

WHICH REMEDIES to YOUTH EXCLUSION
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The core of the debate that conditioned a great part of the twentieth century was the articulation between universalism and exclusion, unity and separation. Some Catholic authors (and non-Catholic) have more recently affirmed that only when we have restored its "place" to thought - relative not only to the individual but to the *entire human species* - will we be able to escape the machine that has affected our lives for too long and feeds the most destructive conflicts by seeing each other as enemies to be excluded or even annihilated (R. Esposito, Einaudi 2013).

The imprint of these concepts which conditioned long historical periods of the last century and is far from Christian ethics, unfortunately still remains, even though in an attenuated form, deploying its negative effects on politics, the economy and the fabric of social relationships.

In the Encyclical *Laudato Si*, the concept of relationship between *humanity* and exclusion is placed in closer relationship with the social and natural environment, calling humanity to integral conversion to prevent even the *soft* forms of exclusion, sometimes rooted not in explicit hatred but in simple indifference towards other people and the environment ("*The attitudes that hinder the path of solution, even among believers, range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation, or blind confidence in technical solutions*" LS 14).

So what framework enables society to be supported and interconnected and prevents exclusion? An analogy with some theories of the natural world of science could help provide the answer to this question. For example, according to a principle expressed by the physicist Wolfgang Pauli, the *concept of exclusion* in the field of quantum mechanics implies gradually increasing levels of the use of energy to allow the jump level of some particles indispensable to the increase of the complexity of matter and the passage from one element to another of the periodic table. It is this growing use of energy that allows certain stars not to collapse into themselves as a result of gravity.

The situation in the social sphere is not greatly different to the sub-atomic world. The transition from uniqueness to growing complexity requires an elaborate network of intangible and material contributions which in turn require an increasing expenditure of energy to guarantee cohesion in society and sustainability in the social and natural environment. This process does not however happen spontaneously; these energies can be deployed by the family, by the teaching system, by particular forms of work organization, by intermediate bodies and also by an increasingly broader and higher level of involvement of all institutions. With the exception of the latter, the order in which we listed the items is methodically growing on a scale of relative importance.

The need for educational and training processes based on the principles of Christian ethics that also embrace the individual's pre-working phase is not unimportant. The absence of ethical standards in these years goes hand in hand with the phenomenon of youth and adult exclusion. The issue of social exclusion engulfing large groups of young people in all parts of the world, is a phenomenon of particular relevance both in terms of numbers and quality.

Study of the problems of working age youth groups has hitherto fluctuated between a concept of the individual understood exclusively as *human capital* - prevalent in our western world - and a *socio-demographic* concept typical of studies in reference to Asia and Africa. In the former, this has led to equating the young worker to a mere wear and tear capital and not innovative, except very marginally, as she or he progresses with age; while the socio-demographic view has led supporters

of this method of analysis to conceive the individual only as a job-demand factor, omitting the fundamental role of institutions as potential supply underwriters.

To understand the phenomena affecting the most disadvantaged groups in the world of young people, it would be more appropriate for us to shift the focus as sociologist Hilary Silver says, "on what institutions can do to ensure an adequate offer of tools aimed at the inclusion and permanence of young people in the working world"; not just any job but a type of job based on respect for human dignity. Consequently, the role of institutions in this context is of primary importance not only in itself but for the effect they can generate on the other elements in the value chain, starting as mentioned from the family and the school.

It should be added as further confirmation of the validity of this concept, that social exclusion should be interpreted as the result of a substantially relational fact; in a social relationship, exclusion has two parts: the one who implements it and the one who experiences it. Hence, it is also of critical importance to examine the behavior of those who exclude and not simply the behavior of the excluded.

In a report entitled *Youth, Social Exclusion and Lessons from Youth Work*, the European Commission EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) states that it is essential to differentiate between aspects that concern:

1. social exclusion and
2. the causes that determine this exclusion

Because the definition of exclusion should not be limited to the concept of poverty but also extend to other causes determining exclusion. According to the European Commission, these causes are can be identified in:

- discrimination (based on ethnic origin, gender referring mainly to women, religious, linguistic)
- the impossibility of acquiring citizenship or residence status
- the lack of education
- poverty, this time in the truly economic sense

Looking at the effects of the lack of policies aimed at removing the causes of the exclusion of young people from work processes, some very worrying data emerge.

