

An altruistic creative love” as a point of departure to facing a sociocultural crisis”: the creative role of craftsmanship

Fabrizio Pezzani

Emeritus Professor Bocconi University Milan Italy

ABSTRACT

On the other hand, the dominance of a single model of thought and value has drastically reduced creative thought, which is formed when people are not shackled by fixed rules, instead managing to give full rein to their critical thought and intuition. Sigmund Freud would have defined this as the free association of ideas, representing the fruit of a meeting between different cultures and histories that, without dogma and any kind of prejudice, leaves room for intuition, which occurs in what are apparently the most unimaginable moments.

Intuition is the basis for the idea of beauty, moral rules, religious values, and has led to an enormous number of discoveries in all fields of knowledge. How many times do we see quoted the discoveries of Archimedes, Galileo, Newton, Poincaré, Fleming, Pasteur, Einstein, Heisenberg and many others, associating their intuition with links between observable facts and natural events

Artisan as " is "demiourgos" deriving from "demios" (people) and "ergon" (production or labour) that Plato in "Timaeus" attributed with the ability to bring together the world of the soul and the beautiful with that of matter.

The term artisanship and the resulting craft is steeped in history and is the operational contribution of manual human activity to the development of the first formations of society starting from the earliest civilization in Mesopotamia at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates. One of the first celebrations of artisanship, as Richard Sennett wrote in "The Craftsman", appeared in the Homeric Hymns, particularly the Hymn to Hephaestus, the patron god of artisans: "Sing, clear-voiced Muse, of Hephaestus famed for inventions.... he taught men glorious crafts throughout the world, men who before used to dwell in caves (here in essence "Plato's cave") but now that they have learned crafts".

The Artisanship: artistic artisan creations offered a decisive contribution to creative mind

In ancient Greece, this activity was particularly important because not only did it provide the tools and means to improve social life but was proposed as "art" to give form to the notion of the beauty of classical culture. At that time, divinely represented in Raphael's "The School of Athens", artistic artisan creations offered a decisive contribution to not only the material development of this historic period, but also represented the search for stylistic perfection coherent with a socio-cultural context closely linked to a transcendent vision in the spiritual sense of culture.



Athen's School, Raffaello Sanzio, 1509-1511

That historic period presented itself as a harmonious whole both in the arts and in the other sciences - philosophy, mathematics, natural sciences, literature, ethics and morality, politics - that informed a society deeply committed to the vision of man as the focus of interest. Indeed, the Greek word translated as "artisan" is "demiourgos" deriving from "demios" (people) and "ergon" (production or labour) that Plato in "Timaeus" attributed with the ability to bring together the world of the soul and the beautiful with that of matter. Plato unites, in this sense, technical skill and creativity in the verb "poien" that becomes a "making" but is also the root of the word poetry. That era laid the foundations for future developments of history and later under Roman rule, the arts and crafts gained a critical role in the development of society until the late Roman empire collapsed, decreeing the end of a historical phase in which the exclusive attention to a materialistic vision of life stifled the creative and innovative spirit for a new turning point in history.



The Milo's Venus



Nike of Samotrace



Wounded Amazon

In the unfolding historic times, that period of fertile creativity and harmony would be slowly suffocated by an increasingly materialistic culture that removed man from the beautiful and that which represents the sphere of feelings, up to associating happiness with the accumulation of worldly goods. This moral and cultural degradation would culminate in the late Roman Empire and its final collapse and is also the anthropological and moral crisis that we are now living. Pain regenerates man and brings him back, Vico would have said through "providence", to a spiritual dimension and a catharsis that would result in the Middle Ages, a time when the spirit would be reconciled with technique.



The Return to Mother Earth and spirituality

The Middle Ages represented a return to transcendent values and to a less hedonistic worldview, and thus artisanship also resumed a more spiritual life, especially in the monastic associations. It was precisely this intermediate stage that brought man to a more transcendent vision of life, preparing him for a highly creative era as a prelude to the Renaissance where "arts and crafts" acquired their decisive dimension for economic and social development. Without the Middle Ages, there would have been no Renaissance.



