

**A QUIET REVOLUTION:**

**RETHINKING THE FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN SOCIETY**

by

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This paper is partly autobiographical, partly about the way Vincent Ostrom introduced many of us to the quest for understanding human affairs and partly a combination of the two in the form of a prologue of work being done in response to Vincent's enduring challenge to do theory rather than talk about theory.

I came to study political science in Bloomington in 1968, after four years as an undergraduate at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. At that time I practically knew nothing about Indiana (apart from Notre Dame) and very little about the American mid-west. I grew up reading more about the Far West and the pampas. I had applied to Indiana University as the suggestion of a professor at McMaster whose own professor had moved from Ohio State to Indiana. But what made me come to Indiana was a telephone call I received from the Director of Graduate Studies, urging me to consider the Government Department at IU (as it was then called) as an exciting place to pursue graduate studies, as more and more it was drawing on the European and Italian political economy tradition to fashion new ways of understanding non-market choices and decisions. I am not sure I understood all that, but I was flattered that the Director of Graduate Studies of a school that had accepted me, had actually telephoned me! No other director of graduate studies had done that. It did not matter that later on I learned that some other entering graduate students had also received personal telephone calls. What mattered, and made the decision, for me to attend Indiana was the human touch of a telephone call. It was for me a most flattering experience. You may have guessed it. The

person who made the call was Lin Ostrom, and I can still recall her enthusiastic, persuasive and friendly voice on the telephone. That was the easy part.

The year 1968 was a tumultuous year on European and North American campuses. I reached the Indiana University campus with a very detached view of the beginnings of those tumults. But it was not before long that the Bloomington campus itself became the setting for all sorts of protest movements, fueled by a growing unrest about the war in Vietnam. It was hard to remain aloof and detached, all the more since one day the old IU library was set on fire and initially blamed on protestors. It turned out that the fire had not been set by students protesting the war in Vietnam at all. But the main point is that as much as I was troubled by the political events, I faced a far more direct, personal challenge – that posed by the teaching of Vincent Ostrom.

Looking back, now I can say it was one of the good fortunes of my professional life to have had him as a professor, and later as a colleague and friend. I handed up taking all his graduate and some of his undergraduate courses, served as his teaching assistant in one of his undergraduate courses and witnessed the creation of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, first housed in Woodburn 313. I shudder to think what my own research and teaching would have been without Vincent's mentoring and friendship. But that was not what I initially thought when I sat in Vincent's introductory course in political science, then called Pol. 570.

Looking back to Vincent's reading list, it was truly phenomenal and anticipated much of the political science that was yet to come. We were urged to have an effective familiarity with *The Federalist*, Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Ostrogorsky's *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* (vol. II), Wilson's *Congressional*

*Government*, Bagehot's *The English Constitution*, Commons' *Legal Foundations of Capitalism*, Llewellyn and Hoebel's *The Cheyenne Way* and to read extensively from the contributors of a new emerging literature that included Ashby, Banfield, Baumol, Duncan Black, Boulding, Buchanan, Downs, Kuhn, Musgrave, Olson, Rapoport, Riker, Tullock and many others.

I was assigned to present *The Calculus of Consent* by James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, and to link that assignment to a quest for a new political science called for by Tocqueville in his *Democracy in America*. Vincent made it seem my assignment as the easiest thing to do, but it was not. To me, the readings and assignment were truly of revolutionary proportion. For one thing, the language used by Buchanan and Tullock drawing as it did on the methods of modern economics and game theory was completely new to me. I struggled to understand the interdisciplinary nature of the work, and was partly saved from giving up when the authors referred to some study of Bruno Leoni. I recognized the name. So I used Leoni to understand somewhat what Buchanan and Tullock were saying. Still, I found the readings, assignments and Vincent's own presentations most challenging. His teaching questioned what I had struggled to learn earlier in Canada. Yet it was hard to find faults with it. And so, I set out on an exciting intellectual adventure – my own quest - that continues to this day.

In the process, I discovered that I did not have to reject all that I had learned before. By recasting what I knew, I found it could travel a lot more. I also learned to appreciate what Lin had mentioned in her telephone call. And so it was that in a relatively short period of time, by 1971, when I went to Sicily to do my dissertation research, I carried a letter of introduction from James Buchanan for a Sicilian colleague

that Vincent graciously managed to secure for me. The anti-Vietnam war protestors succeeded and the war ended as it had been fought – in tragedy. The revolutionary changes that I went through in a few years had far more long-term positive results, and continue to stimulate and enrich my own understanding.

For the rest of the paper, I first offer a retrospective view of why the challenge posed by Vincent had truly revolutionary proportions and helped to prepare the ground for the political science that was yet to come. I then offer a glimpse of some ongoing work that suggests how I continue, albeit in my own fashion, to respond to Vincent's challenge to do political theory.

