

Politics, Economics and Academy the Crossroads of History

Fabrizio Pezzani*

Bocconi University, Italy

Alfred Nobel, in whose name the awards are presented annually by the Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, died alone on December 10, 1896. Torn by the fear that his discovery of dynamite would be an instrument of death and not prosperity for society (he had been called a "merchant of death") and the pain of his brother's death caused by his discovery, bequeathed his estate to an ideal human society. A society that is able to achieve the universal values of human rights: freedom, equality and solidarity. These values were an invitation to politics and science to give substance and value to human dignity. In this sense, the awards were to bear witness to a universal value extended to all and an occasion of great reflection and of high moral value [1].

In his handwritten will, he stated that the proceeds of his estate were to go towards a prize each year awarded to scholars who in their fields "shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind". Alongside and after the positive sciences - chemistry, physics, medicine - prizes were to be awarded for literature to those who had produced "the most outstanding work of an idealistic tendency"; finally, the prize he perhaps cared most about, namely, the peace prize "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between the nations and the abolition or reduction of standing armies and the formation and spreading of peace congresses". Alfred Nobel's wishes were very clear and carved in stone without the possibility of false interpretations, functional to creating a balance to the meaning of life in abeyance between the spirit world and that of experience. Over time, however, these indications seem to have been progressively overshadowed in favour of criteria for certain prizes that do not always coincide with the wishes of Nobel. Let us consider the facts.

Until the sixties, the Academy had tried to maintain a difficult balance in a period that seemed to have destroyed any hope of life that is completely human. In 1969, the prize for economics was established, which had not been foreseen by Nobel [2]. In fact, it is financed by the Bank of Sweden, with numerous controversies expressed amongst scholars in this very field; Von Hayek himself was undecided until the last moment whether or not to accept the award in 1974. Indeed, Alfred Nobel had foreseen prizes for measurable sciences and awards imbued with the spirituality of sentiments - literature and peace - but economics, the newcomer, in an intermediate position and as a social and moral science could not be treated as a positive science, yet in having to contribute to answering practical needs could not be studied without elements measuring the expediency of choices in the presence of scarce resource and too many needs [3].

The award, as Von Hayek reproved, would contribute to changing the "DNA" of economics, assigning it only to the world of exact sciences; the transition transformed an instrumental science into a purposive science able to define a concept of societal "welfare" in a completely different and asymmetrical way from what Alfred Nobel had conceived. The resulting cultural context contributed to changing the dominant values in society and accelerating the progressive cultural decadence that is rooted far back in time, precisely in the field of speculation.

Since the late sixties, in awarding of the prizes for literature, economics and peace - the three with the most apparent controversies - the anomalies have become more evident favouring a cultural model and its interests that have brought us to the true crisis of our time, the anthropological, which we still refuse to see.

Since 1969, when the first prize for economics was awarded, American scholars have won the lion's share: in the 44 years of Nobel prizes in economics, one or more than one American has been awarded the prize 41 times: a consistent monoculture without any variation 41 times out of 44; only in the years 1969, 1974 and 1988 did they not win. The trend was accentuated after the fall of the Berlin Wall when the awards rained down on finance scholars who defined financial markets as rational and accurate without the risk of error. Finance has become a sort of hegemonic weapon over States able to exert pressure on the policies of individual States and on global choices. Wealth was created without States and States without wealth, a model of an individualistic and conflicting society in which moral sense is subservient to personal interest and the strongest are in command; the system of toxic relationships created between Politics, Finance and Academy exploded in 2008. Is the soul of this cultural model able to inspire feelings such as kindness, altruism, solidarity, respect for humankind, in short, a propulsion towards the ideal that Alfred Nobel desired?

The answer can be found with disarming evidence in the prizes awarded for literature. In fact, since the end of the sixties, the United States that seemed omnipotent has in essence not won a single real prize in literature. Morrison, in '94 expressed the racial pain of the people of colour, then a minority, now a majority; Bellow in '76 and Singer in '78 were the manifestation of European culture where they had lived for a long time before moving to the United States [4]. The other awards over the years have been divided amongst different nations, even if this type of economic well-being was absent or in any case not relevant in these countries, for example, Ireland, Peru, Chile, Saint Lucia, Poland, Romania, Greece ... The two cultural models are opposed without the possibility of dialogue and sharing because the interests of economics and finance put the maximization of self-interest in first place, exactly what Alfred Nobel wanted to avoid. The legitimisation of the single thought has suffocated the imagination and smothered universal values - freedom, equality and solidarity. In the words of Pascal, "l'esprit de finesse" was finally separated from the "esprit de geometrie" but rational man reached the end of the line. Everyone is responsible, albeit in different ways, because everyone has contributed, even in silence, to attributing the value of incontrovertible truth to those positions.

Moreover, from 2002 to 2009, the USA won three awards for peace - Carter, Al Gore and Obama - despite having the largest armies, the greatest number and most powerful weapons in the world, half the global war expenditure and companies in the arms industry that from

*Corresponding author: Fabrizio Pezzani, Professor of Planning and Control, Bocconi University, The Strategic Council Member SDA Bocconi - School of Management, Via Roentgen, 120136 - Milan, Italy, Tel: +39.02.5836.2594-5; Fax: +39.02.5836.2593; E-mail: fabrizio.pezzani@unibocconi.it

Received July 15, 2016; Accepted August 12, 2016; Published August 19, 2016

Citation: Pezzani F (2016) Politics, Economics and Academy the Crossroads of History. Arabian J Bus Manag Review S2: 003.

Copyright: © 2016 Pezzani F. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.