The months of the year of Benedetto Antelami (Parma, Italy)

Around the eleventh and the twelfth century, the associations of artisans assumed critical importance in society not only for their artistic and operational contribution, but also for their role in societal development choices. This historic period was extraordinary in terms of intellectual and technical creativity, Gothic churches are a kind of stone Bible raised to the skies and represent the spirituality of time and the creations that today we do not understand or appreciate the difficulty of their creation. When facing the huge windows of Gothic churches, we do not inquire into the technical difficulties of constructing coloured glass tiles that can withstand the dynamic expansion and contraction of the iron that contains them. The period up to the 16th century made an immense contribution to the development of our time, forming the Italian artistic heritage that today represents 2/3 of the world's artistic heritage, contributing to consolidating and almost rendering genetic that component of creativity of the Italian people that makes it unique in the world. The creative sense and value of the "Made in Italy", recognized as unique in the world, has its roots in the history of artisanship.

Indeed, the labour of craftsmanship is a form of immediate work in which the eye, the hand, the desire to achieve a goal, the sense and pleasure of the material used, the imagination and ultimately the ability to give shape to matter stimulate a constant propensity for creativity.

This attitude ended up profoundly characterizing the history of the Italian people because artisanship allows maintaining creativity of thought and reduces the pressure for uniformity of behaviour also extended to the life and consumption models characterizing the modern industrial culture. The world became global, but the realities of each territory are the result of age-old histories and thus the real goal is not a uniform model for all societies, but the ability to combine the principles and methods of cooperation and coexistence deriving from the differences

between states, societies and civilizations that lead to a progressive unification over time, taking the best of the various contributions.

A further aspect of the moral value of artisanship is therefore the strong connection with nature, from which the matter of continuous transformation derives. As we shall see, in this sense, rural culture assumes a particularly important role. The concept of the relationship with nature has changed over time, but to a lesser extent in our country. Nature is often referred to as "mother" for the values it inspires, a binding rule for all knowledge and every action that is natural, and hence the sense of value of existence. Yet this intimate relationship ended up breaking down to the extent that "technique" began to have an independent and dominant role in guiding society, the way of life and the values of the modern world. This thrust for change increasingly helped replace and change the concept of utility to that of dominion, in the extreme sense expressed in a new conception of society and man's relationship with nature that is no longer direct but always more intermediated by calculation and technique, it some way rendering it more sterile. Indeed, man knows much more today than he can see or feel with his senses; designing and building things that he cannot feel, leading to a growing detachment from the natural world that contributes to increasing his coldness of heart and his difficulty of having real interpersonal relationships with others. Man is thus in danger of no longer being able to feel and experience personally, but tending to transform his work into the organization of means and their control, becoming impersonal: a non-human man (see Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*. Sheed & Ward, 1957).

The roots of artisanship in rural culture still exist in our people and matter. One of the greatest sociologists of our times, Pitirim Sorokin, affirmed the importance of this relationship. In rural areas, forms of solidarity are more fully realized in social relations, in urban areas instead, the intense circulation of goods and values creates antagonism and individualism. Maintaining this link between rural and urban culture is essential, because it allows contributing to the renewal of mindsets and values, bringing fresh and new spiritual energy. The roots in the culture of the land are still very strong in our country and still endow its people with greater sensitivity and attention to others, and ultimately a greater and fundamental capacity for feelings of friendship.



The harvest and the grape harvest: the moments of the agricultural world

The stated moral value of Italian artisanship linked to creativity and to the values of nature has the function of keeping this relationship alive, constituting an element of great worth and restoring artisans the social dignity they deserve will enable thinking about how to rebuild the disintegrated social system starting from the inner values that should distinguish it. The history of Italian artisanship is deeply linked to the development model that characterizes our country with mostly small and medium-sized enterprises accounting for 94% of total employment that have always been Italy's true lifeline. The entrepreneurs who created and continue to create these enterprises are the best in the world for their willingness to accept personal risk, their deep attachment to their land and the sense of solidarity that characterizes their behaviour that is rooted in artisanship.

This is the great economic value of Italian artisanship that should be focused on to foster its growth and consequently the launch of new business initiatives and their contribution to not only the economy but also the redefinition of the social systems that are gradually losing the cohesion needed to support their survival. Artisan associations have maintained a supportive relationship with their members and have a less opportunistic and politicized view of their own role in a historic period in which industrial associations instead clearly show their weaknesses in promoting inclusive growth, increasingly related to collusive phenomena with personal interests and politics to the point of becoming too self-referential, yet lacking the cultural and moral content. So again

Freud comes back to the two drives that dictate the rules of human nature, that of Eros, which tends to preserve and unite, and that of Thanatos, that tends to destroy and kill, but both must coexist within an equilibrium continually questioned by human nature, and he ends his answer in these terms: in all our history we can see the different period in which or Eros or Thanatos guides our way of life.

