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Identitarian passions:

The overwhelming power of

the human recognition need

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Nicolò Bellanca and Giancarlo Pichillo[♦]

Nous perdons encore la vie avec joie, pourvu qu'on en parle.

Blaise Pascal

Toutes les passions sont exagératrices, et elles ne sont des passions que parce qu'elles exagèrent.

Nicolas de Chamfort

Abstract

According to Plato, *thymòs* – a notion denoting the human need for recognition – triggers off the most powerful and overwhelming human passions. Indeed, any action originated and nurtured by *thymòtic* passions places its own *raison d'être* in itself. The acts motivated by thymòs can either improve or (even) worsen someone's wellness: they do not entail any payoff in the present or future, and their nature is not influenced nor mitigated by monetary incentives.

Moreover, it follows that since identity is based on the others' recognition (both individuals and social groups), then indulging with thymòtic passions and building up someone's own identity are exactly the same process. Indeed, thymòtic passions are identitarian passions.

This paper argues the relevance of the thymòtic approach. We do propose a conceptual framework that we reckon is useful and innovative in order to study and interpret these peculiar forms of human action. We also point out the social and "environmental" conditions that stimulate their appearance.

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1. *Thymòs* as the identitarian need for recognition.

This paper argues that a very powerful and persistent way of imagining the specificity of human beings, based on the ancient notion of *thymòs[1]*, still persists in the cultural and philosophical landscape of contemporary "Western" societies[2]. We will also discuss how and why this vision, notwithstanding its undeniable bonds with the cultural traditions of our society, has remained alien to the conceptual horizon of the professional economists of the past and present era. According to us, indeed, the explanation lies in the fact that the subject itself of the classical political economy, and therefore of economics as a scientific discipline, has been defined in such a way to cut off the above-mentioned vision since its very beginning. Moreover, one can also add that – consciously or not – economics as both a discipline and a language acts as a kind of redressive mechanism (Turner, 1957) aims at reducing the potentially destructive characteristics incidental to *social drams* caused by thymotic passions[3].

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[1] The notion of *thymòs* – namely, the identitarian need for recognition that human beings feel in order to place themselves within society – goes back to Plato, who in the IV book of his *The Republic* described the soul as composed by three different elements: the first component is rational (*loghistikón*) and lies in the head; the second part, to be found in the internal organs, is featured with concupiscence (*epithymeticón*); the third and last element resides in the heart and is depicted as spirited and irascible (*thymoidés*). According to Plato, the main part of the human behaviour can be explained by referring to the combination of the first two elements described above: the *epithymeticón* and the *loghistikón* – the organs and the head. The former leads human beings to temptation: therefore, they act in order to get what they desire. The latter works as a rational guide, in order to facilitate the research of what human beings desire as a consequence of their concupiscence. However, human beings are also and mostly busy in seeking the identification and recognition of their personal and social value, along with that of people, things, ideas and principle to which they assign importance (See Galimberti, 1999:592-93). In other words, thymòs is the expression of the short-tempered soul. Its etymology derives from the verb *thyo* – to fumigate, a word that shares the same root with the latin word *fumus* – expressing a lack of recognition and identification (See Bodei, 2010:9 and 115). *Thymòs* is further characterised by two crucial facets: someone's search for distinction from the others as well as for her/his primacy over the others. This paper does not concentrate on these two particular aspects. Nevertheless, we will bring to the reader's attention one of the most debated and criticised books of the last two decades – Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) – who owes very much to this philosophic background.

[2] The inverted commas are here used in order to stress the still very much important and relevant legacy of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Said 1978; See also Chakrabarty 2004:65). In our perspective, "The West" is a metaphor with a proper and complex historical genealogy (not a "natural" category), only useful to describe and link societies and nation-states to a particular kind of political economy and self-representation strategies, who are not marked, however, by geographic homogeneity. Therefore, under the category "West" one may find European states, the US, Canada, Japan and Australia, and some others.

[3] The notion of social drama takes us to the domain of social anthropology, and in particular to Victor Turner's studies (1982, 1986). In a nutshell, social drama refers to a unit of disharmonic social process produced by dynamics of social conflicts, namely social crisis. Social drama is a process made of four constant phases, which the Author calls *breach, crisis, redress and schism.* The notion is intimately connected to that of ritual (and in particular to the rites of passage,

In addition, this paper reveals the conditions upon which the establishment of thymòs among the social actors is facilitated. The aim is to suggest a sound conceptual framework through which social sciences are allowed to include this peculiar aspect of the human activity.

In order to introduce our topic, we will consider one of the most important and widespread founding myths of the classical European culture: the story of Odysseus and the Sirens narrated by Homer (around 850 BC). The enchanting music performed by the Sirens symbolises the entry of those who are subjected to their influence in the sphere of the ungovernable and fervent passions: the sailors who are caught by their chants while navigating close to the Sirens' island will not be able to recover the ordinary route as soon as they will retrieve a full domain of rationality and self-control. According to the classical myth, despite being aware of the deadly risks he is going to face, Odysseus opts for being swept away by the flows of unconstrained passion generated by the Sirens voice.[4] Indeed, he seems to adopt a challenging strategy that, at first, does not consider the payoffs associated to any of the branches of the game he is performing. Rather, Odysseus arranges a kind of design allowing him to regain his wrecked rationality in the second stage of the challenge. Thus, at the end of the process he is still able to opt for rational solutions as logical responses to different impulses, whatever these are.[5]

His design consists of three steps: to let his sailors fasten him to the mast; to put wax in his men's hears; to order them not to obey him as soon as he will ask to be freed in order to join the Sirens. It must be emphasised

with their structural and anti-structural, or liminal, stages), and serves as one of the main basis for the theory of performance elaborated by Richard Schechner (1985, 2004) Indeed, we can observe from the very beginning that "social drama" clearly represents a metaphor that the Author takes from the world of theatre. In fact, Turner recognises that he took cue from the Greek drama, where "one witnesses the helplessness of the human individual before the Fates". In this case, he is saying that the Fates is the social process, and that conflicts in society are rarely only personal affairs, but that they almost always involve social relationships.

[4] In the contemporary literature, the word "passion" is often replaced by the word "emotion", as our readers can also notice by looking at some of the quotations in the text. Both "passion" and "emotion" refer to the concept of "affective status". However, we reckon it is important to underline the relevant discrepancy between the two terms: while the notion of "emotion" stands for a passing, transient feeling, "passion" represents a violent, persistent state, which sometimes cannot even totally been controlled or dominated. Passion is chronic, powerful, complex, longstanding, capable of polarizing someone's attention towards a unique objective (See Cattarinussi 2006:17). Therefore, we invite the reader to consider the term "emotion", when it comes across in the text, as just a synonymous of "passion" as conceptualised here.

[5] We are clearly making use of the language of the game theory. In particular, the strategic games are normally represented through the construction of charts containing all the choices one can consider in a given situation. These options, or choices, are called matrices of the payoffs associated to any combination of the possible strategies available to the actors involved.

that Odysseus chooses to get involved into an uncomfortable situation intentionally. It will cost him suffering and distress because, being temporarily unfit to govern himself and his life, he finds himself bound, powerless and thus unable to dive into the sea to reach the island. Furthermore, the more Odysseus twists his body, the more his sailors are forced to tighten the loops of the string that impedes him to give in to temptation. In other words, the more he desires, the less he is allowed to achieve the object of his passion.

