that possible errors, or destructive effects previously experienced, can be compensated. The spirit of initiative, like Achille's spear, wounds and heals. Via this route, from experience, preventive representations of a subsequent action, which acquires a *reflective* and *planning* nature, can stem. And movement, initially spontaneous and immediate, evolutionarily takes on a mediatory and symbolic shape, developing as a nucleus of an *e-xisting* sub-ject. The dynamic producing the *existence* of a *person* causes the emergence of a self-referential source of continuous elaboration of the external reality.

Several theories have been developed on the subject³ and this is not the place to provide another history of the idea of person, coupled with a praise of the successes of modern and post-modern capitalism⁴. However, in keeping with the rather synthetic nature of the approach adopted, I will limit myself to refer to a recent essay, which contains essential references to the context of the present *issue*. It is an essay called *Libertà immaginaria* (*Imaginary Freedom*, TN) published about a year ago by Magatti, where the title itself recalls the counterpoint of expectations and realities that I shall focus on with relation to the learning processes (Magatti, 2009). By providing a wide investigation on the passage to the post-industrial condition and the existing neo-liberalism, the author highlights the deeply seductive – and propelling – allure of the *promises* of personal fulfilment universally offered by the entrepreneurial culture. Just like the male lead in the tango couple, the creative role of the entrepreneur is always represented

³ Among these, there is also the Spinozian concept of *conatus* understood in a cosmic sense (the modal relationship of the *attributes* of “mind” and “body”, that is methodically related to an “order”) and aimed at “*perseverare in esse suo*” (striving to persevere in being, TN). I am briefly referring to it as an example, because some contemporary critical trends, which refer to specific philosophical analyses (Deleuze) or neuro-scientific theorizations (Damasio), attempt deconstructive exercises of the idea of person referring to Spinozian thought. However, the “spirit of capitalism”, by keeping alive the *myth* of the individual person, also updates Spinozian proto-liberalism achieving, at the same time, a widespread socio-cultural adherence, which appears indifferent to the above-mentioned deconstructions.

⁴ Praise notoriously already bestowed, among others, by Marx and Engels themselves, at the end of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

in the act of deciding and taking steps forward. And, “theoretically”, the road to becoming successful entrepreneurs, capable of expressing *creative destruction*, is open to everyone. The universal nature of this offer is well rendered by the easy exhortation, voiced in the French Second Republic and in the pro-market shift of the Republic of China, that each man become “his/her own entrepreneur”. Frequently, the removed reality is instead that (a) competitive success can entail lasting social exclusions; (b) the overall balance of costs (starting from the eco-systemic and generational costs) reveals the emergence of negative externalities and of “perverse effects”. The race to maximizing advantages, jointly connected to the roles of producer and of consumer (roles that, in the free market economy, are basically copresent in the same person), often produces, at individual and/or systemic level, conflicts and contradictions which are difficult to control and cast shadows of socio-cultural delegitimization on this model of development. Going back to the Schumpeterian slogan, “creation” and “destruction” may manifest themselves as an unsolved antithesis.

At this point, two coherent perspectives (with its premises and *promises*) can come to the rescue of the pessimism pervading liberal *Weltanschauung*:

- a) a positive teleological view of historical events, as when Croce, at the end of his *History of Europe*, opposes the immortal values of the “religion of freedom” to the reality of the facts;
- b) a programmatic reformist strategy, anchored to the respect of the “person principle” and a political practice of liberal-democratic imprint, ready to acknowledge both the demands of individual and private existence and of the community and public existence. In the second direction, less fideistic compared to the first, Sen’s *capability perspective* also finds place.

It is a far from easy reference, starting from the necessary clarifications of the meaning of the term “capability”, which currently maintains its polysemous meaning in the English language. I agree instead with the definition aligned with the sense of the Italian neologism “capacitazione” (coming from the Italian verb “capacitare”, in English “to capacitate”), where the reflections on the theoretical and critical level are immediately intuitable.

“The term ‘capacitation’ is rarely used in scientific Italian literature, since it prefers to keep the English version, thus engendering more than a few ambiguities: *capability*, in fact, lends itself to be translated with *capacità*, which, in the context of social and juridical sciences expresses, as far as the subject is concerned, an aptitude for something; a definition which is not suited to seize the meaning of the concept and its heuristic potential. The introduction of the neologism *capacitation* (Rigamonti in Sen 2000, p. 19) is justified by the fact that, in the context of the argument elaborated by Sen, *capability* does not denote an ability referring exclusively to the individual subject and his/her skills, because the opportunities or the means that society gives or denies the individual become a part of its connotation. The adoption of this concept in the sociological context requires analytical instruments suitable to seize the interrelationship between the individual subjective dimension and the social institutional one within a framework which is not static, but dynamic and procedural, by adopting a multilevel perspective. It is for this reason that applying the paradigm of capacitations to the analysis of social policies at European level constitutes a positive challenge, because it requires that the supranational dimension of policies be connected to the conditions of life in the various national and local contexts” (L. Leonardi, 2009, pp. 31-32).