Men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. Homo homini lupus. (Man is a wolf to man.)

Eros and Thanatos: the battle of the man



The piety (Michelangelo)



Canova



Magritte

Thus, the real causes of the crisis that manifest with economic phenomena are ascribable to the evolution of a model of society that over time has become more and more individualistic and anti-egalitarian in the redistribution of wealth. In fact, this crisis is not an ordinary crisis such as those that occur every 10-15 years, but extraordinary and should be read in the long years constituting history in which the genetic impulses of human Nature alternate, always fluctuating between genetic aggression and the collective consciousness of the common good. It is time to understand that we are facing one of the greatest transitions in human history where the model of values and culture is replaced by another and the sooner we realize this way of hearing and seeing history, the easier it will be to find the remedies and means to deal with the problem.

The crisis is fundamentally a crisis of values whose inflection has led to an over-materialistic and utilitarian interpretation of resources and production factors, attributing to the role of economics and finance, which are tools, a moral order, namely, the order of ends to which to submit a judgement on the individual and on society.

The time of rational finance which destroys the society and the Common Good. From moral time to amoral time This social and value model began spreading in the last two centuries with a strong acceleration in the last 30-40 years. In particular, the implosion of the Soviet empire embodied in the fall of the Berlin Wall developed the idea that the strongly liberal economic model is the solution to all ills, justifying market fundamentalism and greater "deregulation" to promote growth and the idea of eternal omnipotence of the nation expressing that model, the US. At that point, the technical-rational knowledge typical of the American socio-cultural model assumed the dominant role of absolute and self-referential values, subordinating to it the development and judgment of the individual and society as a whole. Economics and finance increasingly began taking the role of the ends and not the means, defining the rules and the direction of the social systems. Over a period of a few years, 1971 - 75, a historic turnaround took place that would bring finance to fictitiously rise to the real world. Nixon declared the end of the convertibility of currency into a real equivalent, totally separating the infinite world of finance from the real world that is finite. We would be flooded by an infinite money supply without any correlation with the value of real assets, a mythological currency but fraudulently passed off as scientific truth even when faced with the facts as we can see from the following graphs:



From this began the period of devastation of finance devoid of a scientific basis and used as a hegemonic weapon of social destabilization aimed at the realization of higher interests distant from the common good. Today, we are facing the reckoning and considering the role of artisanship as a way to return to the real world and the realm of feelings of solidarity. Similarly, the cultural invasion of this quantitative-rational model has increasingly led to seeing and studying man as a set of chemical actions and reactions rather than as a set of emotional actions and reactions, man and societies must adapt to the rules and not vice versa.

Paradoxically, man has created the means - economics and finance - which he continues to maintain ever more independent from himself, which in satisfying his needs always creates new and more sophisticated needs aimed at satisfying continually changing personal needs in the short term. Yet, economics and finance must remain endowed with a sense; their activities must have a measurement criterion, a hierarchy of values, an awareness of which needs can be considered right and which wrong. This requires a proper economy of living otherwise an infinite system of desires forms that affirms man's absolute freedom to satisfy them. A continually growing economy based on the ability to meet more and create new needs cannot be considered a dogma as is occurring today, so perhaps it is time to rethink the development model more consistently with the need to bring man back to the centre of economics.

If this will of human freedom could be expressed as the ability to respond without limits to his desires, it could be expressed with the following formula suggested by Sorokin (*The crisis of our Age*, p 167, ed. Arianna 2000 and first edition 1941):

$$\frac{\text{The sum of means}}{\text{The sum of desires}}$$

If the degree of freedom is expressed by the realization of desires, the numerator and denominator must be the same, but if the numerator is lower, then two alternatives exists: the individual gives up part of his desires or has to find a way of increasing the means. In the first case, the social model consists of a limitation of desires referring to a more ethical and transcendent life that we can recall with the saying "Who owns the most wants the least."