Now: why does Odysseus opt for undergoing such a dramatic experience? We venture five different hypothesis:

1) He is motivated by purely instrumental and pragmatic reasons. For instance, he is willing to be dispensed with rowing for some time. Then, he takes advantage of his crew's fear of being entrapped by the Sirens in order to convince his sailors to row harder. Obviously, by this speculation we assume that Odysseus considers the whole staging of his performance – being tied to the mast; putting wax into his men's hears; suffering for not being allowed to dive into the sea; temporarily devolving his power and authority over his sailors as well as over himself – more convenient than being busy at rowing.

2) He is elaborating a kind of indirect rationality as a tool for managing complex problems he is not fit to solve in a more direct or coherent way. In particular, Odysseus does not trust the strength of his own willpower against the Sirens' provocation. This is why he decides to lose his freedom for a while: he knows that once he overcomes the crisis, he will be free and totally rational forever (See Elster 1979).

3) He simply wishes to be delighted by the Sirens voices, without any further goal. He thinks that the best and more valuable condition for appreciating the Sirens chants is to be the only person allowed to enjoy that magic experience. Thus, we can read his performance as a kind of trick: the true, functional stratagem is that of putting wax into his sailors' hears, in order to prevent them from joining his privilege.

4) He aims at renewing his authority over the crew in a moment of crisis. In order to achieve this result, he wishes to give credit to behaviours that would normally not gain any ascendancy over his men (See Frank 1988). For instance, he may be the only one knowing that the ship is going to face one of the most dreadful and difficult phases of the trip:

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the Strait of Scylla and Charybdis. Therefore, Odysseus is perfectly aware that he is called to an extremely hard challenge: that of governing his crew with confidence and authority in a risky context. Hence, it is just in order to strengthen the faith of his sailors in his power and rationality that he decides to perform his drama. The more powerful is the enemy he chooses to face (in this case he even deals with the domain of the supernatural), the more his credibility would potentially increase among the crew.

5) He confronts himself with a *need for recognition*. Needless to say, this is the perspective assumed in this paper. Odysseus yearns for being acknowledged as the only person able to circumnavigate the Sirens' island and survive their voices. This ambition may arise from contingent circumstances – as already pointed out in the previous comma: he needs to be acknowledged as the absolute leader of the crew in a moment of crisis – or from something completely different. We argue that we are dealing with what we call "need for recognition" or thymòtic passion or, moreover, with a tangible example of "social drama". When such a necessity is satisfied, the entire framework of Odysseus identity changes. By performing[6] his drama, and according to the three-stage ritual structure, after the crisis he becomes the epic author of several heroic deeds: he is The One of the Trojan Horse; The One who deceived and defeated the Cyclops; The One who received support from Aeolus, the Lord of the Wings; The One who survived the fury of the Laestrygonians; yet, he is the One who made Circe fall in love with him. Now, he is also The One who faced and endured the Sirens.

Following the suggestions outlined in point 5, we understand how Odysseus succeeds in changing, strengthening and even improving his identity, his social profile. In fact, we can read this transformation on a twofold ground: A) Odysseus experiences what social anthropologists call a "social drama"; therefore, he goes through a rite of passage (See Turner 1957, 1969); B) Odysseus can be compared to an actor who enters the game in its

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[6] We do not use the concept of "performance" without specific purpose. Odysseus behaviour is theatrical, indeed. Performance recalls the notion of social drama, which itself recalls the concept of rite of passage. The latter is characterised by three stages, the second of which is called liminal, or anti-structural, since all normal, daily social rules are interrupted, broken, suspended. Therefore, by this performance – his being fastened as if he was not the Captain – Odysseus is experiencing a rite of passage, a dramatic moment that will change his fate.

second stage, playing therefore with more and/or better resources. Such consideration fully justifies the strategic importance of the first part of the game, symbolised by his performance.

These suggested interpretations are not in contradiction one another: both foresee a plurality of stages or steps, the last of which presents a transformed Odysseus. His social identity is now differently acknowledged by the social group he belongs to. However, Odysseus cannot be aware of the final result of the transformation he has been experiencing. Indeed, he ignores how his identity is going to be transformed after the trial and the entire performance.[7]

On the other hand, the main difference between A and B is, while in A the performance takes place in a second (liminal) stage of the process – the first stage is symbolised by Odysseus's crisis: his need for recognition –, in B the performance itself is the first stage of the game. In the first case we are dealing with a three-phases process (Odysseus's new identity being the third step of the process), while in the second we are dealing with a simpler, two-fold structure.

Following ground A, we can also add that while Odysseus's subjugation to thymotic passions is a liminal condition (signalled by the rite of passage determining the third phase of the social drama), his new status after the performance (the third stage of the rite of passage he undertakes) is that of a reshaped and renewed authority. In other words, *homo timoticus* is a liminal man.

Following ground B – that is: taking into consideration that Odysseus ignores what the final result of his process of identitarian transformation will be – we question whether our protagonist should be classified within either the category of *homo oeconomicus* or in that of *homo reciprocans* or, yet, within an original combination of the two types. Furthermore, we are also called – together with Odysseus – to analyse whether Odysseus's future strategies aim at maximizing his personal payoffs (either his own only, or also those of his crew), or at driving back any possibility of maximizing any potential variable. What counts for Odysseus, at the end of the first stage of the process, is that he is commonly acknowledged as the hero – The One – who has faced and

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[7] This also recalls the topic of the uncertainty of the value, a question that we will address in §5.

survived the Sirens. Odysseus is *The* character who never loses his self-control. If he gives in to temptation, that will only happen after he has set a rigid framework of rules and checks upon which he is subjected. The impact of his passion is already calculated and governed; rather, it generates the satisfaction related to his need for recognition from his subordinates. Therefore, Odysseus is a man animated by calm feelings.

What happens, however, when somebody really loses his self-control? We shall now direct our attention to this question by distinguishing between two different – yet linked – elements: passion and recognition. Paragraph 2 is dedicated to the peculiar characteristics of what we have called "the overwhelming force of passion", while §3 more closely examines the specificity of the "need for recognition".

2. *Homo oeconomicus, homo reciprocans and homo timoticus.*

There are four main differences between the behaviour of *homo oeconomicus* and that of *homo timoticus*.

Firstly, thymotic passions emerge through non intentional acts: anger, love, sometimes martyrdom, instinct, and so forth[8]. Any action originated and nurtured by *thymòtic* passions places its own *raison d'être* in itself. In fact, this can be only interpreted *ex post*. As Homer, Dante Alighieri and Shakespeare wrote, *we are possessed – that is, we act according to – by passions*. David Hume, the XVIII century Scottish philosopher and historian, could not but confirm it (1739:462). In fact, thymòs confers value to an act neither with regard to its specific aim and interest, nor to its efficiency and effectiveness. Through thymòs, any action gets its own intrinsic value simply by being carried out. To quote Hanna Arendt (1958: 206), "Greatness, or the specific meaning of each deed, can lie only in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement".

Secondly, any action nurtured by the thymòs may worsen the actor's wellbeing. Montaigne (1580:95, 937-38) provides us with a very pertinent, although crude, example of the potential negative consequences of acting

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[8] We reckon unnecessary to produce an exhaustive catalogue of what is to be considered as "thymotic passion". However, a hypothetical list should absolutely include three couples, at least: *amor fou* and hate; respect and shame; pride and outrage.

under the influence of thymotic passions. The main object of Montaigne's eloquent tale is pride. The Author informs us that "a young gentleman of ours, felt in love and passionate, having conquered the heart of a beautiful lady with his perseverance" [*our translation*], suddenly became desperate since found himself weak and unsatisfactory, unable to finalise his assault to the lady. Therefore, since "non viriliter iners senile penis extulerat caput", once at home he decided to emasculate his body. He then sent his bleeding victim to the lady as a sign of the expiation of his offense. Montaigne asks: how would we comment such a proud action ... had it been motivated by devotion and reasoning?