### **What Was the Challenge About, in Retrospect**

Political science in the 1960s underwent profound changes that continued in the 1970s, as the discipline moved from formal legal institutionalism to behaviouralism, political culture and political development. These changes tended to be “institution-free,” with individuals nowhere to be seen, while insisting on taking the State seriously, helped by the postwar translation of Max Weber's work. When confronting the question of institution-building the political science of the 1960s' and 1970s sought answers in the formula so well criticized by Brian Loveman (1975, and 1976) as development by administration; when drawing on culture to explain behavior, it posited individuals acting in some kind of institutional vacuum with fixed belief systems and preferences and without a capacity to learn or change, thereby ignoring Tocqueville's great lesson in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* about how people learn from, and deal with, government institutions; with all the emphasis on understanding the policy process, the discipline was rarely concerned with the nature of goods and services themselves. As

Brian Loveman reminds us in his paper, the leading texts of political science of the time called for the development of a universal theory to apply to all systems of order through some form of logical positivism. To borrow from another student of Vincent, Mark Sproule-Jones, Vincent's approach was truly interdisciplinary and went beyond mainstream public administration, economics and political science. This is easy to say now, but it was not so clear to me then.

The richness of Vincent's quest for understanding human affairs can be more readily found in his published (including his editorials in PAR) and unpublished papers. To the risk of not doing justice to the record, let me put down in point form why his work, presented in his inimitable style, appeared to revolutionary, so radical and enticing, to some of us in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

1. The first strikingly novel thing, at least for me, was that Vincent insisted that each one of us is confronted with the task of building a conception or theory of politics which will facilitate our understanding of the decision making process and of the decision making strategies available to us in living our life as part of a political community. He assigned theory much more importance than I have been led to believe; but this was theory which cut across the field boundary of the discipline (and social science!) and with much more explanatory power in thinking through problems. We were encouraged to search out relevant literature across social science fields which would extend our own understanding of the political process and assist us in thinking about our work, or research paper. Words fail me in characterizing how much Vincent insisted in seeing a close connection between political theory and empirical research; he was not interested in political theory or

- the history of political thought or even empirical research as disjointed efforts, but saw of them closely connected in advancing knowledge and providing students with appropriate tool kit for their own work. The other thing that struck me was how much Vincent insisted in linking teaching to productive scholarship and in encouraging students not just to acquire book knowledge but to become independent thinkers and pursue work as productive scholars. These views were later incorporated in the founding of the Workshop offering real opportunities for generations of scholars to participate as apprentices and journeymen in scholarly endeavours. But when I first heard them, they were novel as they were radical.
2. In my very limited experience it was unusual at that time for a political scientist to stress the importance of language and epistemological considerations in defining and understanding political life. Vincent emphasized the relationship between knowledge and action and how all sorts of language forms mediated that relationship. I was particularly drawn to the importance of fashioning a common language to address political problems. Without that common language, it would be difficult to develop a critical self-awareness that would facilitate complementary efforts to build a cumulative approach and even to understand what people were doing. Not that this was easy, but Vincent sensitized us to a critical aspect of his lifelong work and of the discipline.
  3. Vincent's insistence that a political science requires recourse to multiple theoretical formulations was equally radical. He seemed to be going against much of what was being taught in methods courses when he argued that there could not be a single universal theory applicable to all systems of order, or patterned

- regularities (or a culture theory of the kind later on attempted by Aaron Wildavsky and his colleagues). Now, this did not mean that a comparative understanding the foundations of order and patterned regularities in different societies and settings was impossible, just that it was important to know what systems of knowledge as epistemic orders were being used by human agents to construct those relationships. Once that is understood, it became much easier to appreciate why Vincent put so much emphasis on artisanship and artifact. This way many of the classical works in political theory, including Hobbes, Hume, Hamilton, Madison, Tocqueville and many others became alive for many of us in comparative politics.
4. What attributes are to be associated respectively with the economic and political aspects of human existence? Much of the profession had engaged in all sorts of word play – Vincent used to call them word pictures – to minimize or skip over this question. And it took me a long time to understand the importance of both John R. Commons’ book for comparative politics and Vincent’s emphasis that the concept of economy could not be identified only with exchange relationships.
  5. Political systems are best conceptualized as systems of rulership implying rules-ruler-ruled relationship.
  6. Going against much of the discipline as was then taught, Vincent questioned the necessary conditions usually attributed to the existence of “the state” or a system of political order: monopoly over the exercise of rulership prerogatives and the legitimate instruments in the use of force. But he did not stop there. He went on to develop a powerful and convincing argument in favor of self-governing society