Acknowledging the term ‘capability’ in its more specific meaning of ‘capacitation’, Sen’s perspective can thus be understood as an action aimed at equipping the individual person with the material resources and the cognitive and operational attributes (knowledge, competencies, skills) rendering him/her truly autonomous and, at the same time, politically included: *progressive* liberalism, calling to mind – to establish approximate parallels – elements of Dewey, Keynes, Dahrendorf and Rawls, more than the ones contained in some passages of Nozick or of certain admirers, in economy, of the “new neoclassical synthesis” of the Chicago School⁵. This perspective sees the emergence of *lifestyles* that fulfil *the integrity and personal wellbeing of an individual* and styles that, in theory and practice, deny this value. Besides, it should be mentioned that Sen’s positions are in keeping with the emerging tendency, having diversified but easily identifiable contours, to reform the current Gross Domestic Product (GDP) models by introducing new indicators of personal wellbeing. Said

⁵ For a recent and vast summary of Sen’s “procedural liberalism”, see Sen 2009 (It. Trans. 2010). The book is dedicated “to the memory of John Rawls”, but the treatment is constantly oriented towards, in the connotation of the concept of justice, the avoidance of suggestions that the author defines of a “transcendental-institutional” type.

indicators are connected to adequate modalities of existence, rather than continuous linear measurements of produced or distributed goods: e.g., health experienced and perceived, active citizenship, a motivating profession. The determination of such indicators emerges as the result of processes of *contractual objectivation between persons* (manifesting themselves in an individual or community form), rather than as the result of abstract econometries. And when, in order to achieve said objectives, specialized knowledge and competencies become necessary, this entails that the relevant interventions are planned and carried out with the authoritative participation of *professionally trained and certified subjects*⁶. The practice of a professional activity, in its specific articulations of *technical-scientific competence, deontological responsibility and communicative availability*, is in fact a crucial public condition for carrying out effective projects of *services to the individual person*. In the best scenario of this pairing, “individual person” and “profession” appear evolutionarily convergent elements.

Market dynamics can hence engender innovations that are advantageous for some people and, simultaneously, *incapacitating* for others. If *creative destruction* leaves in its wake negative externalities and unexpected conflictual effects, it is on the public scene of political regulation that optimal compensatory transactions emerge. And the subsequent operational provisions must have a basic reference point in the guise of suitable professional figures.

If this smoothly occurs in the regulation of interventions related to health, architectural-engineering activities and the administration of justice, it is hard to understand why the same cannot be said with relation to the field of learning processes.

In this field, for some time, in current language and in sector literature, there has been a proliferation of *slogans* such as *learn to learn, lifelong learning*, and *lifelong worldwide learning*.

Bearing in mind the sense of the previously-mentioned title of Magatti's publication (*Imaginary Freedom*), expressions such as these are often based

⁶ As a universal guarantee for users, a public qualification is necessary in order to deal with interventions that can take place, as is usually the case, under simultaneous conditions of:

- a) competential asymmetry between professional and user;
- b) urgent need (C. Catarsi 2010, p. 217 and subs.).

With relation to this point, see, in my subsequent intervention entitled *Measures of citizenship*, the metaphorical reference to the “dentist's threshold”.

on the precondition of an “imaginary continuity”. Reality is instead characterized by the *fractures* and *discontinuities* that the innovations emerged from commercial competition produce in a great number of people, engendering a long *incompetence* moment between suffered innovation and the realization of re-capacitation project (C. Catarsi, 2001).

At this point, a sharp distinction between the concept of “training” and that of “educational training” can emerge : this distinction is evoked by the title of the present issue and thematized by its contents. Wenger too so stress the importance of this distinction:

“Education, in its deepest and whatever age it takes place, concerns the opening of identities, exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state. Whereas training [in his plain meaning] aims to create an inbound trajectory targeted at competence in a specific practice, education must strive to open new dimensions for the negotiation of the self. It places students on a outbound trajectory toward a broad field of possible identities. Education is not merely formative – is transformative” (E. Wenger, 1998, p. 263).