Thirdly, thymòs excludes reciprocity. There is no indirect or future *do ut des*-mechanism in the actions and transactions motivated by thymotic passions. Even if we consider glory as the payoff of some thymotic acts, we have to recognise that any tangible, positive output or feedback for the concerned player(s) can be taken for granted. As stated in the verse by the classical Latin poetry Horace, "*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*", reciprocity is situated in a non-historical dimension.

Fourthly, thymòs is not directly dependent to monetary rewards; it does not vary if the latter changes. In other words, what is missing is the *trade-off* between money and the need for recognition. As Machiavelli wrote, "gold is not enough if you need to find good soldiers. However, good soldiers are right enough to find gold. If Romans had wanted to make war with money rather than with iron, and in consideration of all the great deeds they realised and all the difficulties they met, they would have needed more than all the wealth of this world. However, they run their wars with iron, and never experienced shortage of gold" [our translation]. Montaigne adds: "the biggest and only virtue of being rewarded with honour is that only a few people may benefit of it ... Quality people have higher desire for such awards than for gain and profit" [our translation]. Shakespeare (1598-99) comes to full circle by saying: "What's all this? My cousin Westmoreland asking for more men? No, cousin, if we must die today, then surely the fewer of us the better. But if we should survive, think how much greater our share of honour will be. No, don't ask for extra soldier. Believe me, I am not ambitious for wealth, I am happy to share my food and clothing with any man. But if it is a sin to wish for honour, then I confess I am guilty."

By *homines reciprocans* we mean those subjects that act not only according to material self interest. On the contrary, their behaviour also includes a social dimension through the inclusion of the others' payoffs as a relevant element of interest and motivation. The theories arguing over conditional reciprocity, equity, trust – and so forth – are rational explanations of the systematic shift between the logic underlying *homo reciprocans*' choices and that, purely instrumental and pragmatic, of *homo oeconomicus* (See Fehr and Gächter 1988; Fehr and Fischbacher 2002). Furthermore, the depiction of *homo reciprocans* produced by the literature of behavioural economics seems to overlap – partially, at least – with that of *homines timoticus*. However, one big difference soon emerges: the latter's logic, in fact, is featured by the complete absence of any *do ut des mechanism*, as well as by the acceptance of worsening his/her own wellbeing as a consequence of acting under the yoke of passion. Moreover, and above all, *homo timoticus* aims at being acknowledged by the other subjects with whom he interacts by sometimes acting positively towards the social group he belongs to, and some other times adopting a selfish and anti-social posture. It follows that thymòs is a need that may arise by adopting both conducts of *homo reciprocans* as well as the rationale – more acquisitive and pragmatic – of *homo oeconomicus*.

According to us, the importance and peculiarity of the notion of thymòs – as well as of that of *homo timoticus* – lays in the fact that it is marked by a truly and pervasive anthropological dimension. Acting for the sake of acting, transcending any other possible human rational motivation: this is what makes the actions inspired by thymòs original and different from those performed by *homo oeconomicus* and *homo reciprocans*. Here, too, lays the general pertinence of our topic in the field of contemporary social sciences.

If we adopt a different but equivalent terminology, we can also add that *homo timoticus* is a man manifesting sacred passions. By "sacred", however, we mean something valuable but, at the same time, without practical utility, useless. Moreover, we mean something whose unavailability cannot be negotiated. The sacred is to be kept separated by what can be manipulated. It is by taking into consideration what we are that we should recognise "the sacred". For instance, we deem as sacred the right of any people of accessing water, the children's right of not being used as soldiers, the right of studying Darwin, and the right of visiting Mecca, just to name a few potential examples.

These conceptual coordinates inform the scholarly work of Robert Axelrod and his colleagues. They have focused on the three ideal types representing economic brokers (Atran-Axelrod-Davis 2007; Atran and Axelrod 2008). Indeed, in the event of a severe conflict, if the involved subjects were all *homines oeconomici* the political negotiation would be totally consumed by the "gradual" values played in the field. Therefore, either the logic of "more-or-less" or that of "before-or-later" would put an end to any potential negotiation as, anyhow, something would be preferred to nothing. Rather, in case the involved subjects were all *homines reciprocans*, they would certainly recognise the existence of "sacred" values, namely, inseparable values corresponding to the logic of "everything-or-nothing", "this-or-that" and "just-now". However, the most valuable quality of reciprocity is that it turns active only when there is somebody who starts donating. It follows that every negotiation should primarily refer to "gradual" values, leaving aside the "sacred" ones, in order to allow the involved agents gaining reciprocal confidence. This way, the web linking their mutual interests would result strengthened and this would further allow the indivisible passions to be included into the negotiation process. A "dimensional jump" is thus made possible. According to Axelrod and his colleagues, these approaches are often keen to fail, since the involved subjects are *homines timotici* (although this expression is never mentioned in their researches) who, as such, grant priority to identitarian values and needs. These *homines timotici* interpret every compromise, either in terms of individual or reciprocal interest, as an abuse. In other words, they cannot consider the compromise as something constructive.

Let's now turn our attention to what we call "symbolic concessions", that, although apparently meaningless or even counter-productive from the point of view of self-interested or socially-driven subjects, concern the indivisibility of the "sacred" values/needs.

3. *From identity to social recognition.*

What do we mean by "identitarian need for recognition"? In order to answer this complex question, we have to focalise on the theme of identity, that represented throughout the last decades the core of studies and debates in such disciplines as philosophy and social anthropology and, generally

speaking, in all the so-called social sciences. However, it is our intention to anticipate that the notion of identity, taken in its broad sense, may produce a misunderstanding. Therefore, the thesis we suggest concerns the fact that the concept of identity, as such, should be replaced with that of "social recognition", which seems to be more analytical and more fertile. We will argue our hypothesis by comparing it with some of the most widespread and debated conceptions of the notion of identity. However, before proceeding we would also like to add that every considered approach is featured by a variety of theoretical backgrounds, which yet produced several internal debates and interpretations. Hence, any mentioned author does not represent a particular intellectual tradition, but only one concrete example of how different theoretical roots have evolved in certain contexts.

A first approach suggests that identity is a structure of social affiliation. It is created when an individual adheres to the structure of beliefs through which a social group defines the others and, consequently, draws and impose material and immaterial borders between the inclusive category of "Us" and the excluding sphere of "Them". Identity, therefore, is not an objective attribute of certain given behaviours. On the contrary, it derives by the way members of a community figure out themselves and interpret/play their relation to that specific community (Tajfel *et al*., 1971; Akerlof & Kranton, 2010). Moreover, it is well known that every person *belongs* to – that is, feels to be in an intimate social and cultural relation with – several groups or collective configurations. Some may be inherited – culture is what defines, for instance, how an individual belongs to a group by descent– whereas others may be the result of fortuitous circumstances, and other may be the product of intentional choices, either strategic or tactical or rational or ideological. By belonging to more than one social group, the individual may experience internal cognitive and/or cultural struggles. Some authors (Simmel, 1908; Turner, 1987; Sen, 2006) affirm that such situation can weaken the person's exclusive and main belonging to a single community. According to us, the worth of this approach lays in its conception of identity as the result of a process of classification of the reality. In other words, this perspective stresses that identity is a socio-cultural construction, since any label ascribed to a group or individual is conventional, arbitrary and changing. At the same time, we also recognise that this interpretation of identity has also got its own

limits. The most important one regards the assumption that identity is the product of some requirements collective or individual subjects apply or impose to themselves and, by contrast, to others.

