

## **The Goal of University through Globalization**

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It is mostly due to commercial exchanges and technological unifications that globalization, in which the whole world is involved, is developing with great speed. Although it is an economical and technological globalization, it's not very different from all the other forms of homologation between cultures of the past: not only the crusades were a huge economic and commercial issue, but also pilgrimage; devotion and fear of hell, in Medieval age (cfr. Duby) used to induce rich landowners to leave, in forms of testaments, their goods to the church, contributing in a significant way to the distribution of wealth in society at the time. But if today the economic-technological nature of globalization is felt more intensely by everyone, it's due to the speed in which it develops through computer science. It is from here that a very sensitive imbalance is created between globalization of goods and technologies on the one hand, and the much slower "globalization" of cultures, customs, and ethics on the other hand. According to my thesis, it is here that the so-called "clash-of-civilizations" has its roots. It seems to me that the two speeds through which both processes of

globalization happen produce a friction from which the racial, religious, and political conflicts arise.

Naturally, the task of the universities in this situation cannot only be that of simply accelerating globalization also on the cultural level as it occurs, for example, when people say that all the world should get used to speak English. If civilizations and cultures between each other become similar through a very slow process, it is not only due to a practical problem, because the “historical” nature of cultures and customs also consists in the fact that their maturation requires time. The same Latin term for “religion” indicates the direction of “binding,” to adjust to something from the past, to its roots, that although it appears natural, it is remote for the individuals and its community in which they recognize themselves. Paradoxically, culture follows a rather natural rhythm or, we could also say, it tries to keep alive those “natural” roots that experimental sciences and technologies tend dissolve in its own abstract universality—such as the mathematical language. It is probably in this opposition that justifications can be found for those propositions of great rational project of a universal language—from Leibniz’s “naturalistic” to the Esperanto—were never able of substituting the “natural” languages. All the formalized and purified languages need, to be instituted and function, the background of a natural language, as can be seen in Goedel’s theory of incompleteness. It is verified here a phenomenon that seems to turn upside down the metaphysical tradition effective from Plato to Nietzsche and Heidegger: in Platonism, the

empirical knowledge had to be overcome by the scientific and philosophical knowledge that was supposed to elevate itself from the world of ideas where it would be freed from any historical mutations. The truth model of Platonism were mathematics and geometry, the essences of things had the same eternal and immutable nature of figures and numbers. But today, according to a development that Heidegger taught us to call the “end of metaphysics,” philosophical knowledge seems to have just that task to re-establish the ideological essences in their historical context. It is not surprising that this outcome comes about just in the epoch of fundamentalism and terrorism, that is, in our age of “clash of civilizations.” It is exactly Heidegger, once again, that tells us that metaphysics—hence, the identification of Being with the stability of ideal un-mutable form, mathematical entities or general laws of nature, on which science and technologies are constructed, which are also applicable everywhere—comes to an end just when it becomes a general law of the existing real world: just when the rational and pure order of the world becomes, in general terms, “real,” it reveals its human indefensibility. Also, in Theodore Adorno’s theory, the illuminist ideal of a universal rationality, from the instant that technology makes it possible through “total organization,” appears unacceptable for our everyday life. Let’s imagine this through a recent example: generally what has been called the “US Empire” is actually very real indeed because they are the greatest world power and that cosmopolitan order that the UN was not able to bring for-

ward, is actually produced today by the Pentagon and the, moral or un-moral, US laws. It is just in this moment—as the Iraq situation shows us—that fundamentalism and terrorist of all sorts are in full expansion and also seem much more violent than at the times of the Cold War when two superpowers were certainly in a dangerous balance, but at least much more stable comparing to what we have to deal with now. Even the “US Empire,” with its order under menace from local revolts and from a general social disorder, is a consequence of a different speed of globalization, a manifestation of the “natural languages” revolts against the English speaking Universality which have become of the language of communication and commerce, and whose generality is the same as the mathematical language of science.

Could one think of the task of Universities in terms of safeguard of differences, of the confirmation of the roots of local cultures, without this contradicting the traditional “platonian,” metaphysical, and illuminist understanding of Universities?