- drawing on Tocqueville and many others. Now, the idea of a self-governing, I had been told by Arendt and others, was problematic – a prelude to totalitarianism of the kind developed in Nazi Germany. And here I was reminded of what Vincent used to say to his undergraduate students taking his courses on political theory and policy analysis (Y204, I believe) and on the logic of political association (P468, fall of 1969)– that people may be using the same expressions but mean something quite different. It was possible to speak both of the national government without implying “the State” and of a self-governing society without advocating, or accepting the inevitability of, some form of totalitarianism. Indeed, quite the opposite!
7. The importance of the constitutional level of analysis. What I learned from both the Buchanan and Tullock work and Vincent’s lectures and his work then in progress – and what I now in retrospect found missing in Arendt and others who seemed to be afraid of the idea of a self-governing society.
  8. A chief attraction of the Federalist was precisely that the way Madison and Hamilton addressed the design of a constitution of order that met the problem of concentration of monopoly power and offered the prospects of mechanisms of accountability and error correcting capabilities capable of withstanding the criticism of Marx, and the writers of ruling elites like Michels, Mosca and Pareto. Political inequality could be held in check.
  9. The preceding points led me to begin to understand why Vincent seemed to be so unsurprised about world events that often dealt with abuse of power, institutional failure, Watergate and the Nixon tapes, and, more generally, cryptoimperialism

and predatory states. But, at the same time, I also learned a far more important lesson from Vincent: all these world events were no argument for skepticism, merely one against pretensions to omniscience. Vincent remained optimistic. It took me a long time to appreciate the source of this optimism: faith in people as the ultimate constituents of this world – real people with different motivations, and information, and quite capable of making mistakes and endowed with different capabilities for thinking through those mistakes and learning from them, yes, but also capable of learning from them. I surmised then that Vincent's methodological individualism had a strong ethical and, I dare say, transcendental dimensions and implications that are very much part of the Western political and religious tradition. His subsequent emphasis on covenantal relationships comes then as no surprise. Later on, this aspect of his work is best discussed in his book *The Meaning of Democracy and the Vulnerability of Democracies*, a work that merits much more attention and study that we usually give it.

In short, Vincent introduced me to a political science much richer than I had originally been exposed to, and far more intellectually exciting. I have continued to learn from him since then. His work provides the foundation for my own quest of order and patterned regularity and their implications in a variety of settings – from the study of why some people in Sicily rejected state rule and established their own extra-legal, outlaw, regimes (which led to all the problems of organized life in the formal, legal regime), to the organization of federalism in Canada. His encouragement led me to take on a far more demanding project than I originally realized when I started: the recovery of a

tradition of critical inquiry in nineteenth century as it confronted the riddle of progress, liberation and freedom, as it emerges in the writings of Carlo Cattaneo (1801-69).

Cattaneo was a Milanese thinker and man of action who followed the revolts of 1848 settled in Switzerland, where he is now regarded as one of Canton Ticino's outstanding nineteenth century figures. Tocqueville was no means the only analyst of this period in Europe and by drawing attention to Cattaneo I'm also suggesting the need to look at others of the same period beyond France and Italy who shared similar concerns. This would not surprise Vincent but it does suggest that the quest for patterned regularities and order is something very human indeed and cuts across civilizations and generations. The rest of the paper briefly summarizes Cattaneo's own quest.<sup>1</sup>

### **Recovering a Tradition of Critical Inquiry**

The paradigmatic challenge of democracy involved a conceptualization of a self-governing society that, for the most part, was nowhere yet to be seen in nineteenth-century Europe. This posed for Cattaneo the problem of what should be the analytical building blocks of his inquiry. He turned for help to the human sciences taught at most Italian and other European universities of his time but found them of little or no use. And so it was that while people in academia were engaged in arcane disquisitions in the history of ideas, the common people, unaware of academic debates but confident in their capacities and aspirations for better life prospects, were posing anew, and agitating to resolve, fundamental issues in organized existence. They - Cattaneo called them "obscure Socrates" - were doing political theory in work places and at street corners (Cattaneo

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<sup>1</sup> I have published several essays on Cattaneo, in Italian. For those who wish to read Cattaneo in his own words in English, they may soon do so, in the forthcoming publication entitled *Civilization and Democracy. The Salvemini Anthology of Cattaneo*, edited by Carlo G. Lacaïta and Filippo Sabetti (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

[1851] 1960, SF, 1:281-2). But, the experience of several crushed revolts and even of the French Revolution itself suggested that the challenge of articulating the conditions under which the aspirations of people to be free and self-governing can be developed and sustained remained problematic. He thus attempted to think through this problem.