It is right on this limit that the second thesis we intend to discuss intervenes. It aims at overcoming the traditional dichotomy between individual personality (identity) and social structure by emphasising the relational and inter-subjective attributes of what we call "identity". This approach argues that identity does not grow in an inner dimension, to enter the social arena in a later stage. On the contrary, identity is intimately constituted by the surrounding socio-cultural reality; it is the collective action that informs, gives shape to and reproduces one's personality. Social reality is then built up by the individual together with other individuals; his/her identity gains sense only in that complex reality. It follows that the rigid distinction between personal and social identity loses its meaning. Identity is never referred to a single subject: it is the consequence of multilayered social processes (Wittgenstein, 1953; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). According to us, the main limit of this approach can be found in its assumption of an already constituted subject, who explores the social reality by interacting with other given subjects, with the aim of their and his/her own identification.

The third hypothesis that we suggest to explore is a response to the limit we have just identified in the lines above. We no longer deal with a given subject dialoguing with other subjects, able to transform the others or to be transformed by them through the words exchange. Indeed, by "inter-subjectivity" we already presuppose a subjectivity that seeks coordination with other subjects, before and independently from social processes. Rather, any identitarian subjectivity is shaped by the web of relations it is encompassed by. Just as a game only makes sense if there are rules regulating it, and a theatrical actor only assumes his/her identity by performing on the stage, identity is generated through the functioning of the social situation it takes part to (Mead, 1913; Goffman, 1956). However, this passage from what we may call "procedural subject" to a "subjectivation process" implies a critique of one of the most pervasive philosophical precept, which assumes that identity is a temporal integration criterion, typical of humankind existence, based on an unvarying nucleus. However, what this hypothesis does not define is *what identity is*. Rather, it focuses on how identity is produced and used by social

actors, be they assumed as subjects or not (Rorty, 1980; Parfit, 1984; Hume, 1739).

The fourth approach we would like to consider is the most radical and also, according to us, the most satisfactory and sharable. Therefore, we shall try to develop it extensively. The "subject" – both capable of self-reflecting and interacting with other individuals – and "identity" – taken as the factor providing unity and continuity to the subject's conscious existence – are notions that have been largely criticised by the past reviews. Consequently, it seems appropriate to reduce the use of these two problematic and complex notions in order to substitute them with less normative and demanding concepts. We shall, therefore, consider the following sentence: no social actor can acquire consciousness of her/himself, unless s/he is acknowledged by others. This sentence neither necessarily require that the social actor is a "subject", nor that her/his self-consciousness is what we call "identity". Our statement solely affirms that, in order to assign a meaning to her/his actions, an individual acting in society (that is, an actor) has to be considered and accepted by other social actors. The mechanism of reciprocal recognition is more essential and at the same time more fundamental than the processes of subjectivation and identification. This perspective has also been masterly stated out by Erik Erikson (1968: 20), who affirmed: "Identity formation [is] a process [...] by which the individual judges himself in light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him". We can rephrase this sentence by stating that the subject's identity is the final destination towards which the process of reciprocal recognition asymptotically converge.

The recognition occurs *before* any preference or judgement is expressed. Indeed, the action of calculating a value (laying at the very core of micro-economics) can never be solipsistically performed. A witty remark by the comedian Lenny Bruce – "I invented powdered water, but don't know how to melt it" – suggests that each individual invents her/his way of measuring the value of things by ranking every alternative according to a function of utility or to a preference relation. However, this way of acting assumes sense only if it is "melted" into a process of recognition. Even the simplest economic

exchange implies acknowledging the value of a good someone else brought on the market. Generally speaking, «we shall explain the choices made by repeating the following question: "why did you make this choice?". A more precise question, for instance, could be: "why did decide to give up your education in order to manage an estate agency?". At first, we might receive a similar answer: "because I draw satisfaction from earning money". Then, we could insist and ask: "why are you satisfied when you earn money?". Our interlocutor may then reply: "Because I can buy prestigious goods". ""Prestigious to whom?", we keep insisting. "To those like us", our counterpart says. At this stage, we face a response that transcends the pattern of the rational choice by referring to a social circle ("Those like us") in which the same ethics of valuing things and choices are supposed to be shared. This circle is the social group to which our interlocutor belongs, or would like to belong for unspecified reasons. If this consideration is licit, then not only all processes of interests maximization happen along with the inter-subjective recognition that assigns value to the assessment of utility, on the contrary they vary according to the different collective identities they are support by» (Sparti, 2002: 130).

Next to the priority assigned to the reciprocal recognition over the rationality of the individual choice, the other pivotal theoretical point that this approach raises is the recognition of social recognition as a social (f)act that cannot be analysed by solely using the paradigm of economic science. Indeed, sometimes social recognition may be generated by an intentional decision, but it *can never arise as the product of a rational choice; on the contrary, it is a secondary and uncertain outcome of actions aiming at other goals.* As well as it is not possible to self-tickle, when a social actor wishes to be acknowledged by those who s/he esteems, s/he cannot establish her/his recognition as the primary goal of her/his actions. Indeed, nothing impresses less than a behaviour aiming at impressing the others. Moreover, according to Pizzorno (2000: 206), those who seek an improvement of their self esteem are just those who admit to have a lack of it. The same author adds that acting in order to become a "certain" person (a kind of "character") contradicts that goal itself, as everything one can achieve is only "being a person who wants to be a certain person", at least to his/her own eyes (2007: 257).

It is possible to object this interpretation by saying that social actors have developed a kind of evolutionary capacity of *self-deception*, as it helps them deceiving the others more convincingly (Trivers, 2011). However, the simulation becomes impossible when requiring the essential qualities of any "authentic" behaviour: pretending to laugh with the aim of *actually* misleading someone means to *actually* laugh; pretending to be an original artist or scientist would not *really* deceive other artists or scientists, unless you are *really* original. It is in such cases that the distinction between *genuinely* unintentional actions and *credible* simulated actions tend to vanish. The only way to result trustworthy is to be genuine (Elster, 1983).

It is also possible to affirm that the rational strategy of improving someone's social performances in terms of wealth, beauty, intelligence, competences or else produces a better recognition, and, therefore, a higher self esteem. However, we can answer that the likelihood of these flows of events is unknown. As already mentioned, since every social universe is constituted and modified through paths of recognition, the amount and quality of the events concern a becoming process. The actor aiming at her/his recognition is aware of the conditions of *possibility*, though not of those of *probability*, which determine the result of her/his actions. S/he cannot maximize her/his own expected utility – namely, the sum of any potential outcome's utility, minus the probability that the outcome does not take place. S/he can only adopt strategies featured by uncertainty. It follows that the actor's strategies will only seek indirect and secondary goals – wealth, beauty, and so on – without any warranty regarding the achievement of the principal and direct goal, social recognition. Better: the recognition *as such* cannot be the object of the function of an expected utility, it can only constitute the secondary and uncertain outcome of other objects of rational choice.