With such a question what has been traditionally considered the European and developed world regions university culture of Western modernity finally receives a real task for transforming, or at least revising itself not only in Europe, but in the whole developed world. This world itself was actually constructed on the basis of the discoveries of experimental sciences, which were massively applied on all spheres of life. University’s culture has always been, during the centuries of modernity, a fusion between “sciences of

nature” and “human sciences,” that is, in the structure of universities it has always been more separated and at the same time in un-stable equilibrium. When Kant, at the end of the seventeenth century, entitled one of his essays “The Contest of Faculties” (1798) he was not alluding to a clash between the faculties of Reasons, to which he dedicated his three Critiques, but to the sections in which it was already divided (“*gleichsam fabrikmäßige*”) in the university. Today, this equilibrium which already at the time of Kant, was an object of discussion, has become more and more precarious. People like us that teach in the so-called humanities feel increasingly, in the Western World, as dinosaurs condemned sooner or later to extinction unless someone comes up with a new social cause that could be drawn from professors of history, literature, theology and so on... In recent years, for example, the European Union launched as a directive for its own development, the so-called “Lisbon Program” [in March 2000]—called thus because of the town where this EU Members reunion took place—which was titled “Europe of Knowledge.” Not only the original content of the document, but also the interpretation it went through in the following years by the Governments and Institutions, demonstrated that the term “knowledge” was here understood in the strict and precise sense of scientific knowledge with a particular attention to the one susceptible to technological application in industrial scale. Of course, not only biologic sciences are part of this understanding of knowledge and therefore their application to medicine, agriculture, and fo-

od, but also those sciences that promise a development of the interplanetary explorations which, until now, do not seem to render any economic applications if we do not consider the possible discovery of useful minerals from other planets and the case of interplanetary interments, for which some enterprises have already risen in the United States. Obviously, I do not ignore that at the ground of the development of each knowledge the Lisbon Program places the learning of writing and reading, which is a personal richness useful to the culture of the spirit. But in general, most of the effort to promote knowledge in the West, is strictly oriented towards the scientific and technological development with the specific purpose, obvious in the Lisbon Program, to prepare the European nations to win the international economic competition: more scientific knowledge means more technological creativity, therefore, a more competitive force in the world-wide market... The devaluation, lost of prestige, and social recognition human sciences texts and teachers in recent years have undergone, is a proof of the direction towards which we are all heading. Also, the enormous rise of new “specializations”—in the world of computer science, of show-business, of communication (from the rapid transportation of merchandise to the “confectioning” of the same merchandise, to the “logistic,” which few of us could define)—happen most of the time out-side schools and universities, not only because most public schools are frequently much more slow in adjusting their program of studies to the latest industrial discoveries, but also because the same

structure of traditional schools and universities (books, lecture classes, divided exams) is not adapted to the new kind of “instruction” that it actually needs. Many of the new works, also the most technological ones, that today are demanded—not only in show-business, communication, but also in the distribution of merchandise—may only be learned in structures that are similar to the *bottega*, craftsman or artistic “work-shops” of the past and not in formal institutions such as schools and universities. I’m recalling all this because it seems to me that also independently from the problem of the humanistic education; today’s school and university must conceive knowledge and culture through new terminologies from their own tradition. In order to concentrate on humanistic education—which is the one that needs the greater amount of protection, since the technoscientific one is “naturally” pushed forward by economy—I would like to invite you all to remember that it has survived in modernity because it was able to fulfill also social tasks in part clearly economic or at least socially useful (for example in the realm of legal sciences [Kelsen]) or because it help to prepare other human sciences “distributors” (masters and teachers or even preachers from various religions...). But already today the request of human sciences teachers tends to reduce itself more and more to primary education, in other words, who will study philosophy or literature at a university level if these disciplines progressively vanish from secondary school and therefore do not offer any employment perspectives?

Obviously, it is not a question of being aware of this tendency, hence that with globalization it has become more and more important to adjust the university structure to this new situation, but rather what we are supposed to remember is that in the contest of faculties that Kant talked about, the humanities are destined to succumb, at least if the dominant criteria is that of the scientific value that they are “supposed” to have. Already today an academic thesis on Hegel, Heidegger, or Kant is a scientifically “impossible” work: the author would have to know an interminable bibliography, which he will not be able to read completely. But even so, in this terrain, apart from discoveries of new material (such as an un-known manuscript of Kant; a pre-historic town that came out from some archeological site), the scientific value is brought forward primarily from the discussion of other texts from the same theme... Human sciences, have until now, in order not to succumb in the contest of faculties, only tried to imitate scientific sciences adjusting themselves to rigorous and “objective” criteria. But also for practical reasons (there are far too many specialist on Hegel as on Kant in the world) such a criteria (the work done on the theme, hence the other books on the theme) becomes the more absurd. We rather call valid and original a study on Kant or Hegel that achieves reading these authors in such a new perspective that would be useful for today in order to understand our life. And often this occurs without any “objective” thoroughness. But, as one can easily see, a similar criterion of value has much to do with the taste, sensibility



(of the student and his judgments). The problem lies in the fact that of such a criteria human sciences are often ashamed because it always seemed to them too subjective and little susceptible of a rigorous application—as it often happens for public academic competitions.