#### Rescuing the Importance of Ideas from Idealists

Cattaneo's 1839 essay on Vico is characteristic of his mode of analysis. Cattaneo began his analysis by pointing out the transformations in cognition that had taken place between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. To an almost unprecedented degree, human reason had been marshaled to scrutinize the most profound religious mysteries, to discard, or to make *tabula rasa* of, leading philosophical and metaphysical schools in Western inquiry and to censure the very foundations and practices of many long-standing civil, and religious, institutions. He was not unsympathetic to these developments. In fact, Cattaneo retained much of the Enlightenment faith in reason, experience and what has come to be known as methodological individualism. But he came to realize - he called it a discovery - that, in surveying the history of Western political and social thought and what was then known about other societies, there were several intellectual puzzles in the unfolding of human development that had been left unresolved or unexamined by eighteenth-century analysts and by much of the Western epistemological tradition. This led him both to reject the emphasis on epistemological individualism - that man is, or can be, self-sufficiently alone or metaphysically independent of society - and to raise serious doubts about the universality of a Cartesian and Hobbesian view of human nature. Thus, Cattaneo made his own Vico's conclusion - namely, that "the natural law of philosophers is not the same as the natural law of peoples" (quoted in Frisch and Begin 1963, 48).

Cattaneo did not stop there, however. He extended the conclusion to Vico's own "new science of humanity" for it presumed uniformity where there is variety and cyclic immutability where there is adaptation and even progress. In fact, Cattaneo continued, the European discovery of Sanskrit in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had enlarged the universe of human culture and revealed the extent to which Vico's own understanding of humanity was largely confined to where it came from, the Greco-Roman world of classical antiquity.

Thanks in part to the retrieval of Vico's comparative cultural analysis, there was emerging in nineteenth century Europe a more nuanced understanding of civilization than in the previous century. Better understanding flowed from two undeniable truths highlighted by Vico - which probably attracted Cattaneo to Vico in the first place and allowed him to tolerate Vico's excruciatingly tedious, if colourful, prose. The first, in Vico's own words, is "that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind" (Vico [1744] 1994, para. 331,96). A second truth followed: information of a scientific type about human institutions and man could be obtained from the past – history as the laboratory of the social scientist. And here Vico agreed with Montesquieu as well as Voltaire. What follows when we accept Vico's truths? Cattaneo noted that in his own time acceptance slowed down the censure of existing institutions and allowed the emergence of a positive view of human development - "the consoling doctrine of progress" (Cattaneo [1839] 1960, SF, 1: 97). Cattaneo was quick to note that human progress is by no means unidirectional. Rather it contains different and contrasting currents of thought and action. He identified three major currents of ideas.

There are those who put all their intellectual stock in successive stages of development and final destination. Anxious to compress centuries in a short time, some of these analysts are now pursuing with vigor the dream of a new and unprecedented civilization free of family, property ownership and inheritance. Another set of analysts tended to view the progress of mankind in terms of "things inevitably unfolding as they should". This mode of analysis derived justification and strength by accepting or interpreting what actually happens as preordained or predetermined. But just because some things do happen in a particular way, it does not mean that they did have - were predestined - to happen that way. And, then, Cattaneo continued, there are those who take issue with the progress of mankind itself. They regret that human beings have grown civilized; they misunderstand the past, and prefer it in some respects to the present, even wishing a return to some idealized starting point in human history, a presumed original state of nature and innocence. They try, vainly, to encourage humanity to take a backward trip in time. Cattaneo reserved some of his sharpest criticisms for what he regarded as Rousseau's romantic, institution-free, search for natural innocence and freedom in the wilderness. Cattaneo regarded all these movements of thought and action as "aberrations" (Cattaneo [1839] 1960, SF, 1: 99).

If we want to understand how particular institutions emerge, how they change over time and how the institutional arrangements affect individual and institutional behaviors as well as development potentials more generally, we - and the Cattaneo we referred to the attentive public of his time, including democrats and publicists - have to explore another path. We need to navigate between the doctrines of extreme rationalism of the past two centuries and the deterministic and servile doctrines emerging in the

nineteenth century. This is not an easy path to follow. This path will need to address simultaneously two considerations: faith in human progress and the recognition that the evolution of society is slow, gradual, certainly not unilinear, often counter-intentional and, hence, in need of mechanisms for critical analysis and remedial adjustments. What shape should a new path of inquiry take? Cattaneo's aspiration to complete the inquiry he set for himself was destined to fall short of its realization. But its building blocks are clear enough to reveal how he went about in charting the contours of this new science of politics.