By setting the issue of recognition at the core of our analysis, we spin the entire interpretative axes of the economic theory. In other words, we suggest a third way to approach economic sciences. In fact, recent debates either represent human behaviour as solely motivated by material self-interest or, more often, as the articulation of social choices, also influenced by our own purposes and/or others' payoffs (see Bruni, 2006). While traditional *homo oeconomicus* carries out choices based on a merely instrumental rationality, *homo reciprocans* – as outlined in the field of behavioural economics –

addresses the attention to the others' choices and preferences. Tzvetan Todorov (1995: 36) demonstrates efficaciously the reason why engaging in the issue of recognition lead us to a third perspective of economic theory (square bracket added): "the most powerful reasons behind any human action are not to be called pleasure, interest, avidity [like in the *homo oeconomicus* paradigm], nor should they be called generosity, love for humankind, self-denial [as in the homo reciprocans']*; rather, desire of glory and consideration, shame and guilt, fear of not being esteemed, need for recognition ...*" [our translation]*.

In a nutshell: in the fourth formulation just mentioned, on a theoretical scenario, there are neither subjects-persons, nor inter-subjective connections, nor intentional actions, nor individual identities displayed at the beginning of the social show. The single actors (potentially) shape themselves as subjects as soon as they are recognised by other individuals. Only following this process they can acquire a proper self-esteem, and can thus recognise themselves as subjects. A community of individuals reciprocally recognising each other becomes a group, notwithstanding the internal unequal relations of power regulating every known community. Therefore, the act of recognition lays at the core of any process of socialization, as well as of subjectivation. It is *never an entirely intentional action*, as the actor receives social recognition only by strategically aiming at other goals.

4. *The framework of identitarian change.*

As already argued in §3, we consider subjective identity the process through which a given Ego recognises itself and, at the same time, it is recognised by an *Alter* as member of a larger and encompassing community. It is based on this process that Ego gives its own actions a meaning. In order to feel itself as a member of a group, Ego needs to stand in the group and, at the same time, must be recognised by that specific group as a member. It means that identity requires a relation between Ego and Alter: Ego joins Alter's group only if Alter recognises it. At the same time Alter recognises Ego as long as Ego, by joining the group, recognises Alter as a member of the group. This is not a circle of causality and effect, nor implies it a given temporal order. Ego is Ego because its meaning arises from belonging to

Alter's group. Alter is Alter because its meaning arises from belonging to Ego's group. Identity is not a *requisite* someone can gain or lose, produce or trade. It is nothing but the circular relation between Ego-Alter-Ego, as acknowledgment is something that only exists on the others' eyes. The ultimate foundation of subjectivity lies in the inter-subjective acknowledgment, and this entails that identity arises from an interaction explicating itself in the form of an encounter or a clash: either we acknowledge each other in the name of affinity and solidarity, or in that of difference and contrast (Pizzorno, 2000 and 2007).

In order to analyse the recognition, thus, it is necessary to look at the social groups the individual relates her/himself to. Hence, we suggest to adopt an analytical framework that grasps the essential elements of the processes of reciprocal recognition (Pizzorno, 2000; 2007).

We shall consider three types of social groups. The first is named *Group of Belonging* (**GB**): it means that the player is a member of the group due to some previous and unknown reasons (ascriptive affiliation, voluntary membership or casualty). The second type is named Circle of Recognition (**CR**): it is constituted by those who evaluate the player. They directly or indirectly judge the player's acts, even though the latter may not desire belonging to the group, and even if they are not part of a same group. Let's consider the example provided by a professor who professionally belongs to the academic world (GB), but is also subjected to students' evaluation, even if these do not belong to the professor's academic dimension. At the same time, our professor is also evaluated by the academic institution s/he works for, or by other organisations as well, if s/he aims at obtaining research or consulting funds provided by those bodies (CR).

What we want to stress is that this model represents GB merely as a container, while the actor belonging to the GB is evaluated by the corresponding CR. For any GB, there will be a corresponding CR, even if the two groups are not linked by a bi-univocal relation. The reason stands in the possibility that anybody belonging to a GB can be evaluated by different CR.

The third case is named Group of Reference (**GR**): it is composed by those individuals that Ego reckons valuable and by whom s/he wishes to be accepted.

We shall now assume that, during a time t, Ego belongs to one GB, whose members are evaluated by only one CR, and that Ego aspires to be included in one GR only. The framework object is the itinerary along which the player: *I)* is acknowledged by the CR and, distinctively, by the GB; *II)* transforms the obtained recognition in self-recognition, namely, in self-esteem.

On one hand, the CR assesses the player according to what s/he currently is and does. On the other hand, the GR values the player according to what s/he wishes or aims to be, namely adopting a potentiality criterion. Therefore, we argue that the actor's self esteem should be defined as the sum of the assessment expressed by the CR and that expressed by the GR. However, it is important to stress that the addends have a different nature.

In fact, while the assessment given by the CR is passively received by the actor – as the actor's CR coincides with the GB s/he is referred to during the time t, which cannot be adjusted or modified in the short run – the judgement expressed by the GB is chosen by the actor. Indeed, it is the actor that selects the group by which s/he aims to be approved and included. It follows that self esteem is made by two factors, which we shall call "choice" and "non-choice".
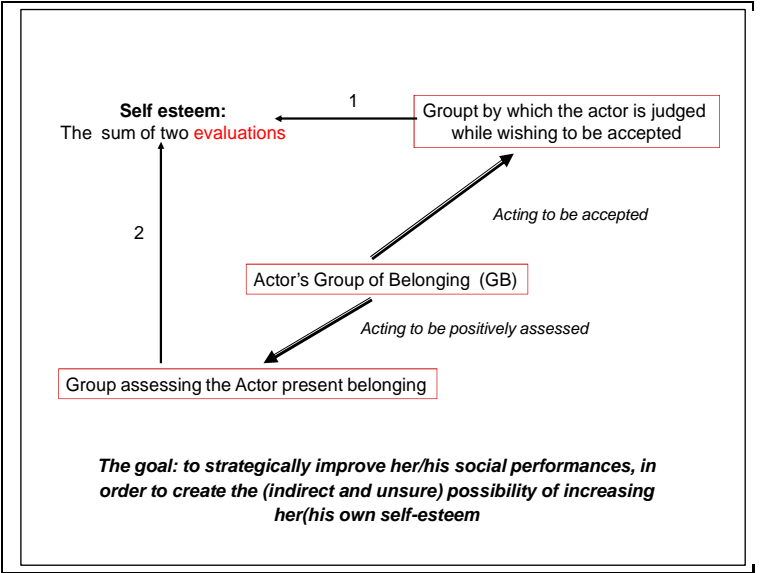

FIGURE 1

Figure 1 shows the strategic positioning executed by the player while aiming to improve (though indirectly and doubtfully) her/his self-esteem. It is

worth underlining that, as already discussed in the third paragraph, the processes of recognition are not fully governed by economic rationality. We want two concentrate on twelve strategies deriving by the manipulation of GB and/or CR and/or GR.

[**I**] The actor decides to substitute her/his GR after having received a negative evaluation by the CR. S/He will therefore select a new GR who appreciates her/him more than the previous one, in order to improve her/his self-esteem. For instance, let's imagine a player belonging to the academic world: if s/he does not manage get a higher position within her/his GR, s/he decides to strengthen her/his collaboration with some newspaper or magazines that s/he already work with. This way, the actor seeks to become an influent opinion-leader. Therefore, s/he is improving her/his self-esteem by changing GR: from the scientific to the journalistic world.