A negative possible side of this distinction from “inbound trajectory” (merely formative) and “outbound trajectory” (transformative) has so evoked elsewhere:

“The direction of learning to learn, centred on an individual’s subjectivity that becomes ‘person’, risks slipping, if specific educative objectives do not intervene, into the practice of *unlimited conformity* to externally imposed conditions. After all, is this not the implicit meaning of slogans such as ‘flexibility’ and ‘creative adaptation’, when they are pronounced – as is often the case – in a vague and, at the same time, peremptory way?” (C. Catarsi, 2005, p. 29).

In this sense, the merely *conditional* aspects of learning may take shape, in the versions previously illustrated by Pavlov, Skinner and Vance Packard. And someone, maliciously, can find well-founded assonances between the expression “continuous training” and its parody “*chronic training*”, derived from the linguistic register of medicine. On second thought, however, the parody is not completely extemporaneous and can engender relevant comparisons between the medical profession and the educational profession. In both cases, in fact, it is possible to witness the emergence of the perspective of an intervention centred on the person and

conducted under the supervision of a competent professional. In the first and second type of intervention, the objective is to guarantee the “good health” of a person (relatively incompetent and pressed by urgent needs) with regard to the seductive messages of sectorial advertising: a type of advertising encouraging – often with pervasive and refined strategies – the maximum resort to remedies and “re-capacitations” of approximate and not personalized efficacy. Furthermore, with even more serious effects, cases of contractually imposed learning – or learning achieved in conditions lacking any pedagogical deontology – can occur⁷.

For all of the above, in the title the term *education* has been contrastively opposed to *lifelong learning*, which, as we have observed, may also be applied to process of merely “conformative” learning, syntonically with the spreading of innovations oriented to unilateral profits.

This “IJSE” *issue* includes interventions aimed at investigating, following the analysis of some junctions of training policy emerging in the European context, crucial aspects of the “creative destruction” // “capability perspective” relationship. Each intervention features connections between theoretical layout and empirical references and the alphabetical order of the authoresses can be in step with contents account. Francesca Bianchi, in *Recent transformation of the Italian labour market: toward a lifelong learning system*, compares a global scenario of post-fordist labour market with the social policies really implemented in Italian context since '90 decennium to date. She illustrates how the construction of a lifelong learning public system results, in fact, a process constantly “delayed”. After having carefully assessed the results of an *Adult Education Survey*, based on recent data from sources such as Eurostat and Unesco, Rosangela

⁷ On the juridical level, the *good* configured by professionally qualified interventions is defined, negatively, by the *damage* that an inappropriate intervention can cause. Traditionally, most of the European and World-wide legal systems, feature damages of a *physical*, *patrimonial* and *moral* type with relation to the citizen's integrity. More recently, in law, the category of *existential damage* (*préjudice d'agrément* in French) has also emerged. The connections of these legal categories with the correct practice of professions specialized in the safeguard of an individual's integrity and hence, positively, with the sociocultural significance of the professions themselves, are intuitable. The reference to *existential damage*, which in the strictest sense calls to mind the concepts of *functioning* and *capability* developed by Sen, is particularly significant for educational type interventions and for the professional profile of the operators entrusted with said interventions.

Lodigiani, in *Recalibrating lifelong learning and active citizenship: implications drawn from the capability approach*, succeeds in defining some “pattern variables” (*employability vs capability; conversion vs stratification*). Having critically developed the outcomes of an internationally significant Report (*European Innovation Scoreboard, 2006*), Angela Mongelli, in *Lifelong Learning and innovation*, comparatively outlines *innovation leadership* profiles. In Maddalena Colombo’s *Challenges of the capability paradigm in a local adult education system. A case study of the Provincia Autonoma di Trento (Italy)*, the descriptive part of the *case account* is preceded and followed by historical and theoretical reflections of a general scope. In Valeria Pandolfini’s *The Use of New Technologies in Teachers’ Professional Development: New Ways to Enhance Personal Capabilities?*, the report on a research-intervention carried out in the context of initiatives promoted by the Italian agency ANSAS (Agenzia Nazionale per lo Sviluppo dell’ Autonomia Scolastica; in English, National Agency for School Autonomy Development) is combined with the final suggestion of a “new way to enhance personal capabilities”. Compared to the previous interventions, Margherita Bertoldi’s offers a diversified approach. In *Lifelong Learning and Career: Research Proposal in the Human Resources Management*, she describes the main lines of a research project still *in progress* on the importance of the training processes for the careers of a vast sample of personnel managers of Italian businesses. Anyway, the project has reached the executive phase and the themes it deals with are relevant to the contents of the present issue, because the role of personnel manager takes on the characteristics of a figure specialized in formatively linking “creative destruction” and “capability perspective”.

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