### Basic Orientation

First, there is the need to discern between those institutions that are accidental and transitory and those without which a human society cannot stand. This is no small matter. The way to identify the mechanisms foundational to human existence is to focus on how human beings the world over have dealt with questions of complementarity, interdependence and coordination. Cattaneo identified five such mechanisms: marriage, kinship, *convivenza* which can be roughly translated as the art of living together, language and the psychology of associated minds (which might be more properly rendered as shared understanding). Though it is not clear how much weight he assigned to each category, there is no ambiguity in viewing them as foundational to his inquiry. In his view, philosophers who have put matters in the form of the question "What would life be without government?" have posed a theoretically interesting but wrong question, by implicitly disregarding the history of human development and by skewing the search for answers for one kind of political order: "the" state. No wonder, then, the widespread tendency to treat the study of politics almost exclusively either as the study of power or

as the study of why some states are more powerful than others; what type of political order advances the cause of self-government and problem solving has not generally been central to such inquiries. It must be quickly added that, for all his profound reservations about "the" government or "the state" and for his self-conscious use of terms, Cattaneo himself could not at times escape the linguistic convention of adopting terms like "the state" as synonyms for non-unitary political forms and political systems in general.

A second set of factors has to do with being open to the possibility - Cattaneo called it at times "a generous persuasion" – of how the constitutive dynamics of human beings manifest themselves in the world, and this requires, as an initial step, that we must stop treating individuals as blind instruments of a particular time or culture. Though Cattaneo disliked using the word ontology for it had become closely associated with metaphysics and classic themes of Western inquiries that he criticized, his conception of the individual is, in fact, grounded in such an ontology of the person that links “being, becoming and acting” to form the cognitive and emotional constitutions of human agents – what he sometimes liked to describe as the field of human liberty (*il campo della libertà umana*) in order to stress the constitutive dynamics of human beings. Later on, Cattaneo added to being, becoming and acting another dimension of the field of human liberty, “understanding as the law of progress in humanity.” The pressing task, for Cattaneo, was to construct a new science of politics or public science incorporating history, institutions and culture and, at the same time, individuals as beings capable through the modifications of their own minds of destroying, derailing or adapting the heredity of the past as well as changing existing equilibria thought to be immutable.

Interested as he was about the origin of words and the use of language, Cattaneo seldom forgot that the root of civilization is *civis* or citizen.

Finally, the constitutive dynamics of human beings – or the field of human liberty - in the world must be studied in the larger context - that is in face of opportunities and constraints in the specificities of particular time and place. What shapes human behaviour cannot be theorized atomistically and *in vacuo*, for, in Cattaneo's view, this had produced much intellectual disorientation. Nor can this field of human liberty be solely studied at the macro, national, level alone, for the history of countries relatively free of foreign domination like Japan teaches that "the independence of a state is no automatic assurance that its citizens are free" (Cattaneo [1860] 1957, SGG, 3:61). We need to be sensitive - and at one point, Cattaneo borrowed directly from Tocqueville (Cattaneo [1837] 1956, SE, 2:68) - to how the self-interest of individuals can be made to serve the commonweal under what institutional arrangements and, simultaneously, what mechanisms are already in place to hinder or facilitate the self-interest rightly understood that originates from the processes of human intelligence and shared understanding, or what he called the psychology of associated minds.

By coming to terms with these factors, Cattaneo was of the view that it was possible to fashion the elements that might serve to construct a new science of politics appropriate to the modern age (Cattaneo [1839] 1960, SF, 1: 99). The attempt to gain a broad enough empirical base necessary to improve his theoretical and comparative understanding led Cattaneo to broaden his inquiry beyond Italy and across time and space. As he did this, he was confronted with other questions.

To look at the civilizations and societies like Africa, Brahmanic India, Imperial China, Islam and pre-Columbian Mexico is, Cattaneo noted, to be confronted with almost different types of mankind (Cattaneo [1862] 1957, SSG, 3:214-47). Many in Europe and North America are hard pressed to extend to those societies his "generous persuasion" about the human person and liberty. And yet, he could not help wondering that it was from Asia that Europe received some of the core ideas in agriculture, religion, arts and science that made European and Western civilization what it is today.<sup>2</sup> Already by the sixteenth century, a golden century of European discovery, the Aztecs possessed, for example, a yearly calendar superior to ours (Cattaneo [1860] 1957, SSG, 3:115). What, then, blocked human development in some parts of the world and not others? What are the prospects of *risorgimento* for nations that were once at the forefront of human civilization? And this question applied to China as well as to Greece and Italy in the early nineteenth century. For Cattaneo, explanatory schemes based on modes of subsistence like hunting and gathering, nomadic and pastoral, agricultural and finally commercial and capitalist - the four stages of development dear to eighteenth philosophers - were

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<sup>2</sup> Compare the description of the common heritage made more recently by Vincent Ostrom: "The roots of Western civilization were nurtured where the African continent and the Eurasian landmass converge. The ancient empires of Egypt and Persia; the strange odyssey of the Israelites and the Prophets that established the foundations for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the interlude of Greek and Roman city-states and empires; the burst of Islam across North Africa to Spain and to the headwaters of the Danube; the intrusions of the Norse and the Mongols; the emergence of the Catholic monarchies of Spain and Portugal and the later imperial thrusts of the Dutch and French Republics, the British Empire and the American and Soviet power-blocs - all these cultural influences have been part of both European and African heritages" (Ostrom 1997, 228).

inadequate, if not misleading. We need better explanations of human progress *and* regress.