[**II**] The player decides to substitute her/his GR after having received a negative evaluation by the CR. This time, however, our player does not select a new GR who appreciates her/him better, but rather one who can be better appreciated by the CR. For instance, our player does not obtain the professorship s/he aimed to. The player knows, however, that the judging commission is composed by catholic members and therefore decides to join Opus Dei in order to increase the commission's mark.

[**III**] If the GR gives a negative evaluation of the player, the latter can increase and enhance her/his position in the GB in order to induce the GR to improve its assessment. For instance, the actor is an academician that aspires, unsuccessfully, to join the Lincei Academy. The player decides to engage her/himself even more than before in research and teaching, in order to convince the Lincei that s/he deserves membership.

[**IV**] If the GR expresses a negative evaluation of the actor, the latter can disengage her/himself from the GB in order to raise her/his credibility in front of the GR. For instance, let's assume the actor is an academician aspiring to be accepted by the Lincei Academy. S/He is refused because her/his belonging university is not sufficiently qualified. Therefore, the player decides to reduce the engagement with her/his belonging university in order to carry out more independent research, which would increase her/his chances to get admission at the Lincei.

Let's now assume that the GB is not a fixed variable anymore. Indeed, in an "individualistic" society any player decides the group s/he wants to belong to. Four additional strategies are following.

[**V**] If the CR's judgement about the actor worsens, the latter can decide to belong to a different GB, which will compensate the player by fostering her/his own self-esteem. For instance, the actor has recently graduated, but does not manage to access the PhD school to which s/he aspires. S/He decides, thus, to drop her/his scientific career in order to be employed by a private firm.

[**VI**] If the CR's judgement about the player worsens, the latter decides to change GB. The rationale is, even though the player is not appreciated in the new GB more than s/he was in the one s/he previously belonged to, the CR will appreciate her/him better in virtue of her/his new GB. For instance, the player is an academic researcher in Economic Sciences who is trying to win the professorship; the Commission, however, does not think s/he is properly qualified in the field of Economic Analysis so s/he eventually does not succeed. Then, s/he decides to move to another scientific disciplinary sector, in order to let the Commission evaluates her/his credits in ... History of Economic Analysis.

[**VII**] If the GR expresses a negative opinion of the player, the latter may decide to start belonging to a GB closer to the GR, so that the GR will change its assessment. For instance, the actor wishes to be admitted to the Lincei Academy; if s/he improves her/his position from simple researcher to full-time professor, s/he would increase her/his chances to be admitted to the GR (Lincei Academy)

[**VIII**] If the GR does not evaluate the player positively, the latter can address another GB, which will be farther from the GR. This choice would then improve the player's position in the eyes of the GR (of course, cases number VI and VIII share the same nature, but with opposite signs). For instance, the player wants to get admission to the Lincei, but does not reach her/his goal because the university to which s/he belongs in not sufficiently qualified. The actor decides to move to a foreign university who is institutionally, culturally and physically farther from the Lincei, but with a reputation that consents her/him to be considered by the latter.

Let's now turn to the point where the CR is no longer a fixed variable. In fact, if we consider a hyper-individualistic society (something that sociologists

call "liquid", in association with a peculiar form of modernity[9]), there is no fixed correspondence between a GB and a CR. In this case it is not granted that, if somebody belongs to a certain BG, there is only one exclusive, corresponding CR. Rather, the player is free to select what CR may evaluate her/his performance in the GB. The search for the appropriate CR lays the ground for two further potential strategies.

[**IX**] If the CR's opinion of the player worsens, the latter can decide to choose another CR. For instance, the player is a painter. S/he looks for experts and reviewers in order to be considered the new Picasso, and s/he does not stop the research until s/he finds what s/he is looking for.

[**X**] If the GR evaluates the player negatively, the latter can select a CR that "compensates" her/him by raising her/his evaluation as member of a GB. For instance, the player is a professional writer of popular novels. S/he aspires at winning Premio Strega, but gets a very bad review. The writer decides to participate to Premio Bancarella, which is based on the judgements expressed by the readers and not by professional reviewers, because s/he thinks that readers will deserve her/him a better treatment, if not even the victory.

Following the last two cases, let's now assume that GR becomes a fixed variable. The actor cannot choose the groups s/he aspires to belong to anymore. S/he is part of a purely ascriptive society, in which there is no social mobility, and where a person's life is already channelled by tradition or power (think about Orwell's "1984"). All the more, such a society imposes to the actor a GB and a CR, too. Therefore, only two out of the ten presented strategies are available to the player (III and IV), because only those can be really carried out when neither GB, nor GR, nor CR change or can be changed. However, such social context leads to two more strategies, so that the player may always have room for some choice, even if s/he cannot change her/his situation "structurally".

[**XI**] If the GR expresses a negative evaluation of the player, the latter can act in order to improve her/his position within the GB in order to influence GR positively. For instance, the player lives in a Sicilian village where mafia acts as the only GR, and s/he wants to be affiliated. S/he is not accepted unless

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[9] See Bauman (2000). In the field of anthropological studies, we invite the reader to consider Appadurai (1996).

s/he starts acting violently in the only GB to which s/he belongs (may that be the family, the village, the work place or the political domain).

[**XII**] If the GR expresses negatively about the player, s/he can disengage for the GB in order to improve her/his credibility in front of the GR. For instance, the actor lives in the context of a civil war, and the GR is the predatory army. The actor wants to be a soldier, but her/his GB has not always been faithful to the GR. In order to raise her/his position in the latter's context, s/he will have to perform violence against her/his native villagers.

5. *Uncertainty and passions.*

The twelve possible strategies of identitarian change outlined in paragraph 4 do not consider a crucial dynamic factor: the connection between uncertainty and passions.

Indeed, passions need to be considered as a critical variable so that an individual's identity changes. As Shakespeare states, hot passions transform, overwhelm and own us. By feeling passions, people become someone else and play even more than one identity at once (this is the case of Amlet's fascinating dilemma in his well known monologue). Let's consider Juliet's falling in love, King Richard III's aesthetic pleasure for other people's sorrow, Lady Macbeth's desire of power, Othello's jealously, Shylock greed or Henry V search for glory: all the considered examples are characterised by passions generating temporal discontinuities in those subjects' selves.

Discontinuities generate a peculiar form of uncertainty. One of the most "customary" propositions in the economic theory suggests that preferences are stable. It follows that the criteria we use when evaluating an alternative remain unchanged both when we are asked to choose and when we examine the consequences generated by our choice. However, thymòtic passions, when experienced, have the capacity of transforming the identitarian profile of those subjected to their power. The actor cannot be sure that s/he will accept the consequences generated by the choices s/he carried out after following "temporary" preferences, since s/he could judge them unsuitable once their effects are manifested. It follows that our actor is not only uncertain about the world's future status, but also about her/his own personal future status.

«We can imagine a referee, a superego, who allocates profits with the very same care to all different egos that will come along (Schelling, 1984; Elster, 1979). However, we should also imagine that this superego has got norms regulating the allocation of profits that remain unchanged or that only slightly change in a predictable manner. … The principle of rationality demands that we anticipate the utility of the choices we undertake. Such anticipation may occur having only incomplete information on some events. However, we can deal with this lack of information by considering, objectively as well as subjectively, the chances that these events concretely happen. Yet, when we anticipate the consequences, we also need to consider that those consequences do not affect the present ego, the one who choices, but a successive one. Now, since the intertemporal comparison is as arbitrary as the interpersonal, we can argue that the condition in which one makes a choice is usually a condition of uncertainty about the way the future ego evaluates the situation in which s/he shall found her/himself as a consequence of the decision taken now, in our present. This kind of uncertainty (let's call it 'uncertainty about values' is different from the uncertainty considered by the probability theory" (Pizzorno, 2007: 55-56, our translation).

