



Thoughts for the present

Choosing a career

It can be difficult to advise young people about what career to choose. So is it best to refrain from doing so? I wouldn't say so. If the young person is the one asking for advice, I would say what I think. Bearing in mind that the world is changing so quickly, what might be a good choice today could be a mistake tomorrow, nothing is written in stone. Generally speaking, it is something young people are willing to discuss because talking things over allows them to hear many opinions: the elderly tend to point out the risks and problems they might encounter, peers talk about their own hopes and opinions, whilst parents and family members advise young people for their own good. Talking things over sheds light on many aspects that help young people to reflect. It is only right to discuss it with diligence, just as the importance of the choice dictates, and to talk about it without influencing them unduly.

It is true that the choices made are important, but it is also true that possible corrections and changes will still be possible along the way. I have met young people who bent to the will of fathers who were doctors or engineers, and having finished (or suspended) their studies, they did not go on to work in the father's business but instead took altogether different paths, with outstanding results. Choosing the right vocation is tough, and we can never be sure if the company or organisation involved is making the right choice. As a young man, I agreed to work as a dental technician for a few months to please my mother. Virtually from the outset I fell in love with the artistic side of the work I had embarked upon. I obtained my qualification and continued to work in the field, which I enjoyed for 25 years. All of a sudden, I felt the urge to organise; I left my job as a dental technician and became an entrepreneur, something I enjoyed even more. People have said that when you do two different jobs, it's like living twice over. It's true, because I know I have struggled twice over, and because in the first twenty-five years I accrued experience which proved useful in my second working life. The stimulus to work is personal, and success is an essential ingredient for ensuring you love the work you are doing. It is necessary to fight to achieve what you believe in. There have been times when people said I was crazy, people who loved me and wanted to help protect me from making mistakes advised me not to embark on tasks that were beyond my reach. I didn't listen to them, it was something only I believed in and it turned out well. Other times I have had to take a step backwards. In Italy work is still free; people use short-cuts and friends in high places to get jobs but they aren't quicker routes, they are unforgivable mistakes and nobody is forced to follow in their footsteps. Companies do not go bankrupt because they pay their taxes. Tax evasion is an offence. There are many companies in Parma that pay their taxes and are doing very well,



whilst plenty of tax dodgers have crashed and burned. Taxes are needed first and foremost for the weak, for those who cannot work, and to eradicate poverty. Let's work together to help honesty win, for a fairer country.

I know I'm not able to teach people anything, but I do want to tell young people to study hard for life itself, not for an exam. I'd like to tell them not to worry because any effort they make with their studies will be repaid ten times over in their working lives.

Academic studies are what underpin every profession and every career. Studies are like the foundations of a house. I would like to conclude by saying that it is only right that we answer young people who want to talk about their future; it is right, and it is also enjoyable to do so. If they listen to us, it means we have helped them to think things over. It's wrong when this openness is missing, when we each defend our own standpoints too rigidly. We should always remember that nobody has a crystal ball, and none of us is infallible.

Studying and working are like a vaccination for young people against drugs and any kind of deviation such as gambling or alcohol. Those who are passionate about their work are unlikely to let themselves be led astray by vices that distract them from their profession. In fact it is through work that man feels fulfilled, that he finds success and satisfaction. Moreover, when men are able to obtain what their families need, they are held in higher consideration at home as well.

Augusto Cattani

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