The crisis of the humanities in today's western education, that we may recognize in examples such as the ones I just mentioned (the Lisbon Program, the clash of faculties, the reduction to absurdity of the scientific character of the "search" in philosophy, literature, history, to not mention theology contexts) shows, as far as I'm concern, that the modern conception of knowledge, basically inspired from the Enlightenment ideal, by now is not practicable. On the one hand, the efficiency of research and of its technical applications demands by now levels of specializations that are so elevated that impose to the experts of the various sectors a form of isolation and separation from common culture that can no more find any solution in the economic gratifications and social prestige that they are attributed to. On the other hand, human sciences, when they do not structure themselves (cognitive, biological sciences) on experimental knowledge cannot ground themselves anymore on values of criteria's that are revealed always more and more absurd.

If this is the problem—and this can be disputed—a solution (of which I do not dispose, of course) should be to start searching from a distinctive point of view authoritatively brought forward from Kant, and resumed by Heidegger in terms that seem scandalous, but actually aren't. Heidegger,

in “What is Called Thinking” published in 1954 (a course delivered at the University of Freiburg in 1951-1952) declared that “science does not think” because when it knows, it only knows the “phenomena,” the totality of the objects that allow themselves to be placed in space and time and deal according to some categories. For Kant, on the other hand, thought deals with the “thought” (in Greek: the “noumenon”), hence with all that is not the phenomenon. More than God, the soul, human freedom, the noumeno is for us, as for Heidegger, the totality of conditions that render possible the knowledge of phenomenon: we would say of our cultural heredity and life wisdom that is handed through the language we talk amounts to the “knowledge” (but not objective since it is not thematic and explicitly argued) that we dispose as members of a community (as what we have assimilated in the arts, literature, moral and religious education). We could identify all this also within the sphere of values based on which we judge life and that guide us in our relation with others. The progressive liquidation of humanities from our scholastic institutions threatens just this sphere of “contents” that are objects neither of experimental science nor of demonstration. We could also say (and I have made such a proposition in a debate at the UNESCO) that to the society of knowledge, of the techno-scientific wisdom, we intend to place side by side (certainly not oppose) a society of *loisir*, of games (for Kant the experience of beauty, in nature and in art, is the “free game of faculties” in the sense of the of the soul faculty). A society of knowledge—of sci-

ence and of technique—risks to being also a violent society, at least when it excludes from education that terrain of vital knowledge, knowledges of the *Lebenswelt* that help to configure the social relations, from being together of communities till political democracy. It is clear that to capture these wisdoms from the scholastic and university education cannot mean to teach them as scientific knowledges. It is possible only to do it by recuperating ancient models of “*universitas*”—the community of academics and disciples, the spirits of the craftsman or artistic “work-shops” or also by creating models of educative relations different from those too rigid inspired by the “hard” sciences. These of course, cannot be at the same time liquidated even though one may hope that the proximity with the contemporary human sciences instructions effect a less rigid and formal way the learning of hard sciences and technologies in order to try to make them acquire a more human nature as an old book by Hubert Dreyfus (1972) is entitled *What Computers Still Can't Do: A Critique of Artificial Reason*. Many of the activities in which the results of scientific research may be applied to technology can be brought forward by robots—even though this is still a dream for the time being, but it is a legitimate dream: for example, just like until today man has progressively freed himself from the manual work through the invention of machines, it is not that absurd that machines (the thinking machines of cyberneticists) may freed themselves one day from the fatigue of calculations, of learning the laws of matter, of tables and theorems, in order to only

leave them the task of “creation.” Also scientist, have progressively become conscious of the aesthetics aspect of their work, that might imply that they recognize that neither is their work that far from the loisir, the game for which, at the end, real human existence ought to exist. We are certainly talking about prospective that are quite far away, but it is just the university that has today the task to study and prepare its realization.