As of our framework, passions constitute one of the main sources of identitarian changes: on one hand, *thymòs* is the need for recognition, on the other hand identity depends on the other's recognition; therefore, both responding to *thymòs* and building our own identity are segments of a single path. Also, if identity concerns received/obtained recognitions, the groups of recognition are, as we have seen, social nets within which self-esteem grows and strengthens. A group might change for external reasons (for instance, the devaluation of a medal out of a military context, turning from a glorious symbol to a mere piece of metal in case of a political-cultural change), or for internal reasons. We will go through the latter only, as these are the ones who tightly concern identitarian or thymotical passions.

In out attempt to sketch an outline, the path of identitarian change is made of seven steps.

1] Ordinary situation: we are in a time *t* and Ego's identity is X, until time 0; it arises from a certain way of satisfying its need for recognition, that is its way of relating to a specific GB, CR and GR (see chapter §4). Among the

aspects of an ordinary situation we can make the example of a stable married love, meaningful for Ego as it is acknowledged by the partner and by a certain CR and GR.

2] All of a sudden, a thymotical passion emerges: Ego "falls" for another partner. This is *not* a fully intentional deed (see §3). Passion changes *thymòs*, namely Ego's need for recognition. The latter aims at being acknowledged in a different way than before (no longer as a husband or father, rather as a single man and lover) and by a different GR (given that its CR will probably oppose to this new aspiration).

3] Intentional deeds start here. What way does Ego choose to court the desired partner? How will Ego manage to be accepted by her/him and the new GR? These actions require that Ego makes a set of conscious and rational choices, although the chain of these actions has been triggered by the "surprise" of identitarian or thymotical passion.

4] The path along which Ego attempts to satisfy its new *thymòs* or need for recognition – by changing actions and GR – is called "conversion" by Pizzorno (1983). As the conversion has occurred, Ego has a new identity: it becomes the subject Y at a time *t+1*. This entails that (as for definition) Ego cannot feel regret nor repentance for choices made as X at a time *t*. Even though Ego might be upset by the new partner, the subject feeling the disappointment would be Y, whereas X is irreversibly out of the scene after the transition from time *t* to time *t+1*.

5] Moreover, when X at a time *t* is overwhelmed by an identitarian or thymotical passion, it does not know what it will become at a time *t+1*. Mister Y is a label given *ex post* by the old CR and the new GR. As a result, this generates a peculiar form of uncertainty, as, following what mentioned above, the subject is no longer uncertain only about the world's future status, but also about her/his personal status.

6] Hence, an identitarian or thymotical passion opens the door to a "surprise" in the life of X (Shackle, 1953). Such event is not predicted at the time of initial probability distribution. It is not an event with an initial zero probability, it is simply not figured yet. The passion was not imagined by X, from time 0 to time *t*, hence it is never taken into consideration as possible or

impossible. It is the *new* event that forces Y towards a new probability distribution, which, being completely free, interrupts the convergence.

7] Hypothesising that the discontinuity emerges in the instant *t*, though not between 0 and *t*, nor between *t* and *t+1* - notwithstanding an adequate significance to *thymòs* in general, and to thymotical passions in particular – we shall simplify the analysis, which should not focus on an "out of mind " or "irrational" period of change, but rather solely on a segment between the two periods, each of them remaining evaluable through the ordinary tools used by economists and social scientists. It means that we are assuming, for the sake of simplicity, that "passional madness" (one of the many mentioned by Homer, Dante or Shakespeare) is squeezed in a single instant.

Although overwhelming passions are sudden, namely they arise with discontinuity and are thus unpredictable, we can understand, based on the framework we have introduced above, some of their conditions of probability. Even though that does not allow an exact planning of the burst, it consents to understand under what conditions its occurrence is more likely.

6. The conditions of possibility of thymotical passions

In the recent debates of economic psychology and cognitive neuroscience, a well-known position is the one called dualist (for a recent review, see Evans, 2008). This postulates the existence of two parallel modes of cognitive functioning. The former – denominated "experiential", "emotional" or simply "system 1" – proceeds in many - affective-intuitive, rapid, associative, non-verbal, metaphorical, impressionistic, narrative, automatic and little conscious - ways. The latter – denominated "analytical-rational" or simply "system 2" – is based on conscious, slow, effortful, rule-based, reflective, deliberative processes based on a formal reasoning. A recurring thesis in this literature suggests that «there are strong elements of rationality in both systems of thinking. The experiential system enabled human beings to survive as they evolved. Intuition, instinct, and gut feeling were relied upon to determine whether an animal was safe to approach or the water was safe to drink. As life became more complex and humans gained more control over their environment, analytic tools such as probability theory, risk assessment,

and decision analysis were invented to "boost" the rationality of experiential thinking» (Slovic and Peters, 2006: 322). Nevertheless, despite system 1 is considered the expression of a form of rationality, the crucial theoretical point concerns the fact that, in the dualist conception, the emotional (or passional) characteristics featuring system 1 only generate mistakes and sub-optimal performances. For instance, according to the Nobel Prize Daniel Kahneman (2011), when «an option is *emotionally charged*, the individual evaluates and substitutes a specific objective attribute with another attribute who comes to mind more promptly, as the objective attribute is little accessible. The substituted attribute is so much linked to the objective attribute that it overcomes the control of system 2 and the substitution takes places unintentionally. An error of assessment thus implicates the failure of system 1, who generated the mistake through the attribute substitution, and of system 2, who did not manage to find it out and readjust it» (Belelli and Di Schiena, 2008: 90). In brief, system 1 harasses and tends to broaden the limits of system 2.

An alternative perspective of research, closer to the setting adopted in this paper, has been promoted by Gerd Gigerenzer and his colleagues. In their point of view, it is little meaningful to define system 2 on the base of "true" rules of logics and statistics, according to which there would be the occurrence of bias and errors. Human mind does not mainly work on the basis of a "stock" of algorithms of the formal reasoning, rather on the basis of heuristics. «A heuristic is a strategy that ignore part of the information, with the goal of making decisions more quickly, frugally, and/or accurately than more complex methods» (Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier, 2011: 454). The heuristics expressed by system 1, instead of constituting processes that are sub-optimal compared to those in system 2, are often compliant with an ecological rationality, that is the ability of adapting to a specific environment[10]. In this interpretational key, according to us, overwhelming or thymotical passions are a heuristic who

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[10] In the literature of psycology and neuro science, the fact that the decision-maker uses heuristics instead of optimization, is a widespread idea that goes back at least to Newell and Simon (1976). Nevertheless, authors like Kahneman and Gigerenzer, mentioned in the text, express very different opinions regarding the nature and role of heuristics. In brief, while Kahneman reckons they never approach the optimal strategy, rather they weakly replace it when it absconds, Gigerenzer thinks many of them are tools of the ecologic rationality's satisficing operation.

takes place in situations where: a) we cannot simultaneously follow all the alternatives; b) non-primary alternatives (for us) emerge; c) choosing at once in favour of primary alternatives is determining; d) the occurrence of the decision-making itself through rapid and simplifying strategies is decisive. We shall now linger on these four requisite.