For someone like Cattaneo who shared the presupposition that human beings everywhere possess a basic common cognitive and emotional endowment and that the very aspirations for self-government express what is universal in human nature, it was imperative to understand why and how such great differences in the human community and potential, in progress and regress, could exist (Cattaneo [1839] 1960, SF, 1:101-2). In short, in coming to terms with the paradigmatic challenge of democracy in Italy and Europe, Cattaneo was compelled to inquire more broadly about humanity itself.

The central issue for him was not whether humans the world over have the same nature or faculties. Against the tide of racial and nationalistic conceits of his time, he held firm to the view of a shared humanity - that the logical structure of the human mind and our perceptive, reflexive and affective faculties are the closest we have to a universally common and perhaps immutable human nature. What distinguishes human beings is not physical attributes or even modes of subsistence but, rather, ideas beliefs and the very process of thinking and learning about one's self and the world around. But where do ideas come from? The paramount puzzle in Cattaneo's mode of analysis is not the Kantian "How and what do I know?" but, rather, "Why do *we* know, think and learn so differently?"

The central issue awaiting most narratives was to explain how and why it is that people endowed with similar psychological faculties have given rise to varied belief systems or epistemic orders, and what differences do these imply for human development. He recognized that this called for a narrative of vast proportion: "To narrate

through what impulses and with what steps the same human beings that can be found in the most primitive state in one hemisphere have, in another hemisphere, been able to weave around themselves the ample fabric of laws, rites, sciences, of arts and whatever else they have developed which has made it almost impossible for them to return to primordial savagery" [or wilderness] (Cattaneo [1839] 1960, SF, 1:101-3). At a most general level, Cattaneo sought to provide answers to the following: if we take the globe as our setting, what universal and local elements can we use to construct a framework for understanding the multiform nature of epistemic orders or belief systems? More specifically to the European and Italian case, he sought to come to grips with the following: what set of ideas undergirds the realization and practice of self-governing societies? What makes people free and capable of self-governing? What linked these sets of concerns was his attempt to understand conceptual mutations in history and to help people of his generation orient themselves toward the challenge of democracy – a challenge he shared with Tocqueville.

For all these reasons, how people think and what ideas they come to share and do not share occupy a central stage in Cattaneo's attempt to come to terms with the paradigmatic challenge of democracy. He held that an analysis of human thought in light of history offers the prospects for a new epistemology capable of overcoming puzzles in the unfolding of human development left unresolved or unexamined by schoolmen and Enlightenment thinkers and of providing a firm ontological footing for what is required in the development of self-governing societies. In the course of almost forty years of frequently interrupted but never abandoned study, Cattaneo sought to do what in his own time - and unknown to him - John Stuart Mill had tried but failed to produce: a new

science of humanity. This life-long project was pursued in three distinct but highly complementary forms. He sought 1) to understand how diverse forms of ideas and order affect development potentials; 2) to fashion a method of inquiry appropriate to this task; and 3) to sustain and expand a culture of inquiry, a tradition of critical rationalism, appropriate to self-governing and self-organizing peoples that he also saw as continuing a certain Italian tradition of thought.

### Mode of Analysis

Cattaneo built his mode of analysis on presuppositions and conceptual categories derived by moving back and forth from empirical facts to philosophical or theoretical considerations. This way, he argued, we can have empirically valid knowledge and proceed from the known to the unknown. This is how he understood the meaning of experimental or empirical philosophy that he had learned from Bacon, von Humboldt, Romagnosi, the Italian Enlightenment, from his study of the ancient community-organized irrigation networks on the Lombard Plains and from his practical experience as a consultant to various educational and developmental projects in Italy and Switzerland.

Three general conceptual categories allowed Cattaneo to gain access to and translate the conceptual elements used by different peoples in putting together systems of knowledge. These are: man's encounter with the universe, or human standing in the cosmos (*man in nature*); man's encounter and relations with fellow human beings (*man in society*); and man's encounter and relations with himself or his own conscience (*man in himself*). Cattaneo, then, broke up, or refined, these broad and multidimensional concepts into particular, more unidimensional, concepts. Let me allude to some of the more relevant aspects.