For the purpose of the working status, Eurostat divides the youth labor force into three categories:

- a) employed,
- b) unemployed
- c) young people outside the labor force (the latter not seeking employment or because they are only students or for other reasons)

The statistical dimensions of the phenomenon of youth unemployment tell us that in the category aged between 15 and 24 in the 28-state Europe that made up the European Union in 2018 (therefore the United Kingdom was still included) there were 3.4 million unemployed young people out of a total of 22.4 million individuals in various ways and with various levels of education belonging to the first two groups mentioned; the incidence of the unemployed was therefore 15.2%.

However, in addition to this element what is most striking is the high number of young people completely outside the labour market as they are not included in the employed and unemployed

categories; while taking into account that between the years 2005 and 2018 there has been a progressive average aging of the population in many member countries; the overall number of young people statistically considered *not part of the workforce* decreased only marginally, passing from 34.4 million units in 2005 to 31.4 million in 2018. Definitely still too many at the end of the period being surveyed.

Eurostat also noted that a group aged between 16 and 29, that is 27.7% of the 28-state EU population namely 21.8 million young people, were at risk of poverty and exclusion. This estimate showed that 27.3% denoted the male component and 28.1% the female element, almost one percent higher.

In addition to the above, even more worrying was the trend that witnessed a 1,7% increase among males and 0.4% among women in the number of young people at risk of poverty or exclusion in 2017 compared to 2007 (although 2007 was the first year of the explosion of the financial crisis).

These and other data also partly explain the consolidation of the tendency to lower the number of legal partnerships and the birth rate. As an indicator of this worrying trend, it was reported that in 2017, 68.2% of young people aged between 16 and 29 were still living with their parents in the 28-state Europe: of this number, men counted for 62.9% and women 73.3%.

In recent years the phenomenon of exclusion has been aggravated by uncontrolled migratory flows, a consequence of wars and political instability, but also of structural factors attributable to the way in which politics is managed in many areas and the institutions which depend on politics. Among countries in the Middle East and North Africa, for example, the youth unemployment rate ranges between 37% in Morocco and 73% in Syria and while in Europe it is young people with the lowest level of specialization who are affected by the phenomenon of exclusion, it is in the non-European countries of the Mediterranean basin, that the most qualified scholastic and academic students are excluded.

Among the possible remedies to respond to the situation affecting young people in Europe and the geographical and political context surrounding it are:

- ❖ provision of coordinated measures – not individual interventions - which also have the legal force to operate as far as necessary, across the board, and overcome bureaucratic obstacles that would slow down the outcome of the projects
- ❖ step by step scanning of the interventions that allows the results to be evaluated and, if necessary, recommend appropriate correctives
- ❖ take due account of the cultural and institutional context of the country where the project has been identified
- ❖ participation of the excluded in the preparatory stage of the project aimed at greater inclusion so that this better responds to their specific needs
- ❖ the offer of training, based not only on theoretical factors and modalities, but introducing work practice at school age and thus making this training phase something which will be of practical use for future activity and not as often happens now, a simple waste of time
- ❖ every future activity - whether this profession, art or trade - should already at school level be able to avail of programmes offering the basics in economics and finance to empower young people to develop entrepreneurial activities individually (self-employment) or in a group, based on the ability to develop realistic business plans and be in control of managing the activities they have set up
- ❖ encourage all forms of joint commercial initiatives within the local communities and with their participation (community-based projects) in the fields of the arts, infrastructures, sports, technologies, the environment, individual medical and health care services for the elderly, transport services, childcare services,

- ❖ elimination of the credit barriers facing young people and particularly women who wish to start financial activities to support themselves and their family

The world needs the issue of exclusion to be dealt with speedily in the right way and with the right tools. Today is already tomorrow and building the future not only for young people is an undertaking that requires great energy and great ability to look beyond the time horizons in which we are confined.

To go beyond these horizons, the first exclusion to be fought is that which concerns religion. In the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (CiV, 56) *“The exclusion of religion from the public square as, on the other hand, religious fundamentalism, hinders an encounter between persons and their collaboration for the progress of humanity. Public life is sapped of its motivation and politics takes on a domineering oppressive and aggressive character. Human rights risk being ignored either because they are robbed of their transcendent foundation or because personal freedom is not acknowledged. Secularism and fundamentalism exclude the possibility of fruitful dialogue and effective collaboration between reason and religious faith. Reason always needs to be purified by faith, and this also applies to political reason, which must not be considered omnipotent. For its part, to show its authentic human face, religion always needs to be purified by reason. Any breach in this dialogue comes only at an enormous price to human development”*