In the second case, as the desires are potentially unlimited, the more one has, the more one wants, leading to a relentless struggle between people and groups to increasingly appropriate the values needed to fulfil the desires largely definable as material possessions: wealth, pleasure, wellbeing, physical health, safety... As the implementation of this model of society, strongly oriented to satisfying material needs in the short term, can only be realized by overriding others, the struggle between people and groups ends up intensifying up causing society to collapse. This model of society in which we can identify ourselves has come to affirm only one principle of

truth: everything that can be touched and seen is real and deserves to be studied and measured in a rational way. Consequently, all human manifestations are inflected with the parameter that places self and physical interests first and in any case to be realized now and immediately whatever the conditions so as to normalize even illegal behaviour. The widespread immorality that daily strikes us with facts increasingly highlights the instrumental use of man for other interests, proving not to be the cause but rather the effect of a socio-cultural model deeply rooted in our way of life and constantly directing decisions on the allocation of resources and the true reason for the current crisis we are dealing with.

Consequently, the crisis cannot be solved mechanistically with external measures - the rules for financial markets, economics, politics... - but internally through the general reorientation of values and pursuing a change in mindset and conduct.

At this point, we must choose between these two statements:

- Economics is a necessary and sufficient condition for a good society
- Society is a necessary and sufficient condition for good economics

Past and present history shows us that the second statement is true, but in the last 30 years, we have always assumed the first as the unquestionable truth.

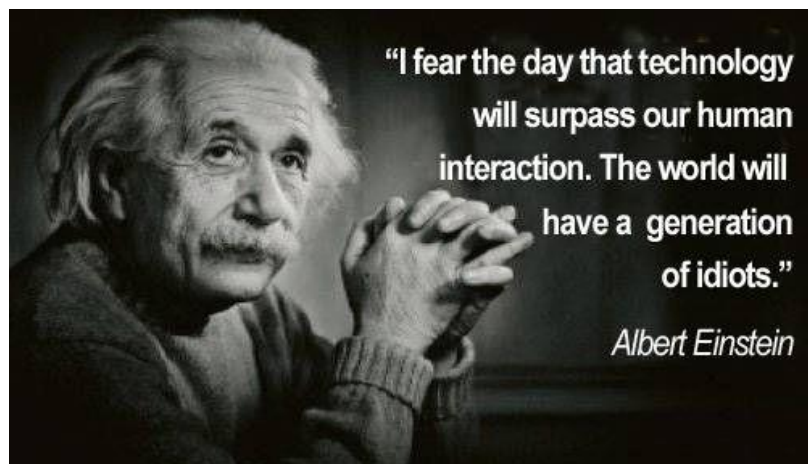
In conclusion, using the term social capital to express the value of society, and economic capital to express its wealth to empirically demonstrate and assert:

- The development of a territory's social capital is a necessary condition for the development of its economic capital.
- An impoverishment of a territory's social capital leads to an impoverishment of the overall economic capital.
- While an increase in an individual's economic capital is also possible under competitive conditions, but at the expense of the economic capital of other entities, the increase of a territory's social capital is favoured by collaborative competition.
- The existence of the century-old difference between Italy's north and south can be attributed to the different concentration of social capital that is greater in the north than the south whose recovery can only come about through the reconstitution of a system of social relations able to recompose the fabric of solidarity and the equitable redistribution of wealth.

Precisely revisiting the role of artisanship could help reconstruct a social fabric primarily oriented to forms of disruptive individualism, rediscovering a different contact with the outside world and rethinking forms of solidarity in the tradition of our people. These are the most effective responses to start rebuilding social capital and to enable a vision of the future and the role of man that is more consistent with his history through a form of collaborative competition able to unite and not divide.

Sorokin concluded the previously mentioned work with this hope (p. 326):

"Let us hope that the grace of understanding may be vouchsafed us and that we may choose, before it's too late, the right road – the road that leads not to death, but to the further realization of man's unique creative mission on this planet!"