"Where man stands in the cosmos" was refined as man in time, in space and in order. *Time* is a methodological key for coming to terms with Cattaneo's field of human liberty. Time is a critical variable for apprehending the temporal unfolding in natural and human events and fix the memory of such unfolding. For these reasons Cattaneo looked to geology, history and religion as particularly concerned with time. In a review of some American ethnological research on types of mankind, Cattaneo noted that the book of Genesis anticipated what later geology began to do, to assign names and events to particular things (Cattaneo [1862] 1957, SSG, 3:228). Just as important, time is also critical for apprehending the constitutive dynamics of human beings in the world and the experiential challenge each one of us faces in his/her own mind about being, acting, becoming as well as understanding. The exercise of freedom of deliberation and choice at any particular juncture and for particular courses of action always calls up the contemporaneity and complementarity of both the past and the future in human affairs as well our respective interior freedom or disposition (or will).

*Space* refers to the place and position both of the earth in the universe and of individuals on earth and in the universe. Cattaneo acknowledged that man's starting position in the cosmos was, and remains, really none of his own making - in the language of John Searle (1995), Cattaneo recognized the logical priority of this brute fact over other facts that followed. Space as a physical constraint remains the province of study of astronomy and geography, but differences in the way humans have contemplated and understood it often in relation to supreme and eternal beings, Cattaneo noted, have been accompanied by variations of revolutionary proportions in human understanding across civilizations. Even within particular civilizations, conceptual mutations - no matter how

much they may have been resisted initially - have brought profound changes. Consider, Cattaneo noted, how conceptual mutations happened in Europe: the increased knowledge about the universe since Galileo, no less than the discovery of "new worlds" on earth at least since Marco Polo, and the phenomena of migration and conquest, radically altered the self-understanding and position of human beings in relation to the cosmos within and across civilizations beyond Europe. Changing conceptions of man's relation to the universe and space have served, in ancient times, to "delocalize" human civilization beyond Asia, to desacralize politics in the West and, since 1492 but especially in Cattaneo's own time, to "universalize" Western civilization beyond Europe (Cattaneo [1840] 1957, SSG, 1:125-87).

*Order* in the universe represents and refers to the complex of laws or rules that applies to every natural event or phenomenon and whose essence humans across time and space have sought to mirror in the microcosm of their own existence. For these reasons, he saw it as constituting a special field of inquiry in human sciences as well as in physics, chemistry and zoology (Cattaneo [1853] 1960, SF, 2: 8). Yet we still do not really know, Cattaneo noted in his discussion of cosmology, how many physical laws apply even to, for example, a single drop of water. There are as many laws of the universe to recognize as there are ideas of the human intellect to gather (Cattaneo [1857] 1960, SF, 1:432-3). The complexity of the world humans have created and live in can be overwhelming for anyone to narrate, and this may help to explain why his discussion of order does not have much depth as his other discussion. Still, Cattaneo had no reservations in asserting, as a general rule, that speculations of where human beings stand in the cosmos by different people across time and space broadened and, more often than not, enriched human

experience in all sorts of practical ways: "Ideas derived from the recesses of nature (or universe) endow man with the power to react on nature and to fulfill the destiny of man, the only one among living beings to transform the surface of the earth according to his ideas. In this way the ideas that man extracts from the spectacle of creation become a *complement of creation*" (emphasis in the original). And he concluded: "Thus experiential ideas, disdained by idealists, acquire potency not even contemplated by them" (Cattaneo [1857-58] 1960, SF, 2:303).

For Cattaneo, human beings are co-creators with God, no matter how understood the supernatural may be. Perhaps for this reason, Cattaneo often would simultaneously refer to all three - time, place and order - when he had in mind man's standing in relation to the supernatural or God, whom he sometimes referred as "the continuity of creation and the eternity of omnipotence" (Cattaneo [1862] 1957, SSG, 3:228). This helps to explain why he probably saw no need to reserve an analytically distinct category for people's search for the eternal. As he once put it in Latin, the universe itself attests to the glory of God (*caeli enarrant gloriam Dei*), though different people expressed this appreciation differently. His study of different civilizations led him to appreciate people's relationship with the eternal as an ontological necessity as much as it is a necessary epistemological contingency.

His exploration of "man in society" is theoretically developed under distinct rubrics such as knowledge, logic, and law and morals; the latter also includes "man and family" and "man in commerce." That of "man in himself" is divided into particular subsets in his analysis of human nature and the psychology of wealth and associated minds. In formulating and developing such categories, Cattaneo founded it necessary to

add a fourth order of facts that, he claimed, was unknown to the ancients: the evolution (accumulation, transmission, and change) of knowledge as a critical dimension of human civilization over time - in effect, some form of cultural history. This fourth order of facts was contingent upon, and could not be understood without, an appreciation of the first three orders of facts.