Requisite (a) and (b) are prompted by the realization that «people tend to have, simultaneously, several goals. At times these goals contradict one another; at times they have no relationship with each other; sometimes they have some bearing on one another, and at other times are the first step to achieving a higher ranking goal (e.g., to save money [subgoal 1], in order to retire comfortably [goal 1]). One way in which emotions function is to divert a particular course of action being taken in order to pursue a more urgent objective. That is, while one might be in the course of pursuing goal X, emotional arousal can subvert attention in order to pursue goal Y. Thus, emotions can function as a mechanism for establishing a hierarchy of goals by pressing us to pursue goals that have high survival value while setting aside less urgent ones. […] Focusing and directing our attention is one of the fundamental roles played by our emotions» (Hanoch, 2002: 8). Therefore, given a list of priorities of events, requisite (b) underlines that passion ties to an alternative that appears relevant, that is an alternative to which we assign a high priority in our evaluation rank. Quoting Steven Pinker (1997), we might say that emotions are mechanisms that set the brain's highest goals. Once fostered by a favourable moment, an emotion triggers, in turn, the chain of sub-goals and sub-sub-goals that we call thought and action. Among the simplifying strategies of choice, we recall the "lexicographic" strategy, that consists in selecting the option with the best value in the subject's primary value dimension (see Fishburn, 1974), and the "elimination by aspect" strategy, according to which we eliminate the options who do not satisfy the reference value within the primary value dimension; then, we eliminate those who do not seem appropriate in the second best value dimension, and so on (see Tversky, 1972).

Requisite (c) indicates that passion refers to alternatives (extremely relevant for the subject) who need to be chosen immediately. One reason that makes the choice sudden regards the fact that the information obtained now is

more important than the one who will follow in the future; hence, gathering additional information appears secondary or even redundant. An example is when her/his identitarian integrity is threatened (a woman who is about to be subjected to violence, an employee humiliated by her/his employer, and so on): the burst of aggressiveness in the response does not wait for the collection of detailed information. Another reason arises when the set of alternatives among which the subject is called to choose tends to shrink, or becomes more expensive, as time goes by; therefore, s/he will feel the urge of selecting promptly an option that might be no longer accessible, or considerably more expensive in future. A roughly explicit example is formulated by Mao Zedong (1936), who affirms that in a fight it is better to cut off an enemy's finger than wounding all his ten fingers, while in war it is better to destroy an enemy division than attacking ten different sites.

Lastly, requisite (d) suggests that the process of choice itself should occur through rapid and simplifying procedures. Going back to the previous examples, the aggressiveness in reacting to the subjugation attempt, or the decision of cutting off an enemy's finger, are as more effective as faster and more direct is their execution.

Summing up: thymotical passion arises in unpredictable, though quite determinable, conditions: alternatives ranked by urge/importance; commitment towards primary alternatives; need of choosing immediately. Upon these conditions, identitarian passions shape a heuristic who is inscribed in our ecological rationality, and who is thus not sub-optimal compared to choices arisen from a logical and probabilistic calculus.

7. Conclusions.

Authors like Lock and Smith, Madison and Mill, developed an extremely refined and articulated conception of human psyche. Holmes (1995) points out that everybody, quite realistically, knows that human behaviour is nurtured by passions as well as by interest. The Author goes further by affirming that human beings are incessantly committed to a wide range of behaviours that have nothing to do with egoism and calculus. He rhetorically asks what the purpose of following nonconformity, falling in love with someone, getting back at humiliations our own group received, getting lost in gloomy meditations

while looking outside the window, sympathising with the less fortunate, being impatient to start a battle, turning down someone's happiness, feeling stuck in fear when we speak in public, gossiping with no reason, blushing, hating ourselves, trying to understand the past (and so on...) are.

The strength of *thymós*, and of thymotical passions, is often evoked within this conception, but is domesticated at the same time, when proceeding to the establishment of the economic science as well as of the liberal political philosophy. «The legitimacy of our own interests' satisfaction is indeed at the basis of liberal-democratic modern societies. […] Such legitimacy approximately occurred in the XVI and XVII centuries through authors who noticed how *aiming to our interest is a peaceful and harmless alternative to that violent passion for glory and honor* who had inspired for a long time the aristocratic and military ruling classes and had covered Europe in blood» (Romani, 1995: 20, italics added).

Obviously, here and there, the specificity of thymòs bursts again, and it would be beneficial to collect incisive and distinguished quotations (for instance: Mandeville, 1714, pp.47-48; Galiani, 1750, pp.40-41; Smith, 1759, pp.150-151; Marshall, 1890, p.169; Veblen, 1899, p.91; Keynes, 1930, p.62). But, in its paradigmatic coordinates, economic science revolves around the nexus between desire and reason: *homo oeconomicus* bears desires, and he is committed to satisfy them according to reason. It is Smith, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), who engages himself in *linking all human passions to the profit yearning*. Hirschman (1977) says that it is worth noting that homo oeconomicus behaves as if he wanted to demonstrate the opposite, as he emphasises the non-economic and non-consumerist reasons behind the fight for economic improvement. According to Hirschman, Hobbes had kept the yearning for honour, dignity, respect and consideration – namely: *thymòs* – away from "the cure of necessary things". The Author also adds that another writer of that time, Smith, proceeds towards an additional reduction, synthesising the two categories in one: the yearning for economic profit is no longer autonomous, it rather becomes a pure vehicle carrying the desire for being considered. In the same way, non-economic impulses, and all their charge, are put at the service of the economic impulses they nurture and strengthen, thus loosing the autonomy they were benefiting from before.

Similarly to what happens in economic science *thymós* stays at the borders of the liberal political philosophy, which is the other main paradigm that, at the beginning of modernity, in order to set a good operation and balance of *pólis*, elaborates strategies who rationally aim at moderating and controlling passions. In addition, also within this paradigm *thymós* tends to strongly re-emerge. For the sake of conciseness, we shall only recall one example: Isaiah Berlin. His most celebrated essay, further reputed one of the classic textbooks of the liberal political philosophy, is called *Two concepts of freedom*. Even in that, next to the "negative" and "positive" freedom, the author argues upon the desire of recognition, that is *thymós,* questioning whether it constitutes a request for freedom in a third acceptation (Berlin, 1958). According to Berlin, what oppressed classes or nationalities ask for, normally, is not only a non-mutilated freedom of action for their members, nor (above all) equality of social and economical opportunities, not even being assigned a role within an organic and friction-free state planned by a rational legislator. Indeed, what they want, most of the times at least, is *simply the recognition* (of their class or nation, of their colour or race) as independent source of human activity.

As for the domain of this economic-liberal setting, a theoretical observation recalling the argument debated so far, appears relevant: the conception of human being according to great philosophers such as Plato and Hobbes, Hegel and Nietzsche, as well as great literary men like Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, suggests that humans fall in love and kill each others, consume and collect, undertake and figure, work and die, not only for calm/divisible passions, but mostly for thymotic passions. In fact, the need for recognition often lays the ground, according to that group of authors, of the whole human motivation, including the *homo oeconomicus*' longing for earnings. As Robert Nozick once affirmed (1989), we can say that desiring power, fame and wealth means, mainly, desiring importance. Following Nozick, we argue that power, fame and wealth also implicate, in a substantial way, importance in its two forms, namely having effect and being taken into consideration, since they symbolise *being* important.

Now, do all these authors reflect and tell an anachronistic social world? At the very beginning of a new millennium, are we only dealing with reason-regulated passions? Or craving importance and overwhelming passions remain

decisive? In this paper we have tried to sketch an analysis assuming, at least hypothetically, the centrality of *thymòs*. All implications of this initial attempt will require a further in-depth analysis to be carried out in the next researches.

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