REFERENCES

1. Arendt Hannah, The Human Condition, Macmillan N.Y. 1969.

2. Aristotele, *Etica Nicomachea* [Nicomachean Ethics], 2000, Bompiani, Milan
3. Balthasar Hans Urs von, *Homo creatus est*, 2010, Jaca Book, Milan
4. Bauman Zygmunt, *Liquid Life*, 2005, Laterza, Bari, 1998
5. Bauman Zygmunt, *Parasitic Capitalism*, 2009, Laterza, Rome-Bari
6. Bloch Ernst, *The Principle of Hope*, 1994, Garzanti, Milan
7. Chomsky Noam, *Failed States: the Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*, 2006, Il Saggiatore, Milano
8. Einstein Albert, *The World As I See It*, 1975, Newton Compton, Rome
9. Freud Sigmund, *The Discomforts of Civilization*, 1971, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin
10. Freud Sigmund, *The Future of Illusion*, 1971, Boringhieri, Turin
11. Freud Sigmund, *L'interpretazione dei sogni* [The Interpretation of Dreams], 1991, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin
12. Goethe Johann Wolfgang, *Faust*, 2005,
13. Guardini Romano, *The End of the Modern World*. Sheed & Ward, 1957.
14. Guardini Romano, *Europa. Compito e destino* [Europe. Task and Destiny], 2004, Morcelliana, Brescia
15. Habermas Jurgen, *The Divided West*, 2007, Laterza, Rome-Bari
16. Kahneman Daniel, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 2011, Mondadori, Milan
17. Kant Immanuel, *Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Sketch*, 2007, Feltrinelli, Milan
18. Keynes John Maynard, *Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren*, 1991, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin
19. Keynes John Maynard, *The end of laissez faire*, MacMillan Publishers, London, 1926
20. Keynes John Maynard, *The end of gold standard*, Royal Economic Society, London, 1931
21. Keynes John Maynard, *Essays in Persuasion*, MacMillan, London 1933
22. Keynes John Maynard, *The general theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, Macmillan, London 1936
23. Krugman Paul, *End This Depression Now*, 2012, N.Y. Times
24. Krugman Paul, *How did Economics get it so Wrong?* 2009, The N.Y. Magazine
25. Kuhn Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1969, Einaudi, Turin
26. Milanovic Branko, *The Haves and the Have-Nots*, 2011, Il Mulino, Bologna
27. Pascal Blaise, *Thoughts*, 1994, Mondadori, Milan
28. Pezzani Fabrizio, *The Lucidity Pact*, 2008, UBE, Milan
29. Pezzani Fabrizio, *Cooperative Competition*, 2011, Egea-UBE, Milan
30. Pezzani Fabrizio, *E' tutta un'altra Storia* [Totally another History], Egea, Milan, 2013
31. Pezzani Fabrizio, *Society, the Foundation of the Economy*, Scholars' Press, 2016
32. Platone, *La Repubblica* [The Republic], 1990, Mondadori, Milan
33. Plato, *Phaedo*, 2010, Laterza, Rome-Bari
34. Plato, *Symposium*, 2012, Feltrinelli, Milan
35. Posner Richard, *The Crisis of Capitalist Democracy*, 2010, Egea-UBE, Milan
36. Prigogine Ilya, *La Fin des certitudes. Temps, chaos et les lois de la nature*, Odile Jacob, Paris, 1996
37. Putnam Robert, *Social Capital and Individualism*, 2004, Il Mulino, Bologna
38. Reich R., *Supercapitalism*, 2008, Fazi, Rome
39. Rees Martin, *Our Final Century? Will the Human Race Survive the Twenty-First Century?* Random House, London 2003
40. Rousseau Jean-Jaques, *Origin of Inequality*, 2009, Grafica Spiel, Milan
41. Russell Bertrand, *The Scientific Outlook*, 2009, Laterza, Rome-Bari
42. Sen Amartya, *Development as Freedom*, 1999, Oxford University Press
43. Sen Amartya, *The Theory of Moral Sentiment*, 2010, Penguin
44. Sennet Richard, *The Craftsman*, Yale University Press, 2008
45. Sennet Richard, *The Culture of New Capitalism*, Yale University Press, 2006
46. Severino Emanuele, *Techne. The Roots of Violence*, 2002, Rizzoli, Milano
47. Sorokin Pitirim, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 1975, Utet, Turin
48. Sorokin Pitirim, *The Crisis of Our Age*, 1941
49. Spence Michael, *The Next Convergence*, 2011, Farrar, Strauss and Giraud
50. Stiglitz Joseph, *The price of inequality. How today's divided society endangers our future*, 2012.
51. Tallis Raymond, *The Hand: A Philosophical Inquiry in Human being*, Edinburg University Press, 2003
52. Toynbee Arnold J., *Civilization on Trial*, 1949, Bompiani, Milan
53. Toynbee Arnold J., *Mankind and Mother Earth*, 1977, Garzanti, Milan
54. Vico Giambattista, *La Scienza Nuova The New Science*, 1722, Napoli
55. Wilkinson Richard, Pickett Kate. *The Spirit Level*, 2009, Feltrinelli, Milan