Cattaneo argued – with varying degrees of success - that his mode and method of analysis can help to identify 1) mechanisms and artifacts universally necessary for human existence, 2) differences in systems of knowledge and artifacts, 3) similarities and differences in both, 4) why some systems of knowledge and ways of life are more conducive to the progress of civilization, and 5) why this very progress did not automatically make people free and self-governing. This way Cattaneo thought, or so he flattered himself, that he had the tools to understand patterns of human development and, as he once boldly put it, "to grasp the outline of the general contours of history" (Cattaneo [1842] 1957, SSG, 1:300). He might have had the tools, but one may ask, did he had the material? The answer to this question is for another time.

### **Conclusions: Hobbes, Ostrom and Cattaneo**

Norberto Bobbio, a distinguished student of both Cattaneo and Hobbes, has drawn attention to the strong similarity between Cattaneo's principal building blocks and Hobbes' *de corpore, de homine* and *de cive* (Bobbio 1971,107). The similarities are more than coincidental as the two thinkers had a strong preference for empirical philosophy. Cattaneo was familiar with Hobbes' work. Like Hobbes, he rejected Aristotelian teleology and admired Galileo's physics and scientific explorations, more generally. Like Hobbes, Cattaneo was well versed in the classics and ancient history and retained strong

humanistic, literary, interests well after he moved on to other interests. Cattaneo's literary writings amount to two volumes, totaling 1450 pages.

Ostrom, Cattaneo and Hobbes equally share the view that people make their own order, though neither Ostrom's nor Cattaneo's order is the kind theorized by Hobbes. Indeed, it is on the issue of order and human sociality that fundamental differences emerge between them. Cattaneo held Hobbes in disfavor precisely because, in his view, Hobbes' *Leviathan* advanced an intellectually compelling argument, but disastrous for self governance, that both order and human sociality cannot be obtained without the State. Vincent would probably agree with Cattaneo. One more critical difference remains: whereas Hobbes' empirical philosophy was born out of fear, Cattaneo's, and possibly Vincent's, was born out of a strong sense of human liberation.

Ostrom and Cattaneo's strong sense of human liberation seems closer to that of Rousseau. They all emphasized the important of self-determining individuals, but that is the extent of their commonality. For Vincent and Cattaneo, human liberation can neither be obtained in the wilderness nor in solitude. Unlike Rousseau, Ostrom and Cattaneo saw no conflict between freedom and community if particular institutional arrangements were in place. No matter how human beings may be born, for Ostrom and Cattaneo they are certainly not destined to live in chain, for political and economic arrangements can be designed as, and made to be, a liberating experience – hence the preference for federalist, polycentric systems by both. There was even a more fundamental difference between the three thinkers. Whereas Rousseau saw the human capacity for self-improvement as the source of most, if not all, human misfortune, Ostrom and Cattaneo saw the same human capacity as a potential source of human betterment and the path to *incivilimento*.

In my way of reading both Vincent and Cattaneo, their strong sense of human liberation is also closer to that of Marx and Engel. My sense is that Ostrom and Cattaneo are sympathetic to Marx and Engel's emphasis on "the life-process" of "men in the flesh", "real active men" (Marx and Engel 1970, 47). This, however, is the extent of their commonality. They sharply parted ways on what institutions could bring about a new society grounded in human liberation and how to identify what sources of human knowledge could bring this about. In their work *The German Ideology*, originally written between 1845 and 1846, Marx and Engel announced that "In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven" (Marx and Engel 1970, 47). Building an empirical philosophy only by ascending from earth to heaven was, in Cattaneo's way of thinking and I believe also Vincent's, as one-sided as that which it sought to replace. Both ascent and descent were necessary. No matter how differently they are located in the cosmological world of a Zoroaster or a Newton, human beings the world over are "tied" to both heaven and earth – a point insightfully made by Barbara Allen's most recent book (2005).

Both Cattaneo and Ostrom engaged in conversation with their respective traditions. Cattaneo clearly acknowledged intellectual debts to Bacon, Locke and Vico. Vincent's intellectual debts are much richer and broader, as I tried to suggest in the beginning. But, both analysts have not merely being satisfied to reiterate the contributions of others, or affirm their authority. For example, just as Locke allowed Cattaneo to see missing parts in Vico and Bacon, so Vico allowed Cattaneo to go beyond Locke, and Bacon allowed him to go beyond Vico. But more than what they actually wrote, Cattaneo would often call up their names to symbolize how it was possible to combine scientific

inquiry (Bacon) with inquiries about human understanding (Locke) and cultural history (Vico). Vincent has pursued a similar line of inquiry by calling up other authors. Vincent responded to Tocqueville and in the process he profoundly compensates for Tocqueville's lack of attention to constitutional choice. But there is no mistake. Vincent's and Cattaneo's construction of a broad framework for framing their quest to understand human affairs and patterned regularities is unmistakably their own. True enough. But I dare to suggest, as this conference also suggests, that Vincent's own quest belongs to us as well as we learn from, and respond to, his challenges.

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